

Heritage Overlay No.: 104
Citation No.: 292
Place: Moloney's Farm Site and Water Reserve

Other Names of Place: 'Moloney's Water Reserve'
Location: Main Historic Place: 1884-1908 Mount Cottrell Road, Mount Cottrell (west side). Including former Moloney property and boundary dry stone walls; also the Water Reserve 2182-2356 Boundary Rd, Mt Cottrell (east bank of Werribee River).
Critical Dates: Historic Dry Stone Wall: 2182-2356 Boundary Road, Mount Cottrell c.1871-72.
Existing Heritage Listings: None. Western Region Rural Heritage Study: 'worthy of assessment'.¹
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



¹ 'Western Region of Melbourne, Rural Heritage Study', Context Pty Ltd, 1994, p.59
Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006)

Statement of Significance:

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.

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.

History:

Contextual History

The Moloney house site is situated is of 72 acres, 3 perches, and 20 roods in the Parish of Pywheittjorrk, being Crown Allotment B1. Moloney took up the land under the Selection Acts in 1871, and acquired freehold title to the property in January 1882.² The adjacent Water Reserve of 21 acres 1 rood and 20 perches was gazetted in 1872, at the same time that the land was opened for Selection.

The ‘Mt Cotterell’ area in which the property was located appears to have had a minor growth spurt in the 1860s and 70s, probably aided by the Selection Acts. In June 1865 a grant was given to open the Mt Cotterell School No.804, to be held in a bluestone Wesleyan chapel / school house and teachers residence.³ This school was on Boundary Road, south of Mt Cotterell. In 1866 a post-office also opened in Mt Cotterell.

² Parish Plan, Parish of Phyweitjorrk.; Land acquired under Sections 19 and 20 of the Land Act 1869.

³ Ford, Olwen, ‘Voices From Below: Family, School and Community on the Braybrook Plains 1854-1892’ (M.Ed Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993), p.238.

Yet the neighbourhood remained ‘a tiny group of farms dwarfed by Clarke’s 8,678 acres’. These small farmers confronted ‘two basic inequalities – access to water and access to good roads’.⁴ Firstly, virtually all the land along the river was owned by large pastoralists (Clarke and the Staughtons), so the only legally sanctioned water access available for local farmers’ stock was the Water Reserve. In the dry Werribee Plains, a Water Reserve was presumably of critical importance to small farmers.

The second problem faced by local farmers was isolation. It was a small community remote from the nearest railway (Melbourne-Geelong), and cut off further by closed roads on pastoral estates. There were 23 miles of enclosed roads, mainly on land owned by Clarke, severely restricting access in all directions. The ‘main links between the residents of the Mt Cotterell district and the rest of the world’ were the southern boundary road, and the Mt Cotterell and Mt Atkinson Roads. ‘Of all the families in Braybrook Shire those at Mt Cotterell were the most isolated.’⁵

Very few small farmers remained on the land in the Mt Cotterell area during the late nineteenth century. While there were more in the nearby Shire of Werribee, the Moloneys few neighbours in the Shire of Melton at the end of the century seem to have consisted of Scarborough, further north on Mt Cotterell Road, and the Moss’s, another original farming family, on the opposite side of Mt Cotterell Road. S. Valentine’s, and James Kerr’s farms were a mile further east.⁶ Clarke had acquired many properties, including the one immediately to Moloney’s south. The land to his north, after being subject of speculation for years, in 1875 was also acquired by Sir WJ Clarke, at a much lesser price than had been previously paid for it. There is evidence that he tenanted out the property. In 1900 the Clarkes sold it to Julia O’Brien, who may have been a member of the Moloney family.⁷

In 1909 O’Brien applied for a Torrens title to the land, perhaps in readiness to sell it. This land became *Penlee Farm*, Moloney’s northern neighbour, belonging to M Davey. Local memory is that ‘the Daveys milked cows up to the 1939 War’.⁸

The difficulties of small farming in this relatively remote plains area become clear in the declining population figures revealed in the number of ratepayers in the Parish of Phyweitjorrk. The number of farmers declined dramatically, from 14 in 1871, to 7 in 1881, and 5 in 1891. Small farmers were by far the most vulnerable:- of the 8 farmers with less than 100 acres of land in 1871, only 2 remained in 1881. Much of their land (including blocks to the north and south of Moloney⁹) had been taken over by WJT ‘Big’ Clarke or his son Sir WJ Clarke.¹⁰

