FORMER TOWN PIER, PORT MELBOURNE

Port Melbourne Yacht Club Port Melbourne March 2003

Pier Hotel Port Melbourne March 2003

Liardets Jetty Memorial Port Melbourne March 2003

Town Jetty Site and PMYC Port Melbourne March 2003

Location

OFF STATION PIER (SOUTHERN SECTION) AND 40 BEACONSFIELD PARADE PORT MELBOURNE, PORT PHILLIP CITY

Municipality

PORT PHILLIP CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0316

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 23, 2009

What is Significant?

The Port Melbourne Yacht Club clubrooms, built in the 1990s to replace an earlier structure destroyed by fire, occupy the site of the former Town Pier and an early landing place for migrants to the Port Phillip District. The first section of Town Pier was built at Sandridge in 1849 as a landing place for passengers and light cargo. It was extended several times when there was pressing demand for pier facilities in the port of Melbourne during the 1850s. From the late nineteenth century its primary use was as a landing place for coal deliveries to the South Melbourne gasworks. From the 1920s to the 1950s, dangerous sections of the pier were demolished and it was finally removed completely in 1958. The Port Melbourne Yacht Club built a new boatshed on the landward site of the pier in the 1960s, converting a former pier lifeboat shed into a clubhouse. This clubhouse was destroyed by fire in 1996 and a new clubhouse was subsequently built on the site.

How is it significant?

The site of the former Town Pier is historically significant to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The site of the former Town Pier is historically significant as one of the earliest piers used by immigrants to land at the new settlement of Melbourne. However, the integrity of the site has been compromised since the mid 1920s, and it is unlikely that any significant fabric is extant. It is therefore not considered to be of State significance.

	What remains of Town Pier today is a miss match of demolition debris lying scattered for well over 1000 ft out of Hobsons Bay. To the uninitiated it may seem that it is of little importance. To a trained eye the remains of occupation are of tremendous value and well worth preserving. Town Pier played an integral part in the development of Australia's social fabric, and the birth of a nation. The berthing of the Confederate raider Shenandoah at east berth in the early 19th-century was quite remarkable within itself and has been the focus of many a study. For example, why did the Melbourne public embrace the raider and its crew as celebrities? Town pier also played a part in the social fabric of the growing colony. Thirteen years after Australia became a nation Town Pier was graced by the boots of the 2nd AIF embarking on a journey to the battlegrounds of France and Gallipoli. The remains of the pier and its diverse archaeological deposits, encompassing well over 150 years of Melbourne's history deserves to be recognised and protected as such.
Interpretation of Site	The current clubhouse was built on this site in 1990 on new concrete piles and decking and now occupies the former landward end of the Town Pier site. Liardet's Jetty memorial is actually placed on the site of Donaldson's Jetty, as Liadet's Jetty would now lie under the Port Melbourne Yacht Club. The current Port Melbourne Yacht Club was built on this site in 1990 on new concrete piles and decking and now occupies the former landward end of the Town Pier site. Both Parkinson and Taylor (pers comm) have reported extensive underwater remains on the site of the old Town Pier. They have described a large section of dressed bluestone groyne 10m long lies approximately 20m off the Port Melbourne Yacht Club, with a gap of 10-20 m before a 'forest of piles' (the remains of the former pier) with bottles and artefacts everywhere. The site is shown on current charts as foul ground.
	'The site is highly significant as one of the first landing sites in Hobsons Bay, and has demonstrated continuous use both commercially and recreationally since 1839.

Other Names	LIADETS PIER,
Hermes Number	12223
Property Number	

History

Contextual History

The Yarra River was the site of the first non-indigenous settlement in the Melbourne region in 1835. Although John Pascoe Fawkner's party, in the *Enterprise*, sailed up to the Falls on the Yarra and anchored there, larger vessels were forced to anchor in Hobson's Bay, near Point Gellibrand and transfer goods and passengers by lighter up the Yarra River. A sand bar near the mouth of the Yarra precluded vessels needing more than eight feet of water from progressing up the river and the tortuous course of the river made the journey by lighter a slow one. While many passengers transferred by boat to the beach at Williamstown and then by lighter up the Yarra, the crossing from Williamstown to what is now Port Melbourne (but was then known as North Beach) and then along a track to the settlement on the Yarra was quicker and cheaper. Early immigrants to Port Phillip were often rowed from vessels anchored off Point Gellibrand (Williamstown) across to the beach or North Beach as it was called. Cargo, however, was usually lightered up the Yarra to the wharves at Melbourne, a very expensive and cumbersome method of handling imports.

