
HO32 - Hjorth's Farm



Hjorths Farm - Dam



Remnant terracing and orchard



Remnant terracing



Finely constructed dam wall



The Hjorth Farm, showing house and outbuilding

Location

163 Hjorths Road TOOLERN VALE, Melton Shire

Municipality

MELTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO32

Heritage Listing

Melton City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Hjorth Farm, at 163 Hjorth Road Toolern Vale is significant as a substantial, evocative, and rare example of early intensive farming in the Shire, as a result of the Selection Acts, and the skills of Danish immigrant Anders Hjorth. Although the house and outbuildings have been demolished, the stone wall dam, terraces and other evidence of the irrigation system constitute significant evidence of an unusual, creative and well-known farm in the district.

Hjorth Farm, at 163 Hjorth Road Toolern Vale is aesthetically significant at a local level (AHC D2). It includes a unique example of an early sedimentary stone dam in the Shire; it is also a unique example in the Shire of a dam used for horticultural purposes. Erected single-handedly across a gully over several years, the reservoir is a solid structure with a vertical wall several metres high, of mortared sedimentary stone and brick, founded on solid stone, and holding a wide earth wall which is also a track. Although subject to minor repairs in terms of introduced brickwork and mortar, the dam has a high degree of integrity.

Hjorth Farm, at 163 Hjorth Road Toolern Vale is historically significant at a local level (AHC A4, B2). It is demonstrative both of the important part played by Selection Acts in enabling labourers to access small farms, and of the intensive farming skills of a European immigrant to make a success of a small farm in land of generally low production value. Through his interest and skills in intensive farming Hjorth was able to transform a small acreage of the 'barren scrubby ranges' beside the Djerriwarrh Creek into a successful dairy and horticultural farm. The property is of historical interest for its demonstration of some of Hjorth's innovative adaptation of European small farming traditions to unpromising local country, sometimes in the face of scepticism by neighbours. His irrigated terraces enabled him to grow a good selection of fruit trees, and provided quantities of lush green feed and vegetables, as well as preventing soil loss in wet weather. He also built a cow shed, and experimented with grasses suitable to the dry climate of Australia. Anders Hjorth lived to a great age, and was a noteworthy person in the Melton community in his time. A son, Ralph Hjorth MP represented the local area in the Victorian Parliament.

Hjorth Farm, at 163 Hjorth Road Toolern Vale is scientifically significant at a local level (AHC C2). It has at least two sets of terraces, with low sedimentary stone walls, upon which is the remnant of an orchard. Agricultural pipes, landforms and other evidence also remain from Hjorth irrigation system. These, and the remnant landforms and other detritus have the potential to contribute new information to our understanding of early farming in Melton Shire, especially in relation to the adaptation of European traditions to local conditions. Similarly, any evidence of the butter cellar would have potential to contribute to this understanding.

Hjorth Farm, at 163 Hjorth Road Toolern Vale is socially significant at a local level (AHC G1). It was identified as a place of local heritage significance in Community Forum held as part of this heritage study. Anders Hjorth is of continuing significance to the the Melton community as a consequence of his historical memoir: 'Recollections of Melton 1861-1867', through which a great deal of the early history of Melton is known today.

Overall, Hjorth Farm, at 163 Hjorth Road Toolern Vale is of LOCAL heritage significance.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Melton - Shire of Melton Heritage Study phase 2, David Maloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie, Sera Jane Peters, 2007;
Construction dates	1867, 1870,
Other Names	Anders Hjorth's 'New Thrustrup' Farm, 163 Hjorths Road (Allot. 59B, Parish of Yangardook), and 163 Hjorths Road, (Allot. 59H, Parish of Yangardook), Toolern Vale,
Hermes Number	29995
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Physical Description -

163 Hjorth Road is situated at the end of Hjorth Road Toolern Vale, on the east side of Djerriwarrh Creek (Crown Allotments 59B and 59 H, Parish Yangardook).

The place is part of the former Hjorth farm and orchard, near Djerriwarrh Creek. The house and outbuildings have been demolished. A stone-lined butter cellar next to the site of the house was there in 1994 and may still survive although it was not sighted. Evidence of this would contribute to the significance of the place.

In 1994 the former orchard and irrigation system established by Anders Hjorth was described as:-

'An extant system of three stone-faced dams built by Anders Hjorth c.1877 along a natural watercourse. Gravity and hessian pipes were used to transfer water between the dams and to water stock, vegetable garden and orchard. Stone-lined butter cellar next to the site of the house appears to be the same vintage.' [1]

This information was obtained from informants rather than first-hand site survey at the time.

There is one small mortared stone dam on site at present. The wall is constructed vertically of sandstone, no doubt the local 'schistose' rock. The wall is curved, and has a farm access track running across the top. A few courses of machine-made brick have been added to the top of the dam wall, probably in the twentieth century.

Close by, to the north and west of this dam, are at least two sets (each c.9 metres long) of low terraces, some of which are supported by sedimentary stone walls c.700 mm in height. Apple, plum, pear and other fruit trees (including an almond or peach tree), together with rose bushes, survive on these terraces. The remains of an agricultural clay pipeline runs below the terraces, parallel with the original stream channel.

A slightly larger dam with an earthen embankment is situated immediately above the stone walled dam.

Detailed investigation is likely to reveal further evidence of channels and the original irrigation scheme.

There the remains of some mid twentieth century weatherboard stables, likely associated with the conversion of the property into the 'Huntly Park Stud' in the mid twentieth century.

Remnants of handmade bricks from Hjorth chimney & stone dairy removed by the Woods' to Norwood (Place No.43)

[1] Johnston, *op cit*, p.176 (citing M&DHS)

Historical Australian Themes

Melton Historical Themes: 'Water', 'Farming', 'Community'

Integrity

Integrity -

Part Substantially Intact.

Part Damaged/Disturbed

Physical Conditions

Physical Condition -

Fair (overall).

Good (dam).

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>