
FORMER ALISON JETTY AND KNIGHT'S WHARF AND ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES

Location

35-41 GIPPS STREET PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0082

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO13

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

35 Gipps St: This property forms the southern boundary of the curtilage area established around this grouping of sites. The property contains a two storey rendered bluestone building located close to the northern boundary of this allotment. A second storey has been added on to the original building after construction. The building occupies approximately one third of the allotment, with the remaining southern portion consisting of open grassed area. The current building is in the same location as a building associated with Alison's Jetty that appears in an 1887 map of the area. The building shown on the 1887 plan was located directly at the landward end of Alison's Jetty. The current building is located close to the Moyne River and at the eastern end has a large entrance way. The current building is likely that shown on the C19th plans and is also likely to be the Alison and Knight warehouse constructed in the 1850s. This entrance was likely the main entrance from the Jetty into the warehouse.

37-39 Gipps St: This property contains a galvanised iron shed that is set approximately 10m back from the western boundary. The shed appears to be constructed on a concrete slab that extends almost the width of the allotment. Behind the shed on the eastern frontage, a new 2 storey building has been built.

Interpretation of Site

41 Gipps St: This property forms the northern boundary of the site complex and consists of 2 bluestone cottages. The first is near the middle of the allotment and the second fronting onto the Moyne River. The remainder of the property is grassed. A bluestone wall extends across the front of this allotment along Gipps St. and continues into the adjacent property (37-39). The cottage along the river front is in the same position as one of the buildings mapped in the 1887 plan of Port Fairy. The plan is not clear, however, and may be indicating 2 buildings in the area.

River Front: The Moyne River front portion of this site includes the bluestone training walls along the western river bank with a concrete capping on top. One section of the wall is curved and this is reported to follow the shape of the stern of an iron hulled punt which was used for reclamation as part of the foundation of the Steam Packet Wharf. At the base and in front of the wall a concrete strip footing has been placed recently. The public wharf is separated from the river wall by approximately 4 m with 2 rows of sawn off piles running parallel to the seawall and visible at low tide. These piles possibly relate to a previous public wharf. Between the larger piles is a set of smaller square piles immediately behind No. 35. These piles relate to a separate structure, possibly to Alison's Wharf. There were no piles visible relating to Knight's Wharf.

The archaeological significance of this site complex relates to what can be learned about the scale and investment by successive merchants and firms in the stores or warehouses which in turn could reflect the confidence placed in the future of Port Fairy as a major centre. Cultural deposits associated with these buildings and associated wharfage could provide new information on the type and quality of goods being traded.

No. 35: Moderate archaeological potential exists on the property around the 2-storey bluestone building. Archaeological remains are expected to exist between the foundations associated with the current building.

No 37-39: The property is considered to have moderate archaeological potential underneath the shed on the western half of the property. The archaeological potential is considered to be low on the eastern side of the property where the new apartment has been built.

Archaeological Significance No 41: Moderate archaeological potential exists surrounding the two cottages on the property. Archaeological remains are expected to exist between the foundations associated with the two bluestone cottages.

It can be expected that archaeological remains on the property would consist of bluestone strip foundations associated with the buildings/warehouses associated with Alison's and Knight's wharves. Underfloor deposits may also be present associated with each of the buildings. Yard deposits associated with the buildings, such as cesspits and other rubbish pits may be located throughout the site. Surface drains, external paved surfaces and possibly a well may also be present.

There is potential for pile remains of the former Knight's and Alison's as well as the Steam Packet wharves on the site, as well as further into the river and below the riverine sediments. Archaeological remains, such as goods and other materials that were loaded or items discarded from the wharf may also be in the area immediately around the former jetty and wharf.

Historical Significance The initial developers of the site, Alison and Knight were influential Port Fairy landowners and flour millers. This site was, for a period, a holding depot for grain and flour produced by their mill at Rosebrook. The mill was strategically located on the northern shore of Belfast Lough and products were ferried down the Moyne to their Port Fairy warehouse and wharf for export. The site represents one link in the networks set up by merchants and manufacturers across the district to store and transport their products. The Alison and Knight Wharf, which seems to have developed into the Steam Packet Wharf, appears to have been the longest, most continuously active commercial wharf, operating for almost 100 years.

Other Names FORMER STEAM PACKET WHARF,

Hermes Number 155262

Property Number

History

In 1844, Mr John Alison and Mr Andrew Halley Knight, partners in merchant company Alison and Knight, entered into an agreement with James Atkinson to purchase a selection of allotments in Port Fairy. Included within this sale was a waterfront allotment along the western bank of the Moyne River.

The agreement was formalised by a conveyance in 1849 and during this year, Alison and Knight constructed a large basalt warehouse for the storage of grain and flour along the southern boundary of the riverfront allotment

and erected a timber jetty to provide a landing for lighters. The northern portion of the property remained largely undeveloped.

Alison and Knight grew to be influential merchants and traders in Port Fairy, particularly in association with their operation at Rosebrook flour mill. The waterfront property on the western bank of the Moyne seems to have been variously known as "Alison's Jetty", "Knight's Wharf" or "Alison & Knight's Stores".

During the early 1850s, Alison and Knight leased the allotment to Mr David Talbot, a member of the substantial merchant firm of William Rutledge & Co., and the property continued to be used for storage of grain and flour.

By 1861, Talbot defaulted on the lease, and Alison and Knight offered the term at public auction. The lease was purchased by Captain Lewis Grant, who became Port Fairy's most successful lighter and shipping agent in the mid to late C19th.

As Grant's business expanded during the 1860s and early 1870s, substantial improvements were made on the riverfront property, which soon became known as the "Steam Packet Wharf". An 1870 surveyor's plan shows additions and developments on the site.

In 1874, a basalt office fronting Gipps Street and connected to the basalt warehouse on the riverfront was constructed for Grant by stonemason Mr John Hooper, and during the late 1870s and early 1880s, a basalt seawall was apparently built along the river frontage.

The Steam Packet Wharf is known to contain an iron lighter as part of the wharf foundations. It appears likely that this lighter was installed sometime during the expansions and improvements to the wharf during the 1870s and 1880s. The lighter was a large, flat-bottomed vessel, imported by William Rutledge & Co. for river transport. However, its lack of suitability for river navigation meant that it was decommissioned and used as a building material.

Shortly after Captain Grant's death in 1885, the lease and later the title for the Steam Packet Wharf was sold to the Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Company (B&KSN); established in 1882 by a number of Port Fairy residents to secure steam transport solely to serve the interests of the township.

In the late 1880s or early 1890s, not long after B&KSN took possession of the Steam Packet Wharf, a section of the allotment was resumed for the Belfast Koroit railway link; with Queen's Wharf serving as the rail terminus. An 1887 plan shows the single track rail line running through the allotment, cutting between the large basalt warehouse on the southern boundary, and boatsheds on the riverfront.

B&KSN continued to own and operate from the Steam Packet Wharf until the company entered voluntary liquidation in 1947. The property was divided and sold largely for residential purposes. In 1964, the basalt warehouse along the southern boundary of the original allotment was converted to a residence and aquarium, which involved the removal of the original roof and erection of a second storey in its place. In the 1970s, the Port Fairy railway branch was discontinued and the line truncated at Dennington. All rail infrastructure in Port Fairy, including the line along the riverfront at the Steam Packet Wharf, was subsequently removed.

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.

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