

**Place name Precinct - Port Albert town survey**

**Survey Date:** 31/07/2002

**Other name** Port Albert Township Surveys, Turnbull estate subdivision

**Id:** 526

**Street** Varies

**Last Update** 4/10/2006

**Locality** Port Albert

**Postcode**

**Official Locality**

**Property No**

**Local Government Area** Wellington Shire

**Property Info**

**Precinct:** Not in precinct

**Easting**

**Northing**

**Map** Yarram

**Workshop number** Primary - C1/08

**Workshop votes** 1

**Field survey number**

**Community priority**

**Designer**

**Builder**

**Ownership** Public

**Built Date** c.1840-194 **Change Date**

**Description** The Port Albert town survey precinct comprises the area generally bounded by North, Wellington, West Boundary, and South streets and the foreshore.

Port Albert never achieved the level of development envisaged by the original town plan and most of the originally surveyed land remains vacant - much of it was swampy coastal marshes and unsuitable for building on. Today, there are three distinct sub-precincts, the nineteenth century civic, commercial and foreshore precinct along Tarraville Road and Wharf Street, the holiday cottages precincts along Bay Street, and the fisherman's cottages in Victoria Street. This is interspersed with post-WWII development of varying quality.

The nineteenth century precinct comprises two clusters of buildings connected by the foreshore reserve. At Shipping Point, notable features include the wharf and fish supply building. On the opposite side is the timber rocket shed built in 1878 to house the Life Saving Equipment, the Turnbull Bond Store and Warehouse, and the Port Albert Hotel, which as a two storey building on a corner site forms an important landmark within the precinct. Just to the north is the former Port Albert Post Office. The second cluster of buildings surrounds the intersection of Bay Street/Victoria Street and Wharf Street/Tarraville. This includes the two important corner buildings; the Derwent Hotel with its distinctive roof and splayed corner, and the former Bank of Victoria. Further along is the Bar of the Ship Inn, and a group of commercial and residential buildings including the old General Store to the Old Bakery and the beautifully restored Gowrie House. All the buildings are set, or close to the frontage, with no side setbacks. Around the corner in Victoria Street is the old Mechanics' Institute - the old Methodist Church has been relocated from its original site in Tarraville Road to this site.

The foreshore reserve has notable mature plantings of Norfolk Island Pines. There are stone memorial gates at the corner of Bay Street and Wharf Street, while the Rutter memorial gates and Pavilion is situated in Bay Street. Another notable feature of this sub-precinct is the early brick drains.

The second sub-precinct comprises the early to mid-twentieth century holiday and fisherman's cottages along Bay Street. Some are concealed within the tree on the north-west side, while others occupy the more exposed land along the bay side. The houses are detached, predominantly single storey and are mostly simple vernacular buildings. Some appear to have been relocated to the site.

The third precinct is a group of inter-war detached, single storey, dwellings on the north side of Victoria Street that are thought to be associated with fishing families in the town. The houses are simple weatherboard or fibro bungalows with hip or gable roofs.

Because of the early date of Port Albert, the precinct also has a number of archaeological sites, which include the former private wharf site on the foreshore, and the footings of the old Powder Magazine at the end of Pier Street.

(see also Butler 1982:100-, 57-82)

**Condition**

**Integrity**

Archaeological potential  
Buildings

Gutter/kerb Subdivision
----------------------------

National Themes	Local Themes
	1. EXPLORATION 2.2 Immigration 4.6 Fishing 5.1 Shipping 7.1 Ports

**History**

**DISCOVERY & BEGINNINGS**

In the first days of settlement in Gippsland, the difficulties of overland travel made sea transport preferable. The wreck of the steamer Clonmel, on the outer sandbanks of Corner Inlet in January 1841, stimulated the interest of pastoralists in the hinterland. At the same time, Angus McMillan reached the red gum plains from the Monaro, and was soon followed by other squatters arriving with sheep and cattle. The need for a port from which to export their cattle was a pressing concern.

The survivors of the Clonmel grounding reported favourably on Corner Inlet, and Captain Lewis, one of the rescuers, called it ‘a noble inland lake, capacious enough to ride a fleet of shipping secure from every storm, with a navigable passage from Corner Inlet, and also from Shallow Inlet’. These good reports prompted a group of pastoralists to form the Gipps Land Company and charter the Singapore to investigate the area.

