# Heritage Citation Report – HO316

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name</strong></th>
<th>Fisherman's Wharf</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Address</strong></td>
<td>Trawler Wharf Road, Portland</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Place Type</strong></td>
<td>Maritime</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Citation Date</strong></td>
<td>20 June 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Heritage listings</strong></td>
<td>National Trust B6494</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended heritage protection</strong></td>
<td>Glenelg Shire Planning Scheme (PS) Heritage Overlay (HO)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 1: Fisherman's Wharf](image)

**Figure 1 : Fisherman's Wharf**
History and historical context

Portland’s origins lie in the town’s port history. The non-Aboriginal use of Portland Bay extends back into the early nineteenth century, where the bay was named by Lieutenant James Grant, RN, (Captain of the Lady Nelson) in the year 1800, after the Duke of Portland (Kellaway and Rhodes 2002; Wiltshire 1984). The bay was said to be ‘large enough to anchor all the navies of the world in perfect safety’, however, only sealers and whalers used the harbour regularly in the early years of the nineteenth century (Wiltshire 1984). It wasn’t until 1839, when Captain Foster Fyans suggested to Sir George Gipps (Governor of New South Wales) that a town should be laid out at ‘The Bay’, that Portland was conceived of as a town. Eighteen months after Fyans’ suggestion was heard, the proposed township was surveyed and mapped by Surveyor Charles James Tyers. The first government sale of land within the township took place in October 1840 (Wiltshire 1984).

The port itself had a later start, with a tannery established by Walter Birmingham in 1842, sited on the beach at the location of the original Port of Portland Authority’s headquarter buildings. The main products transported from the port comprised whale produce, skins and wattle bark. This was eventually followed by wool, with dairy products, beef and potatoes also transported (Kellaway and Rhodes 2002). It wasn’t until 1846 that the first jetty was constructed, although it was described as a ‘very shaky structure’, and extended into 10 feet of water (Kellaway and Rhodes 2002; Learmonth 1960; Wiltshire 1984). Prior to this, cargo had to be loaded into
lighters, and taken to anchored vessels located further out (Learmonth 1960). The first jetty was demolished in 1891, and was sometimes referred to as Henty’s Pier, although it was constructed by the Government (Learmonth 1960). According to Wiltshire (1984), another jetty was built in 1854-1855 (described as the ‘railway pier’), and was only demolished in 1970. However, Learmonth (1960), and Kellaway and Rhodes (2002), claim the second jetty was constructed in 1857, and opened in 1858. The final wooden jetty at Portland was erected in 1899-1901 and was the longest in the southern hemisphere at the time – measuring some 1600 yards (1.46 km) in length, when extended in 1912 (Learmonth 1960; Wiltshire 1984).

The first mention of a breakwater at Portland appeared in 1849, in the Portland Guardian, where land had been reserved by the Government Surveyor for a future breakwater (National Trust nd). Assistant Colonial Engineer Captain John Barrow was then engaged to inspect the three potential harbours of the west; he reported that Portland’s was most suitable. However, development of the breakwater at the time was considered too costly (National Trust nd).

The aim of the harbour development was to create an area of still water large enough to berth coastal traders and ocean going vessels and to provide a safe anchorage and berths for the fishing fleet. All three jetties or piers, even the ‘ocean pier’ as it was known, could not berth vessels safely without risk to the pier structure and the vessels themselves, in rough weather. In rough conditions the vessels were removed from the piers and placed on fixed moorings in the bay. Lighters were still used to service larger vessels until the Ocean Pier was opened in 1902.

A boat harbour was constructed at the port in 1878-1880. The harbour was shown on a plan in The Guardian, as well as on Sir John Coode’s drawings in 1887. The Government employed the renowned Sir John Coode in 1879 to draw up plans for Portland’s future breakwaters (Coode was brought to Melbourne to assist in Port Melbourne harbour design) (Learmonth 1960; National Trust nd). Coode submitted plans in March 1880, which were similar to those originally presented by Barrow. Coode’s suggestions included a three stage approach: the immediate construction of a rock and concrete breakwater extending north from the eastern side of the creek mouth, which would extend 1,000 feet (304 m), before turning north-west for another 320 feet (97 m). This would then cover the Julia Street pier, which could be extended. The second step would be to construct a series of short shipping piers inside the breakwater, with a longer pier extending from Henty Street. The third stage comprised the construction of another breakwater, to extend from the lighthouse (which was located at the time on the southern bluff). This breakwater would stretch 3,450 feet (1,051 m) to the north, covering an area similar to the modern port (Learmonth 1960). Coode’s proposal, however, was deemed ‘beyond the means of any Government’ (Learmonth 1960).

