
PORT FAIRY GASWORKS SITE

Location

52 COX STREET AND 18A-20 JAMES STREET PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0064

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO13

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site

It would appear that the dwellings currently on the site of the former Gasworks were built in the decade after the works closed down. The house on the corner at least, appears to be on a lightly raised building platform suggesting that structures associated with the gasworks were levelled and the house built on top. This may have extended across the entire site.

Archaeological Significance	<p>The archaeological remains of the Victoria Store with its subsequent occupations would provide information on the retail aspect of Port Fairy in the first decades of existence with respect to what was available to the settlers both in terms of essential and luxury items. Refuse pits associated with the period that the site was leased as a butcher shop would be of interest to see what cuts of meat were on offer to the inhabitants of the town. The arrangement of the structures associated with the gasworks could contribute much to the understanding of the efficiency and capacity of the enterprise over time as well as the changes in technology related to this industry.</p> <p>What can be expected to be present on the site would be the footings of buildings and structures associated with the operation of the gasworks. The remains of the earlier Victoria Store building and associated yard, garden features as well as refuse/cess pits may well be present but heavily impacted from the gasworks period. The well known to be on the site should still be present though completely filled with rubbish and/or fill. It is probably brick lined.</p>
Historical Significance	<p>The history and development of the site is reflective of the changes in the development of the town and the changes in technology. Initial occupation of the allotments were by small businesses which were short lived and unsustainable as throughout the latter part of the 19th century the retail sector coalesced around Bank and Sackville Streets.</p> <p>The establishment of the gasworks in the 1880s signals the arrival of lighting and heating to Port Fairy with the technology eventually becoming redundant by the middle years of the 20th century. The introduction of local gasworks to country towns during the 19th century was highly regarded; not only for its convenience but as a sign of the town's advancement and modernity.</p>
Other Names	VICTORIA STORE,
Hermes Number	149841
Property Number	

History

The first known structure on this site was 'Victoria Store' built by storekeeper John Frizzell sometime after 1847. The building fronted Cox Street and was situated approximately 30 metres from the corner. In 1856 the premises was taken over by Robert Grosert who opened a butcher shop. The shop appears to have been returned to a general store in 1858, and consisted of a large shop and residence, with an enclosed garden and well. The site was acquired by the Borough Council in 1864 and the existing buildings demolished. The allotment then remained largely unused throughout the 1870s.

The site was selected for the Port Fairy gasworks in 1880. In 1882, gas engineer, Mr Thomas Bowman, CE was engaged by council to prepare plans and specifications for the gasworks. Bowman was a successful and prominent figure in the development of the 19th Victoria gas industry, and was responsible for other regional gasworks.

In 1884, construction commenced. The main Port Fairy gasworks building and the gasometer tank were constructed of locally-made brick. By early 1885, the gasworks were completed and in March that year, a ceremony of ignition was performed by Mrs W Earle (mayoress).

By the 1930s the Port Fairy gasworks were in a serious financial position. An improvement scheme did not re-invigorate economic production and the gasworks continued to operate at a loss. They struggled until the 1950s when it became clear that maintaining a gas supply as an amenity to Port Fairy was proving too great a burden on rates, particularly given the spread of electricity. In 1958 the fire was extinguished and the gasworks buildings demolished. The land was sub-divided and sold as residential allotments.

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/>