

BACCHUS MARSH HERITAGE STUDY.

Ref: 378

Richard Peterson Architect & Conservation Consultant. Daniel Catrice Historian 1994.

NAME: Lerderberg River engineering works.			
ADDRESS: Holts Lane to Wheelans Road(?).			
TITLE DETAILS:			
USE: Flood reduction and marsh reclamation engineering works.			
CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1878-90		SOURCE: 1	
ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS:		DATE: From 1933	
BUILDER: Shire Council		SOURCE: 2	
CRITERIA: H2,4; Ar1.		HISTORIC THEME: Governing/ Water.	
CONDITION: Good	INTACTNESS: Good	THREATS: -	
SIGNIFICANT INTACT ELEMENTS: ENGINEERING STRUCTURE. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL.			
SIGNIFICANCE: TYPE: HISTORICAL. ARCHITECTURAL. SCIENTIFIC. LEVEL: LOCAL.			
DESIGNATION EXISTING: Nil			
RECOMMENDED CONTROL: PLANNING SCHEME.			
MAP NO: R3.05	SURVEY: GV	DATE: 21.2.95	NEGS: ?

HISTORY: From 1878,¹ the Bacchus Marsh Shire Council began to cut this channel to make a permanent course for the meandering Lerderderg River. This channel, and the earthworks along the banks of the Lerderderg River, drained the marshy lands at the eastern end of the valley where the Shire Council had been faced by a formidable road maintenance task.²

Originally a swamp, the lower reaches of the Lerderderg River was both an obstacle to travel through the valley, and cause of flooding in the area. The Shire council carried out excavation works to formalise a channel through the swamp between Holts Lane and the east end of the Avenue of Honour ((Wheelans Road). Other evidence from maps suggests that the lower reaches of the river were also altered. Excavation was carried out either using a drag-line from the bank, or pick, shovel and wheelbarrow during very low river levels.

Although no documentary evidence apart from the maps has been identified, local tradition has it that the work was done over a considerable number of years and evidence from maps shows that the section through the swamp was excavated some time between 1878 and 1890, while the lower section to the junction of the Werribee River immediately upstream of the Avenue of Honour, dates from after 1933.³

VISUAL DESCRIPTION: The most extensive work appears to have been in the lower reaches. A comparison of maps show the section downstream of the Avenue of Honour has been extensively altered. Originally a meandering stream, it is now an almost straight run down to the junction with the Werribee River.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:

Other major engineering works in Bacchus Marsh include: Anthony's Cutting (ref: 354A), Lake Merrimu Reservoir (ref: 320) and the Melbourne-Ballarat Railway Line (refs: 44, 46, 474, 521, 61, 178 & 375), as well as the Western Freeway.

SIGNIFICANCE: Engineering earth works by the Shire council from 1878-90 and from 1933 to formalise a channel for the Lerderderg River through the town to reduce flooding and reclaim marshland for agricultural use.

The works are of local historical significance for their association with agricultural and water management developments in the community life of the district and in demonstrating the effect of an initiative of local government.

The site is of scientific significance for its archaeological research potential.

¹ There seems to be a discrepancy in dating the works between Osborne (1874) and other documentary sources given below (1878-1933).

² Osborne, *The Bacchus Story*, p.89.

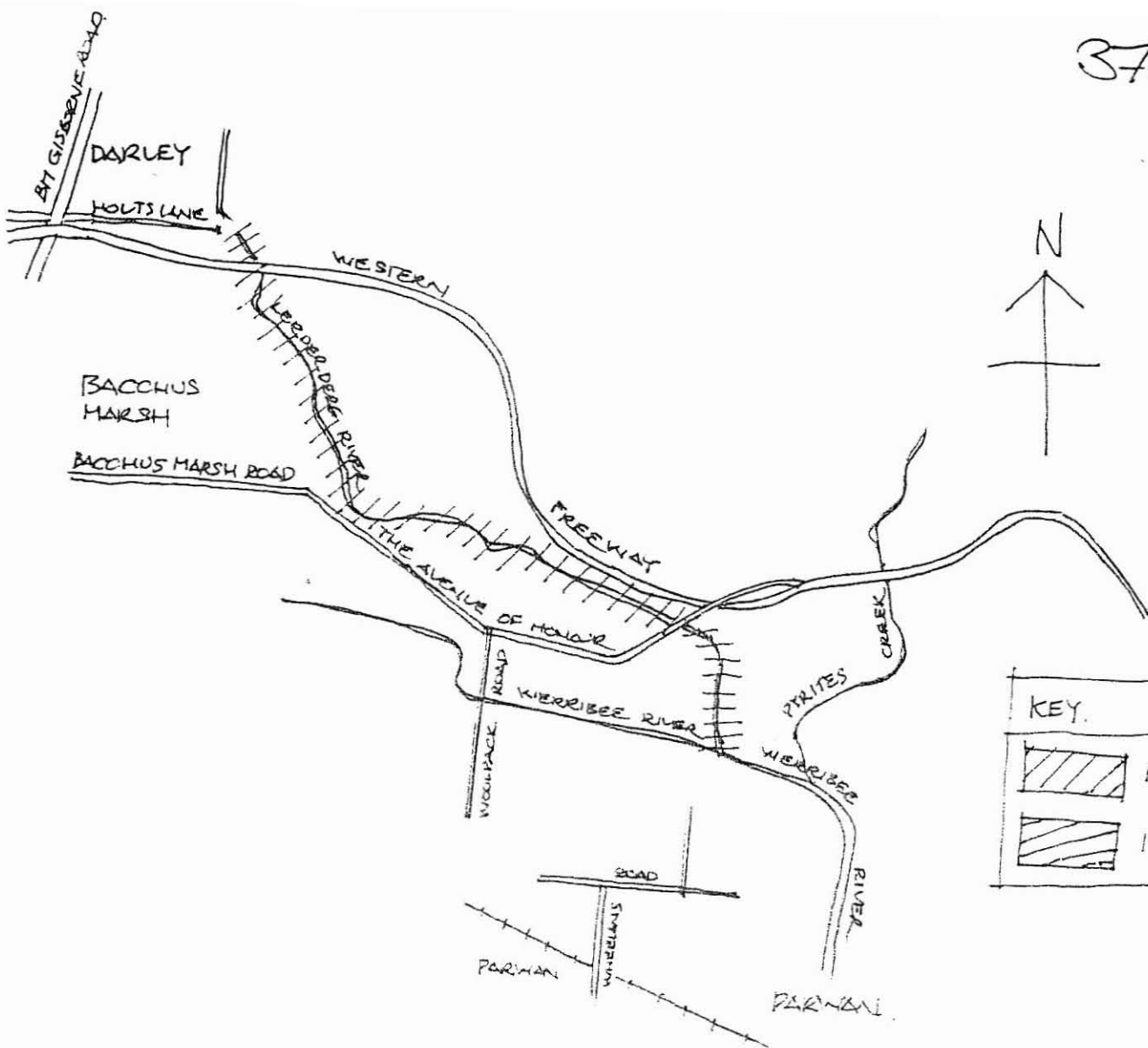
³ Ordinance Survey of Victoria, Ballan Sheet, Surveyor General, 1933; Parish of Merrimu, Department of Crown Lands & Survey, 19.8. 1878; County of Bourke Atlas, 1890, State Library of Victoria.

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INTACTNESS: Good.

CONDITIONS & THREATS: Good.



KEY.	
	1878-
	1933-