
BRICK CISTERN

Location

JELLS PARK, WHEELERS HILL

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7922-0197

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 2, 2023

What is significant?

A handmade brick cistern / well that indicates activity associated with the former rural property. The date of construction is unconfirmed, but it may relate to the later stages of the nineteenth century when a homestead was possibly constructed in this area. The cistern / well has the potential to contain artefactual material dating to the period prior to when it was deliberately backfilled in the 1970s when the park was created.

How is it significant?

The cistern / well has archaeological significance as an early water storage feature associated with the farming practices of the property prior to it being converted to public parkland.

Why is it significant?

The original rural property is now within public parkland and the cistern / well is a physical element that relates to the rural settlement of the area. Increasing urbanisation in the Wheelers Hill area has removed much of the evidence for original pastoral settlement and the cistern / well is a physical remnant of this occupation. The cistern / well is indicative of intensification of farming activities to areas further away from the creek, the main water source, as well as using higher ground that is further away from low lying areas that may be subject to flooding.

Interpretation of Site

The exact nature of the occupation in the Pines Picnic area is unconfirmed but the presence of a cistern / well indicates that some form of activity was occurring in this area. The location where the cistern / well is located appears to have been the site of a domestic dwelling in the mid-nineteenth century, most likely from the 1880s, although it may have been earlier. The area was used only for a short time before a new location was chosen as the homestead site probably in the late 1880s, in what is now the Elms Picnic area to the east (H7922-0190). In the late 1930s early 1940s the property was used as a piggery and then a storage area for the US army in WWII. The land then reverted to farming and then public parkland. While only the brick cistern is visible, there is potential for associated archaeological features and deposits in the wider area, which should be considered if there are to be works that have the potential for ground disturbance. Further research may identify the nature and extent of other possible archaeological features in the Pines Picnic ground area.

Hermes Number 209453

Property Number

History

A construction date for the brick cistern / well is not known. However there are references to the Pines Picnic Area being the site of a possible second hut site for Joseph Jells (landowner 1847/8 – 1886), although this is inconclusive and further research is required. Jells first hut site is reputed to be on Dandenong Creek, probably indicated as 'Mrs Scott's cattle station' depicted in 1840 plan by T.H. Nutt. This hut was most likely constructed by Thomas Napier in 1839, the site of which has been recommended for listing on the Heritage Inventory. The first hut site (Mrs Scott's) is reputed to have also been occupied by Jells, but there are references to him moving to a new location closer to the main road (Jells Road) in what is now the Pines Picnic area, although this is unconfirmed (Dimitrievski 1992: 26). Jells sold the property in 1886 to Thomas William Norris who is thought to have constructed a new house at the Elms Picnic area (H7922-0190). However, he may initially have lived in a hut at what was to become the Pines Picnic area, possibly in the second hut used by Jells or in a newly constructed one that he built. Norris did extensive work to the property and formalised the road and cleared much of the vegetation (Priestley 1979:74, Dimitrievski 1992:31). He sold the land in 1888 and then it was on-sold during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the owners, the Herrings established an extensive piggery in the late 1930s /early 1940s near the Pines Picnic ground and the area was also by the American army as a storage depot (Dimitrievski 1992:49). Any of these phases of activity could have been responsible for the construction of the cistern / well and there are varying accounts of who lived in this part of the property and what buildings were constructed. The land was sold to the MMBW in 1969 and in the 1970s converted to parkland.

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/>