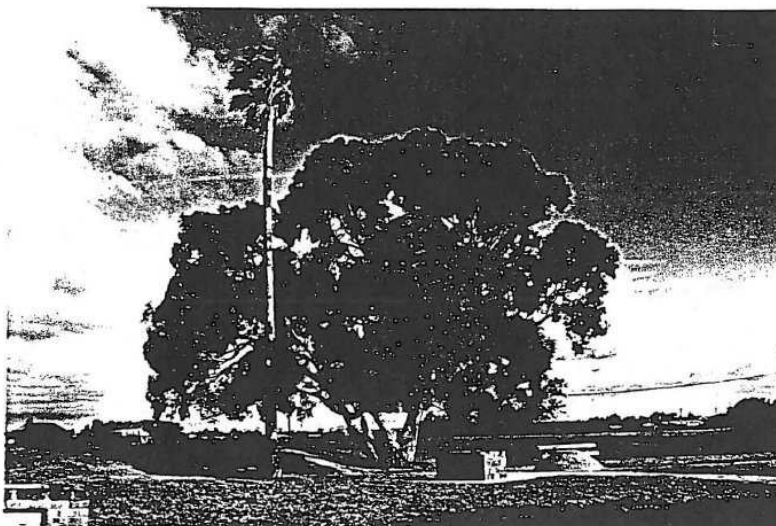


# HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

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**Name** Chaffey Irrigation Scheme  
**Address** Heaths Road WERRIBEE **Significance Level** Local  
**Place Type** Irrigation Channel/Canal  
**Citation Date** 1997



Chaffey Irrigation Scheme

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**Recommended** VHR - HI - PS Yes  
**Heritage Protection**

## History and Historical Context

The Werribee Irrigation Trust and Investment Company was constituted as a private company in 1888, with the aim of establishing an irrigation colony. Primary movers were George Chaffey and the former Rev. E. C. De Garis. Water from the Werribee River was used to irrigate a declining acreage of 160 down to 64.5 acres of grain and fodder crops, vines and fruits, and pasture between 1891-95. The collapse of the land boom in 1890-91 led to the demise of this farsighted venture. It was one of a number of irrigation trusts that collapsed during the 1890s depression.[3]

The next major stage in the development of irrigation schemes waited until 1905 with the creation of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.[3]

George Chaffey was a Canadian by birth. Visiting California on holidays about 1880, he was inspired by the irrigation engineering being applied there. With his brother William Benjamin (W. B.), they worked out a scheme of buying land, irrigating it and selling off the blocks on time payment. Their first venture, Etiwanda (California), was a success.[2]

In 1886, towards the height of the land boom, George Chaffey came to Australia. His preferred land at Mildura required a land grant, promised by Alfred Deakin, but after heated Parliamentary and community debate, failed to eventuate. Soon after the Chaffey brothers obtained two areas of land on the Murray River, the first in South Australia.[2]

# HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

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De Garis, a former Wesleyan Minister, met Chaffey on the Murray in 1887, soon after abandoning religious life and becoming a businessman. He lived in Tarneit for a time, his son Jack going to school there.[1] He helped found the Australian Dried Fruits Association, and his son Clement John (Jack) De Garis followed in the footsteps of Chaffey and his father in his role in the irrigation and dried fruits industries.[2]

On the Werribee site a small settlement was created. George Chaffey built a house (since demolished), water channels were dug and crops planted. The evidence that remains is minimal but evocative: disused water channels, garden and well of the Chaffey house; a weir possibly associated with the scheme. The area has since been subdivided, with part remaining as public open space known as (Riverbend Park).[4]

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## REFERENCES

[1] K. N. James, Werribee: the first one hundred years, p.70, 108.

[2] Ernestine Hill, Water into gold, 1937, pp.63-72, 80, 206.

[3] Rural Water Commission, Werribee Irrigation District - A history, n.d.

[4] Living Museum of the West, Western Region Industrial Heritage Study, Melbourne Living Museum of the West, 1989, unpaginated, Site no. 0293.

## Previous Studies/ Reference Nos.

Melbourne Western Region Heritage Study (1986)

Rural Heritage Study: Western Region of Melbourne (1994) - W 9

Werribee Heritage Kit

Western Regional Industrial Heritage Study (1989) - 0293

## Relevant Historical Australian Themes

4.2 Boosting production

## Description

### Physical Description

The site retains some elements dating from the Chaffey period: a well, palm and other trees. There is a slatted barn with concrete floor, and several pieces of farm equipment (plough and dray - brought to the site by the historical society). The house has been demolished.

The site is now part of a public park, resulting from the subdivision of the area in recent years. Peppercorn trees in Purchase Street are said to have once been on the Chaffey property. There is also said to be a section of irrigation channel dug by the Chaffey's prior to coming to the Quantin Binnah site: it is located on the east side of Sewells Road, south of Sayers Road and has been separately investigated as part of the present study (Sec VIII, CA A).

## Recommended Management

# HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

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Conserve and interpret the remaining evidence of this important site.

## Occupancy

Ownership

Wyndham City Council

## Site Context

Area of Significance

Site including house site (archaeological potential), trees, well, building, and the two movable items (plough and dray).

## Statement of Significance

The evidence that remains from the short-lived Werribee Irrigation Trust and Investment Company scheme is of local significance as the first attempt to establish irrigation in Werribee. Evidence of these early private irrigation schemes is probably rare.

## Recommendations 1997

External Paint Controls

-

Internal Alteration Controls

-

Tree Controls

-

Fences & Outbuildings

-

Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted

-

Incorporated Plan

-

Aboriginal Heritage Place

-

## Other Recommendations

Wyndham Heritage List Planning Scheme Conserve and interpret the remaining evidence of this important site.

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.