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# FORMER QUEENS WHARF

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## Location

EASTERN BEACH GEELONG, GREATER GEELONG CITY

## Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7721-0198

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 3, 2004

### STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: DRAFT ONLY

What is significant?

Eastern Pier, Geelong consists of a stone jetty, surfaced in bitumen with a timber-piled, concrete surfaced extension. First known as 'the jetty', it was begun in 1840 by convict labour. Assisted immigrants were also employed in building the stone jetty. The stone jetty was completed in 1843 and was called Queen's Wharf. A portable timber customs shed was sometimes placed on the jetty. The jetty was extended with timber in 1847 and by the mid-1850s, it was also known as Customs House Wharf. From the early twentieth century it was known as Eastern Pier, but sometimes referred to as Stony Pier.

The timber section of the pier was removed in 1959 and replaced with a new pier extension with a concrete slab surface.

How is it significant?

Eastern Pier is historically and archaeologically significant to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Eastern Pier Geelong is historically significant for its association with the period of first permanent non-Indigenous settlement in Victoria and with the pastoralists who travelled from Van Diemen's Land to establish pastoral stations in Victoria. The pier is significant as a surviving example of infrastructure provided by the Government in the earliest years of permanent non-Indigenous settlement. It is significant for its link to the establishment of customs facilities at the Port of Geelong and to the granting of free warehouse status to that port. Eastern Pier demonstrates the vital role that maritime infrastructure played in the economic and social development of Victoria. Eastern Pier is a surviving example of the use of convict labour to carry out public works in Victoria in the early years of settlement and is a rare documented example of a public site where assisted immigrants were employed.

The Eastern Pier, Geelong, is archaeologically significant for its potential to reveal information relating to the earliest phase of non-Indigenous settlement in Victoria and in the Geelong region.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Heritage Victoria - Maritime Infrastructure Assessment Project, Heritage Victoria, 2005;
Interpretation of Site	The jetty is substantially extant and intact, with evidence that the original jetty structure has been added to within the current structure. Pier piles at the northern extremity of the jetty probably originate from the former pier structure and may be from the period as a Customs Jetty. Archaeological material is highly likely to be found under the adjacent landfill, and underwater in front of the jetty. The current Eastern Pier appears to be of modern origins, but may have incorporated fabric from the previous structure, especially near its extremity.
Other Names	STONE JETTY, EASTERN JETTY, EASTERN PIER, CUSTOMS WHARF/JETTY,
Hermes Number	111634
Property Number	

## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The region now occupied by Geelong was explored by assistant-surveyor, Charles Grimes, in the *Cumberland* in 1803 and then in 1835 by John Batman who was scouting for good pastoral land in the Port Phillip District for the Port Phillip Association. (Barnard p.11). Though Batman and later his rival, John Pascoe Fawkner, settled on a site on the Yarra River as the place for a permanent settlement, their arrival in the Port Phillip District in 1835 was soon followed by that of other Van Demonians seeking to establish pastoral runs in the district. The earliest arrivals in the Geelong district are thought to have come in 1836 (Wynd, p. 7). Most early arrivals in the district landed at Point Henry. Though Corio Bay was a fine harbour, a bar across the entrance restricted vessels drawing more than eleven feet from entering.

Captain William Hobson, who surveyed Port Phillip Bay for the New South Wales Governor in 1836, reported that the head of Geelong Harbour was a 'good location' for a settlement and harbour and was possibly superior to Point Gellibrand (Williamstown), but for the fact that a bar obstructed navigation and the supply of water was precarious. 'The surrounding country and that which extends westward is considered the best land near Port Phillip', he wrote (HRV Vol. 4, p.7).

Governor Bourke who visited the Port Phillip District in 1837, examined both the settlement on the Yarra and Corio. He concluded that the settlement on the Yarra was the best adapted for a town. 'The beautiful flat behind Corio would answer well for a township if fresh water could be obtained', he wrote. Bourke examined whether water from the Barwon could easily be brought to supply a township at Corio, but 'found the project too great for the present state of the Settlement' (HRV Vol.1, p103). There were enough settlers at Corio Bay, however, for

surveyor in charge of the survey at Port Phillip, Robert Hoddle, to instruct assistant-surveyor, H.W.H. Smythe to lay out a town on the shores of Corio Bay, with a main street leading from the waterfront to the Barwon River (HRV Vol.5, p.189).

Sea travel and transport was crucial in the early history of the Port Phillip District and colony of Victoria. Not only did immigrants arrive in the district by sea, but necessary supplies and stock were brought in by sea and exports left the colony in the same way. One of the first priorities of representatives of the New South Wales government was to establish at least rough infrastructure such as beacons and buoys to mark channels, as well as jetties or wharves.

