

No. 312: Water Reserve, Beattys Road

Address	660A Beattys Road, Bonnie Brook
Significance	Local
Construction Dates	Temporarily reserved 1876
Period	Victorian
Date Inspected	6 February 2018



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The water reserve (land) adjoining the east side of Kororoit Creek, north of Beattys Road and including a dry stone wall on the north-eastern side. The reserve (landscape) is located at the important Beattys Road crossing of Kororoit Creek.

The relatively flat parcel of land is located 125 metres from the ruins of the former Rockbank Inn and has a rural context. Temporarily reserved in 1876, the site remains undeveloped and includes a small number of trees. It has an approximate area of 7 hectares and a partially intact dry stone wall marks the original shape of the boundary of the reserve from Beattys Road to the Creek

How is it Significant?

The Beattys Road water reserve is of local historical significance to the City of Melton.

Why is it Significant?

Historically the Beattys Road water reserve is significant as a place that was set aside when the Village Reserve adjoining Kororoit Creek was subdivided into smaller lots during the 1870s. It is historically associated with Beattys Road, which was once part of an early route used by diggers travelling between Melbourne and Ballarat, and the nearby Rockbank Inn, which was owned by two generations of the locally significant Beatty family.

It demonstrates the practice of setting aside land for water reserves on the dry plains of the Melton area to support small local farmers and travellers with stock by providing access to watercourses which had otherwise been largely restricted through private ownership. The reserve on Beattys Road is one of only a few identified rural water reserves that remain in the City of Melton. These water reserves were an important local resource in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The dry stone wall located on the north-east side of the reserve indicates the original shape and extent of the reserve and reflects the early practices of landowners on Melbourne's western plains. (Criterion A)

Description

The former Beattys Road water reserve consists of about 20 acres of undeveloped land located adjacent to Kororoit Creek and situated in the locality which had been known as Rockbank. The reserve is located to the north of Beattys Road, though originally consisted of two separate portions of land, with an additional 10 acres located to the south of the road. The reserve is located close to the ruins of the former Rockbank Inn which remain on a small rise to the south of Beattys Road on the eastern bank of Kororoit Creek.

The water reserve is relatively flat, being part of the wider flat plains through which Kororoit Creek has cut. A dry stone wall extends along the north-eastern side of the reserve, marking the original boundary of the reserve. There are now numerous shrubs and trees in close proximity to this wall.



Beattys Road water reserve looking north-east from Beattys Road. The dry stone wall is indicated

Adjacent to the water reserve, the banks of the creek are a couple of metres high. A smaller tributary is located to the east of Kororoit Creek and connects with the later south of Beattys Road (in what was the southern part of the water reserve). Between these two waterways, the land is a low lying, forming a shallow basin that appears to be frequently covered with water.

There are only few trees to the water reserve, most of which are smaller types located close to the creek including a few young Eucalypts and other species located high on the banks. Much of the riverbed is covered in reeds whilst there are a variety of grasses to the higher land. A dilapidated timber bridge spans the creek just to the north of the current Beattys Road crossing which now consists of a concrete culvert.

History

Contextual History

In 1853, 640 acres of land in the Rockbank area was purchased by William Cross Yuille by Pre-emptive Right, though he had leased the land prior to this. It is thought that the road now known as Beattys Road originated to provide access to the pastoral homestation of W C Yuille, who resided on the site which later became the Rockbank Inn (sometimes referred to as the Rockbank Hotel) and is located just to the south of where the road now crosses Kororoit Creek.¹

By the early 1850s, the road passing the Rockbank Inn was known as the Ballarat Road. At this time, the route was considered to have an easier gradient than the ford located on what is now the Melton Highway, though the former did pass through swampy

¹ Shire of Melton Heritage Study, Stage Two, 2006, Environmental History, David Moloney, p105

terrain.² The Ballarat Road was used by diggers on their way to the goldfields from Melbourne with the Rockbank Inn, serving the passing trade.³ By 1856, a crossing had been constructed over Kororoit Creek at Rockbank. At this time, all of section 18 (excluding lot B, south of Taylors Road) appears to have been set aside as a Village Reserve.⁴ By the 1870s however, this land, had been subdivided into 15 lots of between 21 and 57 acres with an additional allotment for the water reserve set aside. Land for the reserve consisted of all of allotment 8A, section 18 in the Parish of Kororoit.⁵

