

# TOWER HILL STATE GAME RESERVE



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2114 Tower Hill State Game Reserve Jun 06



2114 Tower Hill State Game Reserve Interp Centre Jun 06



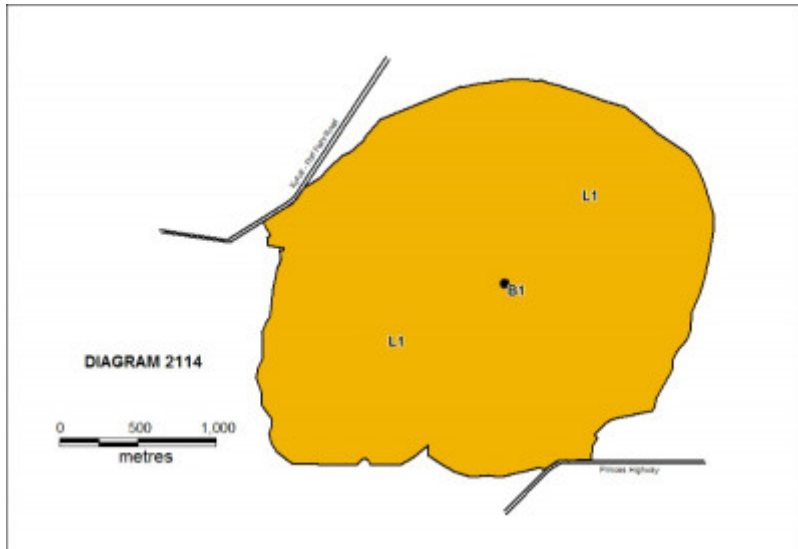
2114 Tower Hill State Game Reserve Interp Centre 2 Jun 06



2114 Tower Hill State Game Reserve lake Jun 06



2114 Tower Hill State Game Reserve vegetation jun06



2114 Tower Hill Reserve plan

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## Location

TOWER HILL AND CROSSLEY, MOYNE SHIRE

## Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2114

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO46

## VHR Registration

March 8, 2007

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 23, 2023

## **What is significant?**

The Tower Hill State Game Reserve is an area of approximately 6.2 sq km, 3 km inland from the coast between Warrnambool and Port Fairy managed by Parks Victoria since 1997. The Reserve consists of a volcanic crater of nested maar type bounded by the encircling crater rim that forms a highly visible landmark in the surrounding plain. The crater, filled by a lake and series of islands, themselves volcanic cones, was formed at least 30,000 years ago when a hot rising basaltic magma came into contact with the subterranean water table. The violent explosion that followed created the funnel-shaped crater (later filled by a lake) and the islands. Artefacts found in the volcanic ash layers show that Aboriginal people were living in the area at the time of the eruption. The Warrnambool area was a rich source of foods for the Koroitgundidj people, whose descendants retain special links with this country.

The first confirmed European sighting of Tower Hill crater was by French explorers sailing with Captain Baudin aboard the *Geographe* in 1802 who named the crater 'Peak of Reconnaissance'. Throughout the 19th century sailors used Tower Hill as a landmark for entering the harbours of Port Fairy (Belfast) and Warrnambool. The name Tower Hill came into common usage in the 1840s. The crater formation, noted by early European settlers for the beauty of its vegetation was memorialised in the landscape painting of Eugene von Guerard in 1855. By the late 1850s substantial amounts of forest had been cleared in and around the crater. In 1866 when the crater and inner rim were temporarily reserved for public recreation, the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria was appointed the Committee of Management (1866-1869). The Society had formed in 1861 with the aim of introducing exotic plants and animals to suitable parts of the colony and accordingly introduced goats, pheasants and rabbits to Tower Hill. In 1873 the area was permanently reserved for public purposes and in 1892 in an attempt to halt the environmental damage to the crater Tower Hill Reserve became the first National Park to be declared in Victoria. It remained under the control of Koroit Council which permitted clearing of native vegetation, grazing and the quarrying of scoria to continue. By the 1930s the landscape was bare and little wildlife remained. In the mid-20th century lobbying by the local community concerned about environmental degradation at Tower Hill along with general recognition of the declining numbers of game birds in Victoria led to the crater being declared a State Game Reserve in 1961, one of a number established across the State at this time as wildlife refuges. The contained nature of the crater site meant it could be readily adapted to a scientifically designed habitat management program.

