

Working Heritage at Jack's Magazine



Nineteenth-century bluestone gunpowder magazines at Jack's Magazine. Photograph courtesy of John Gollings, 2015

The place

Jack's Magazine is a former explosives magazine by the banks of the Maribyrnong River, Maribyrnong. It consists of a series of bluestone and brick buildings as well as a striking bluestone perimeter wall, tunnels, tramways, a canal and earth blast mounds. The site covers just over six hectares and is surrounded by parkland and residential housing. It is Crown Land and is currently unused and inaccessible.

History and significance

Jack's Magazine was built from 1876-8 to provide safe storage for gunpowder and explosives imported into the colony of Victoria – largely for use on the goldfields. It is the largest magazine complex ever built in Victoria. The site was also used for storage of dangerous materials for nearby ammunition factories. Originally named the Saltwater River Powder Magazine, it took on the name of its foreman and keeper Wally Jack, who served at the site from World War I until 1943. Jack's Magazine was decommissioned in the 1990s.

Jack's Magazine is a significant heritage place. It is included in the Victorian Heritage Register, the Victorian Heritage Inventory and Register of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and identified in the local planning scheme. It is a tangible reminder of when the area was the 'arsenal of Australia'.

The area

Jack's Magazine is located within the City of Maribyrnong local government area. The immediate vicinity includes parklands, bike and walking trails, the Edgewater estate and La Scala apartments. Schools and the Highpoint Shopping Centre are close by. It is set in a dramatic landscape between the bluestone escarpment and the Maribyrnong River flats.

Management

Jack's Magazine will be given a new life by Working Heritage – a Committee of Management appointed to manage the site in June 2015. Working Heritage's plans for the site are under consideration. We want it to be useful, accessible and financially sustainable – which could mean a variety of uses and tenants. We will work with the local community, the City of Maribyrnong and potential users and tenants to develop new uses for the site.

Working Heritage

Working Heritage cares for publicly-owned heritage places, situated on Crown Land, on behalf of the people of Victoria.

We are responsible for the conservation and management of some of Victoria's most treasured buildings – from the former Royal Mint in Melbourne to courthouses in country towns. Our role is to revitalise them to ensure they are not only conserved for future generations but that they have function and purpose now and into the future.

Working Heritage is a Committee of Management appointed by the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

Working Heritage has operated as the Mint Inc since 1998. We have recently changed our name to reflect our evolving approach.

Our approach

Heritage buildings are an important spatial and cultural resource for rural towns, suburbs and cities. They have special qualities that draw people to them. Their adaptation and reuse can facilitate development of businesses, community activities and support services while their cultural significance contributes positively to community itself.

The places managed by Working Heritage are no longer needed for their original function and their redundancy is an opportunity to give them new purpose and ensure an ongoing role in their locale. Our approach is to work with tenants to conserve cultural significance, develop compatible uses and adapt buildings to suit contemporary needs. Among Working Heritage's properties are a mint transformed into a museum, a farmhouse that is now a restaurant, and a courthouse used as a theatre. Finding a balance of commercial and community uses for these places means we can fund our work as well as creating affordable spaces for community groups.

More information and comment

More information and comment about the appointment of Working Heritage as managers of Jack's Magazine can be arranged.

High resolution professional photographs are available for use on request.

Contact Working Heritage on admin@mintinc.com.au or **03 9600 1667**.



Interior at Jack's Magazine. Photograph courtesy of John Gollings, 2015.