6. Commercial fishing

Australian Historic Theme: 3.4. Utilising natural resources

Fishermen's huts were located along the shores of Port Phillip Bay from the earliest days. Some were located at Sandridge and Fishermens Bend. Williamstown was also called a 'fishing village' by one observer. As European settlement spread out across Victoria, fishermen followed, often living in shacks close to the sea. At Kings Creek (Hastings) there were fishermen by the early 1840s, for example.[184] The influx of population during the gold rushes created a greater demand for all sorts of food, including fish. In particular, the Chinese population on the goldfields enjoyed dried fish. Fishermen spread out along the more thinly inhabited areas of the coast, such as Black Rock, Mordialloc, Mornington and Hastings on Westernport Bay. By the late 1850s at Mordialloc, for instance, there was a 'regular canvas town of fishermen's tents and between 40 and 50 boats on the schnapper ground at one time'.[185] Oysters were harvested in the 1860s from Westernport Bay and one individual attempted to establish oyster beds at Sandy Point. Tides, however, brought in sedimentary sand which killed the oysters. The industry was wiped out, and did not recover until the 1890s.[186] Fishermen's sheds for storage were built in association with jetties at some of these locations in the 1860s and 1870s. One at Hastings, said to date from 1864, is still in use.

Queenscliff's fishing industry grew from the 1860s. By 1865 it was reported that 130 fishermen were working at Queenscliff,[187] a location that offered the choice of fishing in both Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait. A great variety of fish, including lobster, was caught by Queenscliff fishermen, but perhaps the most famous was the barracoutta, for which specially-designed 'couta' boats were developed.

The ease of transportation to the main market at Melbourne was crucial to commercial fishermen. Queenscliff catches could be transported by vessels to Geelong or Melbourne, before the railway line from Geelong extended to Queenscliff in 1879. Those located on the eastern shores of Port Phillip Bay and Westernport relied on horse-drawn carts until railway lines were extended down to Frankston, then Hastings and Mornington in the 1880s. Regular steamship services to the Port Albert area encouraged the growth of a fishing industry there, while the extension of the railway from Oakleigh to Sale in 1878 was a great boost to fishing on the Gippsland Lakes. By 1892 there were 100 boats fishing in the lakes and its tributaries.[188] Similarly the fishing industries of Port Fairy and Portland were boosted by rail connections in 1877 (Portland) and 1889 (Port Fairy).

Fishing fleets need safe and protected places for mooring. It is likely that some of the jetties and wharves constructed by the Public Works Department in the nineteenth century, particularly on the Gippsland Lakes, were built with the needs of fishermen in mind. At some locations specific 'fishermen's wharves' were constructed, as at Mornington in the early twentieth century, on a site now used by the yacht club.[189] Sometimes fishing fleets made use of older infrastructure when new infrastructure was built. At Queenscliff, when a steamer jetty was built in the 1880s, the 1850s jetty became known as Fishermen's Pier. The configuration of the piers provided sheltered moorings for fishing boats which were unloaded at Fishermen's Pier.[190] In the 1960s, when silting between these piers made the water too shallow for mooring, a boat harbour for fishing boats – known as Fishermen's Basin - was created in a 'cut' that led into Swan Bay. Slipways were added and the harbour extended in the years since the 1960s.[191] At Portland the old breakwater, built in the 1870s and 1880s, offered shelter to the fishing fleet, while the fishing fleet based at Lakes Entrance after World War II made use of infrastructure developed as part of the artificial entrance to the Gippsland Lakes.

Rivers and inlets, along with sheltered bays, such as Westernport, have also provided berths for fishing vessels. For many years during the twentieth century, Melbourne's fishing fleet tied up at the Maribyrnong River wharves at Footscray. At Apollo Bay, where there had been several attempts to build adequate jetties, there had been a significant fishing industry since the late nineteenth century. Finally in 1950, a new boat harbour was constructed. It still offers shelter to the fishing fleet, as well as to pleasure craft.[192]

7. Making ports and the coast safe

Australian Historic Theme: 3.16.1. Dealing with Hazards and Disasters

Pilots and early navigational aids in Port Phillip Bay

Navigational aids and assistance were amongst the first priorities of the representatives of colonial government in the Port Phillip District. The hazardous channel through Port Phillip Heads meant that an officially–licensed pilot was appointed and based at Shortlands Bluff (Queenscliff) from 1839. The ranks of the pilot service swelled in the 1850s, when many vessels made their way to Port Phillip Bay. The government Engineer was pressed to complete a row of houses for these men and some of these houses survive in Gellibrand Street, Queenscliff. In some coastal ports, such as Portland, Port Fairy and Port Albert, harbour masters doubled as pilots in the 1850s and 1860s.[193]

By 1840 six buoys had been installed in Port Phillip Bay as navigational aids, as suggested by William Hobson and later by Captain Wickham, aboard HMS *Beagle*. Most of the buoys were located to guide vessels through Port Phillip Heads and the channels inside them. The sixth was at Point Gellibrand.[194] In addition Victoria's first navigation light had been constructed at Point Gellibrand. It was a wooden structure, with an oil-burning beacon at the top, which was replaced by a bluestone lighthouse in 1849.[195] This operated as a lighthouse until 1860, when it was converted to the time ball tower that is still situated at the reserve. Prior to this, the time ball had operated from a flagstaff erected near the lighthouse. The flagstaff was crucial for conveying shipping news between Melbourne and Williamstown. The timeball was also essential for mariners anchored in or leaving Hobsons Bay because it allowed ships' captains to accurately set their chronometers.[196] A sandstone

lighthouse was constructed at Shortlands Bluff between 1841 and 1843. This also proved to be temporary. By 1861, when it had been joined by a second timber structure lower down on the sand dunes, the lighthouse had to be moved to make way for a battery. Two new lighthouses, both made of basalt quarried in Melbourne, were built at Queenscliff at this time. One of them was painted white.[197]

In 1852 a flagstaff that signalled the state of the tides through the Rip was erected at Point Lonsdale. Signal Master's quarters were added five years later.[198] In 1856 a pillar was erected to the west of the flagstaff to warn ships of a submerged rock south-east of the Lonsdale reef. A telegraph station was erected in the lighthouse reserve in 1861.[199] In 1863 the wooden Shortlands Bluff lighthouse was moved to Point Lonsdale, although it was not lit until 1867. In the meantime a 'temporary' light was used. The present Point Lonsdale lighthouse was erected in 1902.

The early buoys in Port Phillip Bay were later to be replaced by pile lights in the channels and at Point Gellibrand. Constructed on timber piles in the water, the pile lights housed lightkeepers. Their lamps were fuelled by kerosene. Point Gellibrand's, built first as a lightship, was in place by 1860. The pile light that replaced it in the early twentieth century was destroyed in 1976,[200] although the light was salvaged and now resides at the Melbourne Maritime Museum. The South Channel Pile Light was constructed in 1874 on the Mornington Peninsula side of Port Phillip Bay. Its light, powered by acetylene gas after 1925, was not turned off until 1985. The West Channel Pile Light, off the Bellarine Peninsula coast, was constructed in 1881. Temporary wooden signal stations or lights were also erected (on land) at Point Lonsdale and McCrae in the 1850s.

