FORMER PRESTON RESERVOIR CARETAKER'S HOUSE CELLAR

Location

885-897 HIGH STREET RESERVOIR, DAREBIN CITY

Municipality

DAREBIN CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7922-0490

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The cellar is of historical significance in that it relates to the caretaker's house, to which it is probably contemporary, although it may even be earlier. The house has been assessed as of contributory historical significance to Preston Reservoir, and the Yan Yean water supply system as a whole, as an original component of the Preston complex.
The cellar provides evidence of the domestic arrangements at the caretaker's residence, but removal of the deposits within the structure has reduced its archaeological potential as little information remains to be derived from the structure itself.

Archaeological Significance	It is probable that the deposits which fill the feature date to the end of the 19th century, the feature evidently having been filled in advance of construction of the weatherboard extension which has recently been demolished. The upper fill is likely to have been introduced in a single back-filling episode, and it could comprise relatively sterile material imported for the purpose. But it could equally comprise material which was expediently sourced from nearby, such as rubbish deposits, and these would be more likely to include contemporary and perhaps earlier artefactual material. It is possible that the lower fill of the feature contains materials relating to its intended use, or that at least pre-dates the final backfill, perhaps as a result of slow in-fill with refuse and the like during a period of redundancy.
Historical Significance	The cellar is of historical significance in that it relates to, and is probably contemporary with, the 1865 caretaker's house. The house has been assessed as of contributory historical significance to Preston Reservoir, and the Yan Yean water supply system as a whole, as an original component of the Preston complex. The cellar provides evidence of the domestic arrangements at the caretaker's residence, and it may contain archaeological deposits which cast light on their day to day existence.
Interpretation of Site	At the time of writing, the house was undergoing renovations for its intended reuse by Melbourne Water as training and meeting space. These works involved the removal of the original skillion-roof return verandah, together with several later additions, including a large weatherboard section to its rear which was probably the addition made in 1900. The removal of this section revealed a subterranean feature which from the initial inspection (undertaken on the 6 February 2013) is concluded to be a cellar - possibly a root cellar, which is aligned with the original 1865 caretaker's house and is probably contemporary with it. The raised level of the doorways at the rear of the house suggests that some kind of structure did originally lie to the rear of the building, and the gaps in the rear wall at threshold level suggest this to have been a veranda, in which case the putative cellar may have been open to the elements. It appears that the feature was deliberately in-filled, probably in a single episode, and this probably occurred immediately in advance of the construction of the recently removed weatherboard additions, i.e. before c.1900. The size and extent of the stair suggests that the floor of the main structure is approximately 2m below surface level, and therefore that it is filled with approximately 8 cubic metres of material.
Other Names	Incorrectly listed as H7822-2317. Changed April 2013,
Hermes Number	194863
Property Number	

History

A distribution or service reservoir had been included in Blackburn's and Jackson's original plans for the Yan Yean system, but was not built, probably due to economic restraints. Instead Jackson designed two pressure regulating valves. one of which was installed north of Child's Road at present day Mill Park. the other at the site of the proposed service or distribution reservoir at Preston (now at rhe southern end of Preston Reservoir N 0.1) .This was the first time such regulators were used on a large pipeline. but rhey proved to be useless in preventing pipes from bursting. The remedy for this and the problem of stagnation in the pipes was to build a service reservoir on the pipeline between Yan Yean and Melbourne. This reservoir was builr at Preston in 1864 using the same construction technology - puddle core earth **embankment - as the Van Yean Reservoir.**

A caretaker's cottage was built in 1865. one of the caretaker's duties being to ensure that the reservoir did not fill above 17 feer 3 inches each night. An electric float inside the northern slope of rhe reservoir rang an alarm when that level was reached. usually between 3.00 and 6.00 am. at which point the caretaker would have to get out of bed and direct the overflow over the spillway into the Darebin Creek.

Preston was Melbourne's only service reservoir until 1881, **when a small circular reservoir was built at Essendon, and before the end of the nineteenth century a second service reservoir was b**uilt at Essendon, plus three others - in Caulfield, Surrey Hills and Kew. When the Maroondah system was opened in 1891. its water was also piped to Preston Reservoir via a 53 inch wrought iron main. but construction of the High Street main in 1894 enabled **Maroondah water to bypass Preston Reservoir.**

The small Preston office of the MMBW was built next to the house in 1900. Improvements **and additions were made to the living quarters around the same time. Ian Smith, a former** MMBWemployee. recalls that there was a caretaker who had a large family and was given materials to build on an extra bedroom. which he did himself. with assistance from other employees.

Melbourne's six service reservoirs maintained local pressure for rhe metropolis. but by 1905 their combined storage capacity was only sufficient for one summer day's supply. The accepted srandard at the time was three days' storage. which was the original capacity of the Preston Reservoir. In December 1906 the MMBW's Engineer-in-Chief. William Thwaites. repeated the advice of his predecessor William Davidson 22 years earlier rhat a 60 million gallon reservoir at Preston was urgently needed to keep up with daily storage requirements. By October 1907 plans had been drafted for two separate concrete reservoirs with a combined capacity of 50 million gallons. and subsequently Preston Reservoir No.2 was construcred in 1909 and Preston Reservoir No.3 was constructed in 1913.The construction of these **reservoirs completed the Preston reservoir complex.**