
SALTWATER CROSSING SITE



City Link Bridge Inn,
Excavation looking north

Location

MARIBYRNONG RIVER AND MORELAND STREET AND BUNBURY STREET AND WINGFIELD STREET AND NAPIER STREET AND HOPKINS STREET AND MARIBYRNONG STREET FOOTSCRAY, MARIBYRNONG CITY

Municipality

MARIBYRNONG CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0002

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 15, 2005

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:

The Saltwater River Crossing site and Footscray wharves are located on the west bank of the Maribyrnong River, running south from Hopkins Street, Footscray. The site contains significant archaeological remains which have

the capacity to demonstrate the sequence of development of the area in terms of the presence of public houses, residences and intensive industry. Included in the site are a number of significant above ground structures including the red brick construction associated with the Michaelis Hallenstein tannery operation, two bluestone cottages in Bunbury Street, the former Schwartz Boathouse and Henderson House.

The Saltwater River Crossing Site and Footscray Wharves are of historical, archaeological and social importance to the State of Victoria.

The Saltwater River Crossing site is historically important as it has a close association with the earliest stages of the history of Victoria, notably the 1803 visit of Acting Surveyor-General Charles Grimes. The site is also associated with the establishment of one of the early transport routes which connected Melbourne to regional areas, the road to Williamstown and Geelong, and with the subsequent westward expansion of Melbourne through the settlement and growth of the township of Footscray. The site illustrates the important historical role played by punt operators in the development of the Port Phillip Settlement and the integral relationship between the provision of transport facilities and the establishment of public houses. The Footscray wharves demonstrate the contributory importance of the Saltwater (Maribyrnong) River to the expansion of maritime transport and the development of industry. The Former Saltwater River Crossing site and Footscray wharves exhibit a remarkable range of cultural features representing the development of transport routes, the prominent role of public houses, the establishment of the township of Footscray, residential and industrial development, and maritime activity. The site also clearly illustrates the distinctive cultural landscape arising from the growth of industry and retains above ground structures which contribute to this landscape, notably Henderson House, the cottages in Bunbury Street, Schwartz's Boathouse and the original fabric of the Michaelis Hallenstein Tannery, visible as part of a recent brick recreational feature.

The Saltwater River Crossing site is archaeologically significant as it retains subsurface and above ground evidence of an event which in itself was to become uncommon, the establishment of a major punt crossing on the Yarra River with the subsequent growth of a hotel precinct. It is the site of one of only two major inner Melbourne archaeological investigations undertaken to date. The Former Saltwater River Crossing site is also rare as the archaeological evidence, together with the above ground structural remains, provides a comprehensive insight into the physical growth of one of Melbourne's early suburbs and its evolution into a major industrial site. The archaeological investigation of the site contributes to an understanding of the development and occupation of the area. Those features already excavated have the potential for public interpretation which would provide an outstanding illustration of both the historical significance of the site and the role of archaeology in expanding our knowledge and understanding of the history of Victoria. The site has acknowledged potential for further archaeological investigation which could provide further details relating to the occupation of the site and answer specific research questions. Further archaeological investigation of the Ship Inn site is of particular importance as it has the potential to provide an understanding of the sequential relationship of the various hotel sites. The combination of significant archaeological features (both land based and maritime) with above ground structures enhances the capacity for cultural heritage research and interpretation.

The Saltwater River Crossing site and Footscray wharves are socially important as they have a special association with the Footscray community as the site of the settlement of the Township of Footscray.

