

WILLIAM RUTLEDGE AND CO. WEST BANK PRECINCT



1023 - View of south west portion of the site. Looking south east. (D. Tuck. 15/3/10)

William Rutledge & Co.,
West Bank Precinct



1024 - View of east portion of the site. Looking north west. (D. Tuck. 15/3/10)

William Rutledge & Co.,
West Bank Precinct



1025 - View of east portion of the site. Looking north east. (D. Tuck. 15/3/10)

William Rutledge & Co.,
West Bank Precinct



1026 - View of north portion of the site. Looking north west. (D. Tuck. 15/3/10)

William Rutledge & Co.,
West Bank Precinct



William Rutledge & Co.,
West Bank Precinct



William Rutledge & Co.,
West Bank Precinct



William Rutledge & Co.,
West Bank Precinct



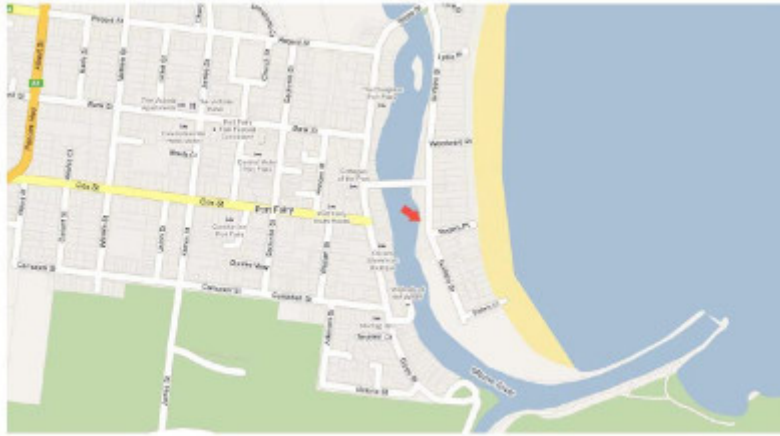
1027 - View across site along Griffiths Street towards intersection with Roger Place. Looking south east. (C. Cornwell. 15/3/10)

William Rutledge & Co.,
West Bank Precinct



1028 - View across site along Griffiths Street. Looking north. (C. Cornwell. 15/3/10)

William Rutledge and Co East
Bank Precinct



William Rutledge & Co., West Bank Precinct



William Rutledge & Co., West Bank Precinct

Location

45-57 GIPPS STREET PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0093

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO13

HO44

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

No.45 Gipps Street.

Located at the southern end of the grouping, an earthen track is located on the southern boundary of the site that allows access to the Moyne wharf at the rear of the properties. Along the southern property boundary the remains of a basalt wall are present running east - west. It is likely to be the standing remains of Rutledge's northern two-storied building . At the western end of the wall, basalt stone remains of a keyed return, to the north, are visible. A timber and stone building is located on the northern portion of the property.

No.47 Gipps Street

This property contains a single storey brick house fronting Gipps Street situated in the middle of the property. The front yard contains a garden and grassed area, and a driveway on the northern side leading to a garage in the rear northeast corner of the property. The rear of the property is grassed and slopes down slightly to the open grassed common area at the rear between the houses and the Moyne River.

No.49 Gipps Street

This allotment contains a single storey weatherboard houses positioned in the middle of this allotment.. The front of the property contains an open grassed area, and a driveway along the northern boundary of the allotment that leads to a garage in the northeast corner of the property. A timber structure is located on the southwest boundary of the property immediately behind the house. The rear of the property slopes down slightly from the house to the level of the grassed common area between the properties and the Moyne River.

No.51 Gipps Street

This property contains a brick house that occupies the majority of the allotment. An open garden and grassed area is present at the front of the property. A driveway is present on the northern side of the property that continues to the rear. Behind the house are a number of mature trees and no other structures.

Interpretation of Site

No.53 Gipps Street

A recently built two storey rendered brick house has been built over the majority of this property. Small undeveloped areas are present at the front and rear of the building, however, these areas are likely to have been heavily disturbed.

No.55 Gipps Street

This property is bound a on the northern side by a walkway that leads from the Gipps Street to the Moyne River and pedestrian bridge across the river. This property contains a weatherboard house situated on the northern half of the property set back from Gipps Street. The house has been constructed on raised brick piers. The remainder of the property is a grass and garden area that extends from the front to the rear of the property.

No.57 Gipps Street

A fibro and galvanised iron structure, possible a shed, is currently present on this allotment. Adjacent to this shed is a timber and galvanised iron garage in the front south-western corner of the property. Between the two structures is a driveway that has access to the rear of the property, which is an open grassed yard area.

