
SOUTH CHANNEL FORT



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1 south channel fort gun
emplacement jun1989

Location

PORT PHILLIP BAY, UNINCORPORATED

Municipality

UNINCORPORATED

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1502

VHR Registration

February 10, 1988

Amendment to Registration

May 23, 1998

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

South Channel Fort, constructed between 1879 and 1888, was designed by Colonel Peter Scratchley of the Royal Engineers using the 'Twydall Redoubt' principles of sand parapets to be the key fort in the network of the outer defences of Port Phillip protecting it from anticipated naval attacks in the late nineteenth century. The fort was intended to play a key role in holding enemy ships in a triangle of fire between Queenscliff, Point Nepean (or Point Franklin) and its own guns; and to lay, control and test the minefield in the South Channel.

The fort is an artificial island built up on 14,000 tonnes of bluestone boulders and concrete with sand overburden. It is 121.9 metres long, 76.2 metres wide and 6.4 metres high above sea level. The fortifications comprise a concrete and red-gum military dugout bunker system which is mainly underground with some areas breaking the surface as gun emplacements facing south and as a service yard facing north. The system includes ammunition magazines, kitchen, officer's quarters, storage areas and power room connected by a network of tunnels. The heavy gun battery originally consisted of five guns, of which only a 6 inch gun in the centre and an 8 inch 'disappearing gun' on either side of the island have survived.

The sandy soil supports a shrubland of coast saltbush (*Atriplex cinerea*), seaberry saltbush (*Rhagodia candolleana*), bower spinach (*Tetragonia implexicoma*) and taupata (*Coprosma repens*). The understorey includes great brome (*Bromus diandrus*) and buffalo grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*).

How is it significant?

South Channel Fort is of historical and architectural significance

Why is it significant?

South Channel Fort is historically significant for its association with the defence of the Port of Melbourne, protection of the entrance to Port Phillip and the main shipping channel. The fort is the only known place where the Twydall principles for a defence layout were applied to an island fortification.

South Channel Fort is architecturally significant for its revolutionary design using camouflage and new methods of protection against bombardment, for its armament, and for its relative intactness. The disappearing or hydro-pneumatic guns are of particular significance for their early date and rarity of the 8 inch guns.

The fort is also of interest for its range of vegetation which includes prickly shrubs used as a deterrent to attack. [Online data upgrade project 2003]

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or

object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific 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 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 1879,
Heritage Act Categories Registered place,
Hermes Number 4853
Property Number

History

Construction of the South Channel Fort began in 1879 and continued throughout the 1880s. Built out of fear of Russian invasion, the fort was intended to defend the approaches to Melbourne with artillery fire and a submarine minefield, however advances in technology had made the fort redundant by 1908. South Channel Fort was constructed out of bluestone, nearly 14,000 tonnes of which were transported from Bacchus Marsh. A jetty was also constructed between 1889 and 1901, as the fort was entirely dependent on sea transport for supplies.

Source: Anderson, R., and Caldow, W., "Underwater Survey Report and Recommendations"

Sources for the draft statement of significance (Online Data Upgrade Project 2003):

Report to Minister dated 15 December 1987

Register of the National Estate

Extent of Registration

Amendment of Register of Government Buildings

Port Phillip Bay

South Channel Fort, Port Phillip Bay (the whole of the structure and works contained in Certificate of Title Volume 6665, Folio 905).

[Victoria Government Gazette No. G39 12 October 1988 p.3092]

Transferred to the Victorian Heritage Register 23 May 1998 (2 years after the proclamation of the Heritage Act 1995 pursuant to the transitional provisions of the Act)

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/>