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# CHAFFEY CHANNEL (PART) AND PUMPING STATION

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## Location

85-87 SEWELLS ROAD, TARNEIT VIC 3029

## Municipality

WYNDHAM CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2395

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 10, 2020

The site forms part of a late nineteenth century irrigation system, constructed by the Werribee Irrigation and Investment Company. This investment company was formed in 1888 by George Chaffey, in order to establish an irrigation scheme in the Werribee region. The planned irrigation system was intended to supply 1,450 acres of land on the Werribee River, and it was proposed that the irrigated land would be suitable for dairying, fruit and vegetable production, and poultry farming. The trust had received water rights from the Victorian Government, allowing them to pump 100 cubic feet of water per minute from the Werribee River. Construction of the irrigation system commenced in 1889 (Weekly Times, May 4, 1889, p. 2 & Aug. 31, 1889, p. 3).

Part of a bluestone structure (pumping station) - purpose built in 1889 to house centrifugal water pumps (x2), and boilers to power the pumps - is preserved at the site. In addition, an open cut water channel and a water collection chamber (bluestone and brick) both dating to 1889, are preserved at the site. The preserved structures and channel are historically significant at a local level as they represent the first attempt to create an irrigation system in the Werribee region. The site is also associated with George Chaffey, who along with his brothers, was responsible for the establishment of major irrigation colonies in Victoria and South Australia during the 1880s and early 1890s.

The site has been assessed as having 'moderate' archaeological potential, and 'moderate' heritage significance

at a local level.

Interpretation of Site

N.B. The site was assessed as part of a larger heritage survey undertaken during the assessment phase of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the property at 85-87 Sewells Road Tarneit. The CMP is currently in preparation; once completed a copy of the document will be provided to Heritage Victoria. A summary of the site inspection, including photographs of the site, has been provided as Attachment 1, Maps and Figures have been provided as Attachment 2. Analysis of site (interpretation) As a result of the site inspection and background research, the nominated site has been assessed as having 'moderate to high' archaeological potential; and as holding a 'moderate' local heritage significance; as detailed below: Threshold A (archaeology) Background research and the site inspection indicate that: • There is 'moderate to high potential' for archaeological features and deposits to be preserved within the nominated site boundaries; and • Any preserved archaeological features and/or deposits will: - Likely be associated with the 1889-1891 construction and operation of an irrigation system that formed part of George Chaffey's Werribee irrigation scheme; and - Are likely to be in a condition that could contribute to an understanding of the sites historic occupation, and the nature of engineering works and structures associated with late nineteenth century irrigation systems. All portions of the property (Wattle Park, 85-87 Sewells Road, Tarneit); subject to a heritage survey (15-25/09/2020), assessed as being associated with the Chaffey irrigation system, and as having more than 'low archaeological potential' have been recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Inventory (see Attachments 1 & 2 for details). The nominated site extent includes: • The visible footprint of a bluestone structure – identified as a housing/seating of industrial pumping equipment, constructed in 1889, and remaining in operation until c.1891 • A section of open cut irrigation channel, constructed in 1889; • An 1889 brick and bluestone structure (water collection chamber) linking sections of the water channel; and • A curtilage of land surrounding the above structures and water channel, that potentially includes additional features and or deposits associated with the 1889 to 1891 occupation of the site. Threshold B (place history) Background research indicates that: - The site is clearly associated with the Werribee Irrigation and Investment Company, formed by George Chaffey in 1888. Although the trust was a financial failure, and the pumping station was only in operation for a relatively short period of time (1889-c.1891) the scheme, colloquial known as the 'Chaffey irrigation Scheme', is significant at a local level due to its historic associations with early irrigation systems in the Werribee region.