[Source; Register of the National Estate]

Hermes Number 8664

Property Number

History

Police Magistrate, William Lonsdale, established a punt across the Saltwater (Maribyrnong) River at Footscray in 1839, for the benefit of travellers between Melbourne and Geelong and Williamsown (Lack, *A History of Footscray*, p.24). On the 15th of November 1840, Benjamin Levien advertised that his Victoria Hotel at the river

crossing on the Saltwater River was opened. A new punt was also in the course of construction (*Geelong Advertiser*, 26 December 1840, p.4). A map of the Parish of Cut- Pa Paw, dated 1848, shows the location of the punt on the road to Geelong (Parish of Cut Paw Paw, 1848, Historic Plans Collections, PROV). Levien's Hotel, on or near the corner of Bunbury and Maribyrnong Streets, was replaced by the Ship Inn, which, though delicensed in 1917, remained near the corner of Bunbury and Maribyrnong streets until it was demolished in 1970. Footscray village reserve was surveyed and named in 1848, bounded by Maribyrnong, Moreland, Whitehall and Cowper Streets and Wingfield and Bunbury streets (Lack, p.39). By the late 1850s there were three hotels operating near the river crossing at Footscray - the Ship Inn, the Bridge and the Stanley Arms (Lack (ed) Charlie Lovett's Footscray, 1993, p5). The hotels not only serviced travellers, but also workers employed at boat and ship repair works in floating docks on the eastern side of the river opposite the Ship Inn in the 1850s and the river crossing at Footscray was described as a scene of 'bustle and activity' in the 1860s (Lack, 1993, p.6).

Slaughter houses, boiling down works and meat processing works were established on the other side of the river at Kensington from the 1840s (Lack, p. 34). Henderson's piggery (H0183) was constructed for Samuel Henderson in 1872- 1873. The complex of buildings included a factory for bacon and ham curing and a residence. Isaac Hallenstein purchased a tannery on the north side of Hopkins Street in 1864. After his uncle Moritz Michaelis joined him in business, the tannery site extended to the southern side of Hopkins Street, facing the river.

By the mid 1870s, there were 122 feet (37 metres) of wharfage along the western side of the Saltwater River at Footscray (Report of the Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners, 1881, p. 27). When the Melbourne Harbour Trust was constituted to manage the Port of Melbourne in 1877, it assumed responsibility for the Saltwater River as far as Hopkins Street, Footscray. Finding that the 'small vessels using the Saltwater River were in want of wharfage accommodation' the Trust planned to extend the wharf northward from the existing wharf for a length of 600 feet (Report of the Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners , 1878, p.7). The Trust installed sheet piling along the western bank, filling in the area behind the sheet piling with silt and metalling the area to make it suitable for wharfage (Report of the Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners, 1879, p10). The following year contractors Carter and Dalgleish, extended the Footscray Town Wharf by 200 feet. Together with the sheet piling constructed in 1879, this lengthened the wharfage at Footscray to 922 feet (281 metres) by 1881 (Report of the Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners, 1881, p.27). The new extension to the Town Wharf was being used extensively for the shipment of cut stone from Footscray's quarries to Sydney (Report of the Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners, 1881, p.11).

In 1883 a number of manufacturers of manures located along the river at Footscray (including Binney, who had taken over Henderson's establishment in the early 1880s) petitioned the MHT to construct additional wharfage because they 'found it necessary in the prosecution of [their] business to have wharfage accommodation to a moderate extent'. They also requested that the Trust dredge the river at Footscray to a depth that would allow vessels drawing 11 feet of water to come alongside the wharf. The Trust agreed to construct the additional wharfage (1883, p. 28) In 1885 the Trust dredged a channel that was 100 feet (30.48 metres) wide, and 14 feet (4.2 metres) deep at low water. An 1892 plan of the Port of Melbourne indicated that the Footscray wharves stretched south from Hopkins Street as far as Parker Street. In 1917 a goods siding was constructed beside the wharf (Maribyrnong City Council Heritage Review, 2001, Vol.3, p. 117).

Sources:

Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners Annual Reports

John Lack, *A History of Footscray*, Hargreen, North Melbourne, 1991

John Lack (ed), *Charlie Lovett's Footscray*, City of Footscray Historical Society, 1993

Jill Barnard, Graeme Butler, Francine Gilfedder and Gary Vines, Maribyrnong City Council Heritage Review, 2000.

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.

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