

## PORTLAND HERITAGE PRECINCT – HO165

### Introduction

This Heritage Citation for the Portland Heritage Precinct documents the historical background of the Precinct and presents an assessment of heritage significance.

This Citation covers much of the old township of Portland and identifies properties based on their contribution to the heritage values of the Precinct:

- ‘Significant’ heritage places are individually important places of State or local heritage significance. They are listed individually in the Glenelg Shire Planning Scheme Schedule to the Heritage Overlay. They can also be places that, when combined within a precinct, form an important part of the heritage significance of the precinct.
- ‘Contributory’ heritage places are places that contribute to the heritage significance of a precinct. They are not considered to be individually important places of heritage significance, however when combined with other ‘significant’ and/or ‘contributory’ heritage places, they play an integral role in demonstrating the heritage significance of a precinct.
- ‘Non-contributory’ places are places within a heritage precinct that have no identifiable heritage significance. They are included within a Heritage Overlay because any development of the place may impact on the heritage significance of the precinct or adjacent ‘significant’ or ‘contributory’ heritage places.

### Historical background

From its beginning as a trading port for the sealing and whaling industries in the 1830s, Portland developed rapidly through the 1840s, due to settlement of the rich pastoral hinterland, with wool and agricultural exports becoming important staples.

Edward Henty is commonly attributed with establishing the first permanent settlement in the Port Phillip District of NSW, later becoming Victoria, when he arrived at Portland Bay in November 1834, well before the first Government survey (The Colonist, 1840). The Henty family took up a large extent of unsurveyed land in the vicinity and commenced farming, constructing a house,

formerly known as Richmond Cottage then Richmond House, around 1835 in the most commanding position, overlooking the foreshore at the centre of the Bay. The business extended into whaling, mercantile and pastoral activity and at the centre of their establishment, the expansive house was ultimately flanked by stables, sheds, yards and mercantile stores, all divided and bounded by high bluestone walls.

The first official government visit to Portland was from Foster Fyans, the first police magistrate at Geelong, who travelled overland from Geelong to Portland in June 1839. Fyans reported to the Governor, Sir George Gipps, on the promising land at Portland and the extent of the Hentys’ landholdings (Learmonth 1960).

The first survey of the town of Portland was undertaken between December 1839 and February 1840 by Charles J Tyers and Thomas Townsend. Tyers reported a town population of 203 at that time. Tyers’ survey plan laid out the familiar north-south grid of streets, and included what are now Bentinck, Percy and Hurd Streets and Glenelg, Gawler, Julia, Henty, Tyers, Otway, Fern and Townsend Streets. The ‘Henty Establishment’, ‘Dr Byas’ House’, ‘Cooks House’ and ‘Henty’s Cooperage Etc.’ are also surveyed on the plan (Tyers 1840).

The first land sales for Portland occurred in Melbourne in October 1840 (Learmonth 1960). Prices were high for properties at that time, and for a short period Portland vied with Melbourne for the status of major settlement of the southern region. A building boom followed the land sales, and from 1840-42 four hotels and four churches were established followed by the first banks in 1846 and 1847 (Tout-Smith 2003).

FW Birmingham undertook a comprehensive survey of Portland in 1853, including buildings and infrastructure established at that time. Birmingham’s survey map provides a comprehensive guide to determine extant buildings dating to pre-1853 (Birmingham 1853).

By the 1850s and 1860s, Portland was established as a prosperous urban settlement as the gold rush period attracted people and wealth to the town. It became a municipality in 1855 and access improved with the establishment of the Portland Roads District in 1856, a Cobb & Co service to Melbourne via Geelong, and an electric telegraph service in 1857. By the mid-1860s the city contained a fine collection of public, private and commercial buildings.

Each part of Portland developed a different character, depending primarily on function. Distinctly residential

areas developed to the west of the town centre. The prominent members of the community established themselves in the inner west in areas around Julia Street west, Percy Street south, Blair Street and Gawler Street west, while the working class built modest weatherboard or stone cottages and houses to the north, west and south.

Key commercial areas developed along Gawler Street south, Percy Street and Julia Streets. Church precincts developed separately on Julia Street (Anglican) and Bentinck Street (Roman Catholic), Percy Street (Wesleyan) and Tyers Street (Presbyterian). These four areas, geographically distinct from each other, each have the benefit of prominence in landscape and therefore views to and from their churches.