From the time of the early Crown subdivisions there were gazetted water reserves in the Municipality, with many located on Kororoit Creek and most being located at road crossing points, though some were also located at the end of a right-of-way. These reserves were set aside to provide both a means of access to water for small farmers on the dry plains and for travelling livestock as they passed along the roads to the Melbourne markets.⁶

As pastoral activities expanded in the shire during the mid-late 19th century, fences, including dry stone walls, were erected to control the movement of stock. During the mid-late 1850s and through the early 1860s, the availability of cheap labour combined with the abundance of stone and the need to clear the land of rocks, meant the construction of dry stone walls was competitive with the erection of other types of fences. This led to many dry stone walls being erected on Melbourne's western plains and in the Melton area.⁷

Place History

In June 1876, a request was made for Council 'take steps for the permanent reservation of land near Rockbank, as the residents had just successfully opposed the application of Charles Beatty to have the same alienated'.⁸ In that year, on 25 September, the land was temporarily reserved by the Crown from sale, leasing and licensing as a site for affording access to water. To be used for 'watering purposes' the 30 acre reserve consisted of two portions of land, both located on the east side of Kororoit Creek with 20 acres located on north side of Beattys Road and 10 acres on the south side.⁹

² Shire of Melton Heritage Study, Citation no. 341, Old Rockbank Middle Road

³ *Argus*, 22 September 1853, p3

⁴ Geological Survey, Parts of parishes Kororoit, Maribyrnong, Derrimut and Jorrk, surveyed 1856 by C G H Aplin, State Library Victoria

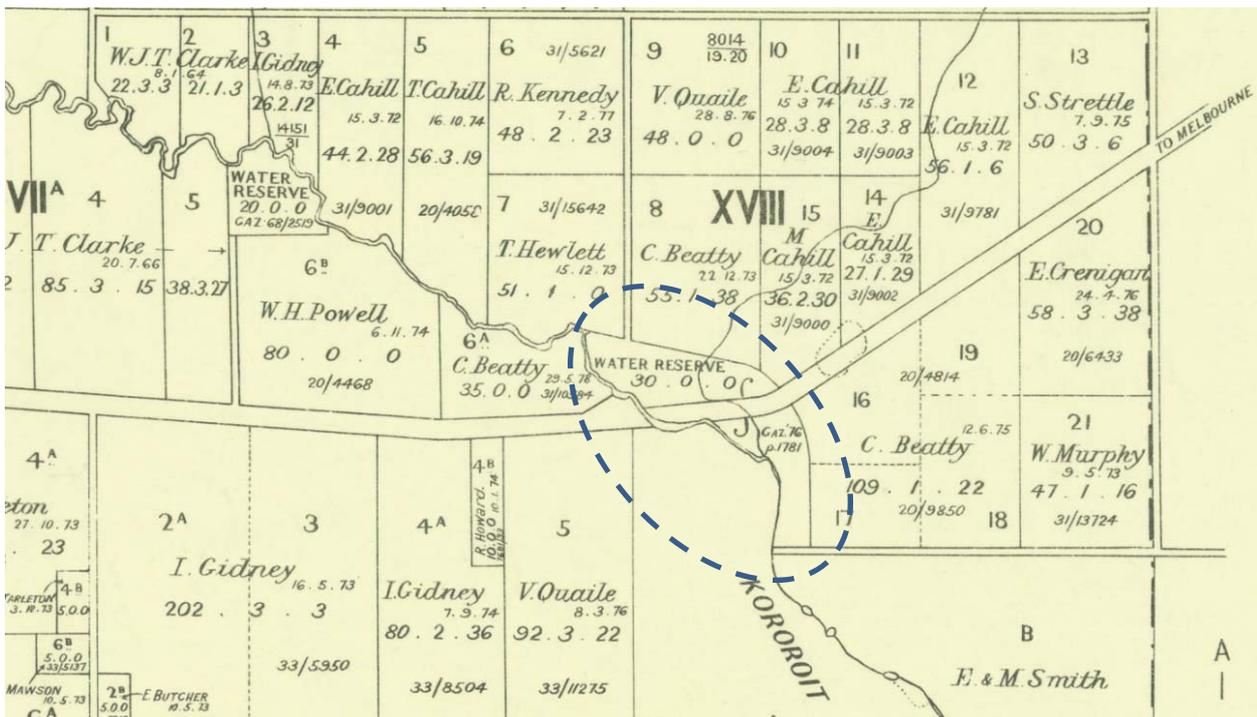
⁵ Parish Plan, Kororoit K74(4)

