
MIDDLE ISLAND LIGHTSTATION COMPLEX

Location

MIDDLE ISLAND WARRNAMBOOL, WARRNAMBOOL CITY

Municipality

WARRNAMBOOL CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0088

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site

A number of building foundations were observed atop of the island which are being undermined and deflated by ongoing excavations of the site by birds. Buildings had been removed in the 1870s and rebuilt at Flagstaff Hill. Site appears to have been left to the birds and local kids. Some re-use of the masonry to form path in places. The buildings were that of the residence for the lighthouse keepers, the chart room, the base of the lighthouse, a cistern and an external privy.

Archaeological Significance

Sub-floor deposits likely to be present but disturbed due to burrowing activities by birds. This does not diminish the value of the resources greatly as this was a single phase site with a relatively short period of occupation. Unsure if the privy was a long drop. If so there is potential for further archaeological deposits to be present. The archaeological significance of the site lies in its potential to inform us of the lives and lifestyles of the light house keepers and their families. This archaeological information would make a useful comparison with those lighthouse sites in more remote areas.

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| Historical Significance | The former lighthouse complex of Middle Island represents the importance accorded to Warrnambool as a port and regional centre. It forms part of the early maritime infrastructure of the port of Warrnambool. |
| Hermes Number | 149742 |
| Property Number | |

History

1857, a Select Committee of the Legislative Council of Victoria recommended the construction of two lighthouses for the harbour of Warrnambool; one on Middle Island and one on the northern shore of Lady Bay.

Construction commenced in January 1859, using basalt imported from Salt Water River, Melbourne. By August 1859, all structures on the island were completed, including the lighthouse, the main cottage, a second cottage and a privy. Two large iron tanks were installed to store fresh water.

A description of the Middle Island lighthouse issued near completion stated that the light was a fourth class catadioptric fixed white light, situated at approximately lat 36 deg, 26 mins S, long 142 deg, 32 min E; 78 feet above mean sea level and would be visible to seaward from all points of the compass for approximately 13 nautical miles during clear weather.

On the 1st of September 1859, the head lighthouse keeper, Robert Deverell and his assistant, John Alexander moved into the cottages and at 5.33 pm, the light was exhibited for the first time, fuelled by colza oil.

In December 1859, the iron lighter, Alfred, was scuttled below Middle Island to form a boat jetty. A flagstaff was installed in 1862.

By 1869, despite maintenance and repairs over the preceeding years, it was becoming clear that the siting of the buildings on Middle Island presented many problems due to extreme weather conditions and erosion. In 1871 a temporary light was constructed on Middle Island, and the light apparatus from the old light moved to the temporary structure. The cottages and storeroom were demolished. Most of the basalt was salvaged and the keepers' cottages were reconstructed on Flagstaff Hill adjacent to the upper obelisk. The foundations of the buildings on Middle Island were left in situ.

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/>