

LAUGHING JACK DAM

Location: On Powers Rivulet, 15 km west of Bronte Park in central Tasmania.

Owner: Hydro Tasmania.

Plaque yet to be installed.

The spillway

This unusual spillway saved the cost of building a separate one on of the dam abutments.

Adequate capacity was essential as otherwise large floods could overtop and destroy the dam. This required research into the "flow through" capacity of rockfill.

In addition the water flowing out of the embankment could not be allowed to carry stones away with it. To this end large rocks were placed at the toe.

John Wilkins BSc (Hons) FIEAust (1912-1996)

After war experience including airfield construction in Malta, John Wilkins joined the Hydro-Electric Commission in 1950. As the long term head of the Civil Design Division, he was noted for his willingness to embrace innovations which would reduce the cost of civil engineering works. He had a particular interest in soil and rock mechanics and led research into the properties of rockfill.

The principal designer was Geoff Lister supervised by Jack Fidler. The spillway design was verified by hydraulic model tests in a laboratory.

Heritage Dams Project

Laughing Jack Dam was one of the 25 dams selected in a national survey to find those dams with the highest heritage values.

