

# HO104 - Moloney's Farm Site and Water Reserve



Track leading down the escarpment to the Werribee River



Farm site and water reserve



Looking down to the Werribee River from the top of the escarpment



Dry Stone Wall K165 - north boundary



Dry Stone Wall K165 - north boundary



Dry Stone Wall K166 - south boundary



Dry Stone Wall K166 - south boundary



Dry Stone Wall K166 - south boundary



Dry Stone Wall K166 - south boundary



Dry Stone Wall K164 - Eastern Boundary



Dry Stone Wall K164 - Eastern Boundary



Dry Stone Wall K164 - Eastern Boundary

## Location

1884-1908 Mount Cottrell Road and 2182-2356 Boundary Road MOUNT COTTRELL, Melton Shire

## Municipality

MELTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO104

## Heritage Listing

Melton City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The underground tank of the Moloney farm on Mt Cottrell Road Mt Cottrell, and the adjacent Water Reserve, are significant as good representative examples of the management of water for both domestic and stock use in farming areas, a particularly important issue in the dry plains country of Melton. This is one of the best remaining examples of a Selection-era underground tank in the Shire. The small, neat, roughly-squared bluestone lined tank has few comparisons in the Shire, most other nineteenth century stone-lined tanks being earlier, larger, and of slightly different construction. The Water Reserve is an important expression of the need to provide access to water for Selectors, as by this time almost all the stream frontage was already in the ownership of large pastoralists. The drystone wall property boundary fences also contribute the appropriate the nineteenth century farming context of the site, demonstrating the size of the property and the public access route to the Water Reserve, while some are also significant in terms of their professional construction, intactness and consequent aesthetic quality.

The Moloney underground tank is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D2, B2). It is an essentially intact example of an underground tank for a small farm in the Selection era, and is different in scale, construction and materials from other earlier and later era underground tanks in the Shire. It is of small diameter, built of squared basalt with lime render (now mostly deteriorated). Its open (uncapped) design is an early style, now rare in the Shire. Like many surviving domestic underground tanks in the Shire, it together with associated plantings, is virtually all the evidence that remains of a former dwelling. It demonstrates the early provision of domestic water supply, and the critical importance of water management in the dry Melton Plains district. It represents a farming era and way of life that is no longer practised. The neat, well-built and largely intact tank is situated between two peppercorn trees (*Shinus Molle, var. areira*) which are also distinctive features of nineteenth century farms. The pepper trees in a setting of bare plains, largely devoid of signs of human occupation, accentuate the isolation of the place, which was also a contributor to tragic outcomes when sickness struck. It testifies to the prime importance of water management for the survival of small farmers, particularly on the dry Werribee and Keilor plains.

The adjacent Water Reserve, access road and associated drystone wall fencing is also historically significant at a LOCAL level. (AHC D2, B2, E.1) Created at the same time that the Moloney selection was established, it expresses the desire to support small selectors in a dry climate, in a place where access to available watercourses had already been largely alienated. It is also historically linked to the farm site through being known locally as 'Moloney's Water Reserve', or 'Moloney's Recreation Reserve'. It is also expressive of the value in which an attractive water recreation feature has been held in the area.

The Moloney underground tank is scientifically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC C2). It has the potential, with other tanks, to contribute to an understanding of the evolution of tank construction, water management, and domestic lifestyles in the dry Melton Plains area.

Overall, the remnant Moloney farm and associated Water Reserve 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	1871,
Other Names	2182-2356 Boundary Road, Mount Cottrell, Moloney's Water Reserve,
Hermes Number	30234
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

### Physical Description -

The few remains of the former Moloney farm homestead principally comprise a small neat bluestone underground tank, of c.1.5 metres diameter, filled to within c.1.5 metres of the top. It is well-built, without mortar now, but with considerable remnants of internal lime render. It is a particularly small tank, which might suggest that it could have been intended as a well rather than a tank; however the relics of internal render indicate that it was used to hold water, rather than for water to percolate into it.

The tank is situated between two peppercorn trees (*Shinus Molle, var. areira*), a plant that was characteristic of small mid-twentieth century farms homesteads, providing shade, ornament, and (according to different folklore traditions) protection from both blowflies and bushfire.

There is rubble stone evidence of former fence lines around and near the house site, likely once built to protect the house and gardens from stock.

The boundary of the original 72 acre property was originally well enclosed with dry stone walls that can be definitively date to the period 1871 to 1874. The northern boundary wall is in excellent condition, with capping course intact, and consistent/even in structure over its length. It has some native Tree Violet, and a new post and wire fence behind it. The southern boundary wall, nearest the house, is in relatively poor structural condition, but remains substantial, and is of added significance as the boundary wall to the Water Reserve (known locally as 'Maloneys [sic] Water Reserve'). This is matched by another similar wall on the southern side of the right-of-way leading to the Water Reserve. Both walls have native Tree Violet, probably self-sown, along their lengths.

The Water Reserve itself comprises some 21 acres 1 rood and 20 perches of undeveloped land along the east bank of the Werribee River. It is accessed by a track cut into a steep escarpment which links the alluvial flats with the plains above. There are numerous introduced plants lining the track including briar rose, fennel, peppercorns and box thorn. The track is very steep and leads to a natural ford across the Werribee River. To the north of the water reserve is an old pumping station with intact machinery leading to a steel pipe which rises up the escarpment, presumably to provide water to the farms near Moloney's. The Shire of Melton has recently been made managers of the area and are seeking to undertake weed control and revegetation works here.

## Historical Australian Themes

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

## **Integrity**

Integrity - Damaged/Disturbed

## **Physical Conditions**

Physical Conditions - Its setting and context is ruinous, but apart from having been mostly filled, the tank is essentially intact and the track to the water reserve is still passable.

*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/>*