Though Melbourne was chosen as the headquarters of government and the major settlement of the Port Phillip District, Geelong's relationship to the pastoral runs of the western district meant that exports of wool from that township sometimes exceeded those from Melbourne in the 1840s. But the bar across the harbour entrance and the lack of port facilities frustrated local merchants and graziers. Along with this, Geelong was not declared a free warehousing port until 1848. This meant that any imports bound for Geelong had to clear customs at Melbourne first and then sail to Corio Bay. Geelong residents agitated to have their district declared a free warehousing port and for harbour improvements.

By 1851 there were 8000 people living in Geelong (Dingle, p. 36). Geelong's proximity to the Ballarat goldfields spurred development and, in the early 1850s, the Victorian Government constructed three more piers (in addition to the original pier), while the Melbourne and Geelong Railway Company (which was taken over by the Government in 1856) constructed Railway Pier. In 1853 a channel was begun through the bar at the harbour entrance. Further work was carried out on the channel in the 1860s, but it was subject to frequent siltation. British engineer, Sir John Coode, proposed a new channel, taking a different course, in 1879. Work on the dredging of this channel began in 1881 and continued until 1895. Named the Hopetoun Channel, it unlocked Geelong Harbour to increasingly larger vessels.

Geelong had always had a major role in Victoria's export trade, with wool and wheat being despatched from the port. Seeking to develop this role further, the Victorian Government, at the turn of the twentieth century, acquired land on the north shore of Corio Bay to develop further port facilities. Increasing maritime traffic and ever larger vessels visiting the port meant that the existing pier facilities at the old Geelong waterfront were inadequate. The north shore offered far deeper anchorages. The government handed over this land to the Geelong Harbor Trust (named the Port of Geelong Authority since 1981) when it was constituted in 1905. The Trust began to develop wharves and facilities and to lease land to a number of exporters and industries. Though the focus of the Port of Geelong then shifted to the north shore and Corio Quay, the old piers located at central Geelong continued to be put to use for smaller vessels, including those associated with the bay steamers, until this trade petered out after World War II. While some of the old piers at Geelong were destroyed or demolished, others were converted for alternative uses.

## HISTORY OF PLACE

Known initially as 'the jetty', Eastern Pier was the second government-built jetty built on Port Phillip Bay in the first years following permanent non-Indigenous settlement. The first stage of Gem Pier at Williamstown was built by convict labour in 1839. Residents of Geelong petitioned the Superintendent of the district, Charles La Trobe, for a branch customs house at Geelong in February 1840. They complained that they paid wharfage fees when there was 'in fact no wharf.' R. S Webb, Principal Customs Officer at Port Phillip, noted on the petition that 'much inconvenience is experienced at Corio for want of a wharf' (HRV, Vol. 4, page 81).

The jetty at Geelong appears to have been begun in that year. Convict labour was used to build the jetty and the prisoners were accommodated in huts nearby. But progress was slow. In January 1841, the *Geelong Advertiser* reported that, despite the protracted labour of the convicts, very little progress had been made (*Geelong Advertiser*, 23 January 1841, p.2). Superintendent La Trobe examined the wharf on 18 January 1841 and 'immediately ordered that it should be made double the width and run into 2 fathoms of water' (*Geelong Advertiser*, 30 Jan 1841, p. 3).

The *Geelong Advertiser* continued to complain about the slow progress of the jetty, blaming the problem on the use of convict labour and government neglect of Geelong (*Geelong Advertiser*, 13 March 1841, p2). In April 1841, however, it announced that the jetty was to be recommenced 'with fresh vigour' and that tenders had been called for the 'conveyance of stones' (*Geelong Advertiser*, 3 April 1841, p.2).

When Governor George Gipps visited Geelong in November 1841, the Chamber of Commerce drew his attention to various improvements required in the harbour. Gipps responded that the improvement at Queens Wharf should be the first attended to (*Geelong Advertiser*, 1 November 1841, p.2). The wharf was clearly in use while work continued on it. Great stones of up to one ton in weight, lying about on its surface, posed difficulties. Though it was reported to be thirty feet wide in May 1842, two carts could not pass on it (*Geelong Advertiser*, 16 May 1842, p.2).

The first immigrant ship to be sent directly to Geelong, the *Regulus*, arrived in March 1842. The immigrants were landed at the jetty and lodged nearby in huts. Some of them were to be employed on government works, such as the jetty (*Geelong Advertiser*, 7 March 1842, p.2). Tragedy struck within days. Attempting to lower a large stone into position as part of the jetty, seven men were thrown into the water when the stone caused the boat to capsize. Two recently-arrived immigrants and one convict were drowned (*Geelong Advertiser*, 14 March 1842, p.2).

In November 1843 rules for 'the jetty' at Corio were published in the *Port Phillip Government Gazette* and in September of the following year tenders were called for the erection of a customs house and Queens store at Geelong (*Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 14 November, 1843 and 10 September, 1844). A timber portable building used as a first customs shed was said to have sometimes stood on the jetty (Brownhill, p.582).

