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# MRS FORD'S BATHS



Kenny Ladies Baths Port  
Melbourne Aug 2003

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## Location

JACKA BOULEVARD ST KILDA, PORT PHILLIP CITY

## Municipality

PORT PHILLIP CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0415

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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Interpretation  
of Site

Underwater inspection of the area revealed a heavy accumulation of 19th and 20th century artefacts (bottles, ceramics, scattered timber piles and planks etc) from immediately adjacent to the St Kilda Pier (offshore from the current St Kilda Baths) which lessened in density approximately 200m away to the SE. Sporadic artefacts scatters were found eastward of this location in positions corresponding to the southern baths, but without the clustering found with the sites associated with the Company and Kenny's Ladies Baths. There are structural remains of two of the former baths evident onshore. Underwater inspection of the area revealed a heavy accumulation of 19th and 20th century artefacts (bottles, ceramics, scattered timber piles and planks etc) from immediately adjacent to the St Kilda Pier (offshore from the current St Kilda Baths) which lessened in density approximately 200m away to the SE. Sporadic artefacts scatters were found eastward of this location in positions corresponding to the southern baths, but without the clustering found with the sites associated with the Company and Kenny's Ladies Baths.

This was one of a complex of baths clustered in this area, and forms part of the recreational landscape of Melbourne.

Other Names KENNY'S LADIES BATHS,

Hermes  
Number 13892

Property  
Number

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## History

The area stretching from the Catani Gardens to Brookes Jetty was once occupied by as many as six separate bathing complexes. The area was always popular with bathers, even before the bath complexes were established.

Kenny purchased a site from Mrs Ford, who had established a Ladies Sea bath to the immediate south of St Kilda Pier in 1853. In 1854, Captain William Kenny purchased the condemned Scandinavian vessel Nancy to use as a bathing ship (H7822-0412), and beached and scuttled her just south of St Kilda Pier on the former site of Mrs Fords Ladies Baths . Bathers were pulled themselves out to the bathing ship using a dinghy and shoreline. He was forced to relocate the vessel at considerable expense a few weeks later to the north side of the pier, and the Kenny Family took up residence on board the vessel. It is not clear whether swimmers bathed inside the ship or from it, but in 1855, Kenny had erected a substantial fenced in enclosure that was advertised as being 'free from fish?', which is shown in a plan of 1872 (HWJ 4066). Kenny also provided accommodation for bathers on St Kilda Beach. A storm washed away most of the fence structure in 1858, which Kenny replaced with solid redgum piles. The bathing structure here was described in 1862 as "three sided wooden erections open to the sea. These are divided into innumerable little apartments rather smaller than a bathing machine".. Captain Kenny also ran ladies baths (H7822-0415) at St Kilda, which were placed under the control of his wife and daughters. Kenny became known as the pioneer of bathing establishment at St Kilda. The licence to this site was renewed by 1858, and a restaurant was associated with it, although it is unclear if the site was owned by Kenny or Ford at that time.

Kenny's operations were running profitably until the Hegarty Brothers entered into competition in 1862 and established Hegarty's Gents Baths, (which was also known as the Company Baths (H7822-0414), and Ladies Baths (H7822-0416) which were located to the south respectively of each of Kenny's baths. Hegarty purchased the site of his men's baths from Legget, who had been the manager of the St Kilda Sea Company Baths as they were previously known before 1862. Hegarty's baths were reported to have 300 dressing rooms for bathers. Parts of the baths were washed away by storms in 1863.

South of Ford's baths was a disused establishment called the Pavillion Baths, which had gone out of favour and were being used by fishermen, and was leased by Kenny. In 1873, The St Kilda Ladies Sea Bath Company was established, and managed by a Mrs Shaw. The complex was so successful that it was extended by 200 ft seaward the next year. By 1881, numerous bathing companies operated at St Kilda, including the Ladies Royal Baths, The Victorian Railway Ladies Baths, Kenny's Bathing Ship (all owned by Kenny) and the St Kilda Ladies Sea Bathing Company Baths, and Hegarty's Railways Baths for Gents (all owned by Hegarty).

Hegarty's baths were later purchased by Isaac Barnet, who later remodelled them with a new facade and installed electric lights. Kenny's bathing ship, was removed in 1912, as part of a foreshore beautification project and the government purchased the Kenny's Ladies baths in 1918.

*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/>*