History of the Place

Matthew Moloney, with only 72 acres, was one of these small farmers who survived. As was the case with many small farmers, he farmed nearby land as well as the land he owned. Ratebooks indicate that by at least 1886 he was leasing the allotment of 71 acres immediately to his east, which his fellow selector Thomas Hobbs had by this time sold to Sir WJ Clarke.¹¹

⁴ Ford, *op cit*, p.237

⁵ *ibid*, pp.237-8

⁶ Shire Map Series, 1892, ‘No.29: Phyweitjorrk’.

⁷ PROV VPRS 460/P0/38274

⁸ Albert Evans, ‘From the early settlers to the 1969 fires’, Manuscript.

⁹ PROV VPRS 460/P0/38274

¹⁰ Evans, *op.cit*, p..239

¹¹ Shire of Braybrook, *Ratebooks*, 1886 – 1901. By 1904 the same allotment was leased by L J O’Brien, probably his son-in-law.

Moloney would have benefited greatly from having immediate access to the adjacent public water reserve.

In 1871 Moloney and Hobbs had each applied for half of the land between Mount Cottrell Road and a Reserve on the Werribee River.¹² This was a time in which Farmers Commons, Water and Timber Reserves were thought to have achieved their purpose in helping original small farmers establish, and were being put up for selection by the government. As in this case, neighbouring farmers sometimes protested that the land was still needed for general purposes. In this case they had strong support from the Shire of Braybrook, whose immediate letter to the Commissioner of Lands requesting that the selections be disallowed also provides insight into the importance of Water Reserves in the Melton and Werribee plains area:

*'This reserve has been a great source of benefit not only to the rate payers of this Shire but also to those of Wyndham and Melton, as well as a convenient watering and resting place for travelling stock, there being no other reserve within seven or eight miles. Its selection it would be evident would entail very great loss and hardship on the general public.'*¹³

Instead of acceding to this request to maintain the land for 'public purpose', the Lands Board appears to have made a compromise, in which access to a substantial (21 acre) Water Reserve on the Werribee River would be provided by a new track from Mount Cottrell Road, adjacent to both the Hobbs and Moloney selections. The Council's letter must have been taken seriously, as an early proposal had this access road at three chains (c.60 metres) wide.¹⁴ This width was usually only provided for major stock routes. The road that eventuated (which survives) was much narrower.

Moloney, born into a farming family in Co. Clare Ireland, had arrived in Melbourne in 1847 and married Margaret Curren in 1860. He and his family had moved into a four-roomed (24 by 12 feet) weatherboard ('deal') house in late 1871. Within a few years he had also built a stock dam, constructed 46 chains (925 metres) of 'stone wall fencing', as well as 47 chains of post & wire fencing, and cleared about 10 acres of the stoney ground for cultivation.¹⁵

He developed income from non-farming activities, describing himself as a 'general dealer' in 1874.¹⁶ This dealing may have been in horses, for which Moloney had a particular love. He raced locally winning the Melton Racing Cup Trophy in 1886 with his horse Black Bess, and is thought to have won the trophy three times. By the time of his death in 1909 he was described as a 'lemonade manufacturer and farmer'.¹⁷ His inability to write (he signed his name with a cross) does not seem to have hindered him particularly.

Neither did his illiteracy prevent him from having a strong letter written to the Board of Education in 1883 complaining that the school's underground tank was dangerous - one of the schoolchildren having nearly slipped between the boards and drowned - and demanding 'a teacher'. Action was taken within two days to arrange a teacher, and within two weeks regarding repair of the tank.¹⁸

¹² PROV VPRS 625/P0/152

¹³ PROV VPRS 625/P0/152: Letter, Shire of Braybrook to Commissioner of Land Survey, 19/7/1871

¹⁴ PROV VPRS 625/P0/152: 'Plan of Land, 24/3/1875'

¹⁵ PROV VPRS 625/P0/152: Inspectors Report, 1/10/1874

¹⁶ *ibid*; and Ford, *op cit*, p.246

¹⁷ *The Werribee Express*, 10/7/1909.

