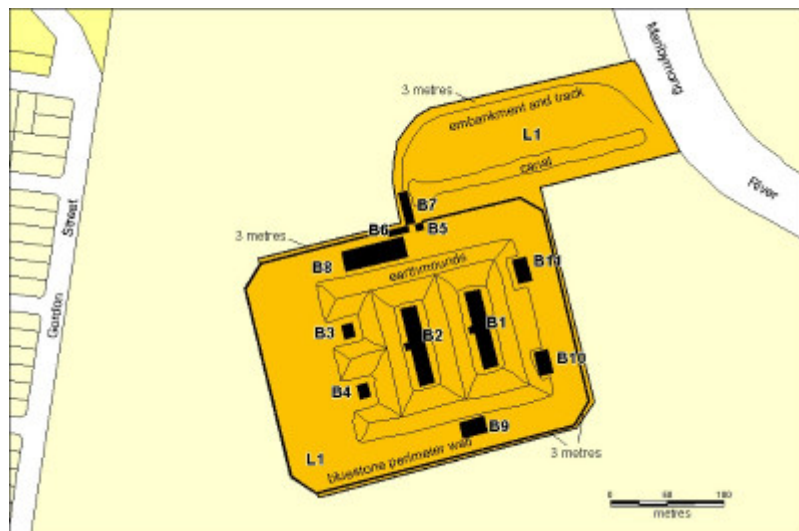


# JACK'S MAGAZINE



JACK'S MAGAZINE SOHE 2008 1 jacks magazine gordon street footscray magazine sep1995



jacks magazine plan

## Location

OFF LA SCALA AVENUE MARIBYRNONG, MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Municipality

MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1154

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO45

## VHR Registration

April 18, 1996

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 6, 1999

What is significant?

Jack's Magazine is a virtually intact complex of 19th century, bluestone, and gunpowder storage buildings with associated earth mound blast walls, tunnels, tramways, service buildings, loading dock and canal. The complex was designed by the Victorian Public Works Department under the supervision of William Wardell and built by contractor George Cornwell between 1876 and 1878. On Federation the complex passed to the Commonwealth which built several brick magazines between 1908 and 1921. The complex became part of the former Ammunition Factory Footscray from the 1920s.

How is it significant?

Jack's Magazine is of historical, architectural and scientific significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Jack's Magazine is historically significant as an extraordinary and essentially intact example of an extensive 19th century gunpowder storage facility. It is the largest gunpowder magazine complex ever constructed in Victoria. Its high degree of integrity, siting, layout, materials and form, clearly demonstrate the specialised function and process of the site for the storage of gunpowder. Its size is a direct manifestation of the importance of mining in Victoria's history. Its canal and loading dock are extremely rare in Victoria.

Jack's Magazine is historically important for its catalytic influence on the location of the bulk of Australia's nationally important munitions manufacturing capability in the western region of Melbourne.

Jack's Magazine is important as an example of architectural design by the Public Works Department under William Wardell. The consistently high quality of bluestone work throughout the magazine buildings, tunnel portals and perimeter wall constitute an extraordinary example of the stonemason's craft.

Jack's Magazine is technologically (scientifically) important for its ability to demonstrate, on the one site, changing approaches to the storage of explosives. The heavy masonry buildings are typical of early magazine design, but the extensive use of earth mound blast walls was a new development in Victorian magazine design in the 1870s. Finally, the relatively light construction of the Commonwealth magazines illustrates the contemporary approach to the problem.

Construction dates                      1878,

Architect/Designer                      Wardell, William W.,

Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	JACKS MAGAZINE, SALTWATER RIVER POWDER MAGAZINE, AMMUNITION FACTORY,
Hermes Number	3770
Property Number	

## History

Associated People: Tenant DEPT OF DEFENCE;

Saltwater RIVER POWDER MAGAZINE (JACK'S MAGAZINE)

Some preliminary historical notes (1 Feb 89)

Patrick Miller

Context

Victoria was a gold-mining colony. After the easily-won alluvial gold ran out in the late 1850s gold-mining changed in nature to deep-lead mining carried on by companies rather than individuals. Mining, farming and building all require the extensive use of blasting powder.

There was no gunpowder factory in the Australian colonies, All powder had to be imported in ships. The Gunpowder Act 1864 was concerned with the importation transport and storage of gunpowder. Ships with a specified amount aboard had to fly a special flag and anchor beyond the normal anchorage. Powder could only be landed during daylight hours and had to be deposited in a government-controlled magazine at the owner's expense. The maximum amount of powder that dealers were allowed on the premises was 1 cwt (22 lb or 10 kg). Any more was required to be stored in government magazines at a rental of 1 penny per 10 lbs per week.