Bass Strait lights

Two New South Wales Parliamentary Committees, sitting in 1841 and 1845, recommended that lights be placed at dangerous points on or near the eastern and western entrances to Bass Strait. Despite these recommendations and the loss of vessels such as the *Cataraqui*, it was not until 1848 that the first of these, the Cape Otway lighthouse, was completed. The delay was partly caused by the difficulty of finding an overland route to the remote cape, over which to transport building supplies. There was a longer delay in placing a lighthouse on Gabo Island in the east, though a temporary

South Channel Pile Light, refurbished
and moved to a new location 3 km
from Rye Pier. The original piles remain
in their original position.
Heritage Victoria.

wooden lighthouse was placed here after the wreck of the *Monumental City* near the island in 1853.

In 1856 commissioners were appointed by the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania to 'confer upon the subject of Light Houses in the several Australian Colonies'. The Commission recommended that six new lighthouses be established on the Australian coast. Two of these, at Cape Schanck and Wilsons Promontory, were recommended for Victoria. The advantages of the Cape Schanck light would, the commissioners said,

' be not only felt by the direct trade to the ports of Melbourne and Geelong, but it [would] also be a benefit to vessels working through the Straits in either direction against contrary winds; and as a guide to vessels seeking shelter in Western Port in adverse weather…'.

Wilsons Promontory, 'in the most intricate part of the navigation of Bass's Strait' and on the great 'highroad to the overseas and coasting trade' was 'surrounded by numerous dangers lying in the direct track, some hidden and some of a less dangerous character' and therefore 'demanded the most attentive consideration.'[201] In addition, the commissioners recommended that the temporary light on Gabo Island be replaced by a stronger and permanent light and moved to a better position.[202]

Arising out of this report, the limestone Cape Schanck lighthouse was constructed in 1859 on the tip of the Mornington Peninsula. Lighthouse keepers' quarters were finished before the lighthouse, in 1857, and two of these limestone buildings still exist on the site. The basalt Wilsons Promontory lighthouse was also constructed in 1859 on the south-eastern pitch of the promontory, as decided by the Commissioners. The permanent Gabo Island lighthouse, designed by William Wardell, was built in 1862 of locally quarried pink granite.

Although the 1856 Commission strongly recommended a light be erected at Cape Wickham on King Island, this was seen as a necessity only to warn mariners of the dangers of the island's coast. The commissioners did not recommend any more ocean lights for the treacherous west coast of Victoria which 'being free from dangers, affords… the safest shore for the prudent mariner to approach'.[203] This was to prove to be a false assumption as wrecks continued to occur along this coast.

Harbour lights

The 1856 Commission decided that the cost of the lighthouses it recommended should be borne by the colonies which would most benefit from them. In addition harbour lights, to assist mariners entering harbours rather than the open ocean, would remain the responsibility of the respective colonies. To those who were interested in developing ports along the coast of Victoria, harbour lights were essential because they meant that mariners could safely enter harbours by day or night. Harbour lights could also mean that, along the treacherous western coastline, ports could act as 'harbours of refuge' to vessels moving along the coast. A Victorian Select Committee on Westward Harbours reported upon the conditions and improvements necessary for the ports of Portland, Port Fairy and Warrnambool in 1857. The committee recommended that, at Portland, a lighthouse was 'absolutely essential for the safety of trade of the port' and recommended that it be constructed at Observatory Point.[204] It recommended a harbour light on Rabbit Island at Port Fairy and two lights at Warrnambool.[205]

At Portland the lighthouse and keeper's cottage were in operation by 1859 on what was then known as Observation Hill, but later became known as Battery Hill. When a battery emplacement was constructed here in 1889, the lighthouse and keeper's cottage were moved to their present location, at Whaler Point on the other side of the port.[206] Port Fairy's lighthouse, on Rabbit Island, was also built in 1859, along with light-keeper's houses. Rabbit Island was joined to Griffiths Island by means of a breakwater at about the same time. Nowadays, the whole island is known as Griffiths Island. The Port Fairy lighthouse remains in its original position. At Warrnambool, buoys and a flagstaff for signalling ships had been installed in the 1850s. As well as the two recommended lighthouses at Warrnambool, two white stone markers were erected to guide ships during the day. The Middle Island lighthouse and keeper's dwelling were erected in 1859. The other lighthouse, a wooden tower on the beach, was erected, along with a timber residence in 1860. Weathering of the lighthouses meant that by the 1870s, alterations were made. The bluestone Middle Island lighthouse was pulled down and moved, with the keeper's residence, to Flagstaff Hill. One of the two white obelisks was removed, but the lower obelisk on Flagstaff Hill was converted into a lighthouse by adding a gallery in which the light from the wooden tower was placed.

The lighthouse keeper's quarters were moved to the new upper lighthouse. Both new lighthouses were lit by 1874.[207] At Corner Inlet, on the Gippsland coast, a lighthouse was erected on Snake Island (then known as La Trobe Island) in 1859. [208] Whether this is the lighthouse that was moved to nearby Cliffy Island in 1884, has not been ascertained.

Also known as the Eastern Shore Lighthouse, McCrae lighthouse was built in 1874, replacing the timber lighthouse erected in the 1850s.[209] At a time when most Victorian lighthouses were being constructed in stone, the McCrae light, which worked in conjunction with the South Channel Pile Light, was constructed of steel.

The 1873 intercolonial conference and ocean lights

An intercolonial conference of Principal Marine Officers of the Colonies, held in 1873, recommended further ocean lights along Victoria's coast. The sites recommended by the conference were at Cape Nelson, near Portland, Point Hicks, Cape Liptrap and Split Point (Aireys Inlet).[210] Once again there was some delay in carrying out the recommendations of the conference. Cape Nelson lighthouse was to assist vessels entering Bass Strait from the west. Although a site for the lighthouse was surveyed in 1879, it was not until 7 July 1884 that the light on the 79 foot bluestone tower was officially lit.[211] An octagonal timber lookout tower was added to the site, possibly to house an auxiliary light, in 1892. These buildings are all still intact on the site.