¹⁸ Ford, *op cit*, p.246

The 1901 ratebook belatedly notes a ‘house’ on the Moloney property for the first time. Between 1905 and 1908 the valuation of the property increases by 50%; some major improvements, possibly a new house, may have been built on the property in this period, or perhaps the rate entry now incorporated the allotment to its north.¹⁹

By 1908 the property was in the ownership of Peter V Moloney, the younger of two surviving sons. Peter’s 26 year-old wife, Mary Hogan, had died in 1904.²⁰ Peter may have been the ‘single person’ of later folklore whose horse, transporting him home, presumably after a visit to a local hotel, always stopped the cart at the gate awaiting someone to open it.

Margaret Moloney, still living on the property, died in 1916.²¹ At some stage during the next few decades the Moloney property ceased to be inhabited. While the house appears on a 1916 Map, by 1938 it is no longer marked.²² It was probably during this time that the Peter, or perhaps his sister Julia O’Brien and her husband, left the property. The house was moved to *Glengallan* where it was used for storage purposes. It contained one very large room which was used for parties and functions. The same house was removed to Bacchus Marsh during the Second World War, where it became the home of Robert Butler (and is still standing).²³ Another part of the house may have been used to extend the adjacent ‘Penlee Farm’.²⁴

By the time of Matthew’s death in 1909 the use of the 1872 ‘Maloney’s Water Reserve’ [sic] had changed. The small new farms that had been struggling to take hold in the year that it was created, had come and gone, and the site was now known as ‘Moloney’s reservation, a place of popular attraction’.²⁵

Diphtheria

The Moloneys’ suffered sadness in their time at Mt Cotterell. In 1875 two of their children – four year old Thomas, and six year old Matthew - died of diphtheria within a fortnight of each other. Matthew’s provided evidence to ensuing inquest:

‘On Monday evening last about 9 am the boy first showed symptoms of illness, at that time he was going about, between 2 & 3 o’clock he took seriously ill. I first gave him castor oil ... he threw up the castor oil, after that he talked as usual but his mother kept him in bed and bathed his feet, at about 4 o’clock he took very bad and I then sent for medical aid to Bacchus Marsh. No doctor saw the child before he died, he died about 2 am on Tuesday morning’

The isolation from medical help, and medical ignorance of the time no doubt played some parts in the deaths. But Ford also suggests that the Moloneys may have been one of the several local cases ““where the medical men had refused, unless their fees were paid in advance, to attend patients who had subsequently died””.²⁶

¹⁹ Shire of Braybrook, *Ratebooks*, 1901 - 1908

²⁰ Moloney family headstone, Melton Cemetery.

²¹ *The Melton Express*, 19/8/1916.

²² Army Ordnance Maps, Sunbury District: 1916, 1938

²³ Robert Butler in Geoffrey Camm (compiler) *Bacchus Marsh: An Anecdotal History* (Hargreen Publishing, 1986)

²⁴ Personal conversation with tenant, 22/2/2002.

²⁵ *The Werribee Express*, 10/7/1909.

²⁶ Ford, *op cit*, p.245

The next child of the Moloneys, Matthew Patrick, also died young, at age 13. The names of all the children are recorded on the headstone erected by Margaret Moloney in the Catholic section of the Melton Cemetery when her husband Matthew died, some 34 years afterwards. All of the other six Moloney children survived to adulthood.

There were three other serious cases of diphtheria at the Mt Cotterell school in the same month that Thomas and Matthew died, and the teacher closed the school. In the same year two children of the nearby Wood family also died from the disease. Another nearby family of small farmers, the Kerrs, had been struck by the tragedy five years earlier, when 6 of their children had fallen victim in quick succession. A local explained later that it was not realised at the time how dangerous diphtheria was, and that there was ‘no doctor near’ the Kerrs, they and other parents hoped that it would clear up.²⁷

Diphtheria was one of the most common causes of death in children in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is a highly contagious bacterial virus, most common in crowded areas with poor sanitation. Large families of young children, in small houses, would have been vulnerable once this highly contagious air-borne bacterial virus entered the house. Locals blamed outbreaks on draughty conditions in schools without fireplaces.²⁸

History of Underground Tanks

Underground tanks were a typical component of nineteenth century rural properties in Victoria, and illustrate a form of water collection and infrastructure no longer practised.

