

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: ROCKLANDS RESERVOIR

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Rocklands Road BALMORAL

STUDY NUMBER: 173

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

PARISH: PARISH OF PENDYK PENDYK

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 388 B3; VicRoads 54 H5; the dam wall is located at the end of the Rocklands Road about 10.5 kms west of the township of Balmoral

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: State



Rocklands Reservoir, Balmoral, dam wall

Image Date: 30/11/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the dam wall and associated works, including the spillway, the overflow section, concrete abutments, rock fill embankments and an area around these including the river valley downstream from dam to the boundary of the Shire of Southern Grampians and to the height of the ridge lines.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The main embankment is 320 metres in length, of which 20 metres is the spillway and overflow section. The maximum height of the spillway is 28 metres above bedrock. The water level of the reservoir is 216 metres above sea level and the river is banked up for almost 100 kilometers. About 10% of the resources of the Glenelg River are supplied yearly to the Wimmera and Mallee water systems and this is usually drawn off in the winter and spring when regional streams usually carry surplus water. During summer flushes are released from the reservoir to replenish pools in the Glenelg river which are affected by the loss of natural river run. The catchment of the reservoir is from 1 458 square kilometers of Crown Lands and the capacity is 348,000 megalitres. The storage was completed in 1953 Rocklands Reservoir is the fifth largest in the state.

HISTORY:

Major Mitchell discovered the Glenelg River on the morning of 31st July 1836 at a point two miles east of Harrow. He described it as a fine stream 120 feet wide with an average depth of 12 feet. He and his party followed it downstream, having many adventures, until they reached the river's mouth at the modern town of Nelson. The river was important for the settlement of the Western District and Wimmera by squatters from the late 1830s, township from the 1850s and settlers under the various Land Selection Acts from 1860 onwards. The four key squatting runs in the area were Glenisla in the east, Glendinning in the south, Fulham in the north, and, to the west, Yat Nat, subsequently subdivided into Rocklands around the original site and the present Yat Nat, closer to Balmoral.

The Wannon Shire attempted to divert the natural flow of the Glenelg River in the Balmoral area in the 1880s. McGaffin states that 'early settlers had reasoned that if a dam could be built on the Rifle Butts site one mile from Balmoral, or across the Pine Huts waterhole on the Fulham run, vast areas could be planted for vines and fruit trees. The early dreams never eventuated and in 1882 the works of 1880 were taken over by the Wimmera United Waterworks Trust which greatly extended the works near Rocklands run.'

Another suggestion of damming the Glenelg was made in 1887 by Samuel Carter of Glenisla and Alexander Turnbull of Rocklands in a discussion with Charles Officer at Mount Talbot homestead (Rogers, 4). From 1880 to 1892 Charles Officer was MLA for Dundas. The proposed water supply was to be created by damming the river at the Balmoral Rifle Butts. Adam Turnbull in Rogers (ibid. 4), writing in 1941 states that the proposed dam was to provide water to settlers in the Wimmera area. "After a considerable time word came back from Mr. Officer that the idea was unworkable, that the Wimmera was not worth saving and to quote his own words 'he was using his best endeavour to induce the government to subsidise the farmers so as to help them to remove to some more congenial settlement from the arid Wimmera plains' " Turnbull continues "the original survey of the Rifle Butts scheme by 'Turner' was carried out by Crowther and Mosman. They camped on a small hill by the creek, crossing north-east of Rocklands homestead. Trees were marked every mile or less with the letter T, and one of these trees near the homestead, I think, marked T/144, the markings after the bark had been cut off were painted over. A Mr. Ferguson, Government Geologist, spent a long time making a geological survey of all the country along the Glenelg about 1892-3. Mr. Stirling, another Government Geologist (brother of the well-known singer Maggie Stirling) also spent some time there. Mr. Ferguson said he could trace the auriferous rock at Rocklands back past the south end of the Black Range across the Glenelg to Mount Bepcha. This mount, as far as I know, is sandstone and from its base was quarried the stone for the house at Glenisla" (ibid., 4-5).

There was no movement on the construction of a dam until the late 1930s, until after some lobbying resulted in the Minister for Water Supply visiting the proposed Rocklands Dam site in November 1940. He spoke of the transformation of the Wimmera-Mallee which would result from the completion of a scheme diverting the Glenelg River to the northern regions. He forecast that the concrete dam would begin harvesting the

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water in 1945 at an estimated cost of 874,000 pounds.