The settlers at Port Albert struggled at first, waiting for the survey of land and township blocks. The first town site on the Albert River was unsuitable for shipping stock, so in February 1842 another site was established on a headland near the mouth of the Tarra River. This location became known as Shipping Point.

The success of the squatters’ enterprise on the central Gippsland plains depended on having a reliable market for their stock. Port Albert was the nearest mainland port to Hobart, and by 1842, a regular shipping route had been established between Port Albert and Van Diemens Land. Live sheep and cattle were shipped across the strait to fulfill government contracts for provisions. Cattle were also shipped across the Tasman to New Zealand, and wool was shipped to Sydney. By the end of the 1850s, the buildings at Port Albert reflected its vital commercial and administrative importance as the port of entry to Gippsland. There are many sites that exist from this early colonial period in Gippsland and they contribute to a significant colonial landscape. Among them are the former Derwent Hotel, Turnbull, Orr and Company bond store and the former immigration barracks.

**TOWNSHIP SURVEY**

The following history of the Alberton and Victoria, Tarra Vale Village and Tarraville, and Port Albert and Palmertson township surveys was prepared by Graeme Butler for the ‘Port Albert Conservation Study’ (1982):

“The above township surveys triplicate the common practice of establishing government townships next to the private townships which resulted from the short-lived Special Survey right of January to August 1841 [1]. The aim was to offset the monopoly of township allotments, gained by the private speculators, but in all of the above cases the private township prospered because allotments or leaseholds were made available prior to the government survey and in the two latter cases, the location chosen was strategically better because of selection prior to government intervention. Only in Alberton’s case was the government reserve adequate to protect the moorings and fresh water, but an unexplained delay of sale of the land allowed the establishment of business premises in Victoria before Alberton, which proved too valuable to shift, especially once the better rural land of Yarram Yarram generated the need for Yarram township and a line of communication then fed the growing Victoria commercial centre of the 1850-60’s gold boom period.

It was the Special Survey (5120 acres) which allowed selection of strategic sites throughout Victoria and gives historic parallels with that in the study area. These surveys also provided most of the first surveyed towns in rural Victoria: being by regulation, five mile outside of Melbourne, Geelong, Williamstown and Portland: Dendy at Brighton, Elgar at Kew, Unwin at Bulleen, Clarke near Sunbury, Rutledge at Kilmore and Atkinson at Belfast (Por Fairy). As Gipps demurred with Dendy, restraining his survey to six miles from Melbourne town (by gazette), so did he with Orr and his associates, creating a five mile reserve from Shipping Point [2]. For comparative purposes, the Victoria and Tarra Vale town surveys were perhaps the first surveyed of the coastal, rural townships in Victoria. Despite the delay in issue of a Crown Grant (7/5/1844), Victoria was surveyed by the former government surveyor and architect, Robert Russell, early in 1843 to allow the first sale of allotments in July [3], whilst government surveyor, W.S. Urquhart, was still checking the survey boundaries at Belfast in January 1843, to allow the issue of a grant in September 1843 [4]. Like Tarra Vale, no allotments were sold at Belfast until 1848 (in Tarra Vale’s case 1851), Atkinson and Reeve preferring to lease allotments [5]. Hence the allotments sold in Victoria were the first registered freeholds to be given, outside of the existing towns of Melbourne, Williamstown, Portland and Geelong, in the Port Phillip district and may have arisen from the sixth town survey in the State.

Similarly, after Portland (Tyers and Townsend survey town lots January to February, 1840, land sales October) [6]. Melbourne (land sales June 1837), Geelong (land sales February 1838), and Williamstown (land sales June 1837-), came to Alberton's town design. Surveyor, A. S. Townsend, designed Alberton and submitted the plan to the Executive Council in July 1842 [7]. The New South Wales Government Gazette of September announced the existence of the town, predating Victoria. It was chosen as near a good berth, near fresh water and near the non-swampy arable land to the north. However, land sales did not occur until 1846, thus allowing the minor boom in 1842 to establish Victoria as the major township of the two. Thus Alberton was the fifth township designed and surveyed in the State.

Tarra vale village and Port Albert, both of the associated government towns (Tarraville and Palmerston) followed much later and were thus never competition despite government investment in Palmerston. Tarra Vale appears to have been laid out at a similar time to Victoria, in 1843, and substantial buildings were constructed (two large stores by November, several large buildings under way in June 1844 to provide a total of 50 buildings and one 'good inn' of brick).

