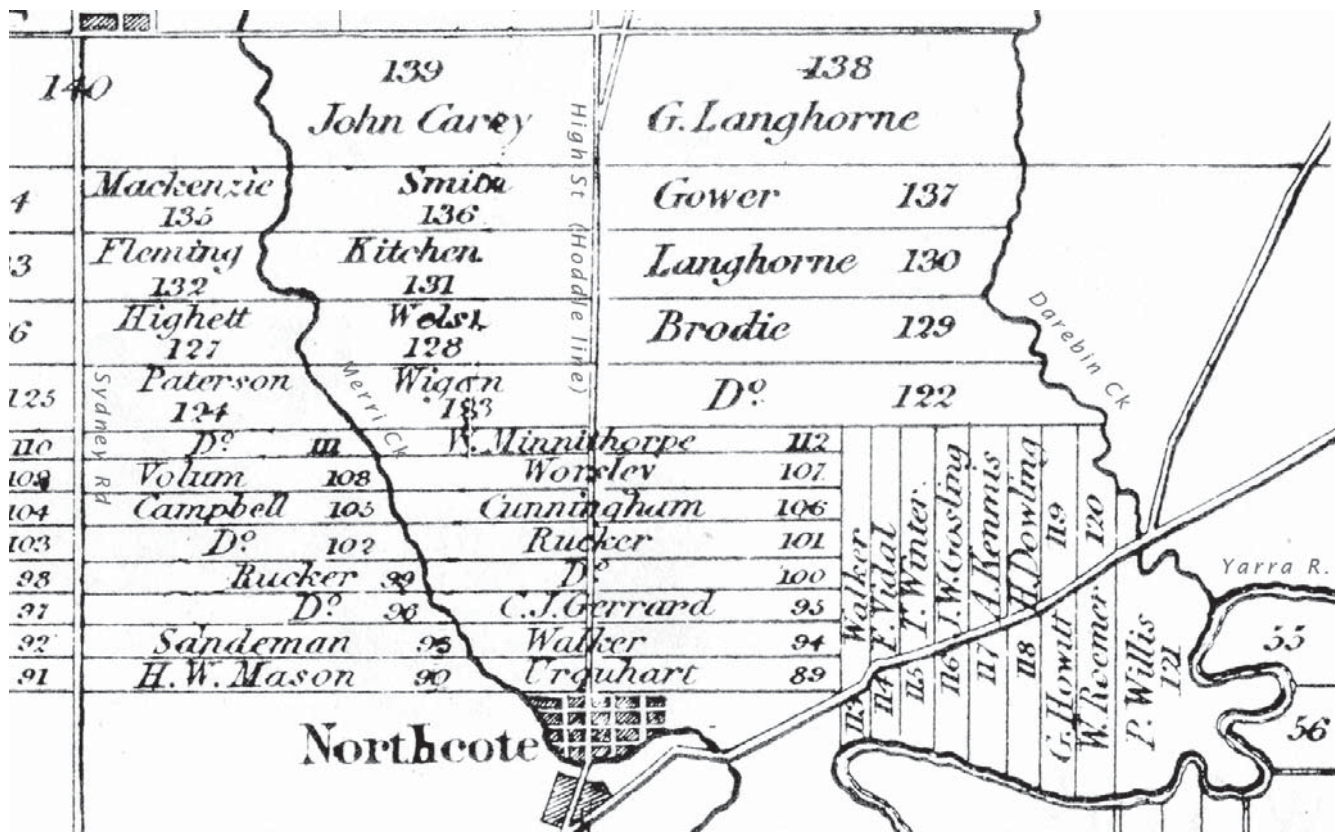


The Alpines – Rucker's Folly?

William Rucker's most notable and extravagant land purchase was at Melbourne's second land sale in 1840, when he purchased four allotments fronting Merri Creek. The survey had been made under Hoddle's instructions, which created long narrow allotments each of about 130 acres with frontages to a creek. (The narrow allotments proved difficult to farm and later influenced poor development of the area, with their long, narrow streets.) Two of Rucker's allotments faced the Sydney Road, and two on the eastern side of the Merri Creek ranged over a prominent hill, soon referred to as Rucker's Hill. These allotments were expensive compared with others at the sale and cost Rucker a total of £2,266/10 shillings. The next year he bought allotment No. 106 on the northern side of his land on the hill for a figure believed to be close to £2,500, twice the auction price. This purchase was remarkable, as the economy had already started to deteriorate.



With Rucker's insolvency in 1842, the allotments not sold by Rucker were repossessed by the Union Bank. In February 1843 the bank advertised this land for sale by auction and described it as:

The undermentioned valuable properties on the Merri Creek formerly belonging to W.F.A. Rucker, Esq.
Suburbans No 96, 99, 100, 101, 106 and the frontages of 102, 105. Parish of Jika Jika.

These valuable properties, from their vicinity to town, the substantial and extensive improvements that have been effected thereon, are too well known to require comment.

On the homestead has been erected the most extensive country house in the district, with stables, coach-house, sheds, &c. and a garden in a high state of cultivation.

On the Sydney Road are three substantial brick cottages, one let as a public-house for 3 years at £60 per annum.

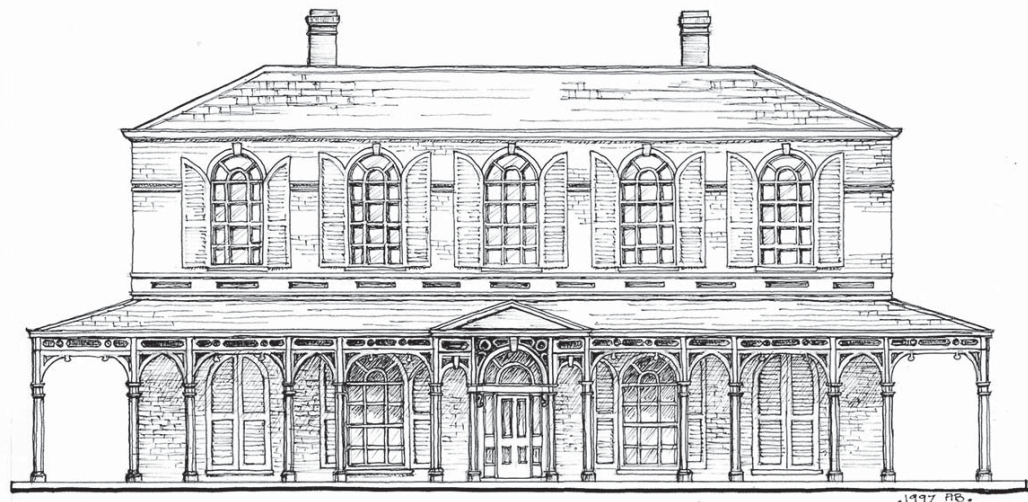
Intending purchasers are requested to inspect these properties previous to the day of the sale. The distance from town is only two and a half miles.

A plan of these grounds may be seen every day at the mart.

Allotment No. 99 fronted onto Sydney Road, East Brunswick, and was about two-and-a-half miles from town. It is now known that Rucker's home stood on this allotment and was called *Stony Park*. The proposed auction either did not proceed, or was a complete failure.

The Union bank then leased *Stony Park* to John Mickle, but it was occupied by his brother-in-law, William Lyall. The Lyalls claimed that the house was unfinished and they completed it and developed the garden. They referred to it as 'Rucker's Folly'. William Lyall

Stony Park,
Rucker's mansion



DRAWN BY ALISON BAIN