During the 1840s merchants and shipping agents agitated for Government-sponsored improvements to the port. Three main schemes were advocated - straightening and deepening the Yarra, cutting a canal from Melbourne through to the beach from Melbourne or constructing railway lines between Hobson's Bay and Melbourne. Though no immediate action was taken on these possibilities, in 1849, the Port Phillip Superintendent of Bridges, David Lennox, called for tenders to extend the jetty at Williamstown (erected in 1839) and to supply piles and sawn timber for a jetty at the North Beach, Hobson's Bay. (*Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 1849, p.187). The following year, tenders were let to supply timber for the addition of stairs and handrailing for the jetty. (*Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 1850, p.986).

The discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851, however, 'caused an influx of population' and a 'demand for extraneous goods' that brought 'an enormous fleet' of ships to Hobsons Bay. (C. Pasley, 'Report on the Various Plans for the Improvement of the Port of Melbourne, *VPP* 1854-1855, Vol 3 p,783). Both government and private enterprise worked to extend the accommodation at Hobsons Bay. The Colonial Government extended the jetty at Sandridge (as the North Beach was by then known). A private company, the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay Railway Company, built the

adjacent Railway Pier (and a railway line connecting it to Flinders Street) in 1854. The government also built additional pier accommodation at Williamstown. Another private company Melbourne, Mount Alexander and Murray River Railway Company began building Railway Pier (later called Gellibrand Pier) at Point Gellibrand.

Despite these improvements, unloading cargo continued to be inconvenient and expensive because most imports were destined for warehouses and stores located close to wharves on the Yarra. A Melbourne Harbor Trust was constituted in 1877 and, soon after, commissioned Sir John Coode to come up with a plan to improve the Port of Melbourne. The creation of the Coode Canal and Victoria Dock in Melbourne between 1884 and 1892, drew some trade away from Town Pier, as larger cargo vessels could now travel up the river (canal) to discharge cargoes at the river docks. Unlike the railway piers on Hobson's Bay, Town Pier relied on drays to remove goods and cargo after unloading (Parliamentary Report, 1902). Nevertheless, at the request of the Railways Department, the MHT dredged a channel 28 feet deep and 600 feet wide to the Port Melbourne piers in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Pier accommodation at Port Melbourne was augmented by the construction of Prince's Pier to the west of Railway Pier between 1912 and 1915 and Station Pier (on the site of Railway Pier) between 1923 and 1930. Both of these piers, unlike Town Pier, were connected to the Victorian Railways system, allowing ease of transport of

both export and import material. In addition, both piers were designed to handle both cargo and passengers arriving and departing on ever larger vessels.

History of the Place

The beach at Port Melbourne was an early landing place for migrants arriving in Hobsons Bay. The first group of assisted immigrants to sail directly to Port Phillip from Great Britain on the *David Clarke,* in 1839, landed at this beach. (*Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol.4, p. 325) Immigrant, Wilbrahim Liardet, arrived in the Port Phillip District in 1839 and soon established a ferry service between the beach at Port Melbourne (then known as North Beach) and the shipping on Hobson's Bay. He built a small jetty on the beach, as well as the Brighton Pier Hotel (Buckrich, 2002, p. 36)

In 1849 the Superintendent of Bridges, David Lennox, called for tenders supply sawn timbers for a jetty at the North Beach. (*Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 1849, p.187) The following year tenders were let to supply timber for the addition of stairs and handrailing on this jetty (*Port Phillip Government Gazette,* 1850, p.986).

When gold discoveries brought not only increased immigration, but also imports to the colony in the 1850s, the Victorian Public Works Department extended the Sandridge Jetty, expending thirteen thousand pounds on it in 1854 (Public Works Department, Yearly Abstract of Costs and Register of Works and Buildings). This was in the same year that the adjacent Railway Pier (later Station Pier) was constructed, in conjunction with a railway line to Melbourne, by a private company, the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay Railway Company. In the same year, the Public Works Department purchased a building at Sandridge for use as a Customs House and quarters for Customs staff. The Colonial Engineer, Charles Pasley, explained that the Sandridge Pier would not be adequate for unloading heavy goods, but would be useful for 'landing passengers and light goods, such as personal luggage'.(Public Works Department Minute Book, Colonial Engineer, VPRS 956/p1 Unit 1, p.93) The Sandridge Pier was extended in 1856, 1857, 1858, 1860, 1862 and 1865 and 1871 A crane was added to the pier in 1863, but removed in 1869 (Public Works Department, Yearly Abstract of Costs and Register of Works and Buildings).

