

# GRIFFITHS ISLAND



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2008



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griffith island lighthouse  
griffith island port fairy  
landscape



griffith island lighthouse  
griffith island port fairy  
entrance



1 griffith island lighthouse  
griffith island port fairy front  
view



griffith island lighthouse  
griffith island port fairy rear  
view



H1659 griffith island port fairy landscape



H1659 griffith island port fairy landscape2



H1659 griffith island port fairy landscape3



H1659 griffith island port fairy beach1



H1659 griffith island port fairy causeway



H1659 griffith island port fairy quarry1



H1659 griffith island port fairy quarry2



H1659 griffith island port fairy quarry3



H1659 griffith island port fairy shearwater colony



H1659 griffith island port fairy lighthouse mast footings



H1659 griffith island port fairy keepers quarters remains



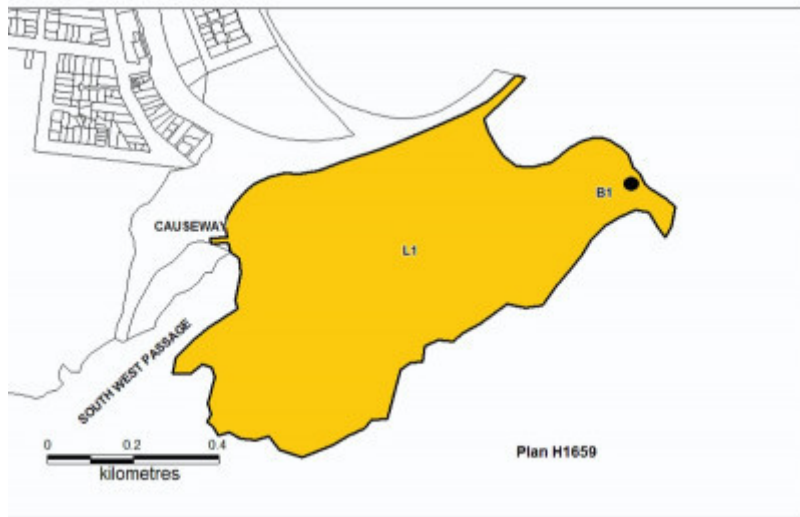
H1659 griffith island port fairy keepers quarters remains2



H1659 griffith island port fairy keepers quarters garden remains



H1659 griffith island port fairy training wall



H1659 Griffith Island Port Fairy Plan August 2007 pr

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### **Location**

GRIFFITHS ISLAND PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

### **Municipality**

MOYNE SHIRE

### **Level of significance**

Registered

### **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H1659

### **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO15

### **VHR Registration**

August 20, 1982

### **Amendment to Registration**

August 2, 2007

### **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 7, 2007

### What is Significant?

Griffiths Island, Port Fairy, is an unusual geological landform, consisting of an isolated basalt outcrop, overlain with calcareous sand, and partly bounded by possible collapsed lava tunnels. It lies to the south east of the town of Port Fairy, at the mouth of the Moyne River, and at the extremity of the Mount Rouse lava flow. At the time of European settlement, the island consisted of three separate islands (Griffiths, Rabbit and Goat Island), but these have now been joined into one as a result of altered environmental conditions, effected to improve the quality of the bay anchorage and navigability of the Moyne River.

The first European use of the island was as a base for a bay whaling station in the mid 1830s. Historic plans identify a whaling station, owned initially by "Messrs Connolly & Co" and later by "Mr John Griffiths" located at the eastern tip of Rabbit Island. Old whaling buildings and a "Trywork Hill" are also shown on Griffiths Island on 1850s charts. The whaling operations ceased by about 1843, as the industry fell into terminal decline.

The whalers' wooden buildings were re-used by Flora Rachel Wallace Dunlop as a house, farm, schoolroom and dormitory for the benefit of young Aborigines. Dunlop occupied the island until 1854, and it is likely that the whaling buildings were dismantled sometime following her departure. Ship building also took place on Griffiths Island in the 1840s. The sea-going vessel *The Brothers* is recorded as being constructed on the island in 1847.

The Port Fairy lighthouse was erected on a one acre site on Rabbit Island in 1859 to mark the entrance to the Moyne River and Port Fairy Harbour, at a time when the town was a thriving trading port for western Victoria. The Public Works Department designed a circular basalt lighthouse with machicolated capital and domed metal lantern, and the local firm of McKenzie and McGowan were responsible for its construction. Erected unusually at sea level, the lighthouse stands almost eleven metres above high water level and contains a notable spiral stone staircase, with each step inserted in a course of stonework in the outside wall.

Lighthouse keepers' quarters were also built at this time, the senior keeper's house being of standard Public Works Department design, slightly modified for the site. A flagstaff, for signalling tide heights, was erected on a high point to the west, and a small basalt jetty was constructed to service the lighthouse with fuel and supplies. The lighthouse keepers' quarters and compound were demolished after the Harbour Master was relocated to near Battery Hill in 1956, and the lighthouse now operates remotely. The foundations of the lighthouse keepers' quarters are still discernible, and a group of Norfolk Island pines marks the compound perimeter.