After World War Two and into the 1960s the investment in industries such as the meat trade at factories such as Borthwicks and improvements in the Port and shipping resulted in increased development in Portland and the town became increasingly urbanised. The population of Portland was more than 12,000 by the 1970s (Jean, Kellaway and Rhodes 2002).

### Physical description

The Portland Heritage Precinct encompasses most of the early town of Portland as surveyed by Tyers in 1839-1840. The Precinct is bounded by Cameron and Hurd Streets to the west, the Henty Highway to the south, Tyers Street to the north and Bentinck Street to the east.

The contributory and individually significant places in the Portland Heritage Precinct comprise commercial, ecclesiastic, and residential buildings and structures which date from over 100 years of development, from the early 1840s until the 1940s. Many include complexes made up of multiple structures including outbuildings, particularly stables and stone boundary walls, reflecting the predominant development of Portland prior to the introduction of motorised transport.

Early public governance and administrative buildings were constructed mainly of locally available bluestone, with a high level of detail. These buildings and their prominent locations within the Precinct provided a reminder to the citizens of Portland of the need for law and order in this remote town.

Early residential buildings are represented by colonial weatherboard houses (1840s), built using imported timber and other materials, and early modest stone cottages (1850s-1870s) which exemplify the nature of early colonial Georgian-style vernacular architecture in south western Victoria.

Distinctively Victorian residential weatherboard architectural styles developed as Portland increased in prosperity throughout the 1870s to 1890s. These places had increased ornamentation, timber-framed verandahs, hipped roofs and moderate setbacks with extensive gardens.

Later Edwardian styles came into prevalence in the early 1900s to 1920s, with larger gables, low-pitched wide roofs with overhanging verandahs and porticos, deep setbacks and extensive gardens and hedges.

Art Deco buildings are evident in the Precinct, although not in large numbers. There are some significant examples, notably the examples at 33 Blair Street and commercial examples at 78-82 Percy Street and 40 Julia Street (the Star Cinema and small shop adjacent). Some of these places use thin dark bricks as contrasting colours and the basis for standard Art Deco stepped motifs.

Post-World War Two housing is often under-represented in historic heritage town studies. In Portland the houses of this period make an important contribution to the development of the town. Examples of this period within the Precinct can be seen in Cameron, Hurd and Palmer Streets.

Norfolk Island Pines were planted along prominent streets throughout the town including Percy, Hurd, Gawler and Cliff Streets. This was a deliberate town planning decision in the Victorian era to improve the streetscape. Similar plantings occurred in Port Fairy. Monterey Cypress trees were planted along Bentinck Street opposite the shops in the 1870s and on North Bluff in the 1880s. Other individual mature tree plantings and landscape elements exist in private gardens and the public realm which are associated with the nineteenth century development of the town. Other nineteenth century elements in the public and private domain include bluestone kerb and guttering and macadamised road treatments.

The southern end of this Precinct is dominated by Fawthrops' Lagoon. The lagoon was originally a natural feature which was increased in size during the early settlement of Portland as a source of water for the town. The lagoon is named after Captain James Fawthrop, the harbour master of Portland Bay from 1853-1868. Fawthrop built the bluestone Windsor Cottage (south east of the lagoon) and lived there with his family.

### Comparative analysis

Comparative examples of a Heritage Precinct in Victoria covering an entire town are rare. Most Precincts have a

particular focus or emphasis on residential or commercial rather than both. The Portland Heritage Precinct is unusual in many ways, but components of its significance can be considered to be comparative to other precincts in south western Victoria.

For example, the Gipps Street and Moyne River Precinct in Port Fairy (Moyne Shire), also of a large extent and includes residential, commercial and industrial buildings as well as administrative and legal ones, has many similarities to Portland Heritage Precinct. Both precincts include administrative and governance buildings and both precincts can be identified by avenues of Norfolk Island Pines. The Gipps Street and Moyne River Precinct is of historical, architectural, social and scientific significance to the Moyne Shire.

### What is significant?

The Portland Heritage Precinct is of heritage significance to the Glenelg Shire.

