Heritage Citation Report

Name: The Corkscrew
Address: Main breakwater, Port of Portland Harbour
Place Type: Maritime
Citation Date: 6 June 2016
Heritage listings: None
Recommended heritage protection: Glenelg Shire Planning Scheme (PS) Heritage Overlay (HO)

Figure 1: The Corkscrew, Portland

Figure 2: Proposed HO extent
Portland's origins lie in the town's port history. The non-Aboriginal use of Portland Bay extends back into the early nineteenth century, when 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, the harbour was used largely by sealers and whalers during the nineteenth century (Wiltshire 1984). It wasn't until 1839, when Captain Foster Fyans suggested to Sir George Gipps (NSW Governor) that a town should be laid out at ‘The Bay’, that Portland became 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 current 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 a 'railway pier'), and was only demolished in 1970. However, Learmonth (1960) claims 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 1,600 yards (1.46 km) in length, when extended in 1912 (Wiltshire 1984). The opening of this pier in 1902 was cause for major celebration, with the ceremony officiated by the Honourable William McCulloch (a representative on behalf of Sir Alex Peacock, the current Premier) (Learmonth 1960).

Despite the immense potential for the port, little 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 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).

The Corkscrew was constructed on the main breakwater of the Port of Portland. The Corkscrew was built in around 1960, by one of the construction companies who worked on the harbour. The structure was erected in a show of goodwill from the port developers to the port and the townspeople of Portland (pers comm. Brendan Jarrett, 8 June 2016). The Corkscrew was designed by Godfrey and Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, and has a unique, corkscrew-shape, over a continuous graduation, providing three viewing platforms. The drawings were completed for the structure at the Port Harbour Trust offices in June 1960, with the goal to give navigators/sailors a unique landmark for the Port of Portland. It was described as ‘Breakwater Observatory’ on the 1960 elevation drawing. The original design was also meant to incorporate male and female toilets into the base of the structure, however, it is unknown if they were actually constructed (pers comm. Brendan Jarrett, 8 June 2016). The Corkscrew was originally designed to be an iconic landmark, as well as a beacon at the end of the main breakwater. It was also used as a lookout by local people; however, access is no longer permitted to the public.

Community members have spoken of The Corkscrew as ‘guiding’ them into Portland, while surfing or boating in the harbour (pers. comm. Community Reference Group). In addition, older members of the community recall their journeys to The Corkscrew as young children and teenagers, when they could ride their bikes out along the breakwater to The Corkscrew, and ride up and down its spiral. The public access originally granted to The Corkscrew resulted in community engagement with the newly constructed port, its infrastructure and economic benefits (pers. comm. Community Reference Group).

The Corkscrew has been described as a ‘piece of functional industrial design’ that is ‘sadly…disintegrating’ (North 2015), and is considered to be an ‘important marker for commercial shipping and recreational sailors at the end of the Harbour’s main breakwater’ (Historic Buildings Restoration Committee (Inc) 2015). The Corkscrew was reported by the Historic Buildings Restoration Committee’s (2015) report as being ‘highly regarded by the community’.

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
8. Developing Australia’s cultural life
8.1 Organising recreation
8.1.4 Enjoying the natural environment

8.2 Going to the beach

**Description**

**Physical description**

The Corkscrew was constructed on the main breakwater of the Port of Portland, to the east of Number 2 Quay. It is approximately 1.2 km north of Madeira Packet Road, at the tip of the breakwater. There is an access road along the breakwater to the site. The Corkscrew was built in around 1960, from reinforced concrete, and had bronze window frames, and steel handrails protected by ‘dimet’ (a rust-proof treatment). The Corkscrew was designed by Melbourne firm Godfrey and Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, and has a unique, corkscrew-shape, over a continuous graduation, providing three viewing platforms. The building comprised two ramps, one internal, with the second ramp actually being a roof, for the internal ramp. It had concrete pillars, floors and walls, and glass windows (the windows are no longer extant) (Figure 1 and Figure 3). The cement used for the construction of The Corkscrew is considered to have been of lesser quality than that used for the seawall, which has shown no signs of decay. The Corkscrew's concrete is cracking and eroding, and the steel reinforcing bars have completely eroded in places.