Tarra Vale was on the overland track which reached both the pastoral leases and later the gold at Omeo It was considered that Tarra Vale was Gippsland's foremost town of the 1840s [9] having more substantial buildings, both private and business premises, than Alberton, Port Albert or Victoria in the pre-gold period (by 1848-9, 100 lived in the town alone). Tarra Vale was perhaps the seventh town laid out in Victoria.

Port Albert commenced with Davidson's purchase in 1843 and plans of 1848 and 1845 show streets and allotments existing at the corner of Wellington and Victoria Streets. Tyers reported in July 1844, that there was 10 acres of useful land and the rest was swamp: 36 people lived there, carting water from the wells at the Old Port or the Tarra River, near Tarra Vale. By December, he noted that, the scrub had disappeared and 'neat cottages' had emerged from the Tea Tree. R.B. Thomas, surveyor and architect, prepared a further subdivision with that shown in 1848 incorporated, ready for the first land sales in 1854. Some 14 private houses were shown outside of Turnbull and Co.'s stores, Gellion's Port Albert Hotel (1844-) and the boiling down works along Bay Street. The government town of Palmerston followed cries of monopoly and land sales ensued in 1858.

With all of the above towns, it is evident that, at no time, did the surveyed town ever fully materialise. Main access roads such as Wharf Street, Reeve Street and Turnbull Street became strip development centres and residential use radiated from these centres; the unit land area quickly increasing, particularly in Victoria and Alberton.

From an early date, allotments were acquired and amalgamated unofficially such that when E. T. Newton purchase the site of 'Eabon Eabon' in the 1870's, he purchased several suburban allotments, en bloc, and the result was the loss of the road pattern of Russell's 1843 survey. Similarly, many sites in Port Albert, Victoria and particularly in Tarra Vale are without known owners. Single owners in Port Albert have acquired whole sections and could devise amalgamation of the allotments within.

#### NINETEENTH CENTURY BOOM TOWN

Until the opening of the Gippsland railway Port Albert was the main port for the export of Gippsland's produce, principally livestock, and for the import of manufactured goods and immigrants. Port Albert was also ideally situated to benefit from the extra trade generated by the discovery of gold at Walhalla and Omeo in the 1850s and the fishing industry emerged in the following decade.

The commercial life of the peninsula was dominated from 1844 into the 1860s by the firm of Turnbull, Orr & Co. The firm's brick and timber bond stores and offices were constructed in 1844 and are shown on the Wilkinson survey plan of 1848. Much of Port Albert's early commercial development was carried out by John and Robert Turnbull. It soon became the principal town and administrative centre of Gippsland and a port for the region's trade with Melbourne and Van Dieman's Land. Its initial prosperity was based upon its proximity to the cattle trade between Gippsland and the future Tasmania. The shipping trade grew, with a number of ships serving the port en route between Melbourne and Sydney. In the first six months of 1844, Commissioner C.J. Tyers reported 48 arrivals and 43 departures. Cattle were regularly shipped to Van Diemens Land and to New Zealand. Sheep, wool and some dairy produce were also exported, as well as timber and wattle bark, tallow, skins, grain, potatoes, fish and oysters. As trade increased, a customs officer was appointed in January 1844, and a customs office built soon after. The discovery of gold in north Gippsland from the 1850s boosted trade. The Port Albert Steam Navigation Company ran a regular steamship service, landing prospective miners, mining machinery and supplies. A powder magazine was built on the foreshore, a substantial new customs house was completed in 1857 and an immigration barracks built by 1858. The Bank of Victoria opened a branch in 1856 and in 1861 moved to an imposing new architect-designed building that illustrated the prosperity of Port Albert, the projected expectations for its growth and the anticipated success of the Bank of Victoria in this region.

At first, stock and goods were transported through shallow water to ships waiting in the channels but Turnbull & Orr built a small jetty in 1846. Gradually facilities at the port were improved, with a government wharf erected in

1860 as well as three new private jetties. A crane and a goods shed were installed in the following years. The port was served by an unofficial pilot from 1841, but in 1845 a government pilot was appointed to guide ships through the entrance and channels. A signal station was established on Clonmel Island, and later when the island washed away, a lighthouse was built on the eastern end of Snake Island. This light was removed by the early 1880s and a flagstaff erected. There was also a signal station on Sunday Island. There were numerous wreckings and groundings near the entrance to the inlet, so a lifeboat was added in 1860 and a rescue rocket in 1877.

