
BENWELL FLOODGATES

Location

INTERSECTION OF RIVER TRACK AND REGULATOR TRACK, BENWELL FOREST

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7726-0012

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 3, 2023

What is significant?

Benwell Floodgates is an archaeological site located on a redundant irrigation channel in Benwell State Forest. The Benwell Floodgates consist of a series of steel runners attached to timber posts. The site is in fair archaeological condition in a relatively undisturbed site.

How is it significant?

Benwell Floodgates is of local historical, scientific and representative and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The site is historically important due to its connection to the development of water infrastructure and irrigation in the Myall area of Victoria prior to 1900. The site is scientifically important as it demonstrates the development of water control technology for the purposes of irrigation, domestic supply and flood control. The site has potential to contain buried components which would reveal further information regarding the construction of the regulator. The site is a visual reminder of water management system in rural Victoria during the late 19th century.

Interpretation
of Site

Benwell Floodgates are a water regulation device constructed circa 1886 within a wide hand cut irrigation channel and are related to water management, pastoral and/or agricultural activity in the Myall region. The site may contain buried features related to the construction and operation of the floodgates. The site may provide information regarding past activity related to water infrastructure and water management. The site's history can be directly linked to the development of irrigation in the Myall region. The Benwell Floodgates were intended to control the volume of water from the Murray River into a channel which ran to the township of Myall, where the water entered Reedy Creek. The main supply channel used for this process was 9 m in width and 1.2 m deep, and ran on a gradient of 1 in 5,000. The channel with regulator, which were constructed in 1886, took water from the Murray to Myall where it entered Reedy Creek and was subsequently channelled to areas of Murrabit and Benjeroop. In the same year, a weir with sluice (with sluice gates – the Benwell Floodgates) were built on the channel in the Benwell Reserve, and filled with water via a channel from the Murray. This water supplemented the irrigation system via a second channel connecting the weir to Reedy Creek. Although designed to have a permanent pumping station, one was never installed. In 1906, the newly formed State Rivers and Water Supply Commission took over the works, and replaced the system with a gravitational scheme. Benwell Floodgates are a water regulation device constructed circa 1886 within a wide hand cut irrigation channel and are related to water management, pastoral and/or agricultural activity in the Myall region. The site may contain buried features related to the construction and operation of the floodgates. It therefore meets Threshold A (archaeology). The site may provide information regarding past activity related to water infrastructure and water management. The site's history can be directly linked to the development of irrigation in the Myall region. This site thus also meets Threshold B (place history).

Hermes
Number

209341

Property
Number

History

Irrigated farming began in the Guttrum State Forest Region in the 1870s. The Koondrook Irrigation Trust was established shortly after, in 1885, to provide water for the extensive grazers and dairies, as one of four Trusts aimed at providing irrigation to the wider Kerang district (McKinna et al 2012; Victorian Places 2015). Koondrook was proclaimed a town in 1888 (McKinna et al 2012). The Benjeroop and Murrabit Irrigation and Water Supply Trust (established in 1886) adopted a scheme to pump from the Murray River via Myall and Reedy Creeks to irrigation channels within the Benjeroop and Murrabit region. The main supply channel with a regulator (sluice gates, known as the Benwell Floodgates) to control the volume of water from the Murray River was constructed in 1887. In the same year, a weir with a sluice was built on Reedy Creek in the Benwell Reserve (Kaufman and Ballinger 2014, pp. 48-49). In 1887-1888, the Benjeroop and Murrabit Irrigation Trust embanked part of the Murray River at Benwell Forest as a method of flood prevention, constructed a dam at the Murray River inlet in Guttrum Forest, and built a weir in Guttrum Forest to create water storage for irrigation. The system was replaced in 1906 with a gravitational scheme following a number of dry years at the turn of the 20th century when water levels did not reach the excavated channel in which the floodgates were constructed, and steam engines had to be employed pump at the floodgates. The floodgates are not mapped on Parish mapping dating to 1923. The irrigation channel leading to the floodgates is visible in aerial imagery dating to 1945.

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/>