

PORT FAIRY WHARF AND JETTY PRECINCT



QUEEN'S WHARF



THE MOYNE RIVER, PORT FAIRY



QUEEN'S WHARF



QUEEN'S WHARF, MOYNE RIVER



QUEEN'S WHARF, PORT FAIRY WHARF AND JETTY PRECINCT



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WEST BANK OF MOYNE RIVER, PORT FAIRY WHARF AND JETTY PRECINCT



MOYNE STEAM FLOUR MILL AND WHARF, PORT FAIRY WHARF AND JETTY PRECINCT



SKETCH OF PORT FAIRY QUEEN'S WHARF



PORT FAIRY FACING WEST ACROSS THE MOYNE RIVER



GENERAL VIEW OF THE GRASSED PUBLIC SPACE, 27 GIPPS STREET



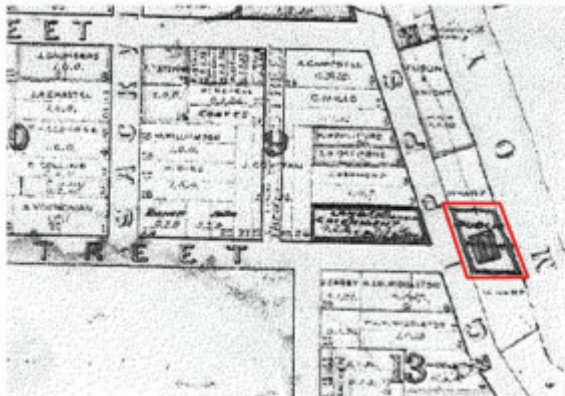
GENERAL VIEW OF THE GRASSED PUBLIC SPACE, 27 GIPPS STREET



VIEW OF THE CAR PARK AND PRIVATE COMMERCIAL PROPERTY WITHIN THIS AREA



SITE PLAN, PORT FAIRY WHARF AND JETTY PRECINCT



1850 plan of Port Fairy township – shows "public wharf" with apparent large structure in centre of allotment.

PORT FAIRY TOWNSHIP



PORT FAIRY WHARF AND JETTY PRECINCT PLAN



PORT FAIRY PLAN SHOWING THE PUBLIC JETTY



1870 PLAN OF PORT FAIRY



1887 PORT FAIRY RAILWAY YARDS

Location

27-35 GIPPS STREET PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0083

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO13

HO39

HO44

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

This grouping is contained between No.35 and No.27 Gipps Street. The allotments to the south of No.35 are collectively known as No.27 and are the public wharf and open public space. No.31 and No.29 are two commercial premises at the southeast corner of No.27. Each allotment will be discussed individually below

No.35 Gipps Street

This property forms the northern 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.

The building occupies approximately one third of the allotment, with the remainder consisting of open grassed area. This property has been included into the curtilage around the complex of buildings as there is potential for other archaeological remains relating to features associated with the known buildings and wharf, such as cesspits or rubbish deposits, surface drains, external paved surfaces. It is also possible that a well may be present in this area as it was between the wharf, Gipps Street and the other sheds built at the time.

No.27 Gipps Street

Number 27 Gipps Street is an open public space located between Gipps Street and the Moyne River. This area currently contains a car park, sloping grassed area and direct access to the Moyne River public wharf. There are also two private commercial premises located at the southeast end of the public space, adjacent to the wharf.

Driveway entrances are located at either end of the allotment. Between these two entrances is an open grassed area that slopes down towards the river. This grassed area has been landscaped to include cuttings and undulations to form a seating area. These undulations are believed to have been introduced and do not cut into the natural topography. There are a series of services that have been placed within the grassed area.

The car park and two commercial premises are located on an asphalt level benched area to the east of the grassed area. This benched area extends out and on to the wharf.

The two commercial premises located in the open public area (known as No.29 and No.31) are both brick buildings, and appear to have been built on top of the asphalt surface. To the north of these two buildings is the former customs shed, which has been built on raised bluestone footings.

This area is considered to contain a moderate to high potential for archaeological remains associated with the former wharf facilities. The grassed area has been landscaped, suggesting that much of the area has not been heavily disturbed. The asphalted car park and area surrounding the two commercial premises has been cut and benched to create the levelled area, however, this is likely to only have removed up to the top 200 mm from the area, and therefore has the potential to retain archaeological remains.

Interpretation of Site

Wharf and foreshore area

The wharf is differentiated from the car park area by a modern concrete deck. While not visible on the concrete deck, the banks of the Moyne River have been dressed with a bluestone retaining wall with a concrete capping. At the northern and southern ends of the wharf the concrete decking ends and the wharf continues from its outer edge.

Between the detached wharf and the river retaining walls are a set of piles that run parallel to the retaining wall.

