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# Saltwater River Gunpowder Magazine



Jacks Mag A.JPG



Jacks MagB.JPG



HO45(1) - Jack's Magazine.JPG



HO45(2) - Jack's Magazine.JPG

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## Location

1 Gordon Street, MARIBYRNONG VIC 3032 - Property No 2038000200

## Municipality

MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO45

## Heritage Listing

Maribyrnong City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The powder magazine is of National historical, architectural, and social significance as by far, the largest and most impressive of its type which demonstrates both the early concern for the defence of the colony of Victoria and the safety requirements of storage of explosives for both military and commercial uses (Criterion A3). The canal and its associated tramway is unique in Australia while the vaulted bluestone magazines demonstrate a technology concerned with confining an explosion rather than the more modern deflection and absorption principal.

(Criterion B2) Purported to be designed by William Wardell, inspector General of Public Works, it represents a distinctive architectural solution to a rare type of building (Criterion F1). The fine bluestone masonry provides the prime illustration of Footscray's foremost (stone) industry and remains in a remarkably untouched condition (Criterion D1). The more modest twentieth century buildings show the development of the complex as part of the defence supply industry which was unique to Maribyrnong up to World War II.

Jacks Magazine has become a social icon in the district as the most visible focus for the recollections of thousands of people who worked in the now demolished munitions factories.

Its role in determining the eventual form of industrial development in the area has indirectly affected all residents since (Criterion G1). Remnant native vegetation survives on the escarpment and within the enclosure as a consequence of the quarantine effect of its past use, while its isolation from other development is an important aspect of its visual setting (Criterion E1).

Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) criteria

The Australian Heritage Commission criteria consist of a set of eight criteria which cover social, aesthetic, scientific, and historic values. Each criterion has sub-criteria written specifically for cultural or natural values. The relevant criteria are:

*A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.*

Built into the side of the valley with unique enclosed spaces, vistas and architectural and landscape treatments, it is clearly a unique cultural feature.

*A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.*

Jacks Magazine is a unique cultural feature reflecting gold rush prosperity, colonial government regulation, aesthetic achievements in local bluestone, and the origins of the defence supply industry in the region.

*B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.*

The storage of gunpowder demanded strict control and specialist architectural and engineering solutions, which were all made redundant with the introduction of dynamite about the time the magazine was built.

*C2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.*

The Victorian gold rushes gave the impetus for introduction of bonded control over gunpowder imports on a large scale resulting in this magazine, which then became the catalyst for the explosives and ammunition industry which grew around it to become Australia's Arsenal.

*D2 Importance in demonstrating the principle characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique).*

The place demonstrates the role of explosives in mining and warfare and its control by government. The magazines and perimeter wall are the ultimate expression of functional bluestone construction

*E1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.*

The unique buildings in their special landscape setting presents an unsurpassed aesthetic quality.

*F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.*

Technically, the magazine represents the high point in design for safe storage of explosives with a high level of artistic design in the forms, finishes, and detailing of the buildings.

*G1 Importance as places highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations.*

Jacks Magazine has become a local icon for the industrial and military history of the region, and focus of the

recollection of thousands of people who worked in the now demolished munitions factories.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Maribyrnong - Maribyrnong Heritage Review, Jill Barnard, Graeme Butler, Francine Gilfedder & Gary Vines, 2000; Maribyrnong - City of Footscray Urban Conservation Study, Graeme Butler, 1989;
Construction dates	1878,
Other Names	Jacks Magazine, Maribyrnong Explosives Depot,
Hermes Number	28373
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

Two substantial bluestone magazines with twin vault interiors, buttressed walls and gabled, slate roofs surrounded by nine metre high earth blast mounds. The high bluestone perimeter wall is of large coursed axe-faced blocks, stepping up the slope. There are two smaller slate-roofed bluestone decanting buildings on the west side of the complex and the timber and galvanised iron unloading buildings at the head of the canal and tramway. These connect with the river, where there was originally a second smaller jetty of which only sunken piles remain.

The canal has been blocked at the junction with the river. Additional smaller magazines built during the Second World War on the east side of the blast mounds, complete the complex.

Stone lined, semicircular-arched tunnels connect each of the magazines with the loading shed through the blast mounds. Much of the original tramway system is still in place, although in disrepair and dismantled in parts.

This is a powder magazine complex with original buildings of exceptional size and massive bluestone construction, reflecting the aspirations of the colony and aspects of a now obsolete technology. The canal by which the complex was serviced is unusual in Australian terms, and forms a part of the place, as do the tramway lines, the blast mounds, perimeter walls, the zig-zag access roads with its remnants Telford cobbled pavement and gutters, and the more modest brick magazines of the early twentieth century. Also within the boundary walls, remnant vegetation and some introduced landscape have been preserved and protected.

## Physical Conditions

Good, some former vents (for relieving pressure in a blast and ventilating the buildings) have been opened out into windows. internal painting is only fair, and some roofing is in need of repair. The tramway has been dismantled in parts.

## Integrity

Generally original apart from the alterations to the loading wing, a later entrance through the wall, and minor changes to the magazines such as services and window treatments.

## Physical Description 2

Located in the Maribyrnong River valley, which originally provided natural protection, also adjacent to the Colonial, later Commonwealth ammunition factory, now demolished, and in the centre of the 20th century munitions industries of Maribyrnong.

## Historical Australian Themes

### Thematic context

**Australian Principal Theme** Providing for the common defence

**PAHT Subtheme:** Going to war

**Local Theme** Storing gunpowder

## Physical Description 3

**Creation date(s):** 1878

**Heritage Significance** *national*

**Map (Melway)** 28 B11

### Boundary description

Maribyrnong River, the fence on the north side of the Commonwealth land, the top of the escarpment and the south wall with a curtilage of 50 metres.

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Commonwealth (ADI)

*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/>*