The reservoir was constructed in two stages, the first being the construction of a diversion weir incorporated in the main weir. The second stage involved the construction of 'the main weir of 16,371 feet of which 600 feet formed the spillway and overflow section'.

World War Two interrupted construction of the reservoir soon after it began. During the five years up to 1945, the construction camp site became an Air Force recruit training depot. Balmoral received a tremendous boost from the influx of hundreds of workers who occupied the temporary township of Rocklands during the construction of the reservoir and from the No. 5 Air Force Recruiting Depot.

Construction recommenced in 1945. There were 450 men engaged on the scheme and living in the temporary township. In 1953 Rocklands Dam was officially opened by the Hon. C P Stoneham, MLC, Minister of Water Supply. Balmoral now enjoys a reticulated domestic water supply which superceded an unreliable and unhealthy supply drawn directly from the Glenelg River. As well as its importance for water supply, the Rocklands Reservoir and surrounding state forest has assumed an important active and passive recreational role.

The water level of the dam has reached an all time low after several seasons of dry weather, and although its potential to hold water is undiminished, for many years it has failed to provide adequate water for the purposes for which it was built.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

3. Developing local, regional and national economics

3.11 Altering the Environment

3.1.11 Regulating waterways

3.11.5 Establishing water supplies

Theme 4: Building settlements, towns and cities

4.2 Supplying urban services (power, transport, fire prevention, roads, water, light and sewerage)

Theme 7 Governing

7.7 Defending Australia

7.7.3 Going to war

Theme 8 Developing Australia's Cultural Life

8.1 Organising recreation

8.1.4 Enjoying the natural environment

8.3 Going on holiday

CONDITION:

The reservoir is severely under capacity, although the weir, embankment, spillway and other constructions survive in excellent condition

INTEGRITY:

Excellent degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Rocklands Reservoir and associated channels were constructed by the State Rivers and Water Supply

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Commission between 1941 and 1953. Proposals and attempts had been made to dam the Glenelg River from the earliest times. The Reservoir represents the culmination of lobbying from locals in the late nineteenth century, including the influential squatters: Samuel Carter of Glenisla who built a large irrigation scheme on his own run; Alexander Turnbull of Rocklands; and Charles Officer at Mount Talbot who was MLA for Dundas. The lobbying resumed after the First World War and the opening up of country to Soldier Settlement when finally the Minister for Water Supply visited the proposed site in November 1940. World War Two interrupted construction and the construction camp site became an Air Force recruit training depot. The Reservoir was constructed in two stages, the first being the construction of a diversion weir incorporated in the main weir. The second stage involved the construction of the main weir of 16 371 feet (5 037m) of which 600 feet (185m) formed the spillway and overflow section. The Reservoir opened in 1953 and is the largest water supply in the Wimmera-Mallee water supply system, having a capacity of 348,000 megalitres and is potentially one of the largest in the state. The dam has a large, centrally located concrete spillway, with concrete abutments and rock fill embankments at each end. The outlet is from a tunnel at the north abutment leading to a concrete lined channel. The Reservoir soon assumed its ancillary but important recreational functions: water-skiing, fishing, boating and swimming as well as passive recreation. These are reflected in the landscaping around the dam wall. The water level reached an all-time low because of successive droughts from the late 1990s and for many years has failed to provide the water it once promised.

How is it significant?

The Rocklands Reservoir is of significance to the State of Victoria and the Shire of Southern Grampians for scientific, social and historical.

Why is it significant?

Rocklands Reservoir is of scientific significance for its method of construction and for its control of the natural water supply, being the fifth largest dam in Victoria and the largest in the Wimmera-Mallee. It is of social significance for facilitating community development and its recreational value. It is of historical significance for its association with key figures in irrigation and water supply and for its possibly unsuccessful conclusion to the long term problem of stock and domestic water supply in the Wimmera-Mallee.

COMPARISON:

There are no comparative examples within the study area.

ASSESSED BY: tfh & aen

ASSESSMENT DATE: 27/01/2002

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
G McGaffin	The Wannon Shire Centenary 1872-1972 : A Brief History of the Shire of Wannon	1972	58
J Ann Hone, in Douglas Pike ed.,	'Officer, Charles Myles (1827-1904) and Suetonius Henry (1830-1883)' Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol 5	1974	357-8
Lyell Harris with the Balmoral Historical Society	Welcome Back to Balmoral	1975	15
W. J. (Jack) Rogers	Balmoral	1967	4-5