
DIGBY VILLAGE PRECINCT



Extent of Registration (HO) Digby Village Precinct Boundary

Location

BUCKINGHAM ST, CLARKE ST, COLDHAM ST, MCLEAN ST, RUSSELL ST, SIMPSON ST, and BOWEN ST,
DIGBY, GLENELG SHIRE

Municipality

GLENELG SHIRE

Level of significance

Recommended for Heritage Overlay

Heritage Listing

Glenelg Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is Significant?

The present township of Digby, located on the Portland-Casterton Road, dates from the early 1860s and appears to have pre-empted the closer settlement afforded by the Land Selection Acts by several years. The first buildings were Lewis' Inn and Ottey's General Store, located on the southeast and southwest corners of Clarke and Crawford Streets, both dating from the early 1840s. These and a few other scattered buildings are noted in the plan of subdivision of the land, dated 1852. The town soon developed as a service centre for the timber getting district. There were no mills in the centre of the town, but Eldridge and Rice operated a steam saw mill at Digby from 1862, and many of the timber commercial and residential buildings are constructed of locally milled timber. The important commercial and civic buildings and heritage inventory sites relating to commerce are located in Clarke Street. These include the two churches, the Mechanics Institute, the Digby Hotel, the former

Butcher's shop and the site of a number of important archaeological sites. The site of the former State School is located in the south west corner of the precinct, and is a large site with mature plantings. While the school has gone, the teacher's residence and the original school gatepost survive. Digby's fresh water springs is on the western boundary of the precinct. This historic area has a natural fresh water spring within it and was used initially as a source of fresh water, and later as a recreational place. The apparently vacant land along Stokes River is an important archaeological area. Until the 1940s, when a large flood cleared the area, there were a number of crude timber huts located in this area, believed to have been constructed as early as 1841. The huts were washed away in the floods of the Stokes River in the 1940s, but the land retains the potential to yield interesting material. The remainder of the precinct is residential, or residential with several subsistence allotments, traditionally used to keep animals and grow fruits and vegetables. Digby's housing stock follows the three main periods of development within the township - the very early settlement from 1840-1855, of which it appears little or no above ground fabric remains. The second period of development occurred between 1855-1875, when the timber industry expanded rapidly, as the influx of settlers created demand for timber construction in south west Victoria. There are a few examples of small cottages which were constructed in this period, the most intact being 1 Coldham Street, a small timber cottage with a substantial garden surrounding it. The third period of development was the interwar period, between 1918-1939, when a number of small timber shops were built, as well as simple timber dwellings. Many of these survive in varying degrees of intactness. World War One had a devastating effect on the population of Digby and district with almost half of the population enlisted. The Avenue of Honour along Clarke Street was planted to honour those men in August 1917 and is the earliest avenue in the Shire. In addition, a Soldiers Memorial Hall was erected in 1926, with funds raised from the community. Digby's private and public plantings are unique within the municipality. There are many mature specimens of Oak, Pine and Elm on private land within the township. Many of these appear to be between 90 - 120 years old, and are in very good condition. These trees add to the established historic character of the small village. Overall, the precinct retains a high degree of integrity and is in good condition.

How is it significant?

The Digby Village Precinct is of historic, cultural, social and architectural significance to the Glenelg Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Digby Village Precinct is of historic significance as one of the earliest settlements within the municipality. Its contributory elements (including a range of archaeological sites) are varied, and exhibit three distinct phases of development, which co-incide with pastoral and industrial development throughout the municipality. It is of further historical significance to the Shire of Glenelg as one of the chain of small settlements between Portland and Casterton, which developed as the major centres in the area, and for representing the emergence of various aspects of agriculture and timber getting in the area. Another historically significant aspect of the precinct is the layout of the village, and location of buildings which allows us to see a previous way of life, namely the way in which households participated in subsistence agriculture and horticulture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It is of cultural significance as a predominantly Anglican and Wesleyan settlement, represented in its churches, their associated plantings and memorials. Of further cultural significance is the physical evidence of how the First World War affected the community of Digby, and the way in which the community honoured those who served in conflict. The Avenue of Honour and the Soldiers Memorial Hall are strong indicators of the community's values in this respect. It is of social significance as the focus for the community's education and recreation, roles that continue to the present. The architectural significance of the town lies in a range of commercial, civic and religious buildings constructed from local materials (particularly locally got timber) over a long period of time, ranging from the finer religious buildings through to the humble timber cottages which remain.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Glenelg - Glenelg Shire Heritage Study Part One, Carlotta Kellaway, David Rhodes Mandy Jean, 2002; Glenelg - Glenelg Heritage Study Stage Two (a), Heritage Matters, 2006;
Construction dates	1840,
Other Names	DIGBY,
Hermes Number	52781

Physical Description 1

The Digby Village Precinct is centred on the main thoroughfare, Clarke Street which also forms part of the Portland-Casterton Road. This has been the traditional route from Portland through to Casterton and beyond into South Australia since the earliest days of settlement, and follows the tracks established by the Henty Family in the 1840s. The Precinct is irregular in shape, but generally could be considered to be bounded by Crawford Street to the north, Ross Street to the east, the Dartmoor-Hamilton Road and Bowen Street to the south and various title boundaries between McLean and Coldham Streets to the west.