Contributory elements include:

- Early commercial buildings constructed close to the street (no setbacks) of local (bluestone) or imported (timber) materials in colonial Georgian style.
- Colonial Georgian-style bluestone public building architecture, as evidenced by the former Town Hall, the Court House, the Police Cottage, the Rocket Shed, and the Customs House.
- Pre-Separation (July 1851) public buildings including the Customs House, the Watch House, the Court House and the remnant wall of the former Portland Gaol, all of which pre-date Separation of Victoria from New South Wales.
- Properties with potential for archaeological sites. For example, remnants of the wall around the former Portland Gaol, the underground tunnel beneath Cliff Street to the foreshore and the site of the Former Immigration Barracks within the Public Buildings Precinct, the All Saints Catholic Church reserve, several old wells and the macadamised cart track in the vicinity of Julia and Percy Streets, locations of old hotels and inns and the former Henty property on Bentinck Street all contain high potential for significant archaeological deposits and features.
- Distinctive ecclesiastic complexes of mid-to-late Victorian origin including some of Victoria's earliest such as St Stephen's Anglican Church and School; Wesleyan Church, Sunday School and Manse; All Saint's Roman Catholic Church and Scots United Presbyterian Church.

- Victorian and Edwardian architecture in the Precinct, particularly examples which contain the key elements of each period.
- Art Deco architecture in the Precinct, with important commercial examples and residential examples.
- Post-World War Two housing generally constructed as infill houses in established residential streets.
- Gardens and landscaped areas within the Precinct. The landscaped forecourt of the Wesleyan Church and Manse at 61 Percy Street is an unusual example in a regional town of the use of a garden and lawn as a focal point for a commercial area. Other landscaped areas of note include the grassed areas in the memorial triangle outside the former Town Hall. This area provides a landscape for reflection and commemoration, the nature of which is offset by the dramatic Norfolk Island Pines along Cliff Street and Portland Bay beyond.
- Tree plantings, particularly Norfolk Island Pines and Cypress Pines along important thoroughfares through the town.
- Fawthrop's Lagoon in the south of the Precinct.
- Remnant street architecture, including bluestone gutters and crossovers in many of the streets within the Precinct. The quality and condition of these features varies, from fine examples in Julia Street to poorer condition gutters in Hurd Street near Hanlon Park. However, regardless of condition, these features are an important part of Portland's civil infrastructure.
- Views from key observation points within the Precinct, particularly views to the east along Henty, Julia and Tyers Streets towards Portland Bay and views of the Bay from Bentinck Street. Views from Palmer, View, Hurd and Percy Streets to the south over Fawthrop's Lagoon are also significant.
- Views of Portland from the Bay, important for visitors, commercial users of the Port and the local community.

### How is it significant?

The Portland Heritage Precinct is of historical significance (HERCON Criterion A), it possesses rare aspects of cultural heritage (HERCON Criterion B), has the potential to yield information (HERCON Criterion C) has creative/technical significance (HERCON Criterion F) and associative significance (HERCON Criterion H) to the Glenelg Shire.

### Why is it significant?

The Portland Heritage Precinct is historically significant (HERCON Criterion A) to the Glenelg Shire and Victoria. Portland was the first permanent non-Aboriginal settlement in Victoria, and encapsulates the early history of settlement in Victoria. The heritage fabric of Portland presents rich and varied stories of early settlement and ongoing development in a regional and remote part of Victoria. The town's layout and design, and remaining historic buildings contribute to the character of the town and forms an important part of Victoria's heritage.

The Portland Heritage Precinct contains examples of early colonial architecture of a style which is rare in Victoria (HERCON Criterion B). The oldest house in Victoria (in its original location) is located in Portland at 4 Percy Street, built in 1841 (VHD 2004). This place and the Steam Packet Inn were built using materials imported from Tasmania (VHD 1999).

The Portland Heritage Precinct has the potential to yield information about the history of Portland and Victoria (HERCON Criterion C). The suite of colonial Georgian-style public buildings, banks and house (single and double-storey) in Portland provides a unique opportunity for research and understanding of the stonemasonry techniques and use of local materials which was a necessity in this remote location.

The Portland Heritage Precinct also has the potential to yield information about the history of Portland and Victoria (HERCON Criterion C) through its numerous archaeological sites. There is a very high potential for unidentified archaeological sites throughout the Portland Heritage Precinct and as these sites relate to the earliest permanent settlement in Victoria, they are highly significant.