When it became clear that a breakwater extending from Battery Point (formerly Observatory Hill) to provide a large area of still water for safe berths and anchorage, required a formidable investment of funds, a decision was made by the council to build a small boat harbour for the fishing fleet. The first attempt built between 1878 and 1882 was not successful due to silting (shown in black on Figure 3).

Another report for the construction of breakwaters was released by WH Steel in 1883 (Learmonth 1960). It proposed to turn the creek into a bay, near the bridge, and to construct breakwaters on similar lines to those proposed by Coode (Learmonth 1960). Coode was consulted again after his initial plans were considered too costly and he provided a report dated July 1887 which recommended a number of improvements to the small boat harbour only, including an open pile section (now covered over or removed) in lieu of the timber piles and stone section and the solid breakwater extending north and curving to the north west, the remains of which we have today. This small boat harbour was completed in 1891.

After nearly 40 years of community agitation only a small boat harbour was achieved. These works were undertaken, and the site eventually became the Fisherman’s Wharf Breakwater (Figure 3). Work for this was completed in June 1891 and involved the ‘early use of mass concrete in wharf construction’ (Kellaway and Rhodes 2002; Learmonth 1960). The original timber viaduct at the base of the wharf is no longer extant, however, ‘remnants of the spray wall remain, as do some original handrails and decking, and two early timber cranes’ (Kellaway and Rhodes 2002).
However this harbour did not protect the fishing fleet from south easterly gales. For example in December 1902 a south east gale smashed 10 fishing boats and damaged 9 others, and only 6 rode out the storm.

Despite the immense potential for the port, little overall development of the area took place during the mid to late nineteenth century, or the early twentieth century. The Portland Harbour Trust was established in 1950, under the auspices of three Commissioners (Kellaway and Rhodes 2002; Wiltshire 1984). The harbour was constructed from 1950-1960 at a cost of almost $12 million. The Fisherman’s Wharf Breakwater was incorporated into the new design, and became part of No 2 Quay (which was built on reclaimed land). The Fisherman’s Wharf Breakwater is considered by local fishermen to be ‘their’ wharf, and has historically allowed them access to the sea (pers. comm. Gordon Stokes).

The harbour was opened on 19 November 1960, however, it continued to be upgraded, and by the 1970s, had a capital spend of over $20 million (Kellaway and Rhodes 2002). The port had been designed to reflect the maritime needs of the region; a principally rural area. However, it also catered for other industries, such as those related to ‘wool, petroleum, grain, timber and the manufacture of fertilisers’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1973; Kellaway and Rhodes 2002). The port is currently owned by Hastings Funds Management and Palisade Investment Partners (Glenelg Shire Council 2015).

![Figure 3: Portland’s first breakwater (1878-1880), shaded in black (after Learmonth 1960)](image)

**Figure 3 : Portland’s first breakwater (1878-1880), shaded in black (after Learmonth 1960)**

**Relevant Historical Australian Themes**

3. Developing Local, Regional and National Economies
   3.8 Moving goods and people
      3.8.1 Shipping to and from Australian ports

4. Building Settlements, Towns and Cities
   4.6 Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities
**Description**

**Physical description**

The Fisherman's Wharf is a mass concrete structure, designed to plans by Sir John Coode. The timber viaduct at the base of the structure is no longer extant, while the tops of hand cranes have been placed in storage.

The cranes are pillar and jib cranes. The pillar is set into the wharf in this case with concrete. The cast iron base rotates around the pillar. The wooden jib is fixed into the base and a cable is wound on a drum via a sheave at the end of the jib, operated by a geared crank handle. Attached to the cable would be a hook and cables to enable the fisherman to lift their vessels from the water and swing them onto the deck of the breakwater. One crane appears much older than the other and perhaps it was originally located of the first or second jetty. The bases of the cranes remain in situ and the original hand rails and decking are still intact. Remnants of the original spray wall (and later additions) are still present.

**Physical condition**

Poor

**Usage/Former usage**

Maritime – breakwater, wharf

**Recommended management**

Prepare a Conservation Management Plan in consultation with the community and the National Trust.

