
THORNTON'S JETTY SITE

Location

WORM BAY ROAD WARRNAMBOOL, WARRNAMBOOL CITY

Municipality

WARRNAMBOOL CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0075

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site	<p>There are no visible remains of Thornton's Jetty. The site is now covered with metres of sand that has accumulated over the area in the last 100 years since the building of the Breakwater. This process was possibly augmented with some direct reclamation.</p>
Archaeological Significance	<p>The archaeological significance of Thornton's Jetty lies in the material used and manner of its construction. This could possibly provide information on the importance placed by the relevant authorities on providing durable or otherwise maritime infrastructure in the mid 19th century before Warrnambool was declared an open port. From the historical record there were numerous complaints about the quality of the structure during its lifetime. The cultural deposits associated with the jetty could provide valuable information about its use and the trade that passed over it.</p> <p>The jetty was allowed to deteriorate which means that structural elements such as headstocks and even decking could possibly have survived intact before it was buried. Cultural deposits associated with the use of the jetty are most likely present.</p>

Historical
Significance

Thornton's Jetty was the first significant piece of maritime infrastructure constructed at Warrnambool and signifies the increasing importance of Warrnambool as a port of trade in the late 1840s.

Hermes Number 154991

Property
Number

History

In the mid to late 1840s, as the Warrnambool township was being established, the need to improve the shipping possibilities of Lady Bay was recognised. Early in 1849, the construction of a jetty on the south-western shore of Lady Bay was authorised by the Government and carried out under the supervision of engineer Mr David Lennox. By June that year, it was reported that "the piles for the construction of the jetty are nearly all down and (the contractor) may shortly expect to commence its erection."

The jetty, which became known as Thornton's Jetty extended 183 metres into Lady Bay to a depth of 3 metres of water; deep enough to permit lighters to be used for transporting passengers and freight from the ships anchored in the deeper water of the bay. It was first used during 1850, although it was apparently quite a simple structure; the full length of the floor was not planked and it was not fitted with protection for passengers or inward and outgoing cargo and goods.

Thornton's Jetty was left in an unfinished state. By the mid 1850s, media reports stated that "the jetty has been dribbled at until almost fourteen months ago when it was given up for want of funds".

Repeated petitions were made to the Government to improve Warrnambool port facilities. During July 1854, the Government responded by providing funds and calling for tenders to repair and extend Thornton's Jetty. Local residents, however, were unimpressed as the improvements did not include the installment of steps or cranes to the jetty.

By 1857 a new jetty, later known as the Tramway Jetty, was completed. Whilst still operational and being used largely for Harbour Master and Customs Office vessels, Thornton's Jetty was described as being "nearly worn out".

In July 1862, a severe gale caused a large portion of the seaward end of Thornton's Jetty to collapse beyond repair. In an attempt to control the damage, Captain Helpman, the Warrnambool Harbour Master, cut through the broken sections and argued that the remainder of the now separated section should be removed to avoid it breaking free and damaging the new Tramway Jetty. However, within a few weeks, the seaward section broke apart, scattering its timbers along the beach without damaging the Tramway Jetty. The remaining landward section of Thornton's Jetty was left in situ, gradually deteriorating, but still providing a breakwater for the Tramway Jetty.

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/>