**Physical condition**

Poor

**Usage/Former usage**

Maritime infrastructure

Lookout/recreation

**Recommended management**

Conservation Management Plan in consultation with the community

**Comparative analysis**

There are no listings on the Victorian Heritage Database that relate to maritime infrastructure of a similar nature to The Corkscrew. There is one place listed on the South Australian Heritage Database that contains a breakwater, however, there is no structure associated with the listing. There are four lookout points listed on the Victorian Heritage Database, but only those of relevance are included below.

**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).

**Lake Bellfield and Tourist Viewing Platform, Grampians Road, Halls Gap, Northern Grampians Shire**

This heritage place contains two listings: Lake Bellfield, and the Tourist Viewing Platform. The lake is artificial, and was constructed in the mid-twentieth century, as a reservoir. The Tourist Viewing Platform comprises two
levels: a toilet block (with stone cladding), and a cantilevered viewing platform above with curved roof and glass cladding. It is described as ‘an elegant late twentieth century structure associated with the lake’ (Victorian Heritage Database 2004). The listing is considered to be locally significant as:

- It is historically and scientifically significant due to its association with the Wimmera-Mallee stock and domestic water supply system (which is one of the largest of its kind in the world).
- It is socially significant as a recreational destination. It is also valued and recognised by the local community and regional visitors.

This place has been recommended for listing on the Northern Grampians Shire Heritage Overlay.

National Trust B6917 Belmont Tower, 32 Belmont Avenue, Upwey, Yarra Ranges Shire

The Belmont Tower is a timber lookout, constructed in 1923. The National Trust considers it to be of State historical, architectural and social significance, as:

- It is the oldest-known timber lookout in Victoria
- It is one of the last timber lookout towers in the Dandenong Ranges
- It is associated with the Dandenongs’ residential development, tourism, and fire safety provisions

The tower was built as a ‘land selling feature’ for the Mount Upwey Estate – the goal was to provide potential buyers with views of the estate’s setting. The tower was also used as a fire lookout by the Upwey Fire Brigade. The tower was considered to be iconic in the Dandenongs, and in 1927, the Rose Postcard company included the tower in a Victorian series.

Summary

The comparative analysis indicates that there are no registered sites within Victoria that contain both maritime and recreational values of a similar nature to The Corkscrew. The design of The Corkscrew is unique among registered lookouts, which are considered to be of social and architectural significance. The Port Elliot Breakwater and Quarry also indicates that public works associated with the development of ports are also considered to be of significance.

Statement of significance

What is significant?

Significant elements of The Corkscrew include:

- Associated with the construction of the Port of Portland and its location on the breakwater
- Associated with well-known Melbourne-based architecture firm Godfrey and Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb
- The unique three-tiered corkscrew design
- Its landmark/iconic nature
- The fabric of the structure
- The social value

How is it significant?

The Corkscrew is of aesthetic significance (HERCON criterion E), and social significance (HERCON criterion G), to the Glenelg Shire.

Why is it significant?
The Corkscrew is of aesthetic significance because of its setting on a prominent breakwater within the Port of Portland, commanding 360 degree views of the Portland foreshore, harbour and town. In addition, the unique three-tiered corkscrew design (completed by Godfrey and Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb) is an important piece of mid-twentieth century maritime industrial architecture. The Corkscrew is a well-known harbour landmark, and is considered to be iconic for the area.

The Corkscrew is of social significance, and has been documented as being ‘highly regarded’ by the community. In addition, The Corkscrew’s social significance is inherent in its prominence to the community, both as an icon marking the port entrance and as a beacon for those arriving by boat. Community members have spoken of The Corkscrew as ‘guiding’ them into Portland, while surfing or boating in the harbour. In addition, older members of the community recall their journeys to The Corkscrew as young children and teenagers, when they could ride their bikes out along the breakwater to The Corkscrew, and ride up and down its spiral. The public access originally granted to The Corkscrew resulted in community engagement with the newly constructed port, its infrastructure and economic benefits.

**Recommended Controls (2016)**

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

**References**

- Glenelg Shire Council 2015 *Port of Portland*.
- North, L. 2015 *Pop-up bar brings urban edge to Portland*: Bluestone Magazine.

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.