The Balbethan Stud Shearing Shed is of Regional historical and architectural significance as one of the oldest and largest shearing sheds in the study area; as by far the largest and oldest of the two known timber sheds in the study area; and as one of only two substantial shearing sheds which are very prominent in the rural landscape of the study area.

The significance of this particular landscape is enhanced by its association with Richard Brodie, one of the pioneer Port Phillip squatters, and the first permanent settler in Bulla, who had a sheep station on the site in the late 1830s. This, together with its prominence in the landscape, constitutes the Balbethan Stud Shearing Shed as something of an emblem of the study area's pastoral history.

The structure is unusual in having incorporated shearers' quarters. It is also unique amongst shearing sheds in the study area for its double storey construction and hipped roof.

The shed probably dates to the late nineteenth, or perhaps the early twentieth century. Further research into the shed, and some future typological study of shearing sheds, might reveal more about its comparative significance. The property is also of local historical significance for its association with the Clark family of Glenara.

Description:

The building is a former shearing shed and shearers' quarters. Its construction is very different from most shearing sheds. It is a timber framed weatherboard structure, of two stories,
with a hipped corrugated iron clad roof, and a number of different shaped windows punctuating the walls. It appears to be in excellent condition. Its shearing stands and sheep yards remain, and it appears to be quite intact.

It is situated near the top of the Red Hill, overlooking a small but rich valley which is one of the headwater branches of the Moonee Ponds Creek. On the other side of this valley Richard Brodie had established his sheep station by the time of the first Government survey of the area in 1839, so confirming the historic association of the site with the pastoral industry and the European occupation of Port Phillip district.

Its size and its white weatherboard cladding, together with its position, make it prominent within the Oaklands Road landscape.

Other Shearing Sheds in the Study Area

The most comparable shearing shed in the study area, in terms of size and era, is the shearing shed and combined coachhouse and quarters at Dunhelen on Mickleham Road, Yuroke. There are differences however. Dunhelen shed is bluestone, is likely to have been earlier, and appears to have incorporated a coachhouse and quarters. The Dunhelen shed does not appear to have been built originally as a shearing shed, but as a stable/coachhouse. A shearing area has been added in more recent times. Dunhelen has also suffered a major fire within the past two decades, and the roof has been totally reconstructed.

Other early shearing sheds in the study area have been substantially modified. Probably the most interesting, in its small scale and incorporation of loft wool storage, is that at Emu Bottom. The use of this bluestone building has been altered on a number of occasions however, and it is today associated with its phase as a stable. At Marnong, on Mickleham Road, is another bluestone building which is similar in scale to Emu Bottom, although smaller and of a later date.

Probably the largest shearing shed in the study area, and one of considerable local historical significance, is at the former Bunker Hill property on the Hume Highway. This is a later, more orthodox gable and skillion, corrugated iron clad, structure. Its yards are also of interest, retaining a sheep-dip, and some remnant post-and-rail yarning. The large shed has not been used for some time however, and is in poor condition.

Other sheds in the study area are also of interest. The small shed at Bristol, also constructed of timber, has been identified for heritage protection in this study and is the subject of a separate report. Its history does not relate to a large pastoral property, but to the break-up of the Clarke estate and the creation of small farms in the early twentieth century. Other shearing sheds of interest which also relate to the break-up of the Clarke estate include that at Grevisfield on Wildwood Road, and at Karoora Park on Riddells Creek Road. The former is of structural and historical interest for its use of flattened kerosene tins for cladding, and for this reason is thought to have been constructed around the time of the Second World War restrictions on building materials. It is built without the timber-slat raised floor of the typical modern shearing shed. It also has separate workers quarters nearby. It has potential to be picked up as a heritage site in a future study. The shed at Karoora Park is also an example of an early to mid twentieth century shearing shed in (tolerably) poor condition.

There are also quite a number of small shearing sheds, some with steel rather than timber frames, which date from the period around the middle decades of the century, or the post Second World War period. These are typically two-stand sheds, associated with small mixed farming enterprises, some the direct result of post Second World War Soldier Settlement Estates. They are generally of a more typical or quintessential style, and in reasonable condition. They probably testify to developments in the pastoral industry (including the wool boom during the Korean War), and the growth of the 'fat lamb' industry following the progress of refrigeration in the early twentieth century. The sheds certainly signify an important economic development in the study area - the spread of small farming in the mid twentieth century - and ought to be considered in any future heritage study of this part of Hume City. Few of the sheds remain in use.

A heritage study which did not recognise the significance of sheep in the history of this area would be negligent. The search for sheep pasture is the essence of the history of European settlement in Port Phillip, and the study area was a key locality in the first settlement and establishment of Port Phillip's flocks. Sheep pasture has since remained a significant part of the history of the study area, not least through it being the 'home station' of the Clarke pastoral
dynasty. A shearing shed is thus a particularly appropriate and important part of the heritage of the study area. A large shed, prominently located, could signify this history, and constitute something of a cultural heritage landmark.

There are probably only two other shearing sheds of equivalent prominence to that at *Balbethan*. These are situated at *Glenluce*, on the side of the prominent 'Red Rock', Dalrymple (Back) Road, and a smaller unnamed shed on the side of a hill on the Calder Highway nearly opposite the junction of Couangalt Road. The latter is relatively modern, while the *Glenluce* shed, set among some older Cypress plantings, probably dates to the early or mid twentieth century. It has substantial modern extensions, but is immediately identifiable as a typical shearing shed. Both of these sheds are clad in corrugated iron, and are in the typical gable style. Of these two, the *Glenluce* shed has potential as a heritage site in the study area.

