
DIGGERS REST-COIMADAI ROAD BRIDGE REMAINS AND RETAINING WALL

Location

351 DIGGERS REST-COIMADAI ROAD DIGGERS REST, MELTON CITY

Municipality

MELTON CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2303

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site

The location of the original road and bridge over Kororoit Creek East Branch is shown on Parish Maps in Spreadborough and Anderson (1983) and the Surveyor General's Parish Map dated 1854. It is likely that the construction of the road and bridge occurred during the early 1850s. Extensive land clearance and possible excavation on the eastern side of the creek to establish a cutting in order to prepare the location for the retaining wall may have occurred. The acquisition of bluestone to be used for the retaining wall may have been a similar process as to the collection of suitable material for dry stone walls.

The site would have been used by local landowners namely; W.J.T. Clarke, M. Bourke and J. Moloney who were prominent landowners in the region. The road and bridge would have been used as main transport route between Toolern Vale to the west and Diggers Rest to the east.

Archaeological Significance	<p>The archaeological significance of the remains of the timber frame, bridge and road retaining wall is assessed as being medium. However, the assessment is limited to the visible component of the site (e.g. timber frame and retaining wall). Further research is required in order to properly assess the existing structure and the likelihood of subsurface historical archaeological remains and features related to the construction of the site and its use.</p> <p>Further historical archaeological investigation either excavation or monitoring of any proposed impacts to the site may reveal archaeological deposits that may yield specific information about the technology employed to construct the bridge, road and retaining wall.</p>
Historical Significance	<p>The site is of medium historical significance because the former bridge and road remains represents the earliest crossing point over Kororoit Creek East Branch and may have been used as a landmark by early settlers.</p>
Hermes Number	183903
Property Number	

History

In 1824 an expedition led by William Hume and Hamilton Hovell reported on the grazing potential of the volcanic plains of Keilor and Werribee (Moloney 2006: 3). These reports, coupled with a shortage of pasture land in Van Diemens Land (Tasmania), encouraged exploration of the Port Phillip district. In 1835 John Batman arrived with a small fleet carrying sheep, and opened the area for squatters (Moloney 2006: 3). In 1836 John Aitken established Mt Aitken, a successful sheep run in the north of the current Melton Shire, comprising the northern portion of the activity area (Moloney 2006: 22).

Pastoralism developed in the 1850s with the introduction of freehold land tenure. During this time fences, woolsheds and homesteads were established (Moloney 2006: 22). As land was opened up for sale, several owners, Staughton, Chirnside and Clarke, soon dominated the Port Phillip district (Moloney 2006: 28). By the late 1870s, Clarke owned the majority of land between Tarneit, Rockbank, Sunbury and Merriang, including most of the land adjacent to Kororoit Creek, and the present day Kororoit Creek East and West Branches (Clark 1993: 9, Moloney 2006: 30).

The gold rushes in the 1850s resulted in a boom in farming, and landholders supplied vegetables, dairy products and poultry to travellers. Small farming declined in the 1860s as a result of crop disease and drought (Moloney 2006: 41). In the late 1800s and early 1900s the large estates of Staughton, Chirnside and Clarke were divided up, and land was again made available for farming. Developments in farming techniques, technology, fertiliser, transport and markets also assisted in reviving farming in this area (Moloney 2006: 41).

Early roads in the area were cart tracks, following solid and clear ground. As bridges, culverts and fords were constructed, these roads changed route (Moloney 2006: 101). Two main transport routes from Port Phillip passed through the Melton district, the Melbourne to Geelong and the Melbourne to Portland roads. Establishment of hotels along major transport routes led to the development of settlements at Melton, Diggers Rest and Keilor (Moloney 2006: 112). Many bridges mark early crossing points, and often replacements of these bridges were built on different alignments, leaving remnant timber and bluestone bridges, associated embankments and cuttings or remnant bluestone abutments, such as on the Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, within the current activity area (Moloney 2006: 114).

Since the 1920s, the land immediately east of the current activity area has been used for light agricultural purposes, mainly sheep and cattle grazing (EarthTech 2005).

References

Clark, N. 1993. Archaeological Survey of Telecom Optical Fibre Cable Route: Sunbury to Toolern Vale. Unpublished report to Telecom.

EarthTech. 2005. Vineyard Road, Diggers Rest: Due Diligence Report. Unpublished report to Payce?

Moloney, D. 2006. Draft Shire of Melton Heritage Study: Stage Two. Environmental Thematic History. Shire of Melton.

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.

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