⁶ Shire of Melton Heritage Study, Environmental History, p163

⁷ Jim Holdsworth *et al*, *Shire of Melton Dry Stone Walls Study*, 2011, Volume 1, pp16-17

⁸ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 10 June 1876, p4

⁹ Victoria Government Gazette, no. 69, p1781, 29 September 1876



Part of plan of Parish of Kororoit, County of Bourke (Department of Lands, 1916)

The water reserve is indicated
 (Source: State Library of Victoria)

In the following decades, various individuals attempted to acquire or lease the reserve. One such application was made in 1890 to lease the reserve for grazing purposes, though was rejected by the Council (then Braybrook Shire Council).¹⁰ Another request was made nine years later for using a 20 acre water reserve on Kororoit Creek. Some explanation was given by the Council when refusing this request.

Council objects to any water reserves being let, as such letting causes a deal of annoyance to the ratepayers and travelling public, which cannot be compensated by the small rental which they would fetch.¹¹

By January 1903 however, it was noted that the water reserve at Rockbank was leased to a Mr Doyle who claimed to have kept the reserve open to all. At this time, his term of lease was close to expiring with several other landowners in the area eager to take possession of the reserve at this time.¹² Two months later, a deputation from the Braybrook Council requested that the Council be given control of a 20 acre reserve at Rockbank so that they could open it for ratepayers and the general public. It was noted that although the government road ran through the reserve, the lessee had blocked the roadway with a chained gate, forcing those who lived in the vicinity to travel three miles further to get to the Rockbank railway station. In response, it was said that no fresh lease would be issued when the existing expired and that the reserve would be reopened for the public.¹³ An article in 1917 however, suggests the 'Beaty's Reserve, Rockbank' was again to be leased.¹⁴

A notice that the temporary water reserve was to be revoked was published in the *Victoria Government Gazette* on 29 May 1957.¹⁵

Thematic Context/Comparative Analysis

City of Melton Historical Themes:

Water

¹⁰ *Independent* (Footscray), 6 September 1890, p3
¹¹ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 11 February 1899, p3
¹² *Independent* (Footscray), 17 January 1903
¹³ 'Water Reserve at Rockbank' *Independent* (Footscray), 14 March 1903, p2
¹⁴ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 6 October 1917, p3
¹⁵ *Victoria Gazette*, no.180, 29 May 1957, p1783

Farming

Known comparable places in the City of Melton

Historically, this is one of a few remaining water reserves that were once common throughout the Municipality. Similar places which relate to the theme of water include:

- HO104 Moloney's Farm Site and water reserve (Place no. 292), 1884-1908 Mt Cottrell Road and land adjacent to the Werribee River.
- HO75 Melton Reservoir, in Hannah Watts Park, Melton, which is significant for its illustration of an early scheme to provide water and the vulnerability of the early township to a lack of water.
- HO 84 Melton Weir, at Nixon Street, Melton is significant as it represents the efforts of the local population to mitigate Melton's low rainfall and provide drinking water to the township.
- O'Neill's Water Reserve (Place no. 398), Water Reserve Road, Kororoit Creek. Said to include the creek flat, redgums and Sheehans ford.
- Water Reserve, Kororoit Creek (Place no. 397), Leakes Road, east side, south of Kororoit Creek.
- Heritage Victoria Inventory site, H7822-2319 Pinkertons Huts and Dry stone wall complex at 260 Clarke Road, Rockbank which was used as a water reserve.

Condition

Infested with weeds and dry stone wall in fair/poor condition.

Integrity

The water reserve area is intact, the dry stone wall is partially intact.

Previous Assessment

The site was first identified as being of potential heritage significance in Stage One of the *Shire of Melton Heritage Study, 2002*. The water reserve was noted as being 'much degraded by raising of water table in past few decades generating salt resistant reeds'.¹⁶ In the final report for Stage Two, the site was included in Schedule 3A as a 'conservation desirable place'. It was one of 57 such places.

Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings and/or Fences	Yes, dry stone wall located on the north-east side of the reserve

Recommended Extent of Heritage Overlay

The recommended extent of the heritage overlay includes the original northern portion of the reserve - that is, the east part of the parcel of land defined as allotment 8A, section 18, in the Parish of Kororoit. It excludes an additional part of land in the said parcel to the west of Kororoit Creek.

¹⁶ David Moloney, *Shire of Melton Heritage Study Stage One 2002: Places of Potential Heritage Significance*, p81



Recommended extent of Heritage Overlay
(Source: Nearmap 21 April 2018)