
HO53 - Holden Road Dam



Holden Road Dam



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Location

765-789 Holden Rd PLUMPTON, MELTON SHIRE

Municipality

MELTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO53

Heritage Listing

Melton City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The large pastoral dam at 625-833 Holden Road, Plumpton is significant as a probable Clarke *Rockbank* estate dam - one of a unique series known in Victoria - and also as the best example of a more typical style of nineteenth century dam of the Melton plains area, where water management was an especially critical issue.

The large pastoral dam at 625-833 Holden Road, Plumpton is structurally significant at the LOCAL level (AHC D2) as a large and relatively intact example of a nineteenth century building form in the Shire of Melton. Its use of fieldstone or floaters as shoring on the dam wall is typical of the dams built by many smaller pastoralists and

farmers in the Shire, and contrasts with the more professionally built walls on other Clarke dams. This use of the rocks may also have been a form of 'consumption' or use of the fieldstones.

The large pastoral dam at 625-833 Holden Road, Plumpton is historically significant at the LOCAL level. (AHC B2) It represents a building form that is no longer generally practised and in danger of being lost in the Shire of Melton. It is expressive of the importance of water management in the Shire of Melton, whose especially low rainfall has been a major influence in its history.

Its likely origin, as one of a series of at least four large and medium sized drystone dams to have been built on the Clarkes' *Rockbank* station in the Shire of Melton, is also of historical significance. No comparable structure or group of structures, comprising long stone dam walls over wide shallow gullies, is known elsewhere in Victoria. These structures were a local response to the particularly low rainfall of the plains area, the difficulty of sinking 'tank' dams in the shallow bedrock of the area, and the local availability of bluestone. Smaller Melton pastoralists and farmers constructed much smaller and more makeshift dams which were also variations on the same principle. The dam is also significant for its likely association with Australia's mid nineteenth century pastoral giant WJT Clarke, and his son Sir WJT Clarke, Victoria's leading citizen in the late nineteenth century, and Australia's first baronet. As such, the dam would have been integral to the 40,000 acre *Rockbank* station's role in fattening and delivery of sheep for the Newmarket meat trade. With the other Clarke dams, it conveys something of the scale of the *Rockbank* station, whose domination of the Melton Shire was an increasingly acute grievance to local farmers, culminating in the break-up of the estate in the early twentieth century.

Overall, the large pastoral dam at 625-833 Holden Road, Plumpton 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;
Other Names	'Colglenn', 625-833 Holden Rd, Plumpton,
Hermes Number	30048
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Physical Description -

The dam is situated c.800 metres south of the Holden Road, on Warren Gully (east of Plumpton Road). It is a substantial - c.60-70 metres long, and high - dam with an earthen wall shored or beeched in field-stone, or floaters. In this it is very similar to a typical drystone wall, and contrasts with the more professionally constructed dams built as part of Clarke's *Rockbank* estate, which are constructed of both fieldstone and crudely worked bluestone. It is a deep in relation to the other Clarke dams, holding considerable water, yet the level being still more than 2 metres below the top of the wall.

The wall has been repaired recently; with a new coping stones added.[1] Two part-drystone fences are built into and across it, dividing it into three.

The shoring of the dam walls with fieldstone is typically used in the Shire by farmers and smaller pastoralists. It may have been used partly as a means of consume the high density of fieldstone in the area. This dam is set apart from other similar constructions by its overall scale, and the large size of the rocks used. This is by far the largest example of this type of construction in the Shire.

There are extensive drystone walls remaining on the property, and in the area. These include Clarke's 'Mile Wall', on the eastern boundary of this property, named after the square mile section on which the dam is situated.

The owners of the property have cleaned out the debris and silt from the bottom of the dam and banked this up to the east and west of the high water level. There has been considerable erosion of the eastern end of the dam wall where an overflow pipe has been inserted in the wall to prevent the bank washing out in a big flood.

[1] Glenn Ford, owner 'Colglenn', personal conversation, 14/3/2002

Integrity

Integrity - Partly Damaged/Disturbed, but Sympathetically Repaired.

Historical Australian Themes

Melton Historical Themes: 'Water', 'Pastoralism'

Physical Conditions

Physical Condition - Fair

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/>