Magazines at ports were controlled by the Department of Trade and Customs; magazines inland were controlled by the Department of Mines; still others were under the control of the military. There were several magazines in Melbourne prior to the construction of the Saltwater River Powder Magazine at Footscray 1877-78 but none as extensive as the new magazine.

But the long era of gunpowder was drawing to a close. In 186 the Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel (183-1896) perfected a process of stabilising the highly volatile explosive nitro-glycerine. Almost immediately mining turned toward the new explosives such as Nobel's dynamite. Nobel started factories in Australia in the 1870s. Black powder was still used for some blasting and for the manufacture of ammunition.

In 1879, a total 806,74 lbs of gunpowder was imported into Victoria of which 746,220 lbs were of blasting powder. In the same year 141,000 lbs of dynamite was imported.

But even with regard to ammunition, technology was catching up with gunpowder. New, more efficient and more smokeless propellant based on nitro-cellulose compounds such a cordite meant a revolution in ammunition production.

The Magazines

The site for the magazine was chosen as a result of a Board of Inquiry held in 1872. The requirements were remoteness from housing, a protected site (preferably in a valley), and proximity to water transport. The Saltwater (later Maribyrnong River at Footscray was ideal on all counts.

The magazines were designed by the Department of Public Works. Moore claims it was by William Wardell but I have see no direct evidence of this. The original contract called for the erection of bluestone magazines, earthmound blast walls, entry buildings, perimeter wall, tramway, canal and landing stages, and was performed by George Cornwell.

The magazines were under the control of the Department of Trade and Customs from their opening until 1900 when the were transferred briefly to the Chief Secretary's Department. They were known as the Saltwater River Powder Magazine(s). There was a usual staff of three consisting of a keeper, a cooper and a labourer. There were three cottage in the area of the carpark to the north of the magazines.

Because of the risk of fire from sparks, special clothing had to be worn including felt slippers. All metal fittings which had a potential for causing sparks had to be non-ferrous. The buildings were elaborately protected from lightning strikes.

The land to the south of the magazines was taken up by the Colonial Ammunition Company in 188 who produced the first ammunition manufactured in Australia. The cartridges were filled initially with black powder, no doubt from the magazines nearby, and later with imported cordite and then with cordite from the government factories at Maribyrnong.

Transfer to Commonwealth

The Australian Constitution.

Section 69 ...the departments of custom and excise in each State shall become transferred to the Commonwealth on its establishment.

Section 8 When any department of the public service of a State is transferred to the Commonwealth -(i)All property of the State of any kind used exclusively in connexion with the department shall become vested in the Commonwealth...

The transfer of staff and property to the Commonwealth was not altogether automatic or co-ordinated to happen on 1 July 1901. There was a period of

joint responsibility which continued in varying degrees up until the finalisation of transfer in 1916. The staff of the Saltwater River Magazine appear in the Victoria Public Service List in 1901. In 190 the magazine is not mentioned but the staff are still listed (the keeper Albert Balwyn is listed as the keeper of the Truganina [Altona magazine]). The Commonwealth Gazette 38/190 announced the appointment of Edward Fry as a magazine storeman under the Department of Defence, Victoria but this may be at Maribyrnong. The three staff of the Saltwater River Magazine disappear completely from the Victorian Public Service List by 1903.

It seems to me that the property was transferred as a Customs concern to the Commonwealth who immediately took it as a Defence concern. Certainly it was the Commonwealth that started to build facilities for fuzes and small-arms ammunition storage.

**Significance**

The major significance of the precinct lies in the original bluestone buildings, earthmounds, landing stage, perimeter walls, tramway and canal, built in the period 1877-78. The massiveness and harmony of this utilitarian complex project the unity of purpose of its design - the safe storage of gunpowder. The precinct is a response to both the importance of mining to the economy of 19th century Victoria and to the strict control that the Government exercised over the industry.

The later additions by the Commonwealth are related to the basic use of the site but differ in context and motivation, The Commonwealth has always used the site as a part of its defence production capability. As such it has significance in the story of the growth of that industry but this should be seen in the light of the notion that, had the magazines not existed in their built form, then the Commonwealth would not have constructed a similar facility.

## Extent of Registration

### AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic Building No. 1154:

Jack's Magazine (Saltwater River Gunpowder Magazine), ADI Footscray Facility, Gordon Street, Footscray, City of Maribyrnong. Extent:

To the extent of:

1. All of the buildings known as Jack's Magazine marked B1 to B11 (explosives magazines) on Plan 605307 endorsed by the Chair, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council.
2. All of the land marked L1 on Plan 605307 endorsed by the Chair, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council being part of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 3381 Folio 150. [Victoria Government Gazette No. G15 18 April 1996 p.956]

*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/>*