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# STONY CREEK DRAWBRIDGE



Stony Creek Drawbridge  
Maribyrnong July 2003

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## Location

HYDE STREET SPOTSWOOD, MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Municipality

MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0424

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Interpretation of Site

There is evidence of timber piles under the modern roadway bridge, but it unclear whether this is part of the former bridge or Stony Creek Wharf #2 (H7822-0422). The location of the former bridge possibly lies under the northern section of Hyde St Road as there has been extensive land filling in the area. This was one of only two drawbridges in the Maribyrnong Region, and was the only surviving evidence of this type of infrastructure. The bridge demonstrates recognition of the importance of the ballast trade for the port.

Other Names WEST GATE BRIDGE ASSOC. LAND,

Hermes  
Number 13784

Property  
Number

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## History

Stony Creek was formerly an important source of bluestone ballast stone. When a road was established across Hyde St, a drawbridge was installed to allow access further upstream for the ballast boats. A sketch in the *Australian Illustrated News*, 28th April 1888, shows a timber bridge with two sets of support piles (five piles wide) with an overhead gantry for operating the drawbridge, connected to earthworks abutments on either end. The bridge is not shown in plans from 1910.

The Stony Creek Backwash is a shallow wetland and mangrove stand, situated at the confluence of Stony Creek and the Yarra River at Yarraville/Spotswood. It includes the West Gate Memorial Park and the Stony Creek Backwash Park, which is managed by Parks Victoria. The backwash lies partially beneath the West Gate Bridge. The backwash is bordered on the north by the Mobil Yarraville Oil Terminal, on the west by Hyde St and on the east by the Yarra River.

Quarries were located in the vicinity of Stony Creek from the 1850s (Evans, 1969, p. 4). Ballastmen used light vessels to ferry quarried stone down the course of Stony Creek to unload into larger vessels at wharves located on the Yarra River (*Illustrated Australian News*, 25 November 1885). As early as 1879 the Melbourne Harbor Trust deepened the Stony Creek channel for 'the accommodation of the ballast craft', removing 5,430 cubic yards of silt and installing four mooring piles (MHT Commissioners' Report, 1879, p.14). By the following year, however, thirty-two quarrymen and ballastmen pointed out to the Harbor Trust commissioners the need to re-dredge the creek above the Hyde Street Bridge. By 1884, when the quarrymen and lightermen petitioned once more for the creek to be dredged, it was pointed out that the Trust had done so already three times and that there were 'plenty of sites available to ballastmen outside of the creek' (MHT Commissioners Report, 1884, p.65).

It was presumably to accommodate the ballast craft that a drawbridge was erected in the causeway that spanned the backwash in line with Hyde Street Yarraville. The causeway offered a crossing over the Stony Creek and backwash between Yarraville and Williamstown. A wooden drawbridge is pictured across the creek in line with the causeway in the *Illustrated Australian News* of 1888. It is not known when this drawbridge was replaced, though the Melbourne Harbor Trust informed the Footscray Council in 1925 that tenders would soon be called for the construction of a bridge here (*Argus*, 4 February 1925). Evidently this did not happen for in 1930 the Footscray Council borrowed money to construct a reinforced concrete bridge over the Stony Creek at Hyde Street (*Argus*, 20 February 1930, p.10). Remnant piles beneath the current bridge may be the remains of the drawbridge, but are more likely to be remnants of a double row of piles erected in connection with land reclamation in the backwash in the 1920s and shown on a plan of the Port of Melbourne dated 1924. Much of this double row still exists in the backwash, though it is partly obscured by a modern boardwalk constructed as part of a memorial to the victims of the West Gate Bridge disaster.

*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/>