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# CORIO BAY ROWING CLUB

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## Location

WESTERN BEACH GEELONG, GREATER GEELONG CITY

## Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7721-0197

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 3, 2004

One of the earliest clubs in Geelong, and only one of two clubs to survive. The site itself probably has strong social value for the club members and the rowing community. The former clubhouse is a unique example of an early surviving rowing club facility.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Heritage Victoria - Maritime Infrastructure Assessment Project, Heritage Victoria, 2005;
Other Names	WESTERN BEACH BOAT CLUB,
Hermes Number	111633
Property Number	

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## History

The Corio Bay Rowing Club was one of many rowing clubs established in Geelong, but one of the only two early successful clubs (many others were insolvent after just 6 months). The boathouse was built in 1879, and stood 50 yards east of the Yarra St Pier. However, around 1921 the club decided to physically move the building to the Barwon River (Henry, 1945: 16). The building was again moved back to Corio Bay when the club decided to establish a branch club on Corio Bay at Western Beach and was later converted to the Western Beach Boat Club Clubrooms (see H7721-0166)

The first regatta was held here in 1844, and included four races for rowing and sail boats of various sizes.

There have been a number of rowing clubs in Corio Bay. The first, the Rowing Club, was established in 1861 at the time of the Geelong Regatta, but lasted barely six months due to lack of patronage. The Geelong Amateur Rowing Club was established in 1862, and regularly met at the Victoria Hotel until it too folded six months later.

In 1864, the Barwon Boating Club was formed on the Barwon River, and held races there and at Lake Connewarre. The club members owned 14 boats, and an application was made to the Government for land to the east of the bridge to build a boathouse.

The Corio Amateur Rowing Club was formed in 1865. A boat shed was built at Eastern Beach and rowing practice was undertaken in the Corio Bay. The club folded however three years later when all its assets including the boatshed were sold for £30 (Brownhill, 1990: 545).

In meantime, the Geelong Rowing Club had survived and maintained a low profile, and by 1870 formed a branch at the Barwon River called the Barwon Rowing Club. The first boat race took place in that year, with the first rowing race on the Barwon River held in 1876 (Brownhill, 1990: 546). The club remains a successful entity today.

Buoyed by the success of the above association, the Corio Bay Rowing Club was formed in 1873, and entered into an arrangement with C. Blunt to provide the boats and other equipment for a nominal charge per head. By 1879, land between the Yarra and Eastern Jetties was granted to the club (Geelong Advertiser, 20/8/1879). Tenders were called to build a boathouse that was designed by Joseph Watts (Geelong Advertiser, 20/8/1879), and a contract was accepted to build the boathouse for £365 (Geelong Advertiser, 2/9/1879). A 60 x 34 feet wide shed with a 20 x 16 ft dressing rooms, and a shingle roof was built by J.C. Taylor and opened in 1879 under contract to the club, with a double 47 ft long platform projecting seaward (Brownhill, 1990: 547; Geelong Advertiser, 5/9/1879). J.P. Hopkin, R. de Bruce Johnstone (MLA), and W Sommers were appointed trustees of the Corio Bay Rowing Club Boat Shed (Geelong Advertiser, 21/10/1879). The boatshed was opened in November 1879 (Geelong Advertiser, 28/11/1879). Regattas were often held on the Connewarre Lakes, and drew large crowds around Easter from the surrounding districts (Brownhill, 1990: 547). The club had a yard, small pier and boat shed over the water (G387). Although the club is still shown as the leaseholders for the site in 1927, the shed and facilities are no longer shown on site (G 278). The shed was moved to the Barwon River in 1921 (Henry, 1945:16). However, the club again decided to relocate in 1932 (Phillip, 1959:42), when the club had leased land at Western Beach, near the end of Cavendish St (G389), where the clubhouse was again mounted over the water.

The former clubhouse site was reclaimed in landfill by 1937 (G278).

*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/>*