In 1962 Robin Boyd was commissioned to design a Natural History Centre on the main island at Tower Hill, completed in 1969. This early example of an interpretive centre was to provide the public with information about the restoration of the Tower Hill environment and the wildlife and habitats of the State's Reserves and to be a centre of study for wildlife management. Boyd, a hero of the conservation movement, designed a simple stone circular structure with sloping roof mirroring the volcanic island hilltops, sitting in harmony with the landscape. The circular glazed pavilion is a timber construction with a cill height stone skirt and wide eaves. At the centre of the open internal space is a central hollow stone column which supports the roof and is crowned by a skylight reminiscent of the core of the volcano that gave rise to the landscape. Laminated timber rafters, arranged radially, span from the hollow stone core to the outer ring of window and project to form deep eaves.

As early as 1958 local community groups established experimental plots of native trees at Tower Hill. Following designation as a State Game Reserve serious efforts began to replicate the original vegetation using von Guerard's (1855) painting as a guide to replanting using botanists to identify the plant species. By 1981 school children, naturalists and other volunteers had planted 250 000 trees and shrubs at Tower Hill and removed non-native species and weeds and feral animals. Native animal species including koalas, wombats, emus and echidnas have also been successfully reintroduced to Tower Hill through reinstatement of habitat. The replanting program was the first of its kind in Victoria and provided a model for the national Landcare movement, established in Victoria in the 1980s.

## **How is it significant?**

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is of aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and architectural significance to the State of Victoria

## **Why is it significant?**

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is of aesthetic significance, being an inspirational landscape, recognised for the beauty and uniqueness of its geological form and natural vegetation from first European exploration and settlement of the region.

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is a cultural landscape of historical significance in reflecting more than a century of changing attitudes to landscape in its evolving status and the character of its environment.

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is of historical significance as an iconic and inspirational landscape, noted for its geological form and the beauty of its natural vegetation from first European exploration and settlement of the region, memorialised in Eugene von Guerard's 1855 painting of Tower Hill crater and island. It was this iconic beauty that environmentalists sought to reinstate through their replanting of native vegetation, the species having

initially been identified initially from the detail of von Guerard's painting.

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is of historical significance as the earliest and an outstanding example of community programs to reinstate native vegetation and re-create native habitat on cleared and degraded land. Skills developed in the course of this work, and subsequently applied in other parts of the country include an understanding of the importance of using species indigenous to the local area, requirements for re-introduction of native fauna, and awareness of the need for re-establishment of understorey species.

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is of social significance for the ongoing role of the local community and community groups in the reinstatement of natural habitats in the Reserve.

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is of scientific (geological) significance as an example of a nested maar, a specific type of volcanic crater that formed at least 30 000 years ago when hot rising basaltic magma came into contact with the subterranean water table resulting in a series of phreatic explosions that created the funnel-shaped crater (later filled by a lake) coupled with late stage scoria cone development of the islands seen today.

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is of architectural significance for the innovative design of the Natural History Centre now known as the Worn Gundidj Visitor Centre, designed by Robin Boyd in 1962 and completed in 1969. The circular design of the Centre, reminiscent of the surrounding volcanic landscape, is said to have provided the inspiration for the Bangerang Cultural Centre, Shepparton (H1802), designed by Frederick Romberg in 1979, possibly in homage to his late partner, Robin Boyd.