Hermes Number 206955

Property Number

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## History

Chaffey Brothers – Irrigation scheme (1880s-1890s) With experience developing successful irrigation schemes in the USA, and encouraged by the Victorian government, George and William Chaffey transported their business enterprise to Australia in the late 1880s, with the aim of establishing profitable irrigation schemes here. The brothers successfully negotiated legal arrangements with State governments in Victoria and South Australia, providing them with access to land for the construction of their irrigation systems, and resulting in the establishment of 'irrigation colonies' at Renmark (South Australia) and Mildura (Victoria)(Engineering Heritage Australia, 2017, pp. 10-11). The Victorian land boom of the 1880s provided an opportunity for the growth of irrigation schemes, and in 1888 George Chaffey formed the Werribee Irrigation and Investment Company (WIIC), in order to establish a scheme in the Werribee region. The planned irrigation system was intended to supply 1,450 acres of land on the Werribee River purchased by the WIIC, and which they proposed could be worked as an "irrigation, dairying, fruit growing, poultry, and garden settlement" (The Ovens & Murray Advertiser, 01 Dec. 1888, p. 21). The trust had received water rights from the Victorian Government, allowing them to pump 100

cubic feet of water per minute from the Werribee River. Construction of the irrigation system commenced in 1889 (Weekly Times, May 4, 1889, p. 2 & Aug. 31, 1889, p. 3). An 1890 description of the established irrigation system provides details of the pumping station and channel system on the Werribee River: The pumping plant [1] is well housed on the banks of the River Werribee, and consists of a 30 horsepower Tangye engine, with two boilers, driving two 12in centrifugal pumps capable of lifting 5,000 gal per minute a height of 50ft to the cement chamber [2] which heads the main race. The pumping plant has cost about £2,500, and a supplementary boiler or receiver to contain surplus steam was being added at the time of our visit. This will economise fuel and ease the work of the engineer in charge. No weir has been put in the river but a temporary waterfall has been made with rough stones to give a pool for the pumps to work in. About 5 ½ miles of main channel have been cut 2 ½ ft wide at the bottom, and sloping up to the surface 1 to 1. In one place the channel is 8ft deep. Weekly Times, Sept. 20, 1890, p. 27 [N.B. the features described in this 1890 article correspond to structures and a water channel identified during the 2020 site inspection (see Attachment 1 for details)] The pumping station was in operation from 1889 to c.1891. During its short period of operation, a number of disputes arose with local land owners regarding water access, with claims that the WIIC were pumping excessive amounts of water from the Werribee River, leading to reduced flows downstream (Geelong Advertiser, 11 Mar. 1891, p. 3). The WIIC was a financial failure, in part due to the depression of the 1890s, and by 1893 the trust was insolvent. Ownership of the pumping equipment passed from the defunct trust, to Mr Thomas Agar. Agar removed the pumping equipment from its original location and re-established it on his property at Werribee in c.1895 (The Age, Oct. 5, 1893, p.1; Bendigo Advertiser, Mar. 14, 1895, p. 2). From 1889-1895; land at 85-87 Sewell's Road - encompassing the site of the WIIC's original pumping station and part of the main water channel - was owned by Thomas Chirside. Chirside had purchased this land as part of a larger holding of 1,700 acres from Alexander Bruce in 1875. At the time of Chirside's purchase, the land was being used for grazing purposes and a homestead (Wattle Park) had been constructed within the property; this dwelling is located ~1km southeast of the pumping station. Members of the Chirside family – Thomas, his brother Andrew, and Andrew's sons, George Thomas and John Percy – maintained ownership of the property until 1911 (The Leader, 02/07/1887: 30; Wills & Probate (PROV 2020)). Land titles dating to this period, do not indicate that the WIIC held a leasehold to the part of Chirside's land that encompasses the pumping station; however, the trust had presumably negotiated an arrangement with Thomas Chirside allowing them the use of his land. It should be noted that a number of primary documents are held by the Public Records Office Victoria that pertain to the WIIC – due to Government restrictions (in place Sep-Oct 2020) these documents could not be accessed; a review of these documents is likely to provide additional historic information. From 1899 to 2020, land encompassing the former pumping station (85-87 Sewells Road, Tarneit) has been occupied by members of the Sewell family (leasehold 1899-1910, ownership 1911-c.2020); the land was used for farming purposes during this period, grazing and cropping. Part of the former water channel was in-filled during this period (Land Victoria 2020).

*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/>*