The archaeological significance of this site complex relates to what can be learned about the scale of investment by successive merchants and firms in the construction of the wharfage and supporting structures which in turn could perhaps reflect the confidence placed in the future of Port Fairy as a major centre. Cultural deposits associated with wharfage and associated buildings could provide new information on the type and quality of goods being traded. 27 Gipps Street is considered to contain a moderate to high potential for archaeological remains associated with the former wharf facilities. The grassed area has been landscaped, suggesting that much of the area has not been heavily disturbed. The asphalted car park and area surrounding the two commercial premises has been cut and benched to create the levelled area, however, this is likely to only have removed up to the top 200 mm from the area, and therefore has the potential to retain archaeological remains.

Archaeological Significance

There is the potential for archaeological material associated with the former public jetty, and later public wharf to be present in this area. Pile remains from both structures are visible above the waterline, and potential exists for other structural remains to be present below the waterline and marine sediments. Other archaeological remains, such as cargo or other material accidentally dropped or discarded from the jetty or wharf area may be present on the river bed, or buried under the marine sediments.

Archaeological remains that are also likely to be present within the site complex include foundation remains of post holes from the early sheds that were built on the site. There is also the potential for bluestone foundations to be present from later boatsheds that were built. Posthole remains may also survive from the stockyards and other fences that were built within the site. Cesspits and other associated rubbish pits may also be located through the site.

Other infrastructure, such as crane pads or remnants of other machinery built near the wharf, drainage systems, paved or other former surfaces may also be present.

Historical Significance

This extensive wharfage that was developed in this area indicates the traffic and trade that passed through Port Fairy in the mid 19th century. That most of the maritime infrastructure was initially constructed for government and public use shows the determination of the authorities not to allow a handful of merchants to monopolise access to the waterfront which would have restricted trade and increased the prices of goods thereby making the port less competitive. That the Portland & Belfast Steam Navigation Company could not establish a competitive business at Port Fairy in the 1880s reflects perhaps the diminishing importance of the port relative to its neighbours Warrnambool and Portland.

Hermes Number

156726

Property Number

History

By the mid 1840s, the growing population and expanding development of the newly established township of Port Fairy was increasingly relying on maritime transport and trade. As the number of vessels landing in Port Fairy Bay and trading with the community emerging on the banks of the Moyne River, the need for public maritime infrastructure and formal organisation of port operations was soon realised. One of the first priorities was the establishment of customs officials in order to regulate and tabulate goods imported and exported from the colony

and also to provide important Government revenue.

In ca. 1844, a customs officer was appointed at the fledgling harbour of Port Fairy, collecting customs duties under the powers of the Portland Office (established in 1840). The Port Fairy customs officer was supplied with a small customs boat and crew, however, some local residents were critical of the outfit, claiming it was a waste of public money as the officer was a mere "tide-waiter" with no power to enter or clear vessels. In late 1849, the situation was rectified as Port Fairy was declared a Government sanctioned port for entrance, clearance and customs collection. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Peter Nicolson, the then Landing Waiter at Portland, was appointed as Sub-Collector at Port Fairy and all customs business was thenceforth separated from Portland. In ca. 1852-1853, a Harbour Master, Captain John Mills, responsible for managing and maintaining harbour services and anchorages, was also appointed for Port Fairy.

Wharf premises and facilities to serve public purposes were set aside on the western bank of the Moyne River, extending from the riverbank to Gipps Street. A plan of Port Fairy dating to 1850 shows the boundaries of the allotment and depicts a single structure / store situated near the centre. In 1853, this allotment was formally conveyed to Mr. Nicolson & Captain Mills - as Government appointees. By 1854, as shown on a navigation chart of Port Fairy, three jetties were constructed along the western bank of the Moyne; a "Customs Jetty," "Public Jetty" and "Harbour Masters Jetty." Photographs of Port Fairy dating to the late 1850s show these structures as relatively simple timber jetties, with associated timber sheds along the river bank. Both the public jetty and the harbour masters jetty fall within the area acquired by Nicolson & Mills and designated as a "public wharf." The customs jetty, however, was situated further to the south, outside the boundaries of the public wharf.

It is likely that customs facilities were set up in this location in the mid 1840s (when customs officers operated under the powers of Portland), yet on a site that was never officially acquired for such. In 1853, the waterfront allotment fronting Gipps Street behind the customs jetty was sold to Dr. Alexander Russell who, upon occupying the property and commencing construction of a flour mill, began complaining about the customs house positioned in the northern portion of his property. Russell, backed by the Port Fairy Borough Council, informed the government that he would soon take steps to have it removed as it encroached on Gipps Street. Mr. Nicolson officially assured Russell that the customs structures along the waterfront of his property would be removed as soon as a new building was constructed and by 1860-1861, a more permanent customs house was constructed, waterfront facilities were moved to within the public wharf allotment and the customs jetty and associated sheds on Russell's waterfront property were removed.

