
CORIO BAY ROWING CLUB/WESTERN BEACH BOAT CLUB

Location

WESTERN BEACH FORESHORE ROAD GEELONG, GREATER GEELONG CITY

Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7721-0166

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Heritage Study/Consultant	Heritage Victoria - Maritime Infrastructure Assessment Project, Heritage Victoria, 2005;
Interpretation of Site	The original clubhouse from the Corio Bay Rowing Clubhouse (previously located near the Yarra St Pier) is still substantially intact, although somewhat altered with a second story added and an extension at the rear.
Hermes Number	111459
Property Number	

History

)Corio Bay Rowing Club

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 relocate the building to the banks of the Barwon River (Henry, 1945: 16). The building was again moved back to Corio Bay (to this site) when the club established a branch club on Corio Bay at Western Beach.

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 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 was still shown as the leaseholder for the site in 1927, the shed and facilities were no longer present 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 clubhouse was again mounted over the water on leased land near the end of Cavendish St, Western Beach (G389).

Billy Blunts Boatbuilders

During the late 1930s and 1940s, boatbuilder Billy Blunt leased the eastern side of this site from the Geelong Harbour Trust. He was employed by them during the war years as a full time employee to construct local workboats, some of which were used in New Guinea (Ethyll, 2004:1).

Barrows Boatyard

Peter Barrow Senior leased what is now the Western Beach Boat Club Workshop around the mid 1950s. Local fishermen paid a winch operator to haul their boats up the slipway using a hand cranked winch. Barrow (Snr) rented space to mainly amateur fishermen to house their boats, but had decided to give up the lease when many failed to pay their bills. He was approached by a number of fishermen who proposed the formation of a club on his leasehold, which led to the formation of the Western Beach Boat Club (Ethyll, 2004:1).

Slipway

Before the club came into existence, the Geelong Harbour Trust installed two 60 feet long piles on the site on the condition that the professional fishermen could use the slipway. The slipway was constructed sometime before 1938 (G389). The fishermen later got their own slipway at the Ausport Marine site - H7721-0170 (Ethyll, 2004:2).

Western Beach Boatyard

The Western Beach Boat Club was established in 1955 as a working man's alternative boat club to the Geelong Yacht Club. Members regularly met at what is now the workshop. When the Corio Bay Rowing Club again decided to move back to the Barwon River sometime around the late 1950s, their former clubhouse was taken over by the Western Beach Boat Club, and the beach between the large jetty and the clubhouse was reclaimed by landfill (Ethyll, 2004:1). The fill came from the office works site in Mallop St, and a member provided the bluestone for the seawall (Ethyll, 2004:1).

The Harbour Trust assisted with maintenance of the clubhouse building, often providing paint, and it also installed a new roof, and applied anti corrosive paint. The building was owned by the Harbour Trust before it was taken over by the Geelong City Council. The building was built on sand, and the club extended the shoreward section in the late 1960s/ early 1970s using social club funds (Ethyll, 2004:2).

The **winch shed** was once located on the old pier, where it was used to sell fuel to passing boats. When the old jetty was destroyed during a storm in 1968, a barge was used to transport the shed to its current location over the slipway winch (Ethyll, 2004:2).

Club rules stipulated that at least 80% of boat owners members had to be fishermen, and there were often calls to exclude professional fishermen. Boats were built and maintained in the yard, and some were often on the hard for many years (Ethyll, 2004:2).

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/>