Statement of Significance:

_Balbethan Stud_, formerly _Dunalister_ homestead, erected in about the late 1880s or early 1890s for William David Peter, is of local architectural, historical and social significance.

Architecturally the building is an interesting example of a style not found in any other rural dwelling in the study area. Although reclad and without its original decorative timber details, the building retains the essential striking form of the original design. The dominant and unusually configured roofline is of note.

Historically the construction of this building as the _Dunalister_ homestead means that it is an important surviving link with the original name of the property as given to it by an earlier owner, Walter Clark. Clark was a major landowner in the local area and the name commemorated both Scottish heritage and his son, Alister, who later became a prominent member of the local community.

Socially the homestead is of importance as one of the places where the local Oaklands Hunt Club, established in 1888, would gather before or after a meet.
Description:

The former Dunalister property (now known as Balbethan Stud) was one of the places in the district where the local Oaklands Hunt Club, established in 1888, gathered before or after a meet. A photograph of the Club members taken some time between 1908 and 1915, or 1919 and 1922 (one of the people in the photograph is listed as the Master of Foxhounds, C.E. Hobson, who held this position during these years) is of interest because it shows the south east corner of the Dunalister house.\(^1\) The photograph shows that the gable end originally had a decorative timber gable screen and brackets, separate awnings over each window and simple timber brackets to the side verandah. The original weatherboards ran horizontally up to the gable apex. The house was reclad some years ago and the decorative timber work removed. The gable ends have been infilled with vertical weatherboard cladding in contrast to the horizontal weatherboard cladding to the remainder of the house. The awnings to the windows have been replaced and the timber verandah brackets have been removed.

Essentially, however, the house appears to be as originally constructed with its rather unusual layout and roof line. The front section of the building, which faces west, is a long rectangle, one room deep, with a room either side of a central corridor. The centrally placed front door is flanked on either side by square bays with french doors. The gable roof features dormer-like gables over each of the bays. The verandah roof is a continuation of the main roofline but at a lesser angle.

The next section of the building is virtually square in plan and roofed with twin gables, which run perpendicular to the front section so that the valley runs along the central corridor. This section is narrower than the front thus creating two side verandahs. The verandah on the north side has been filled in to create another room. The three chimneys to this section are of brick with corbels.

The rear section has the same plan as the front but is roofed somewhat differently - the gable roof is broken in the middle to allow the valley of the second section to continue through. A skillion roofed room with a plain brick chimney is a more recent addition to the rear facade. Except for this skillion, which is roofed with corrugated iron, all the roofs, including those to the verandahs, are of slate.

Given the original detailing of the building and the complexity of the roofline it is likely that this was an early version of the increasingly picturesque Federation style that developed in the 1890s and the early part of the twentieth century. As detailed in the history below, the land was purchased by a William David Peter in 1887 and it is probable that he had the house built in the late 1880s or early 1890s. The former Sunbury Courthouse, erected in 1885, has similar detailing in its use of a decorative timber gable screen to the main gable, individual awnings over the windows, and brick chimneys with stepped cornices.

History:

This homestead is located on Section 9 of the Parish of Bulla Bulla, which was first acquired from the Crown by a Courtland Taylor in March 1847.\(^2\) The way in which Taylor used his land and the length of time he owned it has not been established but by October 1863 it was owned by a Dennis (or Denis) O'Halloran. Rate records described it as a 'Pasture and Agl. Farm' part of which O'Halloran leased to a David Bourke until 1867.\(^3\) In June 1866 O'Halloran, who was a 'licensed victualler', bought Section 10 which bordered his land to the north.\(^4\) That property is now known as Oaklands and he and his family owned it for some decades. O'Halloran retained ownership of the land in Section 9 for only about a year longer before

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\(^2\) Current Parish Plan, Parish of Bulla Bulla, CPO.

\(^3\) Bulla Road Board *Rate Book* 1863-1865 and Shire of Bulla *Rate Book* 1866-1870.

\(^4\) PROV, VPRS 460, Document in *Torrens Application No.35156*. 
selling it to Walter Clark of Glenara by October 1867. \(^5\) Around the same time Clark had also acquired Section 8 and part of Section 4.