Grassed Common Area behind No. 45 to No.55 and the Moyne River

This grassed common area between the houses and the Moyne River is a combination of a grassed and gravel track that gives vehicle access to the Moyne River wharf. The area is level and at the same height as the Moyne River retaining wall. The grassed and gravel surfaces extends from the access track on the southern boundary of this grouping area to the pedestrian bridge across the river at the northern end.

No.45 Gipps Street: Moderate archaeological potential exists in the southern portion of the property in the locality of the earthen access track and remains of the basalt stone wall, where disturbance is believed to have been minimal. Low archaeological potential is considered to exist underneath the house present on the property.

No.47 Gipps Street: Moderate archaeological potential is considered to exist on this property in the areas surrounding the houses, particularly at the rear of the allotment. Low archaeological potential is expected to exist underneath the current houses.

Archaeological
Significance

No.49 Gipps Street: Moderate archaeological potential is considered to exist on this property in the areas surrounding the houses. It was not clear at the time of the survey if the house was constructed on raised piers, concrete slab or strip trench footings. Archaeological potential is considered to be present underneath the house, however the potential may be reduced from the construction of the current house.

No.51 Gipps Street: Disturbances to this property appear to have been limited to the area of the house, however, the disturbance to the archaeological potential at the rear of the property has been possibly reduced due to the presence of mature trees. Moderate archaeological potential is considered to exist in the front garden, driveway and at the rear of the property between the mature trees. The remainder of the property, specifically underneath the area of the house is considered to be low due to the disturbance of that may have occurred in the construction of the current house.

No.53 Gipps Street: This property is considered to contain low archaeological potential.

Cox's store was reputedly the first mercantile business in Port Fairy, being established in ca. 1839. Operating from a timber structure, Cox provided the fledgling community with a range of general goods and "all requisites for cattle and sheep stations," supplied via ship from Tasmania. The store also provided a venue for many early public services, including town meetings and religious services; the latter conducted by Presbyterian minister, Rev. Alexander Laurie.

Historical
Significance

The purchasing of Cox's premises by Rutledge represents his ambition in developing Port Fairy as an entrepot for the region. William Rutledge is an omnipresent figure in the early years of the development of Port Fairy as he instigated many of its activities. Arriving in the town in 1843 he immediately formed his trading venture, which shipped wool, tallow and, later, gold to England, and imported a wide variety of goods, using their own ships and wharf. They also issued their own notes and tokens, and by facilitating credit, fostered the early inter-colonial cattle trade. He later bought a considerable portion of land around Koroit to which he encouraged many Irish immigrants to settle there.

William Rutledge was also highly active in almost all town affairs in the 1840s-1850s, variously serving not only as magistrate, mayor and alderman. It has been stated that Rutledge was "inextricably entwined with the early history and prosperity of Port Fairy for he instigated many of its activities."

In general the historical significance of this site is that it describes the trajectory of the mercantile activities on the Moyne River from the single store owned by Cox, to the extensive warehousing and maritime infrastructure development by Rutledge and Co. to relative decline by the end of the 19th century.

Hermes
Number

161936

History

Mr. John Cox was one of the earliest pioneers in the Port Fairy district, being among a handful of settlers occupying land along the western bank of the Moyne River prior to James Atkinson's Belfast Special Survey and the subsequent establishment of the township.

In 1839, Cox established the first mercantile business to exist in Port Fairy. Operating from a timber structure, Cox provided the fledgling community with a range of general goods and "all requisites for cattle and sheep stations," supplied via ship from Tasmania. The store also provided a venue for many early public services, including town meetings and religious services; the latter conducted by Presbyterian minister, Rev. Alexander Laurie.

A plan of Port Fairy dating to early 1843 depicts Cox's store as a comparatively large structure orientated E-W on the western bank of the Moyne River; a second plan from that year also depicts a "landing place" abutting the store, extending out from the riverbank. While there is some indication that Cox's land extended to what is now the western side of Gipps Street (between Bank & Cox Street), mapping overlays indicate that the store building as shown on 1843 plans was situated on the eastern side of the street, along the riverfront. By the early 1840s, Cox was developing his own pastoral pursuits, acquiring land in Penshurst and Macarthur and was looking at relinquishing his retail store. In ca. late 1843-1844, Cox sold the land, assets and goodwill of his business to Mr. William Rutledge, land investor and developer associated with James Atkinson (briefly appointed his agent in Belfast) and who had recently arrived in the Port Fairy, also acquiring the 5120 acre "Farnham Special Survey."

It would appear that Rutledge almost immediately conducted some improvements to the store for in March 1844, "Cox's new Store" was described in newspaper correspondent reports as "now nearly completed" and "the most tasteful building....observed on the township."