Provision of a domestic water supply was critical to the establishment of any rural property that was not beside a permanent supply of water. ‘The first essential was to secure a reliable water supply. Unless the farm bordered a permanent creek ... the selector had to dig a dam for his animals and a well [sic] for the household supply.’²⁹ Especially in low-rainfall Melton, domestic water storage was critical, and relics of these systems is a key part of the heritage of the Shire. Many underground domestic ‘wells’ (as they are usually called) around Melton are in fact ‘tanks’ which, rather than tapping groundwater, were sealed cisterns for the storage of water from the roofs of buildings.

Underground tanks became only generally necessary in Australia from the 1850s, when increased population and Crown land sales ensured that many dwellings were unable to locate beside a stream. At the same time, as a result of the goldrushes, the mass introduction into Australia of the new product ‘corrugated iron’ made it feasible for ordinary people to be able to channel water into the underground tanks from roofs and guttering.³⁰ Underground tanks on small properties generally seem to have been located at the rear of the house; this might have enabled the roof runoff from dairy and other nearby farm outbuildings to also feed the tank.

The construction of wells goes back thousands of years, and designs for underground wells and tanks, such as contained in JC Loudon’s *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, had been available to English farmers since at least the early nineteenth century.³¹ These generally advocated cigar

²⁷ Alex Cameron, ‘Melton Memoirs’ (Melton & District Historical Society, unpublished typescript), p.8

²⁸ Bob Macdonald, ‘History of Melton’, unpublished typescript, MDHS, c.1969, p.6

²⁹ Cannon, Michael, *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2* (Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978), p.149

³⁰ Hughes, Trueman, Ludlow, ‘Wells and Underground Tanks’, prepared for the Heritage Council of NSW (nd), *passim*; Cannon, *op cit*, p.150

³¹ J.C. Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, London, 1826.

shaped cross-sections, with the domed top being mostly underground. This shape was also used in Australia, but on Melton rural properties they do not appear to have been used on early farms. Instead, the early tanks had vertical walls, and no domed covers. Most appear to have been constructed of local stone rather than brick, and without a low wall (as in romantic images of European wells) to ensure safety. Isolation and cost probably meant that they may have been sunk by the property-owners, at least in the case of early small farms. Examples of such tanks on small farms are the former Scarborough and Moloney properties on Mount Cottrell Road (Place Nos.293 and 292) which were constructed of bluestone in the 1850s and 1871, and for which no evidence of a cover remains. In terms of larger early (1850s) properties, *Glen Elgin* (Place No.39) has a low timber-framed gabled roof, clad in corrugated iron; and the tanks of *Tibbermore* (Place No.392), Mount Ida (Place No.002) and the Diggers Rest Hotel (Place No.067) both have flat corrugated iron covers on raised stone sides. (These covers, and sides, might have been added later, as gradual modernisation of the tanks was common.)

While domes were advocated in early British architectural literature, they appear to have only begun to be built in Australia in the 1860s. At that time there was a growing realisation of the dangers of uncovered wells and tanks in terms of sanitation, as well as safety. Unclean water could wash into uncovered tanks from dairies, and sometimes from cesspits, and vermin also obtained easy access:

‘The typical countrywoman of the early days hardly moved a step from her threshold “to cast away indescribable filth”. The contents of chamber pots, vegetable peelings, grease-laden water – all festered around the hut and blended with the nearby latrine to create a “peculiarly offensive” odour which attracted swarms of flies. Sometimes the fluids soaked through the soil into the well [sic], so that the family suffered from an intermittent “low typhoid” fever whose cause they did not suspect.’³²

In 1885 *Martins Home and Farm* described uncovered underground tanks and wells as ‘the family rat-trap’.³³ ‘Common infections of the nineteenth century, such as typhoid, scarlet fever, diphtheria (which was known to have proved tragically fatal in the case of Melton’s Kerr, Moloney and Wood families), tuberculosis and gastro-enteritis, spread rapidly in many country towns Efficient disposal of human excreta was a major problem.’³⁴ The connection between water pollution and public health, in particular diseases like dysentery, typhoid and even cholera were beginning to be appreciated.³⁵