The Cliffy Island lighthouse was also constructed in 1884, although the 1873 Conference had recommended Cape Liptrap as the site for this light. Point Hicks lighthouse, built six years later, signals the introduction of concrete lighthouses into Victoria. It is the tallest concrete lighthouse in Australia.[212] Two keepers' houses were built at the same time by contractor J. Thorne. The main internal light at the lighthouse has been replaced by a light on the balcony of the lantern houses and the lightstation is now used as a weather reporting station by the Bureau of Meteorology.[213] Split Point lighthouse (originally known as Eagles Nest Point) was also built of concrete in 1891. Two keepers' residences that were built with the lighthouse, have since been sold and other ancillary buildings, stables and stores, were removed when the light was unmanned in 1919 and converted to electricity. Another concrete lighthouse was built at Point Lonsdale in 1902, replacing the earlier wooden lighthouse. It serves both as an indication of the entrance to the heads and as an aid to navigating the South Channel. A brick building was placed around the base of the light tower in 1950 for use as a signal station and observation room. The Point Lonsdale lighthouse is still staffed,[214] mainly for the provision of information of arrival and departure times of ships

Commonwealth period lighthouses

After Federation the Commonwealth Government became responsible for ocean or 'highway' lights. It commissioned Commander Brewis, RN, to review the existing system of Australian coast lights. Brewis found that, despite the Wilsons Promontory lighthouse, Bass Strait presented great difficulty on a dark night, and recommended additional unmanned lights at Cape Liptrap and Citadel Island (in the Glennie Group, off Wilsons Promontory). Brewis recommended a concrete light tower on Cape Liptrap and a 'skeleton iron structure' on Citadel Island.[215] Both were constructed in 1913. The lighthouses suggested by Brewis completed the circle of ocean lights around the continent. In addition to these light houses or towers, there are navigation lights located at Lighthouse Point, Refuge Cove, Sealers Cove and Waterloo Bay at Wilsons Promontory. It was not until 1944 that another light tower was located at Lighthouse Point, Corner Inlet, although by then several ocean lights had been located on the ocean side of Wilsons Promontory.[216] At Lakes Entrance, the Mount Barkly light was erected in 1923. Further east along the coast, Conran Point lighthouse was erected in 1966. A Navigation Light also exists at Wingan Inlet. It is said that a beacon was located on Grossard Point, Phillip Island in the 1860s, to warn mariners of McHaffies reef. There is still a major beacon at this point. Two other lights on Phillip Island help mark the entrance to Westernport. The Point Grant Light, an iron lattice tower near the Nobbies, was erected in 1947. On the eastern entrance to Westernport, at Cape Woolamai, another light, erected on an iron column, was first lit in 1928.[217] After the widening of the channel through Port Phillip Heads in the 1920s two steel towers were placed at Queenscliff to indicate the width of the channel.[218]

Beacons

Beacons – fixed structures on land or in the water - are found at many points along Victoria's coast and within Port Phillip

Life boat, life boat shed and rocket shed (in background) on the Moyne River, Port Fairy (H1431). *Heritage Victoria*.

The life boat shed was moved to this position in 1973, when the jetty on which it was located fell into disrepair.

Bay. Providing guidance for vessels negotiating channels or the coastline, the earliest beacons in Port Phillip Bay were simply a series of sticks placed in the mud along the Yarra River. As Victorian ports became more sophisticated, with shipping channels dredged to ever greater depths and the volume of shipping increasing, they relied even more heavily on navigational aids such as beacons to provide clear direction to vessels. An increasing array of beacons were needed in the twentieth century, particularly to guide vessels along the Yarra or through shipping channels at all hours of the day or night. In the 1930s, acetylene gas burning buoys were installed at many points of the bay to guide ships through the channels.[219] When the Port Melbourne channel was dredged to 34 feet deep and 600 feet wide in the 1920s, two new beacons were installed at Port Melbourne to guide vessels along the channel towards the Port Melbourne piers. The concrete, land-based, Port Melbourne lighthouse, was one of these beacons. The other beacon, built of timber, was placed 500 feet to the south, in the water between Princes Pier and the newly-emerging Station Pier. The timber jetty linked to this beacon has since been demolished. Flashing beacons were installed to define the edges of the widened channel.[220] Sometimes pre-existing structures have been converted

for use as beacons, as for, example, in Hobsons Bay in the 1950s, when a dolphin installed for defence-related purposes during World War II was used by the Melbourne Harbor Trust as a navigational light.[221]

Lighthouse technology

The very earliest beacons at Port Phillip used oil-burning lamps. The lighthouses built in the middle years of the nineteenth century, such as Cape Otway, used a catoptric lamp system in which parabolic reflectors reflected a light generated by burners. The fuel for such lamps was oil, sometimes sperm whale oil. The dioptric system, in which light is refracted to a preferred position, was invented in 1828,[222] but does not seem to have been used in Victoria until after the 1850s. It was still being used in the early twentieth century when Brewis made his recommendations. By then however, acetylene gas was being used to power dioptric lights, meaning that they did not have to be attended. Most lighthouses were gradually converted to acetylene and then to electricity between the two world wars, but the light at Citadel Island (1913) was the first automatic light installed by the Commonwealth of Australia.[223] As ocean going vessels became larger during this period, they increasingly had to travel

Former rocket shed at Shipping Point, Port Albert 2003.
Heritage Victoria.

in deeper water, and therefore required stronger lights, such as those powered by electricity and this was another reason for the gradual conversion to electricity in the inter-war period. The development of radio beacon technology meant that ships travelling even over the horizon could determine their position by contact with a land-based radio beacon and beacons were installed at Cape Otway in 1937 and Cape Schanck and Cape Wickham (King Island) in 1939. Another beacon was established on Gabo Island in 1964.[224]

Saving lives

Lifeboats and lifeboat sheds

The treachery of the Victorian coastline made shipwrecks an all too common experience in the nineteenth century. Early in the century attempts were made in Britain to develop successful designs for lifeboats. The process was complicated because lifeboats had to have the capacity to be launched into surf, carry a number of passengers as well as a crew, and be buoyant.[225] These designs were perfected around the middle of the century and in 1857 the Harbour Master at Melbourne, Charles Ferguson, commissioned four lifeboats from migrant boat-builder William White at Williamstown. Even before these boats had been commissioned however, at least one lifeboat seems to have been in use in Victoria. In 1854 the Public Works Department spent £57.0.0 repairing the Royal Humane Society's boat at Sandridge.[226]

The first of the four commissioned lifeboats was taken to Port Fairy for testing in 1857. The next three were taken to Queenscliff, Portland and Warrnambool the following year. Port Albert received one in 1859. It seems that the lifeboats at the 'outer ports' were little used, except for regular practice by their volunteer crews. However, after the wreck of the *Cheviot* on the ocean side of Point Nepean in 1887, there were calls to back up the service at Queenscliff with another lifeboat stationed at the Heads. The Point Lonsdale jetty, complete with lifeboat shed, was built to house this lifeboat in 1891.[227]

Like the sheds built to house the earlier lifeboats and equipment, Point Lonsdale's lifeboat shed was cantilevered over the water on the seaward end of the jetty. This arrangement ensured that the boats could be launched quickly in emergencies. The sheds housing the early lifeboats were built by 1862, but two of them were later moved. The jetty on which the Port Fairy shed was

built fell into disrepair and it was moved in 1873 to a position on the Moyne River, with a slipway leading into the water. At Warrnambool, where the build-up of sand in the harbour was a recurrent problem, the shed was moved in 1878.[228]

Although the lifeboat crews at Portland, Warrnambool and Port Fairy continued with regular practice until World War II, their services were rarely in demand. At Queenscliff, however, the old lifeboat was replaced with a motor-powered boat in 1926. This new vessel appears to have made the Point Lonsdale lifeboat redundant.[229] The Queenscliff lifeboat service was discontinued in 1976, though the shed used to house the motor lifeboat survives. A shed, though not the original, survives at Port Albert.[230] The lifeboat and nineteenth century lifeboat shed survive at Port Fairy.