Tenders were called several times in 1846 and 1847 for the extension of the jetty in timber. The width of the timber section was to be twenty-five feet and tenderers were asked to specify how far they would extend the jetty from the stone section (*Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 13 August 1846, p. 197).

In 1848, Geelong was finally declared a free warehousing port. In the same year the Government Gazette declared the 'wharf at Geelong, commonly known as Queen's Wharf', a public wharf. Regulations for the use of the wharf included the rule that the western side of the stone section be reserved solely for the use of steamers (*Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 4 January 1848, p.12).

The next year tenders were called for the erection of another jetty at Geelong and by the end of 1850, records indicate that there were at least the beginnings of three government jetties on Corio Bay (*Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 20 November, 1850, p.985). Within five years the steamer jetty (dismantled in 1875), the Yarra Pier (completed in 1851), the Moorabool St Pier (completed in 1855) and the Railway Pier (completed 1856) had been constructed along the Geelong waterfront as gold rush traffic transformed Geelong into a busy town and the port into a busy port. In 1856 Governor Macarthur proclaimed Moorabool Wharf, Steamboat Wharf, Yarra Street Wharf and Customs House Wharf (Eastern Pier) legal wharves for the lading and unloading of goods (*Victorian Government Gazette*, 19 August 1856 p.1364).

The Moorabool and Yarra Street piers were far longer than the original jetty and Public Works Department records suggest that in the second half of the nineteenth century most maintenance and extension work was carried out on these, rather than the original pier. Nevertheless, when the Geelong Harbor Trust assumed responsibility for the Port of Geelong in 1905, the Eastern Pier, as the 'jetty' was then known, was listed as one of the piers offering berthages for vessels within the Port of Geelong. Improvements and repairs were carried out at the pier in 1915, but it was not valued very highly as an asset. While the adjacent Yarra Street pier was valued at £3113 in 1917, Eastern Pier was valued at only £42 (*Geelong Harbor Trust Commissioners Report*, 1917). Beams and decking on the timber portion of the pier were renewed in 1921 (*Geelong Harbor Trust Commissioners Report*, 1921).

While the Geelong Harbor Trust concentrated much of its work on the north shore of Corio Bay, it also worked towards land reclamation and improvement of the foreshore between the western and eastern beaches. In 1929 a seawall was built between the Yarra and Eastern Piers and land behind the wall was reclaimed. It was during the late 1920s and early 1930s that the City of Geelong developed the adjacent Eastern Beach complex (H0903).

In 1943 the GHT commissioners drew up a list of post war works for which they wished to apply to the state government for funding. Amongst them was the partial reconstruction of Eastern Pier. The works at the jetty were later dropped from the list and in 1946 both Moorabool and Eastern Piers were closed to traffic (*Geelong Harbor Trust Commissioners Report*, 1946). Work began on demolishing Moorabool Pier the following year (*Geelong Harbor Trust Commissioners Report*, 1947). Yarra Pier continued in use, with redecking making a second berth available at the pier in 1955 (*Geelong Harbor Trust Commissioners Report*, 1955).

In 1959 the timber section of Eastern Pier was demolished and replaced with a concrete slab surface on timber piles (*The Port of Geelong Annual Report*, 1959). The L-shaped new pier was intended to provide protected

berthing facilities for 'mooring launches and other small craft' belonging to the Geelong Harbor Trust (*The Port of Geelong Annual Report*, 1960). A photo published at the time of the replacement of Eastern Pier indicates the new section of the pier being added to the stone section. This section has since been surfaced with bitumen. At the same time an extension from the adjacent Yarra Pier provided a small boat breakwater for all-weather protection for small craft (*The Port of Geelong Annual Report*, 1960). Much of the Yarra Street Pier was destroyed by fire in 1988..

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## Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA:

Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of Victoria's cultural history

The stone portion of Eastern Pier, Geelong, is a rare surviving example of maritime infrastructure constructed by the government in the Port Phillip District, following the first permanent non-Indigenous settlement in 1835. It is associated with the earliest phase of non-Indigenous settlement in Victoria as one of the first services provided for settlers who arrived in the Port Phillip District in the 1830s and 1840s and at one of the two major points of entry to the district - Melbourne and Geelong. Local agitation for a wharf and harbour improvements reflected the importance of the Geelong district as an outlet for wool exports from the Port Phillip District. The pier is significant as the earliest maritime infrastructure constructed in Geelong - Victoria's second largest city and port. Eastern Pier is an example of the use of convict labour to build government infrastructure in Victoria's foundation years. It is significant as a rare example of a public work on which assisted immigrants were employed.

Criterion C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history

Eastern Pier Geelong has the potential to reveal artefacts and objects associated with the earliest phase of its development in the 1840s and with the use of convict labour in its construction. Potentially part of the original pier lies under reclaimed land. The stone section of Eastern Pier is highly likely to have been substantially unchanged since it was first constructed in the 1840s.

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*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/>*