

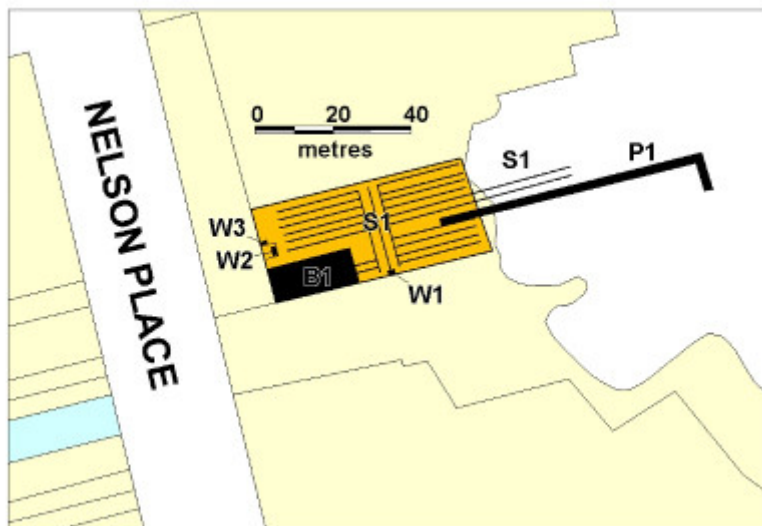
## BLUNTS BOATYARD AND SLIPWAY



BLUNTS BOATYARD AND  
SLIPWAY SOHE 2008



1 blunts boatyard slipway  
traverser & shed



blunts boatyard and slipway plan

### Location

150 NELSON PLACE WILLIAMSTOWN, HOBSONS BAY CITY

### Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1885

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO6

## VHR Registration

July 20, 2000

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 9, 2009

What is significant?

Williamstown was the site of concentrated boat building activity from the 1850s on. There were at various times a number of large scale boat builders and repairers, both government and private, and the infrastructure to support this activity. The foreshore along Nelson Place was particularly suited to small boat building and repair activities. Williamstown was right on the bay but at the same time sheltered, and slipways for small vessels could operate in all weathers. A large number of small boat builders have operated from a variety of premises along the foreshore over the last 150 years.

The Blunt family's business has been operating in the area since the 1880s. The family began boat-building in Geelong in 1858. The business moved to Williamstown c1880 and operated from a yard with shed, pier and slipway on the waterfront between Ann Street and Thompson Street. Many 'finely build' craft were constructed there including 24 sailing vessels. In 1925 their lease was resumed by the government for land reclamation. The current boat-yard site on Nelson Place was taken up in 1926. The site had been used from 1858 till at least 1877 for steam sawmill operations, and from 1913 to 1926 by motor engineers.

The timber shed, and two adjacent sheds of similar design on the Commonwealth owned naval cadet site adjacent to the west, date from around 1913. The slipway system occupies most of the yard. The original slipway was reputedly constructed using elements from the first floating dock to be used in Port Phillip, though there is no above water evidence of this. The slip leads to a three rail traverser system which is operated by a hand winch and which allows access to six storage/work bays. Another set of rails leads into the shed. The trusses of the seaward end of the shed have been modified to allow sheltered work on larger vessels. There are a number of cradles of various ages and materials in the yard. The main slipway winch is of a type likely to have come from a ship. An older main winch is still located nearby. The long timber pier has a number of moorings and is of a height suited to small vessels.

How is it significant?

Blunts Boatyard and Slipway is of historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Blunts Boatyard and Slipway is of historical significance as a rare operating example of the many small scale boat-building and replairing businesses which have operated on the Williamstown foreshore from the 1850s on. The use, equipment and layout of the yard remain similar to that of earlier in the twentieth century, while many of the other yards have disappeared or have been changed more substantially. The Blunt family boat building business has operated continuously in Willimastown since the 1880s, and in Victoria since the 1850s.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions:

1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

EXEMPTIONS:

- \* Repairs and maintenance which replace like with like
- \* Repainting of previously painted surfaces
- \* Replacement and installation of electrical wiring

|                         |                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Construction dates      | 1926,             |
| Heritage Act Categories | Registered place, |
| Other Names             | BLUNT'S BOATYARD, |
| Hermes Number           | 6040              |
| Property Number         |                   |

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## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The ship-yard facilities at Williamstown grew to accommodate a wide variety of types of shipping, from small to large vessels.

A number of small to medium scale slipways operated in Williamstown from the 1850s. J.J. Legge built a slip for small craft in the early 1850s on a site opposite the Anglican Church. This was taken over by Knights, who built craft for the shell-grit and Tasmanian & King Island trades. (Evans p13; Elsum p38) William Knight died in 1903 and William Junior carried on till 1960. The business is still owned by members of the Knight family. (Evans p92), There is still a slip on site and one old shed, though very little evidence of the earlier phases remains. The rest of the site has been considerably redeveloped and the current activity and plant has little continuity with the original. J. J. Savages, another old boat-yard just north of Blunts, has been heavily redeveloped.