Rocket and mortar sheds

An alternative to lifeboats for the rescue of shipwreck victims was a 'rocket' or 'mortar'. Because these devices could be launched from the shore they were often more effective than lifeboats. They were small devices which 'fired' rockets attached to lines of rope from shore to a stricken vessel. Survivors on the ship were instructed to fix one line to the ship's mast. Then a second line was run out on which a breeches' buoy was attached. The breeches' buoy was literally like a pair of trousers in which survivors would sit as they were then hauled above the water to shore. Specially constructed sheds, which were quite small, were needed to store rockets or mortars in dry and secure conditions. Some were built at Point Nepean and Point Lonsdale, Warrnambool and Portland in 1858 and Port Albert in 1877. Portland's was replaced in 1885 and Port Fairy's in 1886. Lakes Entrance had one by 1890. Another rocket house was constructed at Sorrento in 1891 and it is probable that other rocket sheds were constructed around the coast. In order to ensure that the contents were kept dry, rocket sheds were often built of stone or brick. Some remaining examples are at Port Fairy, Lakes Entrance and Port Campbell.

8. Boat and ship repair and building

Australian Historic Theme: 3.7. Moving Goods and People

With a heavy reliance on shipping, it is no wonder that the Port Phillip District numbered boat builders and repairers among its early commercial industries. James Jacks and Charles McIntosh proclaimed themselves 'boat builders and shipwrights' in Thomson Street Williamstown in 1841.[231] But, under the stresses of the gold rushes, a Select Committee of the Parliament of Victoria argued in 1853 that a ship repair facility was needed at Melbourne, even though there were by then a number of privately-operated slips at Williamstown, on the south bank of the Yarra and at Sandridge.[232] By 1853 the south bank of the Yarra 'had been appropriated to ship building'[233]

The Select Committee recommended that the government construct a dry dock, or at least a patent slip,[234] a paved ramp on which vessels could be hauled out of the water for cleaning or repairs. Construction of a government patent slip commenced at Williamstown in 1856.[235] In the next decade work began on the massive Alfred Graving Dock, which took ten years to complete. The graving dock formed the nucleus of a government dockyard, becoming the 'State Shipbuilding Yard' in 1913. The Commonwealth Government took over the dockyards in both world wars, building several ships, such as minesweepers, frigates, destroyers and barges.[236] Between the wars the Melbourne Harbor Trust used the dockyards, moving next door during World War II to establish its own slipways, jetties and extensive system of workshops, where the Trust constructed and maintained its own vessels such as dredges. After the war, the former state shipbuilding yard remained in Commonwealth control until 1986.

Both the Yarra south bank and Williamstown maintained their links with private ship repair companies. At Williamstown Blunts and Knights slipways are still in existence. Ship repair on the south bank of the Yarra ceased with the demise of river shipping. However Duke and Orr's dry dock constructed in 1875, and reconstructed in 1901 provides evidence of a nineteenth century timber-lined dry dock. Though this dry dock ceased operating in 1975, it remains as the site of the Melbourne Maritime Museum and home of the barque *Polly Woodside*.

Though these Melbourne locations have long associations with boat-building and repair, there were other maritime centres which also needed such facilities, if only for pleasure craft. Queenscliff, for example, a fishing village, had boat builders from the 1890s, though it is believed that the earliest 'couta boats' may have been manufactured in Geelong or Melbourne.[237] Once shipping got underway on the Gippsland Lakes in the 1880s, Paynesville acquired a private patent slip, which passed into government hands in 1914.[238] The eastern banks of the Maribyrnong River also supported a boat repair industry in the nineteenth century. Boat-builders have been based at Mordialloc, a place of quiet recreational boating and commercial fishing, since 1892 when William Kretchmar established his business. Jack Pompei, whose father worked as a fisherman at Mordialloc from the 1920s, established a boat-building business in the 1930s. The business is still operating and located at Mordialloc.

9. Accommodating seamen

Australian Historic Theme: 3.22. Providing Lodgings

Sailors arriving on foreign ships in Victoria faced the difficulty of finding affordable lodgings. While many may have preferred to spend their time ashore in hotels, they ran the risk of being 'at the mercy of the low boarding-house keeper and crimp', who took the sailors' money, provided them with 'unlimited rum and tobacco' and then charged them exorbitantly for their lodgings.[239] In England in the 1830s a mission to seamen movement, which aimed to provide affordable and a clean accommodation for seamen, was established. The first such accommodation in Victoria was reputedly offered in a hulk moored at Williamstown and, soon after, a mission building was operating in Beach Street, Port Melbourne, near Town Pier. In 1865 a government grant and public donations allowed the opening of a Sailors' Home in Spencer Street, on the corner of Little Collins St, Melbourne. Here private rooms, recreation rooms and hot meals were provided to sailors, along with religious services and evening entertainments.[240] At Williamstown, from 1878, the 'Sailors' Coffee and Reading Room', offered a non-alcoholic refuge for visiting seamen.[241]

In 1905, when the Anglican Church sent a new Minister to preside over its Melbourne Mission, a new Mission building was located in Siddeley Street, near the Yarra River docks. This was replaced in 1917, by a new Mission building built nearby at 717 Flinders Street, where it still stands today. Twenty years after the opening of this Mission Building, philanthropist Alfred Nicholas donated funds for another mission building at Port Melbourne. Located on Beach Street, between Station Pier and Prince's Pier, this Mission operated until 1972. The building was demolished in 1991.

10. At the beach: using the sea for recreation

Australian Historic Theme: 8. Developing Australia's Cultural Life

Early European use of the seaside for recreation in Victoria

Of necessity, most of the maritime infrastructure constructed in Victoria in the first fifty years of European settlement was meant for utilitarian purposes, such as transporting people and goods into and around the colony. But even in the rough and raw early days, there is evidence that some residents found time to enjoy the attractions of the sea. One source recounted that visitors sometimes took evening strolls along the Sandridge beach in the early 1840s, and the attempt to promote the tiny settlement here for leisure purposes was evident from the fact that the Pier Hotel was marketed as 'Brighton on the Beach'.[242] By the 1850s, some bathing structures had been erected at points along Port Phillip Bay's shores. The purpose of these, initially, however, was more to enable people to bathe, rather than for recreation. But, since English seaside resorts, particularly Brighton, had been fashionable with the upper classes since the mid-eighteenth century, the upper ranks of Victorian society wasted little time in establishing favoured sites for seaside retreats. By 1844, Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe is said to have had a cottage at Queenscliff, where the Port Phillip pilots were based.[243] Henry Dendy purchased all the area we now know as Brighton (Victoria) as a Special Survey in 1841. Soon after he called for designs for a village, farm land and 'marine residences' by the sea.[244] Along with Brighton, St Kilda also developed as a marine 'watering-place' in the 1840s and 1850s. At both locales houses, both permanent and summer residences, offered Melbourne's well-to do a chance to enjoy sea breezes during the hot summer months. Though St Kilda

and Brighton could be said to be Victoria's first seaside resorts, they were soon followed by other locations. At Mount Eliza on the Mornington Peninsula in the 1850s, J.T. Smith, a Melbourne mayor and member of the first Legislative Council of Victoria, purchased land to build a summer residence, setting a precedent for a number of imposing summer residences that appeared along the coast between Mount Eliza and Mornington in the nineteenth century.[245] Queenscliff was, by the mid-1850s, said to be the 'queen of watering places' in Victoria.[246] On the whole, though, Melbourne's well-to do were as interested in retreating to hill stations, such as Mount Macedon, as they were to the seaside, while working people, who had no annual holidays and usually worked a six-day week, had few opportunities for any breaks.