**Comparative analysis**

**South Australian Heritage Register ID 14092 Port Elliot Breakwater and Quarry, Freeman Lookout Road Port Elliot, Alexandrina Council**

The Port Elliot breakwater and quarry were developed as part of seaport works, designed to become part of the trade network with the Murray River. The breakwater's initial design was to run from Freemans Nob to the western end of Pullen Island, with construction commencing in 1853. The granite blocks used for the construction were quarried from Freeman's Nob, but work ceased after only 150 m of the breakwater had been constructed. The breakwater and other harbour works failed to provide adequate protection for vessels. As a result, the port’s functions were transferred to Victor Harbor in 1864. The site is significant as ‘a relic of the extensive public works undertaken by the South Australian Government to establish Port Elliot as the sea port for the River Murray trade’ (South Australian Heritage Database 1990).

**VHI H7822-0389 Newport Pier/Wharf, 100 The Strand Newport, Hobsons Bay City**

The Newport Wharf or Pier is listed on the Victorian Heritage Inventory, and was constructed prior to 1894. It was built on reclaimed land beside the Greenwich Pier and Ballast Wharf, and is located on the prior course of the Yarra River. Due to its position, it is considered to have likely been constructed before the construction of the Coode Canal in 1879. The Newport Wharf or Pier is considered to contain potential archaeological relics and pier piles associated with the former use of the site (Victorian Heritage Database 2003).

**VHR H2124/HO19 Warrnambool Breakwater, Viaduct and Harbour, Breakwater Road Warrnambool, Warrnambool City**

The Warrnambool Breakwater was designed in 1879 by British harbour engineer Sir John Coode. Construction for the site took place between 1884 and 1890, with the harbour used regularly from the 1850s after the construction of jetties. The Government approved plans for the construction of breakwaters in 1874, but work
ceased in 1877. Coode’s original proposal for the breakwaters at Warrnambool was considered too expensive at the time, so Coode prepared a revised plan which included a timber viaduct, and a 900 feet long concrete breakwater and wharf. Due to various issues with siltation, the harbour was no longer in use by the 1940s. The breakwater is considered to comprise two parts: the concrete breakwater and the timber viaduct. The breakwater is 9 m wide, with a 4.5 m parapet along the top. The base of the breakwater comprises concrete blocks. The viaduct now contains an asphalt roadway on top, and has been filled in underneath with rubble. The Warrnambool Breakwater is significant for the following reasons (Victorian Heritage Database (2009)):

'It is of historical significance as one of the most important maritime engineering projects in Victoria in the late nineteenth century. It is evidence of Victoria's nineteenth century investment in regional port infrastructure and the development of Victorian coastal shipping. It is of significance for its association with the English civil engineer Sir John Coode, the most distinguished harbour engineer of the nineteenth century, who was brought to Victoria to advise on works to improve the Port of Melbourne, but was retained by the Government to advise on improvements to the harbours at Portland, Geelong, Port Fairy, and Lakes Entrance, as well as Warrnambool. His projects for Melbourne, Lakes Entrance and Warrnambool were major engineering projects of the 19th century. The breakwater is historically significant as a reminder of Warrnambool's early maritime history as a Western District port, and as one of Victoria's major 'outer ports'. While the Warrnambool Breakwater is a demonstration of the engineering skills of the nineteenth century, it also demonstrates the limitations of knowledge relating to sedimentology at the time and the confidence apparent in a number of nineteenth century plans which assumed that natural forces could be overcome or contained by engineering' (Victorian Heritage Database 2009).

VHR H1088/HO4 Gellibrand Pier and Breakwater Pier, Nelson Place and Battery Road, Williamstown, Hobsons Bay City

The Breakwater Pier was constructed from 1859 to 1861 by contractors McKay and McDonald. It comprises a timber breakwater with an embanked approach, and was constructed over an existing convict-built stone pier. Modifications to the pier took place in the 1880s and again in 1933 to 1934. In 1954, the pier was renovated so that it could accommodate tankers. The Gellibrand Railway Pier was built by the Melbourne Mount Alexander and Murray River Railway Company, from 1854 to 1859. Initial construction comprised the development of a 224 m long embankment, which is now partially covered by the existing pier. A timber extension was added in 1857, with additional modifications taking place from the early 1880s to 1894. Like the Breakwater Pier, the Gellibrand Railway Pier was remodelled to accommodate tankers in 1963.

The Breakwater Pier and Gellibrand Pier are considered to be of historical significance to the State of Victoria for the following reasons (Victorian Heritage Database (1999)):

- **Breakwater Pier**, with the modifications that have taken place over time, demonstrates the changing functions and uses of the site from its original purpose as a convict jetty, to a timber breakwater, to the site for the tide gauge house, to a railway pier playing an important role in the wool and grain trade and to its current role in handling exports and imports for the oil and petrochemical industry in Victoria.