**History:**

The Brodie brothers, Richard and George Sinclair, arrived at Williamstown with 500 sheep on 10 May 1836. This was before George Evans the Jackson brothers landed their sheep (on 10 July of that year), or John Brock (*Bullando Vale*) or James Malcolm (*Olrig*, Mt Ridley) who took up their separate parcels of land in the area in June. While others came and went, the only other early pastoralist who came earlier (March 1836) and settled permanently in the area was John Aitken, of Aitkens Hill.

The Brodies' squatted around the Deep Creek at Bulla. While George became a prominent Melbourne auctioneer, Richard ran the properties in the area. He established a reputation as a sociable, increasingly eccentric, and sometimes extremely generous local personality. Becoming insane, he drowned himself in Emu Creek in 1872.1 In his later years he had provided the opening celebrations for the Bulla school.

The brothers became wealthy, also acquiring large pastoral interests in the Western District. They survived WJT Clarke's Special Survey, although with reduced landholdings. Prior to the sale of the land in the Bulla area in the early 1850s, Richard had lived on Deep Creek very near Bulla, and afterwards moved upstream to a new dwelling at *Helensville* on the Emu Creek.

The small valley which the *Balbethan Stud* property overlooks was the earliest site upon which Brodie is recorded as having settled. Directly opposite and within easy view of the shearing shed, just across the shallow valley, a site was marked on one of the very earliest surveyors plans in the district (1839) as 'Mr Brodie's Sheep Station.'2 Another early map, by Hoddle in 1840, describes the site near the shearing shed as 'Mr Brodie's Station', and marks 'Wool Sheds' (presumably Brodie's) further west, on Deep Creek.3 There is no reference to the site upon which Brodie was established by 1852 (opposite *Lochton*, near the village of Bulla),4 so it would appear that this was the first Brodie headstation site in the district.

While the hill upon which the *Balbethan Stud* shearing shed is situated is described in these early plans as a 'poor scrubby range', the valley was presumably as comparatively rich then (in relation to other parts of the study area) as it is now. The ridge on the opposite side of the valley to *Balbethan* was also woody, described as 'thin forest land, good pasture.'5 It would have provided a sheltered and attractive setting for a dwelling, with timber for fuel and building.

Perhaps Brodie only gave up this site when it was subdivided and sold for freehold in March 1847.6 The area at the time was described as heavily wooded.7 This, together with the fact that it probably did not have had a permanent water supply, may have been the reason that Brodie moved to land nearer to Deep Creek. He also established an outstation called the 'Five Mile', on Deep Creek near Konagaderra, with extensive open grasslands of local fame.

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2 CPO Plans:- Roll 113 (10/9/1839); B520 (nd).
3 CPO Plan:- Sydney B26 (1840, Hoddle)
4 CPO Plan:- Features 551 (Foot, 1852)
5 CPO Plan:- Sydney B26 (1840, Hoddle)
6 Parish plan, Parish of Bulla Bulla, County of Bourke
The area on which the shearing shed now stands became associated with small settlers from the time of the Crown land sales in the late 1840s, though some larger allotments remained. It was originally bought by a Courtland Taylor, who sold it to Denis O'Halloran, who also owned the adjacent Oaklands property. In the early 1860s ratebooks it is described as 'pasture and agricultural farm'. In 1867 it was sold to Walter Clark of Glenara, who purchased extensive property in this vicinity at the time. In the next year book the property acquires the name Dunalister, no doubt after the Scottish 'dun', meaning little hill, and Clark's son Alister who was born a few years before. All of Clark's land in the parish of Bulla, a total of 1900 acres, was leased to two sheep farmers until the late 1880s. (See Balbethan Stud homestead Site Report BB/15).

By this time Clark and his wife had both died, leaving close relative and NSW grazier John Kerr Clark as the trustee of the estate which would eventually pass to the Clark children. Unfortunately John Kerr embezzled the estate. When this was discovered in 1887, he was persuaded to appoint new trustees, including WA Cottee, a prominent NSW banker, pastoral company manager and financial adviser. It was necessary to immediately subdivide and sell all Clark's Bulla property, including Dunalister and Glenara.8

A William David Peter, 'grazier', purchased the 640 acre Dunalister property at this time. He was apparently a man of considerable wealth; at the time of his death in 1928 he was recorded as having formerly lived at Camana in Toorak and Banyule in Heidelberg as well as at Dunalister at Bulla. It is likely that he built the homestead which survives on the property. As the property had been occupied by lessees prior to this, it is possible that he built the shearing shed and shearsers' quarters.

The site has been in a succession of ownerships since Peter died. Since its purchase by the family of the present owners in 1958, it has been developed into a successful stud. For example, in the early 1960s the property's Southdown rams and ewes won many first prizes and awards, from the Royal Melbourne Show, the Hamilton and Western District Sheep Show, the Victorian Sheep Breeders Association, and the Bulla Agricultural and Sheep Society. The property has also been associated with successful thoroughbred horses, including 'Bunratty Castle', winner of a Caulfield Cup, and 'Adieu', a trotting champion. Prizes associated with the property also include a second at the Royal Agricultural Society's 1966 Thoroughbred Horse Show.9 The property is now c.300 acres, the southern portion of the property having been incorporated into a large bluestone quarry.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Balbethan Stud Shearing Shed be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Hume Planning Scheme.

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9 Pers. conv., Mr W Stott.