During the mid 1850s, various problems associated with transport and trade along the Moyne River had been encountered; namely the siltation of the river mouth, which presented an obstacle to vessels attempting to enter the river and limited the size of vessels that could reach riverfront wharves. Several proposals to establish a public coastal jetty and connecting tramway to the township of Port Fairy were entertained and in the late 1850s, a jetty was constructed in Port Fairy Bay and the establishment of a linking tramway commenced. In 1862, the construction of a tramway bridge across the Moyne River began, with the western bank landing and tram terminus situated within the public wharf allotment. As these structures were erected, it appears that the harbour masters jetty was demolished, the riverbank was raised slightly at the location of the tram terminus to allow a level track and timber wharf facilities were erected lining the riverbank. A customs gauging shed was also constructed at the terminus, oriented east-west to allow the horse drawn tramway flat top trucks carrying imported cargo to be taken within.

In 1864, the public wharf complex was appointed by the Governor as a "legal quay or wharf for the lading or unloading of goods in accordance with *The Customs Act 1857* and that such wharf shall be designated "The Queen's Wharf, Port Fairy." The gazetted notice also described the wharf itself as "commencing at the south side of the Tramway Bridge & extending 59 feet [18m] down the river to the Harbour Boat Shed." An 1868 photograph shows three boat sheds, timber wharf facilities (with two vessels moored) and boat landing / lowering wharf with crane on the waterfront to the south of the tramway bridge, and the round-topped customs gauging shed above at the terminus of the tramway. It also appears that the western riverbank was built up in this location to allow a level track for the tramway. An 1870 surveyor's plan also depicts the location of these structures, with the rectangular gauging shed marked and the riverfront sheds marked with a single outline. This plan shows no indication of the large structure previously identified on 1850 plan; it is likely to have been removed in order to allow the construction of the tramway & terminus. By the early 1870s, the coastal jetty and tramway complex was proving to create more problems than it solved. The jetty was hard to approach in difficult weather, the double-handling / loading and unloading of goods at the jetty and again at the tram terminus was cumbersome and, most

importantly, the low level tramway bridge prevented large vessels from passing underneath and thus lighters were required to transport goods further to the wharves lining the banks of the Moyne further upstream. Finally, in 1875, following much public agitation - particularly from merchants situated along the river north of the bridge, the tramway bridge was removed. The customs shed, boat sheds and wharf facilities at Queen's Wharf remained.

In the mid 1880s, the Belfast-Koroit railway link was planned and Queen's Wharf was selected by Victorian Railways to serve as the rail terminus in Port Fairy. By the late 1890s, the slope of the riverbank previously built of for the tramway terminus appears to have been leveled and the railway line was established, running N-S along the bank and terminating at the southern extent of the Queen's Wharf allotment. The customs gauging shed was retained but dismantled and relocated so that it ran parallel to the river and the railway line. A timber stage / walkway and a large timber wharf / loading platform were also constructed, running parallel to the riverbank. The timber boatsheds previously lining the riverfront were dismantled and relocated to the eastern bank of the Moyne.

In 1891, the allotment to the north was acquired by the government to expand the Queen's Wharf facilities. This allotment had previously been occupied by the Portland & Belfast Steam Navigation Company, established in 1877, to provide berthing for steamers to compete for the trade from Warrnambool and other western ports. The property included a wharf, shed and stockyard, however by 1891, P&BSN Co. had defaulted on the lease. When the allotment was purchased by the government, all existing structures were demolished and the land was incorporated into the railyards.

A plan dating to 1887 shows the positioning of the single track, single gauge railway line, the railhead and the artificial / straight nature of the riverbank in this section. A series of illustrations and photographs from the 1890s to the early 20th century depict the structures and facilities within the public wharf allotment.

Throughout the mid 20th century, additional railway structures were built at Queen's Wharf, including a brick station / office building and a timber shed.

Queen's Wharf continued to operate as a railway terminus and public wharf facilities until the mid 1970s when the Port Fairy railway branch was discontinued and the line truncated at Dennington. All rail infrastructure in Port Fairy was subsequently removed. The rails at Queen's Wharf were removed and the yard area was converted into open public space now known as King George Square, including parkland, bitumised car park and a restaurant / cafe in the office building. The small timber shed was removed, however, the timber customs gauging shed survives (VHR# H2046) and other than upgrading and resurfacing, the timber stage and wharfing facilities have not been substantially modified since the 1890s.

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/>