Guidebooks for the various resorts in the colony began to appear in the 1860s. They stressed the health-giving properties of the seaside. Sea-bathing was claimed as a cure for a number of physical ailments, as was the fresh ozone-laden air. Seaside activities, therefore, tended to be restrained. Even bathing, though highly recommended, was suggested for only very short periods, especially for children. Promenading was one method of being able to take the sea air. It was also a social activity, offering opportunities for social interaction with other members of one's class. In addition to these gentle forms of recreation, however, some seaside locations offered more active sport. Hunting, fishing and racing were popular pastimes for those with leisure time in nineteenth century Victoria. On Port Phillip Bay the first sailing regatta in the Port Phillip District was held in 1838, apparently exciting such interest that Melbourne 'town was very much emptied'.[247] Localities such as Mordialloc attracted fishermen and shooters. Here there were 'bream, whiting, trout, mackerel and mullet' in the creek, and ducks and snipe for shooting.[248] Rowing, especially on lakes and rivers, grew in popularity after the 1850s. Furthermore, to encourage patrons to visit their baths, some sea-bath owners began to promote swimming races and carnivals. Captain Kenny held swimming carnivals at his St Kilda bathing ship in the 1860s, charging spectators a fee to enter the baths to watch the races.[249] In the 1870s swimming clubs, associated with baths at South Melbourne, Middle Park and St Kilda, were formed.[250]

Evening at St Kilda Pier after a
hot day, 1887. Engraving, F. A Sleap.
La Trobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria.

The popularity of St Kilda and its
pier as a place to escape the heat of
Melbourne, as well as to promenade,
is evident.

Public reserves

Though enjoyment of the seaside was very much an upper
and middle-class activity in the mid-nineteenth century,
public policy from the earliest times laid the foundation for
more democratic enjoyment of the beach. From the 1840s
government surveyors set aside reserves of land for public
purposes as they reserved towns. While many of these
reserves became parks, gardens or sporting grounds, the
foreshore at Geelong was reserved for the purpose of bathing
in 1844[251] and the general rule of thumb was that land within
100 feet of the high water mark of the sea or navigable rivers,
was not to be alienated from the Crown.[252] This guide for
surveyors was not always adhered to and, in fact, the Special
Surveys granted to some settlers, such as Henry Dendy
at Brighton and James Atkinson and William Rutledge at
Belfast (Port Fairy), meant that some foreshore land fell into
private hands very early in Victoria's history. But after 1870 all
water frontages still in Crown hands were withheld from sale
and remaining Port Phillip Bay frontages were permanently
reserved,[253] giving future Victorians almost unlimited public
access to the coast and its delights.

Nineteenth century development of resorts

Improved transport links helped to promote particular
resorts in the gold rush era and afterwards. The train line
from Melbourne to St Kilda opened in May 1857, allowing
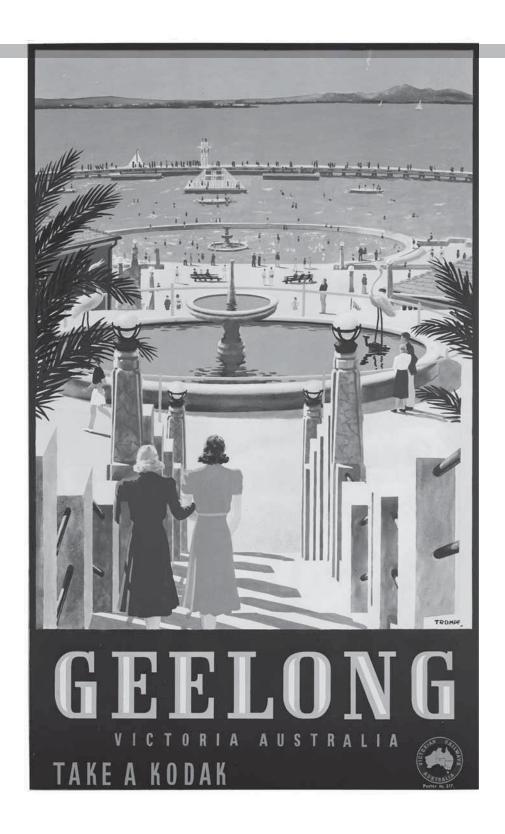day visitors to travel out to St Kilda to sample its delights. A

promenade was built along the beach here in the 1860s.[254]
When the train line was extended to Brighton and then on
to Brighton Beach 'excursion and holiday visitors generated
more rail traffic than did residents.'[255] Resorts more distant
from the population centres could attract visitors by steamer
if they had a useful pier, so Schnapper Point (Mornington)
and Queenscliff, both with piers, offered grand hotel
accommodation from the 1850s. Entrepreneur, George
Coppin, began to develop Sorrento as a resort town in the
late 1860s. He formed the Bay Excursion Company which,
in the 1880s purchased the paddle steamer, Ozone, to bring
visitors to Sorrento and other bay resorts. Another steamer,
the *Hygeia*, joined the Ozone on Port Phillip Bay in 1890. By
the turn of the century a 'trip down the bay' to the resorts of
Queenscliff, Portarlington, Mordialloc, Mornington or Sorrento
was a popular way to spend Victorian holidays.

By the 1880s many working Victorians enjoyed a half day
off on Saturday, as well the whole of Sunday off. In addition,
a number of public holidays were scattered throughout
the year.[256] At the same time, the further spread of public
transport made the beach more accessible to those with
the leisure to enjoy it. Melbourne's population and physical
size grew in the 1880s as landboomers subdivided and
offered for sale new 'suburbs' along the rail and tram lines.
Amongst these proposed new suburbs were seaside resorts,
such as Mentone, Sandringham, Beaumaris and Altona. At
some of these localities hotels and or coffee palaces were
constructed and some private homes were built to capture
the sea breezes, but large-scale development was limited.
Nevertheless, transport links brought day-trippers with their
picnic lunches. Painters from the Heidelberg School of artists,
such as Frederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts, Louis Abrahams
and Arthur Streeton captured the natural beauties and passive
enjoyment of the beach at Mentone when they rented a
cottage there in the summer of 1886-1887.

Railways also began to connect inland country towns with
coastal settlements such as Warrnambool or Portland, and
reached down to Queenscliff via Geelong, and the Mornington
Peninsula via Frankston. From 1885 the Victorian Railways
Department actively promoted tourism in Victoria, publishing
its first tourist guide in 1885 and, soon after, opening Victoria's
Tourist Bureau. Victorians, seeking the delights of nature,
stayed in hotels or guest houses, or met for family picnics
by the sea. At Lorne the Mountjoys homestead, built in the
1860s, was extended in the 1870s to accommodate fifty

Geelong Eastern Beach, Victorian Railways
Poster by Trompf.
Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 12903/P1.
Box 609/12. Poster no. 217.