At the same time, technology was contributing to better health. As long as a bucket was necessary to draw water, it was not possible to cover the tops of tanks, or at best only to provide a rudimentary cover. Once a small and reasonably priced pump became available there was no further need for an open tank. The availability of domestic hand-pumps grew in the 1850s, and by 1860 NSW public buildings (schools and railway stations) specified domes as the standard form of construction for tanks.³⁶ It is also highly likely that the increasing access to good quality bricks, professional bricklaying skills, and cement, over the course of the late nineteenth century contributed to the proliferation of covered tanks in places like Melton.

The new tanks were still circular in plan, but constructed of brick, with approximately 9 inches of clay puddle behind the brick wall to keep the tank water-tight. The hemispherical dome, or segment of a dome, was also constructed with bricks. Both the interior of the tank, and the

³² Cannon, *op cit*, p.151

³³ Cited in Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, p.19.

³⁴ Cannon, *op cit*, pp.255-6

³⁵ Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, pp.19-24

³⁶ *ibid*, pp.32-33

exterior of the dome, were cement rendered according to recommended practice.³⁷ Without internal inspection it is not known whether the cross-section of the tanks typically remained vertical, or cigar-shaped, which were both described in textbooks. Numerous domes in Melton appear to be segmental spheres, rather than hemispheres, and may have spread underneath the surface to a wider diameter tank cylinder, as per the textbooks. The domes were provided with a manhole on top (covered with a concrete cover), of minimum width 16 inches, to provide access for cleaning. Mr Jeff Robinson of Melton West recalls entering the tank on the family farm to repair internal render.³⁸ The opening also enabled the cool water to be used for refrigeration: perishables and jellies (for setting) were lowered into the water in a bucket.³⁹

The only known Australian heritage study of underground tanks (conducted in NSW), claims that they were only superseded by the familiar corrugated iron tanks (on tankstands to provide water pressure) in the 1890s, when ‘the galvanised above-ground tank was in widespread use.’⁴⁰ In Victoria however Miles Lewis claims that ‘*the corrugated iron rainwater tank was manufactured in Melbourne by the later 1850s, and spread very rapidly despite claims that the zinc coating would poison the water.*’⁴¹ Anders Hjorth’s recollections of Melton in the 1860s state that: ‘*The water supply was very deficient; a few had iron tanks, and some under-ground ones.*’⁴² He may however have been referring to the square plate-metal ‘ships tanks’ (shipping containers, usually for foodstuffs, that were designed in Britain for recycling in this manner) that are most usually found these days on larger properties, rather than the larger corrugated steel version that became more common. A survey of remaining underground tanks on nineteenth century Melton properties might reveal the extent to which galvanised iron (or steel) header tanks were used as an alternative. We know that underground tanks continued to be built in the early twentieth century, and that today there are many properties that have both underground tanks (most not in use) and corrugated steel header tanks. As access to hand, petroleum or electric pumps permitted, they may have been used in conjunction.

While domes probably became widespread from the 1860s for domestic use, it cannot be categorically inferred that the absence of a dome means that the tank was built before that time. On the other hand, the presence of a dome does not necessarily mean that the tank was built after this time, as apparently the building of a dome over a tank often took place many years after the original construction.⁴³ The best assumption that can be made in terms of dating tanks is that, water being essential to habitation, they were built at or very soon after the construction of the original dwelling on a site.

Although the Moloney tank is not identified in the documentation associated with the selection, it is almost certain to have been built c.1871. Its primitive construction, of roughly shaped bluestone, without a dome, also suggests an early date such as this.

³⁷ Eg, Albrecht, CE, *Measurements and Dimensions of Tanks and Dams* (Melbourne, Arnell and Jackson [1885?]), pp.30-33

³⁸ Mr Jeff Robinson, personal conversation, 14/2/2006. This contradicts the Hughes *et al* survey of tanks in NSW, which found that internal render was rare in domestic tanks (pp.55-56).

³⁹ Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, pp.32-80.

⁴⁰ Hughes *et al*, *op cit*. (Austral Archaeology also conducted a study of early Chinese wells on the Koorong, South Australia.)

