

Moorabool Shire Council – A Stone Upon A Stone



One of the finest examples of dry stone walls in the area. This homestead wall that surrounds the house and garden at Greystones features a high standard of regular coursed stonework and demonstrates the capacity of the owner to pay skilled wallers.



From the 1850s dry stone walls were constructed extensively across the Keilor Melton Plain. When cheap barbed wire became more commonly available in the 1880s farmers began to combine this with stone walling. On this property the stone walls not only define the boundary, but also visually define the Canola crop, a more recent local commodity.



Timeless walls. New walls. Unfinished walls. To the passer by near Wallace this wall appears to be an old, but finely crafted wall, in poor condition. However, the pile of rocks nearby, represent the events that surrounded its construction by Nathan Perkins in the early 1990s as a demonstration event at a Draft Horse Festival.



In the absence of the skilled wallers of days gone by farmers still need to ensure their boundary walls are stock proof. Note the unusual shaped stone in this wall. "The land has big boulders that were likely blasted with gelignite to create the rather odd shapes." Ian Grigg, Bungaree Oct 2001

The dry stone walls that exist within the Shire of Moorabool are constructed from surface stones that were once part of the landscape. The landscape varies greatly from basalt plains in the south-east to the timbered slopes of the Great Dividing Range in the north. Volcanic mounts such as Mt Warrenheip and Mt Buninyong are located in the Shire's west, while the highest point in the east of the shire is Mt Blackwood.

Post and rail or post and wire fencing was the most common fencing in the area, with timber available from the nearby forests. In the open country, workers cleared the plentiful supply of stones strewn about the land and used them for fencing. Dry stone fences are often evidence of the boundaries between the early pastoral runs and an indication of the earliest local settlement pattern.

In the area around Balliang there survive examples of dry stone walls which reveal the skilled craftsmanship and techniques of the stone wallers' trade, including their use of the knapping hammer to break the stones. The Balliang area was once part of the Staughton estate. One of the most skilfully made dry stone walls in the area is the perimeter wall of the homestead and garden of 'Greystones', south of Bacchus Marsh. The Gothic-style house was built in 1875 for the pastoralist Molesworth Green. Much of the garden wall is of shaped stone. Nearer Bacchus Marsh, on the Rowsley escarpment, is a rather different style of fencing, with large, flat, angular slabs, probably from a very weathered outcrop, the largest slabs being used for the coping.

Moorabool Shire continues to be well known for its rich farming history today and has become a popular tourist destination for day visitors from Melbourne.

Two local farmers recount their childhood memories of dry stone walls.

"I was told as a child never ever to climb the stone walls in case I damaged the walls."
Stuart Wilson Balliang July 2001

"As a child I used to have a horse and I remember the stone walls right along the Bungaree Wallace Rd between Bungaree and Wallace. I can still remember the odd incident of my horse shying at rabbits in the walls."
Heather Trigg, Bungaree Oct. 2001

- 1862 Ballan Road District and Bacchus Marsh Road District created.
- 1863 Bungaree Road District created.
- 1864 Shire of Ballan proclaimed.
- 1871 Bacchus Marsh proclaimed a Shire.
Shire of Bungaree proclaimed
- 1913 A portion of Bacchus Marsh Shire annexed to Kyneton Shire.
- 1994 Moorabool Shire Council formed through the amalgamation of the Shires of Bacchus Marsh, Ballan and parts of Bungaree, Buninyong and Werribee.

Notes from an interview with Bill Grigg of Bungaree October 2001

As a child Bill was told that he had to pick up any stones he came upon on the property and to put them in a pile.

His wife Marie remembers when they were first married that Bill used to go round with a horse and dray and collect the stones on the tip dray then when they wanted to use them they would know where they were.

Any farmer could add to the pile and some of the stacked stones in the area were used for road making.

"As the walls got older the cattle used to knock the stones off but rabbiters did more damage when they chased the rabbits in the wall. Mr Tinney who owned the property with the quarry used to tell the rabbiters off when they pulled the walls down to catch the rabbits. In the early 1930s people, mostly from Ballarat, came to catch their Sunday roast. They came on bicycles and horse and cart and often stayed for the weekend."

Sources
Vines, G. **Built to Last: An Historical and Archaeological Survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western Region**, Melbourne, 1990.

Catrice, D. and Peterson, R. **Bacchus Marsh Heritage Study**, 1994.