William White built skiffs and dinghies from c1854. He was joined by his brother George and formed W. & G White in 1856. W. & G. Whites was the best known and most productive of the early medium scale boat builders, producing schooners, tugs, lighters, light boats, and steamers for the NZ west coast trade. Their business operated on a site between Pasco & Parker Streets. This site was later taken over by Naval boatshed and jetty. (Evans 1982, p14; Evans 1969 p40)

Gunns slip was located immediately north of Ferguson St. (Evans p92). Captain Samuel Mathews had a Floating dock and shipyard at Point Gellibrand 1850s. (Evans p93)

Williamstown also rapidly became a site for slips for larger vessels. In 1855 the first local patent slip was erected by William Isbister. It could take one 1000 tons vessel or two of 500 tons. The slip was 620 feet long, with 160 feet of carriage. The slip was leased c1859 by Wright, Orr and George Duke. Mr Robert Wright is also noted as having erected a slip c1858 and as having joined with C.F. Orr at this time in the Melbourne Dock Company. The company operated until 1874, when Duke dropped out (Elsum p38 & 89 & 109; Evans p90-91). This slip is now enclosed in the Harbour Trust Yard (now Melbourne Ports Authority). (Evans p14) (See also MMBW plan c1920)

The government purchased and erected a Morton's Patent Slip which had been intended for Launceston c1858 (Elsum p38). This was reputedly the largest in the in the southern hemisphere, with a 200ft cradle. The slip was leased to Dove & Oswald in 1859, and to Oswald and Inglis from 1862. Shipwright Robert Wright also undertook works to ships on this slip. The government patent slip was dismantled 1911. The site was converted to shipbuilding berths and is now the No.1 Building Berth in the Naval Dockyard. (Evans p92)

At first the Harbour Department used the Government slip. Later a dedicated slipway and workshops were built between the Gem & Ann St piers. The revenue cutter Falcon was built here 1864. The Harbour Trust leased the site in 1878. (Evans p92) Harbour trust sheds and workshops which were built in the 1880s and relocated here in the 1920s are registered H1790

The decline of sail and growth of steamships meant end of patent slips for large vessels. The stresses caused by hauling up slipway could damage steamship structures, and side mounted paddles made it awkward to fit them on a cradle. The Melbourne Steamship Company operated a floating pier adjacent to Ann Street pier. This floating dock took 70 vessels annually, and several steamers and a dredge were built there (Evans 1982 p90).

### History of Place:

The first boat builder's yard to be operated by the Blunt family was established in Geelong in 1858. The boat-building firm of Blunt's moved to Williamstown c1880. (Evans p14)

Their first yard was on the Bay side of Nelson Place between Ann street and Thompson Street, with shed, pier and slipway. Many finely built' craft were constructed there including 24 sailing vessels. In 1925 the land they leased was resumed by the government to be reclaimed from the sea. The boatyard shed was moved to the north (now the Yacht club site) but burned down soon after. An *Argus* article of 31 May 1926 (p.6) reports that Mr Blunts building on Nelson Place had burnt down almost completely, along with a boats, kauri and bullock timber and tools inside. Losses exceeded 800 pounds. The article also states that the Blunts had been in business for 60 years (which puts their start at 1866) and that Blunt and his three sons had manufactured more than 20 specially equipped craft "for use by missionaries in the south sea islands".

The 150 Nelson Place site was occupied by two steam sawmills operators from 1858 to 1877 (the chimney of the sawmill is visible in a c1874 photo of Nelson Place). From 1913 to 1926 three successive motor engineer businesses operated from the site. (Source: Study for contaminated land) The shed now on the site, and the two sheds of similar scale next doors on the naval cadets site (Commonwealth owned) were built in 1913. (MMBW Williamstown map c1918) These may have been built for the motor engineers.

When Clem Blunt Boatbuilders took over the site in 1926, a slipway was constructed using materials from the first floating dock that had operated in Port Phillip (Evans 1982 p14). Because of ongoing material replacement, the only place where original material from the floating dock might remain is on the underwater part of the slipway.

The yard continued in the Blunt family under the names of a series of different family members up until the present guise of Greg Blunt Boatbuilders. Blunts reputedly built power launches for use by missionaries in the New Hebrides- this was probably post WWII

Chapmans Steam Sawmill 1858-66

Macro's Steam Sawmill 1867-77

A.G. Dow Motor Engineer 1913-1920 (Shed dates from this period.)

Thomas Bros motor engineer 1920-24

Arther Dean motor engineer 1924-6

Clem Blunt (Senior) boatbuilders 1926-32 (Clement Blunt, a founder of the firm, died in 1932)

Clem & Arthur Blunt boatbuilders 1932-73

Robert Blunt Boatbuilders 1974-91

Robert Blunt Estate Boatbuilders 1991-92

Greg Blunt Boatbuilders 1993-present

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

### **Criterion A**

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

The Blunt family boat building business has operated continuously in Williamstown since the 1880s, and in Victoria since the 1850s.

### **Criterion B**

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

Blunts Boatyard and Slipway is a rare operating example of the many small scale boat-building and repairing businesses which have operated on the Williamstown foreshore from the 1850s on.

### **Criterion C**

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

### **Criterion D**

The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

The use, equipment and layout of Blunts boatyard remain similar to that of earlier in the twentieth century, while many of the other local yards have disappeared or have been changed more substantially.

### **Criterion E**

The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

### **Criterion F**

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

### **Criterion G**

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations.

### **Criterion H**

Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All of the building marked B1, the slipway system marked S1, the pier marked P1 and the winches marked W1, W2 and W3 as shown on Diagram No.1885 held by the Executive Director.

2. All of the land shown as L1 on Diagram No.1885 held by the Executive Director, being the area covered by Lease 486 from the Port of Melbourne Authority.

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*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/>*