In the Rate Book entry for the year 1868/69 the property is first described in a pencilled notation as *Dunalister*. The name is most likely to have come from Clark whose second son Alister was born in 1864. Alister Clark later achieved prominence in the local community in his own right as the owner of Glenara, as a member of the Bulla Shire Council, and as a member of the Oaklands Hunt Club. He also became important Australia-wide as an outstanding rose-breeder. The prefix 'dun' is Scottish for 'little hill' and well indicates Clark's Scottish heritage and the conformation of the land. The hill was also later known as 'Red Hill' because of the characteristics of its soil. \(^6\)

Although it was adjacent to the other Sections in the Parish of Bulla Bulla that Walter Clark owned for some reason he treated this land separately from the rest of his holdings. It is interesting that it was not included in an application that he made in December 1872 to bring all of his land under the operation of the *Transfer of Land Statute*. This encompassed some 3218 acres in the parishes of Bulla Bulla and Tullamarine and the land, including 'all buildings and other improvements thereon', was valued at £21,890. \(^7\) Clark died in an accident in March 1873 and the land he owned was valued together for probate at £21,890. Only the 640 acres of Section 9 was valued separately at £3,200. \(^8\) Unfortunately there is no description of a dwelling on this or any other parcels of Clark's land.

After Clark's death probate of the will was granted to a John Kerr Clark, of Melville Plains in New South Wales, who leased out much of the land in Walter Clark's estate. \(^9\) In 1878 the land in the Parish of Bulla Bulla, a little over 1900 acres comprising the adjacent Sections 4, 8 and 9, were leased to two sheep farmers, Charles Percy Davis and John Russell. Then in September 1883 the lease was taken over by the eldest son of Walter Clark, Walter John Clark, although it was still under John Kerr Clark's control as executor. \(^10\)

In 1887 ownership of Walter Clark's estate was transferred to a John Clark (perhaps John Kerr Clark), a William Alfred Cottee and a Harvey William who all lived in New South Wales. They broke the estate up into various properties and sold them. \(^11\) A William David Peter purchased Section 9 and in the Rate Book for the year 1887/88 he was described as a 'Grazier' while the property was described as '640 acres, Dunalister, Bulla' and rated at £375. In July 1889 Peter's overseer, a G.J.Galliers, wrote to the Bulla Shire Council asking for a renewal of their slaughtering licence. \(^12\)

Little is known about William Peter but by his death in May 1928 he appears to have become a man of some wealth. His probate papers record that he died at his residence Camana in Heyington Place, Toorak, and was formerly of Banyule, a large property in Heidelberg, as well as of Dunalister. \(^13\) Amongst his real estate assets were the *Dunalister* property (some 655 acres encompassing Section 9 and part of Section 3 in the Parish of Bulla Bulla) valued at £11,711.2.6 and other land in the district (some 634 acres encompassing allotment B of Section 12 and part of allotment B of Section 11 in the Parish of Tullamarine) valued at £8,876.

For some years before his death, Peter leased the *Dunalister* property to a William Henry Melville and after his death, it was leased by his executors to a Victor Bowman. \(^14\) The property has passed through several hands since and is now down to about 300 acres in size. A

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\(^5\) Shire of Bulla *Rate Book* 1866-1870.

\(^6\) Personal conversation with the Alston sisters of Oaklands; and 'Sunbury' Ordinance Map, Commonwealth Department of Defence, surveyed 1914 by the Survey Section of the Royal Australian Engineers and drawn 1915, held in the Map Collection LT Library.


\(^8\) PROV, *VPRS 28/P2*, Unit 13, Record 685 of Series 10 - Probate documents for the estate of Walter Clark.

\(^9\) Chernov, Steen, *op cit*, np.

\(^10\) Shire of Bulla *Rate Books* from 1878.

\(^11\) Chernov, Steen, *op cit*, np.

\(^12\) Uncatalogued letter held at the George Evans Museum, Sunbury.

\(^13\) PROV, *VPRS 28/P3*, Unit 1904, Record 590 of Series 223 - Probate documents for the estate of William Peter.

\(^14\) Shire of Bulla *Rate Books*. 
quarry covers much of the northern part of the original 640 acres. It has not been established when the name of the property was changed from *Dunalister* to *Balbhan Stud*.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the *Balbhan Stud* homestead be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Hume Planning Scheme.