However, Port Albert's importance as a port gradually declined. By the mid 1860s, many cattle were being driven overland to the Melbourne market. Coach services competed with the steamers, and the opening of the Gippsland Lakes to navigation allowed steamers direct communication with the inland towns. Sale had a railway connection to Melbourne in 1878 and in 1892 the railway through South Gippsland reached Port Albert. In 1891, there were three steamers weekly but after 1900 there was only one steamer a week, ceasing operation in 1928. The customs house closed in 1903. As a consequence, the population decreased by more than two-thirds between 1891 and 1933.

#### FISHING & RECREATION

Port Albert supported a fishing industry from the days of early settlement when dried fish were exported by Chinese. Fishing sustained the port and growth in this industry in the 1940s prompted the provision of further mooring facilities and improvements in port services. The port has also supported some shipbuilding over the years. The fishing industry declined from the late 1960s, but a small fleet still works from Port Albert, trawling in Bass Strait or netting in Corner Inlet.

The port was also used for recreation. An annual New Year's Day regatta was held at Port Albert for about eighty years from 1858, visitors coming from all over Gippsland, by special trains and by boat. Now the port facilities are used by numerous recreational fishermen and boating enthusiasts.

In the twentieth century, Port Albert became a popular holiday spot for people from the Gippsland region. People either purchased one or the old houses or constructed holiday shacks amongst the ti-tree along Bay Street, or camped out along the foreshore. The story is told how the McKenzie family, who were pioneers from the Yarram district, purchased and donated the land for Rutter Park (which later became the caravan park) to solve problems with unrestrained use of the foreshore by campers. The park was opened in 1954 and named in honour of Dr JH Rutter who served the district from 1909 to 1944.

#### SOURCES

Butler, G, 'Port Albert Conservation Study', 1982

Context Pty Ltd & Centre for Gippsland Studies, 'Wellington Shire Thematic Environmental History', 2005.

Heritage Protections Register	Reference	Zoning	Status
Planning Scheme	HO34		Listed

National Estate Code	Assessment Detail
G	: Value - This place was assessed for social value (sub-criterion G1). The indication of possible social value from the workshop was confirmed by social value research, but the place was accorded a low priority for further assessment by the present project because it is not a forest related place.

#### Research Required

##### Recommendations 2002

The existing heritage overlay (HO34) extends over Raglan St to the north, along William St on the west, Victoria St and North St on the south to the coast on the east, following Bay St frontages back to Raglan St. It does not cover the Turnbull town survey but does cover the early 1840s subdivisions. It extends as far as St Johns Anglican Church on the north but does not cover the former Wesleyan Church in the same area. It covers all of Bay St (that has no identified heritage places) as far as the former powder magazine (individually listed in the heritage overlay).

The recommended reduction of HO34 (Port Albert Master Plan) reduces it to the recognised individually significant buildings at the Wharf and Victoria Streets intersection and around Shipping Point. This does not account for the survey itself or the context for these buildings. If the recommendations in this review (Butler, 2002). are taken up most of the individual places will be separately listed in the scheme, leaving much of the proposed reduced HO34 redundant except for public areas (road and foreshore reserves). A community view is that all of Wharf St from Spring St should be included as a minimum.

Hence if built elements and their immediate setting are to be the focus of the heritage overlay it could be

reduced to follow Spring (north), Princess and Albert Streets (west), Duke St to the coast, Queen St and back to Spring St (Butler, 2002). However a DDO should be considered for the balance of the survey towards protection of the context of the old port and the survey itself.

### Fieldwork priority?

**Stage 1 Ranking** Assessed: Port Albert Herit **Stage 2 priority** No Action: Already include

**Final Ranking** Regional Significance **Final Recommendation** Amendment C26

**Statement of significance** The Port Albert town survey is of historic significance to Wellington Shire and the Gippsland region

- It has served as Gippsland's first port for an extended period, serving the pastoral, gold and then the fishing era, as major phases in the development of the region as well as the town. It was of vital importance in the early development of Gippsland as the major entry point for goods and people prior to the coming of the railways. It was also important to the early development of Victoria as a key port serving trading routes to New South Wales and Tasmania. [RNE criteria A.4, D.2]
- It contains some of the first town lots created in Gippsland (Wellington Street, west from Victoria Street 1840s and lots in the Tarraville Road and Wharf Street after 1848) [RNE criteria A.4, D.2]
- It contains some of the oldest commercial and civic buildings in the Gippsland region [RNE criteria A.4, B.2]
- It demonstrates the emerging importance of Port Albert during the early twentieth century as one of the first coastal holiday resorts in the Gippsland region. (RNE A.4 & D.2)