The Victorian Railways actively encouraged
tourism throughout Victoria. This poster
advertises Geelong's Eastern Beach complex
and shark-proof swimming enclosure which
was developed in the 1920s.

Steam tram back beach Sorrento
circa 1890–1918.
*Public Record Office Victoria,
VPRS12800/P1 H3552.*

guests, with further extensions carried out later in that and the next decade to create Erskine House.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century trade unions and friendly societies took advantage of public holidays to host huge annual picnics for their members, while philanthropically inclined individuals began offering 'treats' for underprivileged children, such as orphans. Beachside locations with public parks were popular venues for such events. Mornington Park and Mordialloc Recreation Grounds were ideal locations. Foot races and other sporting events took place and bands supplied music for dancing. Well-ordered landscapes, music and other amusements were increasingly a feature of English seaside resorts in the second half of the nineteenth century and, given the limited amount of time nineteenth century Victorians spent in the water, the attractions of foreshore reserves and promenades grew as the century progressed. A popular feature of the Sorrento resort was Sorrento Park, 'laid out in winding paths, and furnished with seats and pavilions for the accommodation of visitors'.[257]

Development of foreshore entertainments and amusements continued at a number of resorts during the decades leading up to and just after the turn of the century. Some seaside locations offered band rotundas, paved promenades and walks and sideshows. Barwon Heads, whose very 'pretty cottages and villas' were 'chiefly owned by residents of Geelong' in the 1890s, had a new and 'attractive pleasure ground [where] 'summer-houses, shelter-sheds, and seats [had] been erected in convenient places, and a public rotunda near the top of the cliff [offered] both shelter and convenience for visitors'.[258] Yet, while some seaside visitors could enjoy highly stylised landscapes such as Sorrento or Mornington Park, a greater appreciation of the natural environment led to the reservation of Victoria's first national parks around the turn of the century. Amongst them were the coastal Wilson's Promontory, Mallacoota and Wingan Inlet National Parks.[259]

Early twentieth century developments

Traditionally, those who holidayed at the beach had stayed in hotels, coffee palaces or guest houses, if they were not wealthy enough to own their own summer retreat. But from the 1890s camping began to offer a cheaper way to obtain a holiday, as well as to get close to nature. Sites such as Dromana and Rosebud on the Mornington Peninsula and Anglesea, Torquay and Lorne on the west coast began to

attract campers.[260] Along the coast between Black Rock and Frankston, in the first decade of the twentieth century 'temporary and permanent dwellings ranging from tents to quite pretentious places' began to appear.[261] The stretch of Port Phillip Bay between Mordialloc and Frankston became especially popular in the 'summer months when its safe bathing waters and the abundant shade tempted campers'.[262] By 1915 most of the tents along this stretch of foreshore had given way to flimsy semi-permanent dwellings. At other beach resorts local foreshore reserves were increasingly given over to campers, notably on the Mornington Peninsula where, by the late 1930s there were twenty camping grounds between Mt Martha and Portsea, the largest of them being Rosebud,[263] but also on the Bellarine Peninsula, at Queenscliff and Portarlington in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1938 at Port Fairy, 'Caravan Park', a reserve on the Moyne River, was planned, complete with a 'comfort station' and an electric sign over the entrance gates.[264] At Lorne a camping ground capable of accommodating 800 people, with conveniences erected by the Public Works Department, was opened in 1939.[265] Camping grounds were often patronised over succeeding summers by several generations of the same family, or by groups of neighbours or friends.

It was during the 1920s and 1930s that large organised camps, such as the Lord Somers Camp, also came into vogue. The first Lord Somers Camp took place at the Anglesea Scout Camp in 1929, before moving to its permanent site at Balnarring East (Somers) in 1931.[266] The benefits of seaside breaks for underprivileged inner city children were recognised in some quarters at this time, with some Victorian orphanages organising summer camps for their residents from the 1920s, or building specific holiday cottages at coastal locations.

The increasing popularity of camping coincided with more widespread use of motor cars in the years between the two world wars. Improved roads also made distant resorts more accessible. The Country Roads Board, formed in 1913–1914, immediately began work improving the poor condition of many roads, particularly in Gippsland and the Otway Ranges.[267] The Great Ocean Road was begun in 1918 and, by 1932 had reached Apollo Bay. Built as much as anything as a scenic tourist road, it also made spots such as Wye River, Kennett River, Lorne and Apollo Bay more attractive to tourists and holiday-makers alike. Local councils of coastal areas recognised the importance of accessible roads if they

Baths and Harbour, Portland
circa 1910.
*La Trobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria.*

were to attract tourists and holiday-makers to their towns and applied to the Victorian Government's Tourists' Resorts Committee for funds to improve roads into their localities and for scenic marine roads.[268] Gippsland coastal settlements, such as Inverloch, Toora, Tooradin and Seaspray were amongst the localities that sought to improve road access in the 1920s. Like Lorne, Peterborough and Port Campbell, which had catered to western Victorian holiday-makers from the nineteenth century, the Gippsland seaside towns began to provide summer holidays for Gippsland residents.

Amenities were needed for both campers and day-trippers. In the 1920s and 1930s many seaside towns and suburbs erected public conveniences, kiosks, pavilions, changing rooms, car parks and children's playgrounds on their foreshores.[269] As much as these facilities reflected the growth of resorts, they also demonstrated changing uses of the beach. After 1917, mixed beach bathing was no longer prohibited in Victoria and prohibitions on bathing during daylight hours were gradually relaxed.[270] Enclosed bathing was no longer mandatory. But the new freedom to swim whenever and wherever one wanted meant that facilities such as changing pavilions and public conveniences were needed. Many of the amenities erected on Victorian beaches from the 1920s were carried out with assistance from the Victorian Government. Foreshore reserves, of course, were the responsibility of the Department of Crown Lands, though, with the exception of a few municipalities, such as St Kilda, they were managed by municipal councils.

The growing awareness of the value of the coastal areas for recreational and scenic purposes was reflected in concern over foreshore and beach erosion within Port Phillip Bay in the 1920s and 1930s. As early as 1923 representatives from Sandringham and Mordialloc councils pointed out to the Minister for Public Works that erosion was seriously threatening the beach between these two localities. The Chief Engineer for Public Works and Engineer in Chief for Ports and Harbours, George Kermode, confirmed that erosion on the edges of Port Phillip Bay, particularly on the eastern shores, was serious. Apart from the dangers posed by undermined cliffs, and the threat to clifftop properties and the beach road, erosion was increasingly reducing

'valuable and irreplaceable foreshore reserves which, with their luxuriamt growth of ti-tree, form a pleasant retreat during the summer months for tens of thousands of visitors from the metropolis and other parts of the State, as well as for residents in the immediate neighbourhood.' [271]

Between 1935 and 1939 £200,000 was spent on foreshore protection and improvement works, mainly in Port Phillip Bay, but also at other coastal locations, as well as on the shores of the Gippsland Lakes.

