

# LADY BAY POWDER MAGAZINE SITE

**Location**

OFF HICKFORD PARADE WARRNAMBOOL, WARRNAMBOOL CITY

**Municipality**

WARRNAMBOOL CITY

**Level of significance**

Heritage Inventory Site

**Heritage Inventory (HI) Number**

H7421-0015

**Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site	The area where the site is located is on top of a low flat topped hill. The area is covered with tall grass and occasional thick and tall bushes. No remains of the magazine were identified
Archaeological Significance	The archaeological significance of the site lies in its potential to inform on the manner of the construction of the magazine. What materials were used and how they were bonded to form the structure would affect the security of the explosives stored within as well as the minimisation of collateral damage in the event of an explosion.
Historical Significance	Powder magazines are a common feature 19th ports as explosives were used for a variety of reasons such as blasting reefs to widen and deepen shipping channels and anchorages. Due to their very dangerous nature these buildings were sited in isolated areas. Its relocation in the 1870s from a hill adjacent to the Merri River near Harris Street to this site shows the increasing development around the former location and the relative isolation of the new site at this time. The magazine may have stored the munitions for the battery at Flagstaff Hill for a period.

Hermes Number 149845

## History

In 1876, the Victorian Board of Land and Works put out a call for tenders for the construction of a powder magazine at Warrnambool. This facility was to serve as storage for explosives being transported in and out of the port of Warrnambool, under the control and supervision of a specifically appointed harbour and custom official; the Keeper of the Powder Magazine. In October 1876, the magazine was constructed on the northern shore of Lady Bay, likely from local brick or bluestone.

This magazine represented the second harbour explosives store; an earlier powder magazine had been constructed in 1859 by B. Wycherley on a ridge above the north-eastern shore of the bay, possibly prompted by the significant increase in transportation of gunpowder and explosives associated with the Victorian Gold Rush. However, the area around the earlier magazine had developed significantly with much surrounding residential and industrial occupation. It seems likely that a new, more isolated location was thus deemed necessary.

Plans of Warrnambool dating to the 1880s show the powder magazine situated on the northern shore of Lady Bay near the Hopkins River, within an area reserved for "public purposes". This was well away from residential occupation.

During the mid-1880s, the position of the powder magazine at Warrnambool was the cause of some concern. Two major war scares in 1877-1878 and 1885 resulting from Russia's expansion eastward and the expected declaration of war between Britain and Russia had spurred intensive investigation and development of Victoria's coastal defences. The location of the powder magazine was noted as making an "admirable target for a shell". No action appears to have been taken, despite public agitation, as the magazine is still recorded in the same position in the 1890s. It appears that the magazine remained in operation until sometime during the early-mid 20th century.

*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/>*