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# FORMER MELBOURNE HARBOR TRUST WORKSHOPS

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## Location

NELSON PLACE WILLIAMSTOWN, HOBSONS BAY CITY

## Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0552

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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### Interpretation of Site

Intact piers and slipways, and harbour trust buildings, large mound of roughcut bluestone could be the remains of a previous slipway of jetty. The site has significance as an area of almost continuous boatbuilding activity since at least 1856 until the closure of the Harbor Trust Workshops. The site is also a unique example of an extant and substantially intact harbour workshop facility. State Level Significance - part on VHR H1790

### Other Names

ISBISTARS SLIP, GRAYS PIER, MELBOURNE HARBOUR TRUST WORKSHOPS SLIPWAY #2, MELBOURNE HARBOUR TRUST WORKSHOPS SLIPWAY #1, MELBOURNE HARBOUR TRUST WORKSHOPS SHIPWRIGHTS SHOP AND SLIPWAY, UNIDENTIFIED BLUESTONE MOUND (SLIPWAY OR PIER BASE), WILLIAMSTOWN MORGUE, WRIGHTS SLIPWAY, WRIGHT AND ORRS BOATBUILDERS, WORKSHOP JETTY, WORKSHOP PIER, BOYD JETTY, BLUNTS BOATBUILDERS (PRE 1910), COMMISSIONER PIER,

### Hermes Number

13941

## History

Two parallel structures shown in 1855 (Jones), are identified by Hall (1856) as a stone jetty (H7822-0551) and a slipway. The site at this time was leased to William Isbistar, and was marked for development as a patent slip, which was completed by 1858 (Ross). By 1890, the facility is identified as Wright's Slip, for a time was identified as Gray's Pier. A contemporary photograph shows the City of Launceston is shown on Wrights slip in 1864. The area of the slip lies on reclaimed land. The site was occupied by a succession of boatbuilders including Wright and Orrs, and finally Blunts, who moved to their current location when the Harbour Trust took over the location around 1910.

Isbistar's Slip/ Wrights Slipway -The Government dockyard was established on the SE half of the site sometime around 1856 and is shown as a 'marine yard' in 1894 (Cox). Wrights Slipway site was taken over by the Melbourne Harbour Trust in 1902, who upgraded the slipway to safely take a 250 ton vessel. The site was then leased to Messrs. Gray Brothers for five years, who agreed to meet MHT costs to improve the facility. The Melbourne Harbour Trust took over both sites in WWII and established a works depot there, when the Commonwealth again took possession of the Harbour Trust Dockyard (now the Tennex Dockyards (H7822-0554) in 1943. The site is now managed by Parks Victoria

### MHT Workshop Facilities

Slipway # 2-A modern slipway was built in 1942 to replace Wrights slipway was 240 ft in length, and was used by the MHT to repair and maintain their vessels. The slipway is capable of raising vessels up to 300 tons.

Many of these buildings are still extant, and Wrights slip has probably been incorporated into the modern major slipway and Workshop Pier that still exists on site. Between Boyd and Anne Street Piers lies a slipway (adjacent to Anne St Pier), and there is also evidence of what may be piled bluestone to the west of this slip, which may be the remains of an early jetty or slipway base. No documentary historical evidence was located to explain this structure, and hence further work is required to ascertain its origins.

Workshop Pier-This pier was constructed in 1942 on the former site of Wrights slipway, and was described as a timber jetty 340 ft long by 20 feet with the outer end 30 ft in width. This jetty was essential to the MHT after its transfer from the Dockyards in WWII. A Railway connected the pier with the workshops, and a gantry crane was used for loading and repair work.

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Commissioners Jetty: No documentation was found for this small structure, which is timber piled and decked. Recent work has renewed the buffers.

Boyd Pier: A wharf, presumed to be Boyd Jetty, 250 feet by 20 feet, was mentioned as being half completed half completed in a 1920 MHT report (Hermes Register HV1790). The same report refers to the construction of a rubble wall, and land reclamation works being commenced. The timber piled pier was 250 ft x 20 ft.

Shipwrights Shop and Slipway # 1 (30 ton slip)-A timber framed workshop was relocated to this site in 1943, and an associated slipway was also constructed sometime around that time. The slipway is 240 ft long and capable of handling 30 ton vessels, and was constructed so that vessels could be hauled up through the doorway of the boat builders shop

Williamstown Morgue-Reputedly after the death of Robert Deanes at sea in 1857, a local newspaper lamented the lack of facilities for handling corpses in the colony, as inquests at that time were held in local hotels. After

much lobbying within the community, the government finally built a morgue made from local bluestone in 1859. The Morgue originally stood in the Customs House Reserve, but after Robert Wright complained of its proximity to Gem Pier and disembarking ferry passengers, it was (at his expense) moved to its present location on Anne St in 1873. It was closed in 1925 due to poor sanitary facilities and occupational health concerns (Victorian Heritage Register, H1512).

*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/>*