Clarke Street, which runs generally north-south has the highest density of surviving contributory buildings and plantings, including the St. John the Evangelist Church of England, and the Uniting Church, which form landmarks at either end of the precinct, and are linked by the Avenues of Honour. The Avenue of Honour is a very early example of its type in Victoria, being planted in August 1917 and dedicated to the men of Digby and the surrounding district who served in World War One. The avenue, which is planted out with 99 Elms has been extended to include trees for those who served in World Two. The Avenue of Honour is an important part of the township. Clarke Street is clearly the main street of the town, and houses the primary commercial, civic and religious buildings of Digby. A number of Heritage Inventory sites, both residential and commercial, are also clustered at the crossing of the River on Clarke Street, just below the Crawford Street precinct boundary. The original timber bridge, and later concrete bridges have been replaced with modern road bridges due to flooding, but several river crossings and fords are still evident nearby. Buckingham Street runs east west, and is likely to have been an early route to surrounding pastoral properties such as Rifle Downs and Crawford River. This street also has a high concentration of heritage places and heritage inventory sites which contribute to the precinct overall. The places in Buckingham Street tend to be all residential (both inventory sites and heritage places), the majority being small houses and cottages, predominantly of timber, reflecting Digby's early history as a timber-getting town. Several of the cottages and houses around the town, as well as the heritage inventory sites display some very early remnant plantings of trees, shrubs and bulbs. A fine garden surrounds the State School, located on the south east corner of Brown and Coldham Streets. While the school itself has been removed, a timber teacher's residence (former) survives on the site, surrounded by mature European and native trees, mainly planted as Arbor Day projects by the school children of the town. Crawford Street, which runs parallel to the river has a series of largely vacant allotments on its north side. These are highly significant archaeological sites which represent the bulk of the earliest dwellings in Digby. The dwellings were largely washed away or ruined in a major flood in the 1940s. The allotments in this area do however have the potential to yield substantial archaeological finds. There are broad spaces between the surviving fabric of the township. Some spaces indicate small scale self sufficiency, which was practiced by most of the residents in Digby from the 1850s. Evidence survives which shows that many houses had their own milking cow, other animals for meat, a vegetable garden, fruit trees and fowl. The views into the rear allotments of Clarke Street from Ross Street can show this previous land use.

The following elements are significant and contributory to this precinct:

CONTRIBUTORY PLACES:

- . Timber cottage, 32 Buckingham Street, Digby
- . Drover's Retreat (cottage) and orchard, 52 Buckingham Street, Digby
- . Inter-war weatherboard house, 56 Buckingham Street, Digby
- . Butchers Shop (former), 3228 Portland-Casterton Road, Digby
- . Timber house, 3267 Portland-Casterton Road, Digby

- . Orchard, Northwest Corner of Clarke and Russell Streets, Digby
 - . Weatherboard cottage and mature Oak and Pines, 1 Coldham Street, Digby
 - . Timber house, 57 Coldham Street, Digby
 - . House, 41 Crawford Street, Digby
 - . The Springs Reserve, between Buckingham and Spring Streets, to the east of Clarke Street, Digby
 - . Timber house, 24 Russell Street, Digby
 - . Nakamura, Timber house (altered), 25 Russell Street, Digby
 - . Inter-war timber house, 53 Simpson Street, Digby
 - . Timber house, orchard and mature Oak, 13 Simpson Street
- Timber shop and residence (former) and orchard, 33 Simpson Street

SIGNIFICANT PLACES:

- . Teacher's Residence (Former), school garden and trees and school gatepost, 36 Bowen Street, Digby
- . Avenue of Honour (World War 1), Clarke Street (Portland-Casterton Road), Digby
- . Avenue of Honour memorial, south-east Clarke & Buckingham Streets, Digby
- . Mechanics Institute and Memorial Hall, 49-51 Buckingham Street, Digby
- . Uniting Church, 3229 Portland-Casterton Road, Digby
- . St. John the Evangelist Church of England and mature trees, 3261 Portland-Casterton Road, Digby
- . Peace Tree in front of St. John the Evangelist Church of England, 3261 Portland-Casterton Road, Digby

Historical Australian Themes

Theme 2 Peopling Australia

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

3.5.2 Breeding animals

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

Theme 6 Educating

6.2 Establishing schools

6.5 Educating people in remote places

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

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/>