While foreshore improvement and protection was one illustration of the greater value placed on coastal foreshores as a 'national playground,'[272] another indication of the increasing use of Victoria's beaches for leisure and open swimming during the twentieth century was the rise of the life-saving movement. The Royal Humane Society had been founded in England in 1774, and a branch of the society established in Melbourne a century later. The Victorian society's early emphasis was on teaching children to swim and to learn resuscitation techniques.[273] In 1904 six life saving clubs, affiliated with the Royal Life Saving Society, were formed in Melbourne, with the aim of teaching swimming and life saving techniques. The first beach-based life saving clubs appeared in 1912 at Elwood, Black Rock, Hampton, Middle Park and Brighton Beach.[274] By 1933 there were 31 beach-based clubs, and 30 pool-based clubs affiliated to the Royal Life Saving Society. Many of the life-saving clubs became dormant during the World War II, particularly those on coastal beaches outside of Port Phillip Bay, but after the Victorian Surf Life Saving Association was formed in 1947, clubs were gradually formed at a number of surf beaches, with many affiliating in the early 1960s.

Post World War II Development

The growth of clubs in the post-World War II era reflected not only the rising popularity of surf beach bathing, but also the increasing number of visits to coastal settlements by a growing and ever more affluent Victorian population, with time for annual holidays and motor cars to get them there. The number of caravan parks grew and motor-inns began to jostle with guest houses in some Victorian resorts.[275] Wealthier Victorians were building their own holiday homes or fibro beach shacks. A measure of the increasingly private ownership of holiday houses was the rise in demand for private jetties and slipways experienced by the Department of Crown Lands and Survey in the 1960s.[276] More widespread ownership of pleasure-craft, such as powerboats and yachts, was also evident in the expansion and proliferation of marinas toward the end of the twentieth century.

Swimming Pool on The Strand, Williamstown (H7822–0391). *Heritage Victoria.*

A similar swimming pool formed with rocks is on the Williamstown foreshore, while another is located at Point Lonsdale.

Recreational infrastructure

Sea baths

In the early days of European settlement in Victoria, public baths provided a means of keeping clean in a hot and dusty environment without a reticulated water system. There were privately-operated public baths on the Yarra River, 'opposite the Customs House' from 1843 and one bathing establishment remained on the Yarra at least until 1859.[277] Sea bathing was an alternative to bathing in the river. But bathing in public view was forbidden between the hours of six am to eight pm, partly because men, at least, tended to bathe in the nude.[278] At Geelong, the Corio Bathing Establishment was established by 1844.[279] Several sea baths were established in Hobsons Bay in the nineteenth century. Sandridge Baths were established in 1853[280] as were Mrs Ford's baths on the south side of the St Kilda jetty.[281] Mrs Ford offered a 'bathing shelter' where bathers could dress and undress in private. By the following year Captain William Kenney had taken over Mrs Ford's site, having purchased a 'brig', Nancy, stripping it of fittings and placing it in ten to twelve feet of water. The *Nancy* was linked to the shore by a rope, along which bathers pulled themselves by boat from the shore to the bathing ship.[282] The 'ship' provided walls, partly to protect bathers from dangers such as sharks, but more importantly to protect modesty. The walls of the bathing ship, like the later paling fences that enclosed sea-baths, protected bathers from view. Some sea bathing establishments allotted specific times for male or female bathers, often raising a flag to signal which gender was permitted in the baths at that time. In some localities, separate men's and women's baths were constructed.

At Emerald Hill (South Melbourne), a fenced-off area provided a rough female bathing area in 1858, while men were offered a screened area of the beach further away. The Emerald Hill Sea-bathing Company established their baths in 1873, and E. Stubbs built a new bathing house for ladies in 1876. Bunbury's Baths at Williamstown, were in use from the 1840s[283]. It seems that these baths, for men only, were not located in a specifically-built enclosure, but in a 'natural pool in a rocky outcrop'[284] on the Esplanade opposite Cole Street. The Williamstown Ladies Baths operated from 1856,[285] Sandridge Baths were in place by the 1880s and Portland's first sea baths were built in 1858.[286] Brighton's first baths, built by Captain Kenney, were in place by 1863.[287] These baths

were joined in 1882 by corporation baths, erected at Middle Brighton.[288]

As well as offering an opportunity to practise personal hygiene, in the nineteenth century sea-bathing and inhaling fresh sea air were also promoted as therapies for a range of ills.[289] Sea baths flourished at a range of 'resort' locations. St Kilda, by 1862, had 'several' bathing establishments.[290] These included Mrs Ford's baths, and the Royal Gymnasium Baths and Sea Bathing Company, established in 1861 and known colloquially as Leggetts and then Kenney's Baths.[291] Queenscliff's sea baths were begun in 1861[292]. Clifton Springs, offering both mineral springs as well as the benefits of the sea, had sea baths by the late 1880s. At Mornington, Irvine's Royal Public Baths were advertised as early as 1879.[293] Sea baths were also available at Portland, Warrnambool, Sorrento and Portsea, Mordialloc and Mentone.[294] Warrnambool's sea baths were actually built away from the sea in the 1870s. Water to fill the pool was pumped by windmill, and later by a steam pump, from the sea.[295]

Offering more than a dip in the cold sea, many establishments provided hot sea baths, as well as dressing rooms, walkways and screened areas for the sexes in sometimes quite elaborate structures. Although intended for gentle exercise, some sea baths soon became the venue for swimming and swimming competitions.

By the 1930s, there were still a number of sea baths clustered on the shores of Port Phillip Bay, particularly within Hobsons Bay. Many had undergone innumerable changes of ownership and changes of form as rudimentary picketted enclosures gave way to more substantial structures. Storms were responsible for periodically damaging or destroying them. After 1917, when prohibitions on open bathing during daylight hours were relaxed, many existing baths lingered on, partly because they offered protection from sharks and also because they offered diving platforms for swimmers.[296]

Some new sea baths were constructed in the twentieth century, such as St Kilda's enclosed baths, constructed in the late 1920s with separate baths for men and women, shops and a café, gymnasium and dressing cubicles.[297] While the seabaths of this complex have been demolished, the reinforced concrete building, recently restored, remains. The 1882 Middle Brighton Baths, destroyed by a storm in 1934, were soon replaced. A Moderne-style building in cream brick replaced the former entrance to the baths. The old timber

surrounds of the baths were rebuilt again in 1988 and the baths are still used in the twenty-first century.[298]

At Geelong, there were three sea baths at both the western and eastern beaches by the 1890s.[299] In the 1920s the foreshore at Eastern Beach was partially reclaimed and an elaborate landscape with promenades, shelters and a seawall created over the next decade. Included in the scheme were a children's pool and a large fenced-in swimming enclosure. The Eastern Beach Bathing Complex is now on the Victorian Heritage Register.[300]

As new sea swimming complexes were constructed, concern about the safety of open swimming in rivers, creeks and lakes encouraged some local authorities to construct 'pools', usually concrete, stone or timber enclosures on the banks of rivers or creeks. There were many 'inland' examples of such pools, both on country rivers, on the Yarra and on the Plenty. Near the coast, one swimming enclosure was located on the river at Williamstown, while a salt-water pool was built in the late 1930s adjacent to Williamstown Beach. A similar still sea-water pool was constructed at Hastings at about the same time.[301] Footscray's swimming club, formed in 1909, was based on the Maribyrnong. By 1922 it was the second largest club in the Victorian Amateur Swimming Association.[302] In the 1920s Maribyrnong had its own Swimming and Lifesaving

Clifton Springs 1890. Photo Brookes' Photographic Union.   *La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.*

A seaside mineral springs resort operated at Clifton Springs on the Bellarine Peninsula from 1875 to 1920. A grand hotel, kiosk, pump station were located here, along with seabaths (pictured here in the background). From 1890 bay steamers called regularly at the long jetty built for this purpose.

