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# Footscray Wharves



HO50 - Saltwater River Crossing Site & Footscray Wharves Precinct, Maribyrnong Street, Footscray.JPG



SITE 21 - Archaeological Management Plan for early post-contact archaeological sites in the City of Maribyrnong, 2001

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## Location

Maribyrnong Street FOOTSCRAY, Maribyrnong City

## Municipality

MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO50

## Heritage Listing

Maribyrnong City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Footscray wharves area is of historical and social significance to the City of Maribyrnong as it was one of the earliest port developments in Melbourne having been used as a primitive wharf for unloading stock directly on to the banks.

Although it is unclear when the first timber wharf was constructed, by the 1870s the area had become a significant shipping area thanks to the dredging of the river by the then recently formed Melbourne Harbour Trust. Shipping continued to be a significant activity well into the 20th century and required the construction of a swing bridge when the New Footscray Road was linked to Napier Street with a new bridge in the early 1900s. (Criterion B2) The mixed industrial and residential development in the area with its three hotels was created in part by the maritime character of the riverfront. (Criterion A3) The Footscray Wharves played a key role in the development of the colony of Port Phillip, Melbourne and the City of Maribyrnong district, as well as being a significant factor in the industrial development of the west. The former boat building shed (now Maribyrnong River Cruises) incorporates part of the Harbour Trust bond store, while other evidence of the former wharf structures include potential for archaeological study following the success of the City Link excavation in 1989. (Criterion A4) As a demonstration of a particular land use and activity in the form of small scale commercial shipping, the Footscray wharves are a distinctive element in the character of the district. (Criterion D2)

One of the few surviving remnants of late nineteenth century wharfage in Melbourne and of an unusual type of construction using cross braced bearers anchored into the riverbank as opposed being built above it. (Criterion F1)

Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) criteria

The Australian Heritage Commission criteria consist of a set of eight criteria which cover social, aesthetic, scientific, and historic values. Each criterion has sub-criteria written specifically for cultural or natural values. The relevant criteria are:

B.2 rarity

A.3 richness and diversity of cultural features

A.4 demonstrates well the course and pattern of history, important historic events

D.2 good example of type

F.1 design or technological achievement .

Heritage Study/Consultant	Maribyrnong - Maribyrnong Heritage Review, Jill Barnard, Graeme Butler, Francine Gilfedder & Gary Vines, 2000;
Construction dates	1840,
Hermes Number	28395
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

Remnants of the 1880s wharf can be seen at the former Smith's boatyard either side of the railway bridge, at the "Blackbird" wharf near Hopkins Street, and south of Napier Street at the present wharf. Elsewhere, timbers of the wharf lie buried beneath about one to two metres of modern fill and have been exposed during various excavations. The existing 'Blackbird' Boat shed of Maribyrnong River Cruises dates in part from pre 1920s having been used by several boat building firms. This is a simple gable ended; corrugated iron and weatherboard clad timber-framed building. One wall of the pre 1920 boat shed survives on north end of the building. It is understood that this may have been a bond store of the Harbour Trust at one time. An acutely angled slipway once ran from the north of the shed into the river.

The wharf is constructed using driven piles in pairs under the apron with a lattice of cross logs (left for the most

part in the round) bracing the structure back into hard ground on the land-ward side. Iron spikes and later bolts are used for connections. Squared timbers are used for deck bearers, decking and fenders. Comparisons with other early wharves suggest timbers may include red gum or turpentine piles, brush box cross members and stringy-bark decking.

## Physical Conditions

Surviving sections of the wharf are in poor condition.

## Integrity

Only fragments of the original wharf survive. Maribyrnong River Cruises retains a small section of the private wharf of Raisbeck & Campbell. Another section near the Footscray Arts Centre has been reconstructed, and the remaining section on the south end had been extensively modified.

## Physical Description 2

Originally in a mixed industrial/commercial residential precinct which is currently undergoing redevelopment, primarily for apartments. The southern end still presents a commercial face.

## Historical Australian Themes

### Thematic context

**Australian Principal Theme** Moving goods and people

**PAHT Subtheme:** Moving goods and people to and from

**Local Theme** Industry by the River: Early

## Physical Description 3

**Creation date(s):** 1840 c.

**Heritage Significance** *city*

**Map (Melway)** 42 E5-D8

### Boundary description

Extent of surviving sections of wharf from Hopkins Street to the south end of Maribyrnong Street from the river edge to the Maribyrnong Street rail line loop.

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Port of Melbourne, Crown land? Council and Parks Victoria

*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/>*