(Source: Butler, 2002) (Reviewed: Context, 2006)

### Extent of designation

**Informant** Thelma Mayze. Potential informants - Yarram Historical Society.

### Notes

### Follow up

### Bibliography

Butler, Graeme, (1982), Port Albert Conservation Study, South Gippsland Publishing  
Context Pty Ltd, (1999), Identification and Assessment of community and heritage values in the Gippsland Forest Region. Report to Environment Australia and Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria as part of the Comprehensive Regional Assessment: National Estate Gippsland Regional Forest Agreement  
Context Pty Ltd, (2005), Wellington Shire Heritage Study: Stage 1  
Context Pty Ltd, (2005), Wellington Shire Heritage Study: Stage 1  
Graeme Butler & Associates, (July 2002), Alberton - Port Albert Heritage Review (Wellington Heritage Study)

Pier St 0014 PowderMagazine2, Port Albert, ID 0526.JPG

Jason Pullman

28/03/2006



Raglan St 0020, Port Albert, ID 0526iii.JPG

Jason Pullman

10/08/2006



DrainsVictoriaSt, Port Albert, ID 0526i.JPG

Jason Pullman

16/08/2006



WharfSt 0063 - 0065, Port Albert ID 0526i.JPG

Jason Pullman

16/08/2006



TarravilleRd 0069, Port Albert, ID 0526ii.JPG

Jason Pullman

10/08/2006



TarravilleRd 0071, Port ALbert, ID 0526.JPG

Jason Pullman

10/08/2006



TarravilleRd 0072- 0074, Port ALbert, ID 0526i.JPG

Jason Pullman

10/08/2006



Tarraville Rd 0076, Port Albert, ID 0526i.JPG

Jason Pullman

10/08/2006



Wharf St 0001- 0003, Port Albert, ID 0526ii.JPG

Jason Pullman

10/08/2006



Wharf St 0013, Port Albert ID 0526ii.JPG

Jason Pullman

10/08/2006



WharfSt 0037, Port Albert, ID 0526i.JPG

Jason Pullman

16/08/2006



Wharf St 0043, Port Albert, ID 0526i.JPG

Jason Pullman

11/08/2006



Wharf St 0041, Port Albert, ID 0526iv.JPG

Jason Pullman

10/08/2006



Wharf St 0047 R&MShed1, Port Albert, ID 0526i.JPG

Jason Pullman

28/03/2006

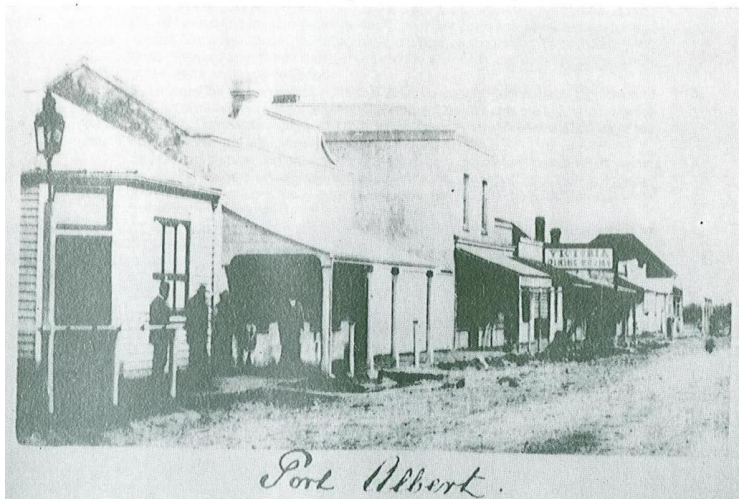


Tarraville Rd, ID526vi.jpg

Graeme Butler

1/01/1982

Tarraville Road, from Victoria Street (Latrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria)



Tarraville Rd, ID526v.jpg

Graeme Butler

1/01/1982



Tarraville Road, from Victoria Street (Latrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria)

Port Albert-mid1950s, ID 0526xvii.jpg

Dana Irving

24/04/2007

