
BEACH BATTERY/NORRIS BOATBUILDER SITE

Location

EASTERN BEACH GEELONG, GREATER GEELONG CITY

Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7721-0207

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 3, 2004

This site is significant as the only battery ever stationed in Geelong and as a major component of the defence network and landscape of Port Phillip Bay.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Heritage Victoria - Maritime Infrastructure Assessment Project, Heritage Victoria, 2005;
Interpretation of Site	The site possibly lies under land reclamation at the northern end of Bellarine St, which is currently used as a car park on the western end of Ritchie Parade.
Hermes Number	111647
Property Number	

History

Beach Battery: With England at war in the Crimea, a petition was received by Mayor Bailie from residents, to address concerns that a hostile ship could easily hold Geelong to ransom. A public meeting was held in 1854, and resolved that a Rifle Corps should be raised to protect the town. Later that year a Rifle Corps Committee and a Rifle Club were formed, the latter object being to provide a similar service until a Corps were approved by the government. The first rifle practice meeting was held in May, on the ground east of the Botanical Gardens, and attracted 40 volunteers to Geelong's first rifle club. The government approved the formation of the Geelong Rifle Corps shortly afterwards, and by 1855, members of the new service had been sworn in and were drilling through the streets. The service used a room in Southey's Hotel in Yarra St to meet. As the Allied war campaign in the Crimea proved victorious, the ranks of the Corps swelled (Brownhill, 1990: 634-6).

Further attempts were made to increase the defence forces from 1858-61. A volunteer Highland Regiment was proposed (and discounted), a Corps Rifle Club was formed, and a Cavalry regiment was suggested. By 1860, the first muster of the Cavalry volunteers was held at the Corio Cricket Ground, and became known as the Geelong Mounted Rifles and later as the Geelong Troop of Prince of Wales, Victorian Volunteer Light Horse (Brownhill, 1990: 636). By 1860 there were 169 members of the Geelong Rifle Corps (unmounted). By 1861, calls were made for an Artillery Regiment to be formed, and the next year the Rifle Corps had been transformed into the Royal Victorian Volunteer Artillery. The Corps were granted land for a parade ground east of the Presbyterian Church on Fenwick St between Little Mallop and Rylie St, and a new drill hall was built in 1863. An Easter encampment at Geelong took place that year, and 1400 volunteers were housed on the eastern and western sides of the Botanic Gardens (Brownhill, 1990: 638, 641).

Platforms were constructed for the mounting of two 32 pound guns at the end of Eastern Beach (northern end of Bellarine St), to be used for gunnery practice at targets moored or drifting in the bay. The Beach Battery construction in 1863 was superintended by Major W.H. Snee, and was seen as an important contribution to the defence of Geelong (Brownhill, 1990: 639). The site is possibly shown in Henry's 1864 plan of Corio Bay (CS 29). A 68 pound gun was added in 1871. The battery was originally poorly mounted on an exposed beach, but were later moved further east near the Botanic Gardens with trees and a fence to screen them. Although 68 pound gun was used sporadically until the mid 1870s to fire at a target 1600 yards away, the battery slowly became dilapidated and were disused. The guns were eventually removed to Western Beach (Cannon Park), The Botanic Gardens and in Kardinia Park (Brownhill, 1990: 639).

Norris Boatbuilder: The foreshore area from Bellarine St to Swanston St was reserved for dockyard use in 1854 (G80), and was listed as Boat Building Yards in 1893 (Downes). Norris' Boat Yard is shown with two buildings, a slipway and a boat jetty by the 1920s (F81). All the boatyards had disappeared from this area by the late 1920s (G 347), probably as part of foreshore beautification works, and by 1937 the site had been covered by foreshore land reclamation (G389).

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/>