- **Gellibrand Pier**, with the alterations and extensions that have taken place through its history, demonstrates the changing functions and uses of the pier from its original purpose as an important element of the Melbourne to Williamstown railway line and its role in the grain and wool trade to its current role in handling the exports and imports of the oil and petrochemical industry of Victoria.

- **Breakwater Pier**, along with Gellibrand Pier, has an association with Point Gellibrand. Both structures had a major impact on the success and prominence of the Point in the early maritime history of Victoria.

- **Together with the Gellibrand Pier**, **Breakwater Pier** is associated with the economic growth of Victoria. It played an important role as a grain and wool port from the 1850s until the 1930s.

- **The importance of the Pier** is heightened by the survival of part of its original structure. The most substantial visible part of the original structure is the dressed basalt retaining wall at the end, and to part of,
the west side of the embankment. The basic layout of the railway tracks is original and some elements of
the timber structure would seem to date from 1845.

Summary

The comparative analysis indicates that the association of the Fisherman’s Wharf with the renowned British
harbour engineer, Sir John Coode, is of historical significance. The design of the wharf and breakwater, with its
mass concrete structure, is also significant for its early use in harbour design. The breakwater is also similar to
the Warrnambool Breakwater, Viaduct and Harbour listing, as it is historically significant as a reminder of
Portland’s early maritime history, and its struggle to become a sheltered harbour. Portland was also one of
Victoria’s major outer ports and was the only deep sea port between Melbourne and Adelaide. Like the
Warrnambool Breakwater, Viaduct and Harbour, the Fisherman’s Wharf and breakwater also demonstrates
nineteenth century engineering skills, and the limitations of sedimentology knowledge.

Statement of significance

What is significant?

Significant elements of the Fisherman’s Wharf include:

- Associated with the early construction phases of the Port of Portland
- Associated with the renowned harbour engineer, Sir John Coode
- The early use of mass concrete in wharf construction
- The fabric of the structure, including the original timber viaduct, remnants of the spray wall, as well as
  original handrails and decking, and two early timber cranes
- The social value

How is it significant?

The Fisherman’s Wharf is of historical significance (HERCON criterion A), contains rare aspects of a cultural
history (HERCON criterion B), technical significance (HERCON criterion F), social significance (HERCON
criterion G), and special associative significance (HERCON criterion H) to the Glenelg Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Fisherman’s Wharf is of historical significance due to its association with renowned British harbour
engineer, Sir John Coode. The breakwater is also a reminder of Portland’s early maritime history, and the
financial and technological struggles to become a sheltered harbour. The wharf is the sole remaining element of
the early port history of Victoria’s first permanent settlement. Portland was also one of Victoria’s major outer
ports and was the only deep sea port between Melbourne and Adelaide. The Fisherman’s Wharf also
demonstrates nineteenth century engineering skills, and the limitations of sedimentology knowledge at the time.
Remnants of the early construction phases are also still present at the site.

The Fisherman’s Wharf contains rare aspects of a cultural history, as there are two hand cranes associated with
the wharf, which may be the last remaining extant examples of their type in Victoria (National Trust nd).

The Fisherman’s Wharf is of technical significance as it represents the use of mass concrete, which was a
feature of Coode’s designs – present also at Warrnambool and Port Fairy. The wharf and breakwater adds to
the comparative and contrasting nature of the use of mass concrete in early harbour construction. The wharf
and breakwater are representative of a ‘flow-through’ engineering principle, which was only partially successful
(National Trust nd).
The Fisherman’s Wharf is of social significance for the local community as it has strong associations for the local fishermen, who consider the Fisherman’s Wharf Breakwater to be ‘their’ wharf, and has historically allowed them access to the sea.

The Fisherman’s Wharf is of special associative significance due to its association with and early design by British harbour engineer, Sir John Coode. Coode was brought to Melbourne to work on the further development of the Port of Melbourne, but was engaged by the Government to advise on the Portland, Geelong, Port Fairy, Lakes Entrance, and Warrnambool harbours. While Coode’s initial design was not implemented for the breakwater, his revised design of 1887 was, resulting in the current shape of the Fisherman’s Wharf (excluding the mid-twentieth century reclamation).

**Recommended Controls (2016)**

- External Paint Controls: No
- Internal Alteration Controls: No
- Tree Controls: No
- Fences & Outbuildings: No
- Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted: Yes
- Incorporated Plan: No
- Aboriginal Heritage Place: No
References

Australian Bureau of Statistics 1973 *Victorian Year Book*.

Glenelg Shire Council 2015 *Port of Portland*.


This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.