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# Port Fairy Fort



GUNS AND EMPLACEMENTS SOHE  
2008



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1 guns & emplacements battery hill  
port fairy cannon may1984

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## Location

BATTERY HILL PORT FAIRY, Moyne Shire

## Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

## Level of significance

-

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1504

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO25

## Heritage Listing

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

### ***What is significant?***

The guns and emplacements at Battery Hill, Port Fairy, comprise bluestone and concrete fortifications built by the Public Works Department in 1886-87; two guns, installed in 1877 and 1887 respectively, and associated machinery; concrete bunkers; and compartments with timber doors labelled 'cartridge recess' and 'lamp recess'. The fort is prominently and strategically sited on a coastal dune overlooking the Southern Ocean and the mouth of the Moyne River. The site comprises a grassed area, with a flagpole at the highest point. A bluestone powder magazine (c.1860s?) is located a short distance away on the south bank of the Moyne River.

Battery Hill was an early observation site. A signalling flagstaff was established here in 1861 and also an observation hut (this was re-developed in 1887 but no longer extant). Battery Hill was established as part of a rejuvenation of Victoria's militia forces in the mid-1860s and, more particularly, with the re-establishment of the Belfast (Port Fairy) Volunteer Corps in 1866. This was one of several important Volunteer Corps set up in Victorian coastal towns (a Volunteer Rifle Corps had been formed originally at Belfast in 1859). In 1867 cannons were installed at the site and a brass band was formed. The battery was made suitable for the addition of new guns in 1874, some on traversing platforms, and further guns were acquired in 1877.

Battery Hill was further developed in the 1880s with the large-scale construction of fortifications in 1887 and the acquisition of additional guns in readiness for a much-feared Russian attack. This strategy came about in response to a heightened hysteria about foreign invasion at this time, and from the sense of vulnerability stemming from the young colony's considerable wealth and relative isolation. The guns have only ever been used only for training purposes and 'civic' celebrations (e.g. King George V's coronation in 1911), and have never been fired in defence.

Following this upgrade of the site in 1887, some of the older guns were sold to the Borough Council. One gun was placed in the Port Fairy Botanic Gardens for ornamental purposes in 1889; it remained here for nearly 100 years before being returned to Battery Hill in 1984. Other guns were relocated to King George Square in 1911, also for ornamental purposes, but these were also returned to the Battery in 1984.

### ***How is it significant?***

The guns and emplacements at Battery Hill, Port Fairy, are of architectural, historical and scientific (technological) significance to the State of Victoria.

### ***Why is it significant?***

Battery Hill, Port Fairy, is of historical significance for its association with the early development of defence in the colony of Victoria. It is an important example of the style of fortifications built in Victoria's coastal towns as part of a broader colonial defence strategy in the 1880s. It has significance for its association with other maritime heritage sites in the town, including the Lifeboat Station (H1431), Powder Magazine, and Griffiths Island Lighthouse (H1659).

The site is of historical significance for its association with the activities of the volunteer militia, who played an important role in the social life of Victorian coastal towns. It forms an important element in the collection of public buildings in this historic township.

Battery Hill is of scientific (technological) significance as an important collection of guns used in Victoria in the nineteenth century; the collection is surpassed only by the collection at Queenscliff Fort.

*[Online Data Upgrade Project 2004]*

Construction dates      1886,

Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	BATTERY HILL,
Hermes Number	125263
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

The guns and emplacements at Battery Hill, Port Fairy, comprise bluestone and concrete fortifications built by the Public Works Department in 1886-87; two [check] guns, installed in 1877 and 1887 respectively, and associated machinery; concrete bunkers; and compartments with timber doors labelled 'cartridge recess' and 'lamp recess'. The fort is prominently and strategically sited on a coastal dune overlooking the Southern Ocean and the mouth of the Moyne River. The site comprises a grassed area, with a flagpole at the highest point. A bluestone powder magazine (c.1860s?) is located a short distance away on the south bank of the Moyne River.

## Veterans Description for Public

The Port Fairy Fort, Battery Hill, is located in the coastal reserve south of Battery Lane and the southern end of Griffiths Street, Port Fairy and to the north of the Powder Magazine. The embankment faces east-south-east and is approximately twenty metres above sea level. The site of the Fort is a particularly important one in the area of Port Fairy along the banks of the Moyne River and the strategically located, elevated site has a commanding view over the sea, the mouth of the river and Griffiths Island and the township itself.

A signalling flagstaff was established at Battery Hill, as an early observation site, in 1861 and also an observation hut (this was re-developed in 1887). In 1867 cannons were installed at the site and a brass band was formed. The battery was made suitable for the addition two 68 pound guns in 1874, some on traversing platforms, and 80 pound RML guns acquired in 1877. The collection of weapons that were installed over its operational life is rivalled in Victoria only by the collection at Fort Queenscliff. However the guns have only ever been used only for training purposes and civic celebrations (e.g. King George V's coronation in 1911), and have never been fired in defence.

The battery structure comprises of bluestone and concrete fortifications built by the Public Works Department between 1886-87; two guns, installed in 1877 and 1887 respectively, associated machinery; concrete bunkers; and compartments with timber doors labelled "cartridge recess" and "lamp recess". The site includes a grassed area, with a flagpole at the highest point. A bluestone powder magazine (c.1860s) is located a short distance away on the south bank of the Moyne River.

Battery Hill was established as part of a rejuvenation of Victoria's militia forces in the mid-1860s and, more particularly, with the re-establishment of the Belfast (Port Fairy) Volunteer Corps in 1866. This was one of several important Volunteer Corps set up in Victorian coastal towns (a Volunteer Rifle Corps had been formed originally at Belfast in 1859). The revived corps were equipped with thirty, 2 pound weight MLSB cannons in 1867, the first battery named The Mills Battery, after the Harbour Master. The volunteers exercised with vessels of the Victorian Navy in 1873 and 1886. Regular practices for the complement of sixty to hundred personnel were held and the volunteers attended camps at Sunbury, Queenscliff and Portland, as well as conducting regional manoeuvres at Belfast. They also conducted competitive artillery practice with the Warrnambool detachment. Earthworks were thrown up in 1874 to support the introduction of sixty, 8 pound cannon and the thirty, 2 pounders were mounted on traversing platforms.

Battery Hill was further developed in the 1880s with the large-scale construction of fortifications and the acquisition of additional guns in readiness for a much-feared Russian attack. The fortifications were inspected by Sir William Jervis in October 1877 and new traversing platforms were supplied in 1880. Government expenditure on western ports resulted in plans for a more substantial battery in 1887, constructed by Messrs

Lewis, Roberts and Glover and completed in October 1887. Two new 80 pound Armstrong guns on iron traversing carriages were installed and the thirty, 2 pounders were sold to the Borough for one pound in 1889 and located in the Botanic Gardens. The sixty, 8 pounders were positioned in King George's Square on the other side of the river in 1911. In 1984 all the cannons were assembled in the Battery Hill area.

## **Extent of Registration**

All of the place known as Guns and Emplacements Battery Hill Port Fairy.

*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/>*