The pier was known as Town Pier when the Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners assumed responsibility for it in 1877. At the urging of the Mayor and Councillors of Sandridge and merchants and shipowners, the Trust lengthened the pier by 100 feet in 1881(Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners' Report 1881, p. 37). In 1889, when the Melbourne Gas Company sought to build railway lines connecting the South Melbourne Gasworks to ships unloading coal at the pier, the MHT Commissioners extended the width of the inward section of the pier by an additional 25 feet (MHTC Report 1889 p.17). Henceforth the inner section of the pier was used largely by colliers.

Two sets of rails were to be laid on this section of the pier. By this time Town Pier could accommodate more ships than any of the other piers in Hobsons Bay. In 1902 it measured 2,015 feet in length and 106 feet wide ('Progress Report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways

on the Question of Additional Pier Accommodation, Port Melbourne', *VPP* 1902, Vol.1).

By 1902 Town Pier was largely used by colliers and vessels delivering cargo to Port Melbourne factories ('Progress Report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways on the Question of Additional Pier Accommodation, Port Melbourne', VPP 1902, Vol.1). It was disadvantaged by the fact that it was not connected to the railways system. Cargo had to be unloaded on to drays on the pier and there were no sheds for sheltering cargo once it had been unloaded from vessels. However, when the American Naval Fleet, nicknamed the 'Great White Fleet' toured Australia in 1908, officers, marines and sailors landed at Town Pier before parading through Port Melbourne and South Melbourne to the Exhibition Building in Carlton. Town Pier was also an embarkation point for some Australian troops during World War I.

Between 1924 and 1926 approximately 1,150 feet of the outer section of Town Pier was demolished (MHTC Report1924, p. 36 and 1926, p.38). Further demolition was carried out in 1941, when it was discovered that the outer area of the pier had become unsafe because of damage by marine organisms. Piles removed were used in the construction of building berths at the Williamstown Dockyards, while other timbers were used to assist in the preparation of the Appleton Dock (MHTC Report, 1941, p. 37). A further 122 piles were withdrawn in 1946 and used for the extension of the Workshops Jetty at the Williamstown Workshops and Slipways (MHTC Report, 1946, p 66).

Contractors were employed in 1955 and 1956 to demolish the inner section of Town Pier (MHTC Report 1955 and 1958, p.23). In 1958 the MHT completed the removal of piles from the inner section 'using a pile pulling

frame mounted on a Phillipine Lighter and capable of exerting a 25 ton pull'. Two hundred and twenty piles were removed, about half of which were small piles of peppermint timber, thought to be remnants of Liardet's Jetty, but possibly from the first Government Jetty on this site (MHTC Report, 1958, p. 23).

In the early 1960s the Port Melbourne Yacht Club, which had been established in 1889 moved from the site of its former clubhouse near HMAS Lonsdale to occupy the landward end of the Town Pier site. The club built a boat shed and reportedly used the pier's former lifeboat shed as a clubhouse.

This clubhouse burned down in 1996 and was replaced by the clubhouse currently occupying the site (Rothwell, 2008)

Sources:

Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners' Annual Reports

'Progress Report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways on the Question of Additional Pier Accommodation, Port Melbourne', *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 1902, Vol.1

Public Works Department Minute Book, Colonial Engineer, VPRS 956/p1 Unit 1

Port Phillip Government Gazette

C. Pasley, 'Report on the Various Plans for the Improvement of the Port of Melbourne', *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*,1854-1855, Vol 3 p,783

Public Works Department, Summary Contract Books (PROV, VPRS 2143)

Public Works Department, Yearly Abstract of Costs and Register of Works, 1851-1873, PROV, VPRS 957/p 0

Barnard, Jill, and Jennings, Sonia, *Welcome and Farewell, the Story of Station Pier,* Arcadia, 2004

Buckrich, Judith, *The Long and Perilous Journey, A History of the Port of Melbourne*, Melbourne Books, 2002

Cannon, Michael and McFarlane, Ian (eds) *Historical Records of Victoria,* Vol.4, Victorian Government Printing Office, 1985.

Rothwell, Cliff, 'Australian Jollyboat Fifty Year Reunion Celebrations at Port Melbourne Yacht Club', www.yachting.org.au

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/