Numerous harbour improvement works since the 1860s have contributed to the changing form of Griffiths Island. The northernmost extent of the island is formed by training walls, constructed from the 1860s and extended until the 1920s with advice from notable marine engineer Sir John Coode to enable the Moyne River to be self-scouring. Quarries to supply stone for the works are still evident on the island. The island has a large mutton bird colony.

### How is it significant?

Griffiths Island is of historical and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

Griffiths Island is of historical significance as the location of an important bay whaling station in the 1830s and 1840s. It is also significant for its contribution to the development of the port of Port Fairy, one of the most significant of the early ports in western Victoria. It is evidence of Victoria's early maritime heritage and of the importance of regional ports in the process of colonial expansion. The training walls and other harbour works were one of Victoria's major maritime infrastructure works programs.

The lighthouse, one of four harbour lights constructed by the Public Works Department in 1859, is of historical significance as the only one to remain in its original location. The lighthouse is also significant for its unusual location at sea level.

Griffiths Island is of archaeological significance for its potential to reveal evidence of whaling buildings and processes, and to contain artefacts and other deposits relating to the earliest period of European economic activity in Victoria. It is of archaeological significance for the potential to reveal more evidence of the keepers' quarters and gardens. The archaeological potential is particularly high because of the accumulation of sand, fill and vegetation which has accumulated since the 1860s.

## **Permit Exemptions**

Regular Site Maintenance:

The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995:

- a) Port of Port Fairy related operations activities such as training wall repairs, road access, works on navigational aids and regular site maintenance such as lighting repairs 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.

Sand Removal:

Any removal of sand from Lighthouse Beach\* and Puddeny Grounds is subject to the approval of the Executive Director, or in accordance with a Conservation Management Plan approved by the Executive Director.

\*The area commonly known as Lighthouse Beach is identified in Vicmap 7321-3-2, using projection AGD 66, at the following coordinates: easting 609050 and northing 5749950.

## **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 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 must take into account 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:

Weed and vermin control activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995 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. Any materials used for the control of weed and vermin must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance. Control must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements.

### **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 to be identified in the Conservation Management Plan.
- (c ) management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373.

### **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, in consultation with a heritage professional.

### **Minor Works:**

A person proposing to undertake minor works must 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.

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 all works shall be in accordance with it. Note:A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan 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. 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 must 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.

Construction dates 1859,  
Heritage Act Categories Registered place, Registered archaeological place,  
Other Names GRIFFITH ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE, GRIFFITHS ISLAND, GRIFFITHS ISLAND, RABBIT ISLAND, GOAT ISLAND, WHALING STATION,  
Hermes Number 2711  
Property Number

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## History

The Victorian Government placed four light stations along the coast in 1859 to provide navigational facilities for harbours at Portland, Port Fairy, Warrnambool and Port Albert. At the three western ports, these lights were officially exhibited on 31 August 1859.

The lighthouse at Port Fairy was erected on Rabbit Island to mark the entrance to the Moyne River and Port Fairy Harbour, at a time when the town was a thriving trading port for western Victoria. A one acre site on Rabbit Island, later to join Griffith Island, was acquired in January 1859 for this purpose. The Public Works Department designed a circular basalt lighthouse with machicolated capital and domed metal lantern, and the local firm of McKenzie and McGowan were responsible for its construction. Erected unusually at sea level, the lighthouse stands almost eleven metres above high water level and contains a notable spiral stone staircase, with each step inserted in a course of stonework in the outside wall.

Lighthouse keepers' quarters were also built at this time, the senior keeper's house being of standard Public Works Department design, slightly modified for the site. A flagstaff, for signalling tide heights, was erected on a high point to the west, and a small basalt jetty was constructed to service the lighthouse with fuel and supplies. Subsequent improvements included the fencing of the compound (1859), the construction of a road (1869) and a causeway between the tower and quarters (1870). Additions were made to the quarters in 1884.

The lighthouse keepers' quarters were demolished after the Harbour Master was relocated to near Battery Hill in 1956, and the lighthouse now operates remotely. The foundations of the lighthouse keepers' quarters are still discernible.

**The draft statement of significance and the above history were produced as part of an Online Data Upgrade Project 2005. Sources were as follows:**

Information on Heritage Victoria file HER/2001/000488

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended in that the Heritage Register Number 1659 in the categories described as a Heritage Place, Archaeological Place is now described as:

Griffiths Island  
Port Fairy

Moyne Shire Council

EXTENT

All of the place known as Griffiths Island, Port Fairy, being marked L1 on plan H1659 held by the Executive Director, and all the building known as the Griffith Island lighthouse, marked B1 on plan H1659 held by the Executive Director

Dated 27 July 2007

RAY TONKIN  
Executive Directo

[Victoria Government Gazette G 31 2 August 2007 1764]

*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/>*