The Portland Heritage Precinct is aesthetically significant (HERCON Criterion E) to the Glenelg Shire for exhibiting key architectural aesthetics particular to different phases of Portland's development, extending from early colonial vernacular architecture to late Victorian, Edwardian, Art Deco and Post World War Two architectural styles. This includes principle buildings as well as outbuildings and other structures such as boundary walls.

Tree plantings in several key streets in the Precinct are also of aesthetic significance (HERCON Criterion E) to the Glenelg Shire, for example the Norfolk Island Pine trees along Cliff Street, Hurd Street and Percy Street provide strong form, dramatic visual impact and an important recognisable landscape feature in the town. The Norfolk Island Pines provide a dramatic visual impact to visitors arriving at Portland by boat. More so than any

buildings, which are hard to discern from a distance, the trees provide an immediate, definitive marker of the town.

Fawthrop's Lagoon is significant for its association with early water engineering and water supply issues in Portland and for its association with Captain James Fawthrop (HERCON Criterion H). The heritage significance of the lagoon is strongly linked to Windsor Cottage (now an archaeological site outside the Precinct).

The bluestone gutters and crossovers constructed in the Portland Heritage Precinct from the 1840s onwards are also of aesthetic significance (HERCON Criterion E) to the Glenelg Shire as they contribute to the streetscape and enhance the historic nature of the Precinct.

The architecture in the Portland Heritage Precinct demonstrates a high degree of creative and technical significance (HERCON Criterion F) as it shows the skill and creativity of local architects, builders and stonemasons in the region, as they adapted Georgian designs to suit the location and nature of their new, unfamiliar environment. The innovation inherent in the use of local materials as a substitute for known materials shows a deep understanding of the physical materials and components of building and design.

The Portland Heritage Precinct is of associative significance (HERCON Criterion H) to the Glenelg Shire for its association with key prominent architects, builders and stonemasons and social, political and business community leaders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Photographs



The Court House (1844-45), 67 Cliff Street



Norfolk Island Pines in Gawler Street



Early colonial Georgian-style shop, 7 Julia Street



View of Portland, at dusk from the Bay, with Norfolk Island Pines distinct against the sky





