
HO48 - Former Murphy Dam



Former Murphy Dam



Dam Wall



Dry Stone Wall P298

Location

209-247 Plumpton Road DIGGERS REST, Melton Shire

Municipality

MELTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0978

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO48

Heritage Listing

Melton City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The former Murphy dam, at 209-247 Plumpton Road, Diggers Rest, is significant as an example of a type of dam constructed in nineteenth century Melton by some small pastoralists and farmers in an attempt to counteract the extremely dry local climate. Its dry-stone construction with roughly worked bluestone is aesthetically pleasing,

and an excellent example of a small dam of this type in Melton.

The former Murphy drystone wall dam, Diggers Rest, is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2). It is a small example of at least five similar, very well built, dry stone dam structures in the Shire, three of which were built on the Clarke Rockbank pastoral estate. These dams express the importance of water in the extremely dry local climate. They may also have been related to the difficulty of excavating large 'tanks' (paddock dams) in the area, much of which has high bluestone bedrock. It appears to be an early dam, built c.early-mid 1850s. It is of particular interest for having been built by a small farmer / dairyman, rather than a pastoralist or large farmer. Built by James Murphy, a pioneering Diggers Rest farmer, it contributed to the success of his small farm and the survival of his family on the otherwise dry-land property for at least two generations. The associated remnant drystone wall complex, of unusual plan, is likely to date at least partly to the 1850s, and is also of historical significance.

The former Murphy drystone wall dam, Diggers Rest, is aesthetically and structurally significant at the LOCAL level (AHC D2). It is a neatly constructed and highly intact dry-stone structure, with a vertical face on the dam side constructed of partly shaped local bluestone and fieldstone. Although now overgrown with reeds it still holds water.

The former Murphy drystone wall dam, Diggers Rest, and the associated complex of drystone walls, in various condition, are scientifically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC C2) for their potential to provide further information in regard to early farming practices, especially in the dry plains areas of the Melton Shire.

Overall, the former Murphy drystone wall dam, at 209-247 Plumpton Road Diggers Rest, is of LOCAL significance.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Melton - Shire of Melton Heritage Study phase 2, David Maloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie, Sera Jane Peters, 2007;
Construction dates	1850,
Other Names	209-247 Plumpton Road Diggers Rest (Lot S2 PS 434718),
Hermes Number	30037
Property Number	

Historical Australian Themes

Melton Historical Themes: 'Water', 'Farming'

Integrity

Integrity - Substantially Intact (a small portion is broken, with coping stones removed)

Physical Conditions

Physical Condition - Good. But overgrown with rushes at present, so difficult to obtain a good view of it.

Physical Description 1

Physical Description -

The dam is situated on a gully c.1.25 km south east of the Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, on a gully in paddock to west of railway line c.750 m. behind the Diggers Rest hotel. The gully that runs north south, and then veers west towards Jacksons Creek, generally to the west and south of the Diggers Rest Hotel.

It is a relatively small dam in comparison to the stone dams constructed by Clarke and other larger farmers in the Shire. It is about 25 metres long, and of reasonable height, being c.1.5 metres above the waterline. It is of 'squared' drystone construction with an earth wall on the downstream side, and having an outlet channel at the west end. The dam is effective, containing substantial water, but is overgrown with reeds and consequently difficult to view properly. The north end of the stone wall is partly broken, and capping stones partly missing.

The dam is a very good example of dry stone stone work. It has a vertical face on the water side, is about a metre wide on top, and is very well constructed.

The stone and post & wire fences around the dam, of varying condition and integrity are also of high significance, given the historical record which shows that they were early, notable (in being the only such complex recorded in the Parish of Holden, and replicated on many plans, with some changes, until 1938[1]), and part of a known farm use. The whole includes walls that are simply remnants of base stone; collapsing 3-4 course walls, with timber posts; and 5-8 course stone fences, with steel drop-posts, probably recently repaired or built. These would appear to be, at least in part, remnants of fences that date to the 1850s, as shown on many plans since that time. They clearly relate functionally to the watercourse and dam, and together with it have the potential to provide information about early farm practices.

[1] Eg, Army Ordnance Plan: Sunbury, 1938.

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/>