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# MERRI RIVER MORTAR SHED SITE

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## Location

STANLEY STREET WARRNAMBOOL, WARRNAMBOOL CITY

## Municipality

WARRNAMBOOL CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0085

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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Interpretation of Site	The location of the Mortar Shed has been recently raised up from a Landcare Project with plantings and mulch. A path passes over the top of where the she would have been. The river bank here is steep. No cultural remains were observed.
Archaeological Significance	The archaeological significance of the remains of the Mortar shed lie in its ability to provide information on the dimensions and the manner of its construction as well as the materials used. Such structures should have been well built firstly so as to keep the contents dry and secondly to muffle any accidental blast. It is possible that foundation - whether strip footings or post holes - of the building are present and buried under the recent landscaping
Historical Significance	The Mortar/Rocket shed was a standard feature in any port in the 19th century. Mortars and rockets were used to illuminate when vessels were in distress at night and to fire lines onto vessels from shore so as to secure them or take off passengers and crew.
Other Names	ROCKET SHED,
Hermes Number	149550

Property  
Number

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## History

In ca. 1858 a government designed and funded "rocket shed" or "mortar shed" was constructed at Warrnambool on the hills northwest of the jetty, on the north shore of the Merri River. "Rockets" or "mortars" were used throughout the 19th century along the SW coast of Victoria as an alternative to lifeboats for the rescue of crew and passengers on board vessels in distress. They were small devices which fired rockets attached to lines of rope from shore to a stricken vessel. Survivors on the ship were instructed to fix one line to the ship's mast and a second line was then run out. A "breeches buoy" was attached to this line and survivors would place themselves on the buoy and be hauled to safety. Sheds were specifically built to store the rockets or mortar in dry and secure conditions.

By the 1870s, following various infrastructure and harbour works at Warrnambool, including the construction of a tramway jetty, tramway and a re-alignment of the Merri River, the mortar shed was either moved to a new location or decommissioned.

*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/>*