⁴¹ Lewis, Miles, *Physical Investigation of a Building: National Trust Technical Bulletin 9.1* (National Trust of Australia, Victoria, 1989).

⁴² Hjorth, Anders, ‘Recollections of Melton 1861-67’, in M&DHS Newsletter, February 2001.

⁴³ Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, p.3

Tankbuilders known to have operated in Melton in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include WA Cecil, Tom Collins (c.1890-1913), and Augustus Schebler ('known for his workmanship' according to Collins).⁴⁴

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Melton Historical Themes: 'Water', 'Farming'

Known comparable examples:

There are relatively few stone lined underground tanks. They usually have removable lids, of timber or corrugated iron. Larger ones often have separate timber-framed gable roof structures, with corrugated iron and weatherboard cladding:-

- *Tibbermore* (Place 392). Has an apparently intact underground tank (covered with modern steel) of similar dimensions to the Moloney tank, but apparently of fieldstone rather than the coarsely squared bluestone of Moloneys. This may reflect its earlier (1850s) rather than Selection era date (c.1871) of Moloneys.
- *Glen Elgin* (Place 39). A huge stone-lined underground tank, with a separate timber and corrugated iron cover. Its stones are much flatter than the square shaped ones at Moloneys', and are probably sedimentary rather than bluestone.
- *Mt Cottrell Farm* (Place No.293). With Tibbermore, this is probably the most comparable to the nearby Moloney tank. Like *Tibbermore*, it is likely to from a different time period (early farming) than the Moloney (Selection era) tank. It has been built with flatter stones than the Moloney tank. It is in a richer complex, which includes pepper trees, the remains of a bluestone dwelling, a complex of different types of dry stone walls (boundary, and yard walls) in interesting configuration, and a dam (claimed by some to have been a sheep wash), and shelter eucalyptus boundary planting. The tank however is much larger, with no evidence of render remaining, and is more disturbed.
- *Mount Ida* (Place No.002). Tank covered with a timber-framed and galvanised corrugated iron gable; presumably an open stone tank. Beside it on a high timber stand is a galvanised corrugated iron header tank.
- *Diggers Rest Hotel* (Place No.67). A now covered stone underground tank, (unusually) built up at the sides.
- *Exford* (Place 269): Has several large tanks with corrugated and weatherboard housings, similar to Glen Elgin. The insides of the tanks were not able to be viewed.
- *Eynesbury* (Place 281). By contrast, Eynesbury does not have an underground tank, but a rare and very large timber water header tank. It is built of large section local grey box, supported on 35 timber posts, and retains almost perfectly intact fixtures including float measure.

⁴⁴ Robinson, *op cit*; also Tom Collins memoirs, part of which were reproduced in the M&DSH Newsletter of December 2000.

- Kerr property (Place No.359). A comparable farm, nearby, and of a comparable era, but whose underground tank was not sighted (it may be buried). It has relics that may be of interest to the question of water storage in the dry plains area. The property retains part of what is thought by some to have been a shallow underground cistern or dam (but which may have been a partially underground dairy or cellar), with a few bluestone steps leading down into it.

There are in addition many rendered brick (hand or machine made) underground tanks in the Shire. These usually have built brick and concrete rendered domed covers. These are more substantial and professionally constructed tanks and are presumed to date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Of the more primitive bluestone lined underground tanks remaining, the Moloney one is the smallest and neatest. Situated between two pepper trees that mark the site in a setting of bare plains, now dramatically devoid of other evidence of human occupation, it bears testimony to the centrality of water for the survival of small farmers on the dry Werribee and Keilor plains.

Condition:

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.

Integrity:

Damaged/Disturbed

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the:-

- Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay
- Victorian Heritage Inventory

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>Yes (two pepper trees)</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Yes (all drystone boundary walls)</i>

Other Recommendations

- An archaeological survey of the tank, has the potential to provide further information regarding the evolution of tank construction, water management, and domestic lifestyles in the dry Melton Plains area, and is desirable.



‘Maloney’s [sic] Water Reserve’, showing the track leading down the escarpment to the Werribee River.



Drystone wall in good condition on the north boundary of the Moloney property.