Colonial Georgian-style cottage, 72 Julia Street



Colonial Georgian-style shop, 25 Gawler Street



Edwardian house, 12 Percy Street

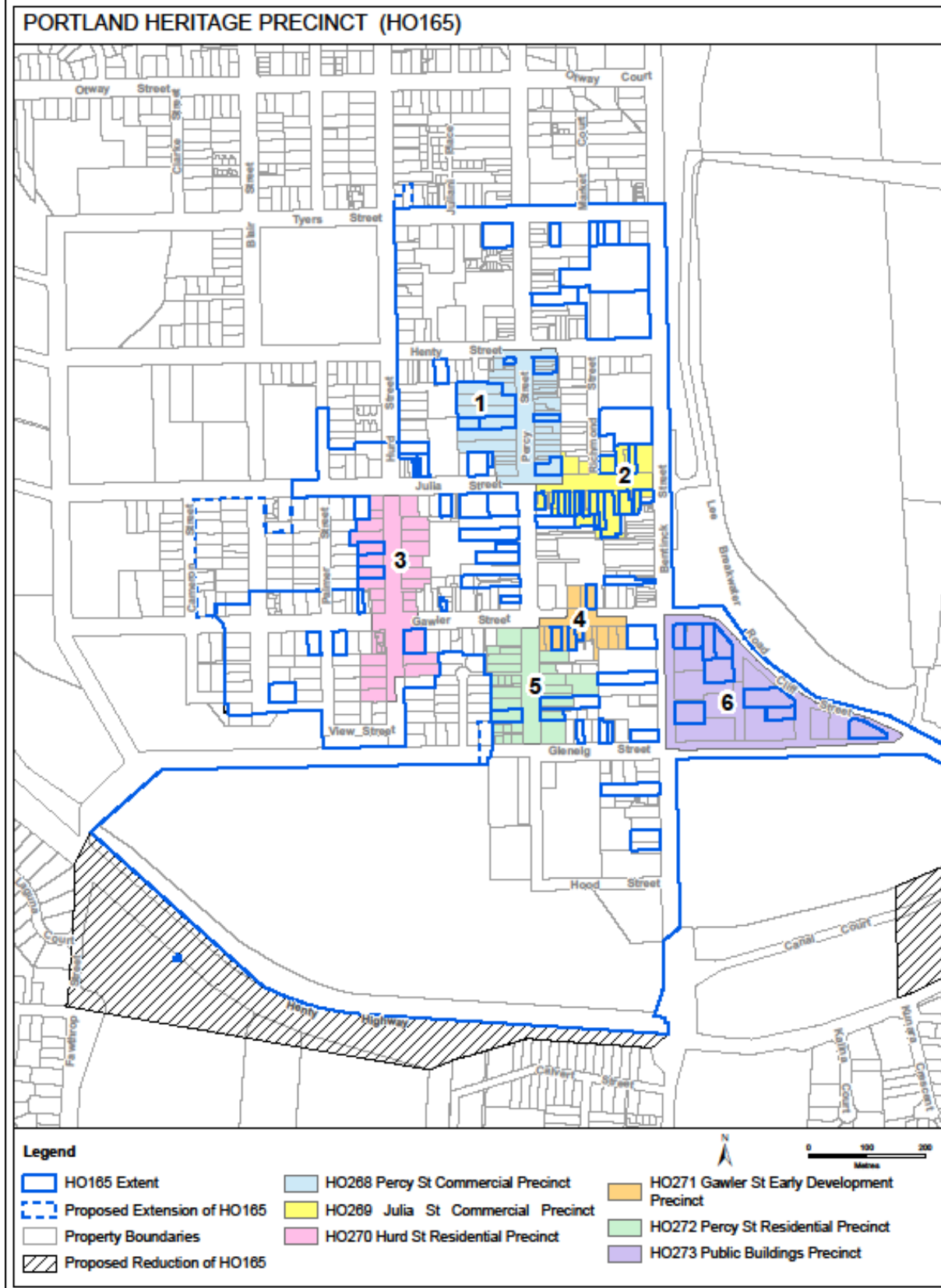


Victorian house, 1/13 Hurd Street



Late Victorian house, 6 Percy Street

HO165 Portland Heritage Precinct Map



### **Contributory Places**

#### **Bentinck Street**

3 (garden), 7, 13, 31, 47, 53, 59, 69, 71, 73A-73B, 75, 83, 105-109, 123

#### **Blair Street**

1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 23A, 25, 27, 31

#### **Cameron Street**

28, 30, 32, 34

#### **Gawler Street**

33, 40, 42, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 58, 62, 63, 64, 70, 72, 73, 75, 77, 80, 82, 84

#### **Glenelg Street**

3, 12, 14, 18, 19, 30

#### **Henty Street**

5, 7, 14, 18, 33, 39, 41, 43, 46, 47

#### **Hurd Street**

2A, 2B, 2C, 4, 35, 37, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 58, 60-62, 66, 72.

#### **Julia Street**

58-58A, 58B, 62, 69, 73, 74, 76, 82, 83, 84, 87, 91

#### **Palmer Street**

1, 2A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 17, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32

#### **Percy Street**

83, 83A, 83B, 88, 1/98, 100, 106

#### **Richmond Street**

6, 8

#### **Tyers Street**

3, 39, 41, 42, 44

9-11, 19, 23, 33, 39-41, 55A, 57A-57B, 57R, 63, 67B, 91, 101, 115, 119-121

#### **Blair Street**

4

#### **Gawler Street**

34, 44, 46, 60, 65, 67

#### **Glenelg Street**

4A (Drill Hall part), 8, 10, 16, 23

#### **Henty Street**

3, 13, 35-37

#### **Hurd Street**

38, 40

#### **Julia Street**

56, 60, 65, 70, 72, 81

#### **Palmer Street**

45

#### **Percy Street**

21, 23, 27, 30, 33, 35, 36R, 39, 2/98, 98R, 113-119

#### **Tyers Street**

5-7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19

### **Significant Places**

#### **Bentinck Street**



### Recommended Controls (2016)

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

### References

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Tout-Smith, D. 2003. Municipality of Portland, Victoria, in Museum Victoria Collections. Retrieved 7 June 2016 from <http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2311>,

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Victoria Heritage Database (2004) Former Portland Inn, 4 Percy Street, Portland  
<http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/13038>

Victoria Heritage Database (1999) The former Steam Packet Hotel, 33 Bentinck Street, Portland  
<http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/936>

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.