

## Identification and location

**Name of Place:** Powder Magazine Footscray

**Other Name**

**Address** 107-109 Lyons Street

Footscray

**Place Identifier** 20173

**Heritage Significance** regional

**Creation date(s):** 1858 -1878

**Map (Melway)** 42 D7

**Boundary description** The extent of the surviving bluestone walls at the east end of Lyons Street.

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Private

## Description

**Site Type:** defence

### Physical Description

A bluestone wall with large buttresses is visible from Lyons Street. Only one wall appears to survive of what was apparently the perimeter wall of the magazine. The remainder was demolished in c. 1972 and what is left has been incorporated into the Safcol canning factory which occupies the old Mowling's site (0224).

The Lyons Street Drain, formerly Billy Button Creek, runs in a bluestone lined channel with grassed verges between the magazine wall and Lyons Street, discharging to the Maribyrnong River. A tramway once connected from the east end of the magazine to a small dock on the river just north of the drain outlet. Remnants of old wharf timbers can be seen in the vicinity, but these probably date to a later period.

### Condition

A remnant only

### Integrity

Part of the outer wall only survives.

### Context

Incorporated into the early 20th century Mowling's Factory in an exclusively industrial area beside the Maribyrnong River.

### Threats

Unlikely to remain a viable structure in the long term. It would be appropriate to investigate the fabric of the surviving structure, and the possibility of more of the magazine having been incorporated into later building. An archaeological assessment should be made before there is any disturbance to the structures or the surrounding ground.

## History

This was the third powder magazine in Melbourne following one on Batman's Hill in c. 1840 which was later moved to Royal Park. The Footscray Magazine was put to tender in 1857 with keepers quarters added in 1858 and a dock with a tramway connecting to the magazine in 1859. It could hold 180 tons of explosives and from the outset there was agitation for its removal. This finally came about in 1879 after the completion of Saltwater River magazine. (see 0074) the Footscray magazine appears to have been sold soon after the completion of the new magazine and reverted to private use as a store house before being incorporated into the Mowling Soap and Candle Works in the early 20th century. The structure remained intact into the 1950s or 60s, but was mostly demolished as part of conversion of the then Cheetham Salt warehousing to a fish cannery in the early 1970s.

## Thematic context

**Australian Principal Theme**

**PAHT Subtheme:**

**Local Theme**

## Cultural Significance

This bluestone wall is of regional historical and architectural significance as the earliest physical evidence of the several gunpowder and explosives magazines which once existed in the Melbourne area. (Criterion A3) Its date of 1858 makes it contemporary with the gold rush period when explosives were imported and used in large quantities for the first time in the colony and the Victorian government created a system of bonded storage magazines to control the importation, distribution and collection of duties. As such it represents an important phase in the colony's history. (Criterion A4)

Gunpowder is no longer manufactured or stored in quantity in Victoria. The technology of explosives storage changed completely with the introduction of dynamite in the late 19th century. (Criterion B2)

This is one of only a small number of places which demonstrate the role of gunpowder during the gold rushes and the oldest such site related to its direct importation. (Criterion D2)

The surviving bluestone structure is a very early surviving example of the construction form in Footscray. (Criterion E1) The structure is of technical and architectural significance as it demonstrates the special forms of building design, such as the heavy buttressed walls which were part of nineteenth century magazine design. (Criterion F1)

## Comparative Examples

On a much smaller scale than the Saltwater Magazine. Surviving gold fields magazines at Beechworth and Heathcote, although built in granite and sandstone respectively, give an idea of the original appearance of this place.

## Recommendations

**Heritage Victoria Register**

**Register of the National Estate**

**National Trust Register**

**Other Heritage Listings**

**Planning Scheme Protection**

## Maribyrnong Heritage Review - Industrial Places

External Paint Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Tree Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?	<input type="text" value="No"/>

### Recommendations

Significance and the cited fabric or contributory elements.  
To conserve and enhance the significant elements of the place.  
To conserve and enhance the public view of these elements.  
To conserve and enhance the visual relationships between the contributory elements.  
To ensure that new or altered elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the contributory elements.  
To prepare a conservation management plan which embodies the above objectives.

### Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

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

Gold rush powder magazines survive in gold towns, but the initial importing phase is only identifiable at this site.

*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.*

The Footscray powder magazine is directly related to the gold rushes in Victoria, and Government efforts to control the exploitation of golden importation of explosives

*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.*

Gunpowder is no longer manufactured or stored in quantity in Victoria. The technology of explosives storage changed completely with the introduction of dynamite in the late 19th century.

*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).*

This is one of only a small number of places which demonstrate the role of gunpowder during the gold rushes and the oldest such site related to its direct importation.

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

The surviving bluestone structure is a very early surviving example of the construction form in Footscray

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

Gunpowder storage required special forms of building design, some of which, such as the heavy buttressed walls are still expressed here.

### Documentation

#### References

Lack 1974,  
Vines, G. *Western Region Industrial Heritage Study*, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West.  
1989.  
Sands & McDougall Directories

### Data recording

Assessed By   
Assessed Date: