



The Faraday Farrago

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EXHIBITION PASS RESERVOIR

Alan J. Elliot

Exhibition Pass Reservoir was originally proposed to supply Castlemaine with water for domestic purposes only, with that for mining activities to come from the North Harcourt (Barkers Creek) reservoir some ten kilometres north. However, sluicing and dredging activities for the gold mines along Forest Creek and Golden Point also benefited greatly!

It was designed to discharge water at the rate of 5.5 megalitres per day, to be supplemented by; and initially partially filled from Malmsbury, via the concrete race and open earthen tributary of Forest creek, passing over the granite 'drops' at Dunstans Flat.

The contract for a bank to be built across Forest Creek was let to Messrs Robb & Overend. Work

commenced in February, 1867, and was completed in 1869.

The outlet tunnel is driven through solid rock, 60 metres in length, having a diameter of 2 metres. It is fronted by solid ashlar, (prepared,



The Res - early photo from State Library of Victoria

dressed stonework) of one metre in thickness. The construction engineer was Mr G. Gorden, and by 1874 the pipeline to Castlemaine, and the reticulation channels throughout the district were completed.

The Argus newspaper published a report from their 'Special Reporter' on 14th March 1867, and some extracts follow:

"I proceeded this morning to the scene of the works, the journey (from Castlemaine) constituting an hour's unmitigated jolt and jingle

through a hilly, uncultivated, and seemingly unproductive district. The site of the reservoir is situated at Expedition Pass, which is at the head of Golden Point Gully, and distant about seven miles from Castlemaine. It is one of the best sites that could have been selected.... A portion of the bed of the once famous Forest Creek is the spot chosen to form the floor of the great dam; and this portion of the creek will be cut off from its natural course by the principal embankment. A magnificent watershed, of 3,000 acres in extent, and entirely composed of steep hilly country, has been secured; so that if a heavy down-pour of rain should occur the accumulation of water in this artificial basin will be truly prodigious. The foundations of the dam are constructed with a view of securing a solid and even foundation for the puddle-wall and earthworks. The depth of water will be fifty-six feet, leaving about four feet clear from the bank surface. It is estimated that the reservoir will be adequate to contain 120,000,000 gallons of water. With regard to the construction of the puddle-wall, it has been deemed imperative to thoroughly excavate all the cracks, fissures, and veiny and unsound portions of the work, in order to insure a perfect contact between the clay puddle and the clean solid surface of the bed rock. The wall will be carried up

from its foundation to the natural earth surface, having its sides as nearly vertical as possible, so that every portion may fit compactly into the trench. From the surface to the top of the embankment, the wall will be gradually reduced in width on each side, on a scale of one foot in five. The material to be used will consist of the best selected clay, which will be passed through a steam puddling-machine. The chief embankment, which will form a superstructure of the puddle wall, is to be 792 feet long, sixty feet high, and ten feet wide. It is proposed that this mass of earth be level for its entire length on top ; but at the cross-sections that it shall slightly incline towards the centre. That side of the embankment next the water will have an incline of three feet to one ; and that of the opposite side will be two feet to one. An experiment is to be attempted on the face of the embankment next the water. Instead of adopting the prevailing custom of "pitching" the face, it is proposed to cover it with a coat of broken metal (sandstone), one foot in thickness. Lastly, at one end of the great embankment a large bywash is to be constructed in the solid hill, which will serve as an outlet for all surplus water.

The number of men employed is not large—in all, about seventy—with twelve drays. The term of contract is limited to nine months, and the amount is £13,758 9s. 11d.

The Hon. J. F. Sullivan, accompanied by the various colonial delegates, will make an official inspection of the Expedition Pass Works tomorrow (Thursday). There will be no demonstration of any kind, although the municipal authorities have made some feeble efforts to

create a Castlemaine sensation, and there are whispers abroad of an address being presented".

Twenty years after its completion, a drowning was reported in the Argus, 8th July 1889:

"Last evening Senior-Constable Armstrong, of Chewton, received information that a contractor



The Res - State Library of Victoria

named John Mooney, residing at Elphinstone, had been missing since Friday night. Yesterday morning, a lad named Charles Thomas found a hat floating in the Expedition Pass reservoir, Golden Point, and surmising that it belonged to Mooney, a search was made in the reservoir this morning by Senior-Constable Armstrong and Constable Foers, assisted by several residents in the neighbourhood. They used grappling irons for some time unsuccessfully, but on making an examination of the bank of the reservoir at another point, marks were discovered indicating that somebody had slipped and fallen into the water. A boat was procured, and with the aid of a drag the body was found in 9ft. of water close to the bank. Having been identified as John Mooney, the remains were conveyed to the Northumberland Arms Hotel, where a magisterial inquiry will be held tomorrow. The deceased was last seen late on Friday night at the Dundas Hotel, Golden

Point, a short distance from the Expedition Pass reservoir".