## Permit Exemptions

**General Conditions:** 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable.

**Regular Site Maintenance :** The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995: a) regular site maintenance provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the maintenance of an item to retain its conditions or operation without the removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the introduction of new materials; c) cleaning including the removal of surface deposits, organic growths, or graffiti by the use of low pressure water and natural detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing; d) repairs, conservation and maintenance to plaques, memorials, roads and paths, fences and gates and drainage and irrigation. e) the replacement of existing services such as cabling, plumbing, wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits or voids, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric. Note: Surface patina which has developed on the fabric may be an important part of the item's significance and if so needs to be preserved during maintenance and cleaning. Note: Any new materials used for repair must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance. Repair must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements.

**Fire Suppression Duties :** The following fire suppression duties are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) Fire suppression and fire fighting duties provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant historical above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) Fire suppression activities such as fuel reduction burns, and fire control line construction, provided all significant historical and archaeological features are appropriately recognised and protected; Note: Fire management authorities should be aware of the location, extent and significance of historical and archaeological places when developing fire suppression and fire fighting strategies. The importance of places listed in the Heritage Register must be considered when strategies for fire suppression and management are being developed.

**Weed and Vermin Control :** The following weed and vermin control activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) Weed and vermin control activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological

artefacts or deposits; Note: Particular care must be taken with weed and vermin control works where such activities may have a detrimental affect on the significant fabric of a place. Such works may include the removal of ivy, moss or lichen from an historic structure or feature, or the removal of burrows from a site that has archaeological values. Landscape Maintenance : The following landscape maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) landscape maintenance works provided the activities do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) watering, mowing, top-dressing and fertilising necessary for the continued health of plants, without damage or major alterations to layout, contours, plant species or other significant landscape features; c) management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373; d) installation, removal or replacement of garden watering and drainage systems outside the canopy edge of significant trees; e) vegetation protection and management of the possum and rabbit population;f) removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994. Public Safety and Security : The following public safety and security activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect significant fabric of the place including archaeological features; c) development including emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a site feature has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public. Note: Urgent or emergency site works are to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist such as a structural engineer, or other heritage professional. Signage and Site Interpretation : The following Signage and Site Interpretation activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) signage and site interpretation activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the erection of non-illuminated signage for the purpose of ensuring public safety or to assist in the interpretation of the heritage significance of the place or object and which will not adversely affect significant fabric including landscape or archaeological features of the place or obstruct significant views of and from heritage values or items; c) signage and site interpretation products must be located and be of a suitable size so as not to obscure or damage significant fabric of the place; d) signage and site interpretation products must be able to be later removed without causing damage to the significant fabric of the place; Note: The development of signage and site interpretation products must be consistent in the use of format, text, logos, themes and other display materials. Note: Where possible, the signage and interpretation material should be consistent with other schemes developed on similar or associated sites. It may be necessary to consult with land managers and other stakeholders concerning existing schemes and strategies for signage and site interpretation. Mineral Exploration : The following Mineral Exploration activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) mineral Exploration activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) preliminary non-intrusive exploration, including geological mapping, geophysical surveys, and geochemical sampling and access to shafts and adits; c) advanced forms of exploration (drilling), including the location of drill pads and access tracks where this has been the subject of on-site negotiation and agreement with representatives of Heritage Victoria, DSE and Parks Victoria, and where all significant historic site features have been identified and protected as part of an approved work plan. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

\*\* Works or activities managing the natural values of the reserve are exempt from requirements for a permit where they are carried out in accordance with a management plan developed in consultation with the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria.

Construction dates	1866,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	Tower Hill,

Hermes Number 14278

Property Number

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## **Extent of Registration**

All the land known as Tower Hill State Game Reserve marked L1 on Diagram 2114 held by the Executive Director. The building marked as follows on Diagram 2114 held by the Executive Director  
B1 Tower Hill Natural History Centre also known as Worn Gundidj Visitor Centre

*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/>*