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# BUNBURY'S BATHS BOAT HARBOUR



Bunburys Baths Williamstown  
March 2003 001



Bunburys Baths Williamstown  
March 2003 002



Bunburys Baths Williamstown  
March 2003 003

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## Location

COLE ST AND THE ESPLANADE WILLIAMSTOWN, HOBSONS BAY CITY

## Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0404

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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Interpretation of Site

The site still displays substantial evidence of its former use. Two stone groynes extend from the west and east sides to encapsulate the site, and it is uncertain if these are natural features or were constructed (or a combination of both). The foreshore area is strewn with loose bluestone rocks, bricks, glass and ceramics dating back perhaps as early as the 1870s. A pronounced area clear of any bluestone approximately 2m wide extends from the shore out about 10m and ends in another cleared area to form a T-shaped region, which corresponds to early plans of the jetty on-site. No signs of former jetty piles were evident, although there is approximately 0.5m of sand accretion on the site. To the west of this feature, a number of ringbolts were located embedded into the natural bedrock, indicating that vessels may have moored here. This was confirmed by Leek, who stated that boats would tie a stern-line to the bolts, and throw an anchor out to keep the bow into the sea when mooring. More of these moorings were found in the centre of the site, as was a loose pile of dressed bluestone blocks. The site is almost certainly the former Bunbury's baths structure, and as such has demonstrates both one of the earliest bathing structures in Williamstown, and early vernacular boat harbours.

Other Names BUNBURYS BOAT HARBOUR,

Hermes Number 13677

Property Number

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## History

Bunbury's Baths (for men) was first established at the corner of the Esplanade near Cole St in the 1840's. A tender was called to erect a fence around the baths in 1859, probably after a man was taken by a shark inside the baths, and the area is shown as Bunbury's Bathing Place in an 1864 plan. By 1870, a platform (a T junctioned jetty) had been erected, but locally newspapers reported that it was totally inadequate, and further accounts revealed that no further work had been undertaken to the Gents bathing place. Tenders to quarry stone from the area were advertised later that year. In response to a letter regarding the size of the baths, the Williamstown Borough Council Chambers noted that the baths occupied 300 ft of beach front. The baths were reduced to such a state of disrepair that it was proposed to turn them into a boat harbour, and the Hobsons Bay Yacht Club sought to lease the site for their club. By 1888, the baths were closed, and they were reported as being in a dilapidated state the year after. Massey put forward a proposal to build a boatshed there in 1904, but it was opposed by local residents, and later that year J.F. Mitchell also asked for permission to build a boat shed at the bathing place. The site was again identified as a good site for a boat harbour in 1908. The site is mentioned sporadically in the subsequent years, once in regards to a shark being caught near the baths, and again in 1934 when suggestions to resurrect it as a pool were proposed. The last mention of the area was in 1934 when the council cleaned up the grass at the old site.

Leak (pers comms) recalls that the area was actually used to moor small boats, and he remembers seeing mooring sticks and piles, as well as a "rickety timber jetty" within the bathing enclosure when he was a child (ca. 1940's).

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*