In 1914, the smaller Golden Point reservoir was built. It is a kilometre south of Expedition Pass Reservoir, and was designed to boost pressure and supply much cleaner water to Castlemaine. Both reservoirs have now been decommissioned, and Castlemaine has a much improved domestic water supply from McKay Reservoir.

Today, our local 'Faraday pool' is very popular during the summer months for swimming, canoeing and fishing, and parking spots are at a premium. The 'res' is well stocked with redfin, and in addition, 3000 Macquarie perch fingerlings were released in 2010.

The metal 'tower' which used to include the outlet control gate, was a popular diving platform, and was removed when the reservoir was drained in the 1990's for maintenance works on the outlet valve.

Interestingly, permission to remove thousands of tons of silted sand build-up between the bridge at Dunstons flat and the open body of the dam was refused at that time, and the inlet remains heavily silted and overgrown by the over-zealous planting of wattles by 'Exhibition Pass Reservoir Management Committee' under the auspice of the North Central Catchment Management Authority. In addition, many mature eucalypts were felled and left in situ as part of this 'program'—a sad example of ill-conceived land management.

BONES

Ian Johnson

Bones allegedly last for millions of years and scientists are finding DNA in them. One might expect the world to be covered in bones. Bones can be reduced by fire as we all should know, and in the olden days at Maiden Gully, bones were ground up and burnt for agricultural calcium. But even so, in the Great Droughts Australia had, all less severe than the one we have just had, half the sheep in Australia perished from severe overstocking which left the country itself bare to the bones with all the soil blown away or washed away as all the vegetation had been eaten off. Naturally our forefathers went out to shoot anything that they could, allegedly for eating the vegetation that their stock was in need of. This included hares and kangaroos and in many places wild horses, but goats seemed more wary of hunters and the kangaroos fled to distant hill forests. The possums, and small natives were killed as they could eat fruit, chickens and lambs, as were eagles alleged to do.

The place should look very bony indeed, and the land still does in most places, but there are only a few animal bones about. Shooting anything that moved was still frequent when I arrived in this place with rabbits allegedly shot at, but there were still pigs from NSW brought in for hunting as everything that moved and could be shot, had.

After annoying many shooters by threatening them and making ditches across where they were wont to drive and thus annoying them even more, they eventually did not return.

The kangaroos and wallabies returned and on the now sheepless hills and on my block, there is an abundance just keeping the grassland neat and tidy, but not leaving any bones when they are run over or shot. They stay around dead until the ants remove their flesh and soft parts, then the bones go somewhere.

Only horse and cattle bones are found as I carefully go through the bush and they are from long past. Kangaroo bones are found at times scattered afar with some bones broken and the marrow sucked out. Few birds are seen in the bony parts of the bush, that is bare of soil, not of bones. Plenty of birds are on my place which was once like that.

Something takes these bones and for that matter eats spiny ant eaters and leaves the outside skins and prickly parts scattered about.

I suspect Quolls. Some people allegedly have seen run over Tasmanian Devils and even wombats in these parts as well as Screeching Owls, and we have all seen wedge tail eagles and foxes. But some have said there are cougars about left by the Americans and others have said they have seen an animal that follows the description of the Tasmanian Tiger, but no footprints that I have seen were much like those, although some big ones were bigger than the usual dog's footprints.

I believe that allegedly extinct animals are still in these parts, not on the Mount, but in those areas close to the pines behind Mount Faraday Ridge and along the bush strips to Barkers Creek.

Bones of old vehicles are in the bush as well as skeletons of old pubs and their crockery and bottle shops. The goats are still running wild near Glenluce, but no bones of those have been seen either.

Our land is much more bony than it was before we and our forefathers arrived. Some of us are trying to bring real life back again. Others are aiming to do so with varying results but the majority could not care less until afflicted by the results of El Ninos and Ninas on our bony land. For those who want to notice, this the way it goes. First dead leaves, twigs, some manure and light diggings are overlain with some light erosion from wind and rain. Lichens and mosses start to spread slowly Ferns grow in odd corners and on the bare slopes, Cassinia, if in the vicinity, will spread from seed, and that in dying will spread light vegetation

on the thin soil now forming. Wildfires and burn-offs will send that back to bones again, but dead leaves will tend to fall from damaged trees and it may start again if no great downpours happen, which will bare to bones again. It takes about forty years of apparent neglect of clearing and cleaning up

etc. To make a significant difference so that the land can keep in survival mode in Great Droughts and rains and cope better with wildfire.



Quoll