Rutledge originally operated the business largely on his own, with some assistance by his brothers, particularly Mr. Lloyd Rutledge; although some accounts indicate that James Atkinson was also involved in the running of the store for the first three years. By 1848, Rutledge took on Lloyd, Mr. William Foster and Mr. Horace Flower as business partners and established the firm of Messrs William Rutledge & Co. It was also during this year that the land upon which the store stood, fronting the western riverbank and the recently formed Gipps Street, was officially conveyed to Rutledge by memorial.

Over the following two decades, Rutledge & Co. developed into a substantial multi-faceted mercantile business supplying virtually all the needs of the growing township of Port Fairy and the surrounding agricultural and pastoral district. The company served as shipowners, importers and exporters, gold-buyers, stock and station agents, general merchants, warehouse and bulk-store operators, insurance and commission agents, wine and spirit merchants, wool and produce buyers, mail contractors and merchant bankers. Rutledge & Co. quickly expanded to one of the greatest commercial concerns in the colony of Victoria, essentially holding a monopoly over local and regional trade and contributing significantly to the growth and development of Port Fairy. William Rutledge was also highly active in almost all town affairs in the 1840s-1850s, variously serving not only as magistrate, mayor and alderman. It has been stated that Rutledge was "inextricable entwined with the early history and prosperity of Port Fairy for he instigated many of its activities."

By the late 1840s, Rutledge & Co. had constructed extensive premises that spread across both sides of the River Moyne (see also 7321-0092). The allotment on the western bank, however, served as the company's primary centre of operation and dominated the waterfront, including large bluestone warehouses, woolsheds, offices and substantial wharf facilities.

By the early-mid 1850s, the buildings at "Rutledge's Wharf" on the west bank included a large bluestone warehouse that ran along the southern boundary of the allotment, from Gipps Street to the riverfront where it extended north for ca. 55' / 3 gables and also had a large frontage to Gipps Street. A second large, double-storied stone building was situated along the northern boundary, with a large frontage to Gipps Street, which may have served as a dwelling. Along the waterfront a hip-roofed building and several skillion roofed sheds existed - both towards the centre of the lot and in the northern portion.

In the early 1860s, Rutledge & Co., began to run into trouble; not due to negligence or mismanagement but rather a result of developing strong competition for trade. A power struggle had begun with various Victorian pastoral, banking, mercantile, agricultural, mining, manufacturing and other interests attempting to gain economic advantage; yet the substantial business of Rutledge & Co. and its monopoly of much of the south-west region was something stood in the way. Rutledge & Co. had largely operated on advance and credit systems and in a few short years, rival companies and organisations accumulated the firms credit or "payment on demand" notes and insisted upon immediate cash payment. Rutledge himself was, during this time, attending to financial negotiations in England and upon his return found the company highly in debt and unable to be recovered.

In June 1862, Rutledge & Co. filed for voluntary insolvency at a deficiency of £54,668 (liabilities declared at £177,508 and assets of only £112,840). By 1866, all creditors were paid but the fall of the company had a devastating effect on the township of Port Fairy, including significant local financial depression and the transference of much regional business and trade to other townships.

Following the bankruptcy of the company, Rutledge & Co's property on the western bank of the Moyne River was sold under an indenture between Mrs. Rutledge, Flower, Alison & A H & J M Knight, George Webster (the Assignee) and S B Vaughn.

The wharf premises were initially leased by Richard Goldsborough, then by Lord Croker & Co., followed by William Bateman & Co., Warrnambool merchants, before succession by the mercant company of Challacombe & Bishop in 1869, who subsequently purchased the site with intentions on expanding one of the existing sheds to serve as a large coal shed.

An 1870s plan of the allotment depicts the two large stone buildings built by Rutledge and two smaller structures along the waterfront.

In 1880, the assets of Challacombe & Bishop were liquidated with the premises advertised for sale including a stone dwelling, stone stores, hydraulic press and crane. The property was shortly acquired by Melbourne merchants, Robert Showers & Co., who leased the site to Nipper & See before the recently incorporated Belfast & Koroit Steam Navigation Company took over the lease to provide a berth for their steamer, SS Casino.

In 1887, upon the expiry of the B&KSN Co. lease, the property was offered for tender, being described as having 3 floored grain and wood store, bond store, Shower's wharf. The site was leased to John See but in 1891, the main warehouse was virtually destroyed by a substantial fire. The loss of the building marked the end of business activity on the site. The southern portion was acquired by B&KSN but remained vacant for many years; the northern section was purchased by F.E. Golding & Jens Peterson and converted to residential uses.

Throughout the 20th century, the site was leased and used for a variety of purposes with the original buildings gradually falling into disrepair and being largely removed. A portion of the stone wall of the Rutledge's northern two storied building remains as part of the boundary of an easement path from Gipps Street to the Moyne.

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/>