Remains of Jetty at Clifton Springs
(H2088 & HI7821–0022).
Heritage Victoria and
Flinders University.

Club on the Maribyrnong River at the end of Chicago Street.[303] Here a picket fence outlined an area for younger children and diving boards were constructed for older members. The club's facilities were demolished during World War II,[304] but concrete edging along the riverbank still denotes where the swimming area was. There were suggestions that the Bunbury swimming pool at Williamstown, a natural rock pool, should be improved in the late 1940s, while at Point Lonsdale, in the late 1930s, a small amount of Public Works Department money was granted to explore the possibilities of creating a rock pool, presumably for swimming.[305]

Bathing boxes

The need to preserve modesty, which had prompted the proliferation of sea baths along Victoria's coast in the nineteenth century, was also the catalyst for the construction of bathing boxes at many Victorian locations. In Britain, modesty on the beach was provided by bathing machines, small buildings on wheels, which were dragged into the water so that the occupant could undress and enter the water unseen.[306] *The Illustrated Melbourne Post* claimed in 1862 that, with the proliferation of sea baths on Port Phillip Bay, there was no need for bathing machines.[307] But bathing boxes were constructed at a number of localities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Typically they were small timber structures, often with gabled roofs, in which bathers could change, store equipment and take refreshment on the beach. Some twentieth century bathing boxes were constructed of concrete. Bathing boxes were usually constructed in connection with a particular beach resort home or hotel and perhaps this is why there was a preponderance of bathing boxes at places such as Brighton, Mornington, Portsea and Point Lonsdale, where many early private holiday homes were situated.

Piers

A pier was an asset to the nineteenth century beach resort. Seaside leisure activity at this time was based on the model established in Britain from the mid-eighteenth century, when a little fishing village on the coast was transformed into Brighton, a resort for the upper classes. Seaside leisure in the nineteenth century centred around the healthful qualities of both water and air. Promenading fulfilled both of these purposes, offering gentle exercise in the sea air, as well as the opportunity to

meet others at the same time. Although promenading took place on shore, it has been said that 'the vogue for piers was, quite literally, an extension of that for the promenade, effectively rerouted to become a highway to ozone'.[308]

Some of Victoria's earliest resorts could take advantage of existing jetties and piers, such as those at St Kilda, Queenscliff, Mornington and Brighton. These had been built for more practical purposes, but could be adapted for promenading. Other piers were constructed to enhance the attractions of potential or existing resorts, sometimes by private development companies. In some cases, the piers offered accommodation for steamers, as well as a promenade, for example Clifton Springs Pier, the new steamer pier built at Queenscliff in the 1880s and Sorrento Pier, built by the government at the same time as Coppin was developing resort facilities. In the land boom of the 1880s, when private companies madly subdivided large areas of Melbourne and attempted to attract buyers, some beachside areas were marketed as resorts. The National Land Company advertised Mentone as the 'Riviera of the South'. A large hotel and large coffee palace were built here in the 1880s and the pier (now gone) was completed in 1891.[309] Similarly Altona's pier was built by the Altona Bay Estate Company.[310] Members of the Emerald Hill (South Melbourne) Council pressured the Victorian Government to help fund a jetty and promenade in their locality in the 1870s and 1880s. Finally, in the late 1880s, a beginning was made on building the Kerferd Road pier, as well as turning the military road along the seafront into a boulevard now known as Beaconsfield Parade.[311]

The seaside resort piers of Britain were, on the whole, far more elaborate than those found in Victoria. Frequently they supported a whole range of activities, such as pavilions and amusement arcades. There were some 'on the water' venues found in Victoria. At Mornington during World War II, the old sea baths were used for dances and later as a kiosk and boat hire establishment.[312] From 1912, the same year that St Kilda gained Luna Park, the Joy Ark amusement park was built over the water at Eastern Beach, Geelong.[313] St Kilda's pier gained its tea room and pavilion in 1904. This historic pavilion was destroyed by fire in 2003, but a replica was rebuilt in 2005.[314]

Boating, yachting and angling

In the 1840s and 1850s a number of sailing regattas took place in Hobsons Bay and Corio Bay, where there were plenty

Camping at Carrum, circa 1907.
La Trobe Picture Collection
State Library of Victoria.

of sailors and boatmen on hand to man the sailing craft. One regatta in the early 1850s, took place at Queenscliff, where the concentration of Port Phillip pilots also provided many experienced sailors.[315] Regattas were held on Hobsons Bay (starting from Williamstown) and in country areas such as Portland, Port Fairy, Mornington and Port Albert during the late 1850s. But the first Victorian Yacht Club, formed in 1856 and named the Victoria Yacht Club, was a very exclusive organisation, with rules stipulating that working boats or those used for hire, could not be used by club members. The Victoria Yacht Club held its first regatta in March 1856 at St Kilda. In its first incarnation the Victoria Yacht Club did not last very long but, resurrected in 1872, was offered a 'piece of land' at Portsea by the Victorian Government to be used for a store, shed and pavilion', though the members of the VYC kept their boats at Williamstown,[316] which provided the most sheltered place on Hobsons Bay for mooring and launching boats. The VYC became the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria in the 1880s, at which time it extended its shed at Williamstown. The Geelong Yacht Club was formed in 1859.[317] But much successful sailing was carried out on calmer inland waters, such as Lake Wendouree at Ballarat and the newly-formed lake at Albert Park.

Brighton Sailing Club was formed in 1875. The following year the St Kilda Sailing Club was formed.[318] When St Kilda pier was lengthened in 1884, this club changed its name to St Kilda Yacht Club and built a clubhouse on the beach at St Kilda.[319] Two years later the (now Royal) Brighton Yacht Club moved to its present site, constructing a partial breakwater, though no real clubhouse was built until 1898.[320] Over at Williamstown, another yacht club was formed to rival the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria in 1888. The Hobsons Bay Yacht Club soon had a new shed, containing clubrooms 200 yards from Gem Pier on the foreshore. In addition, there was a slip and jetty.[321]

In the twentieth century when the number of yacht clubs around Victoria proliferated, improved facilities such as extended breakwaters and marinas helped to protect sailing craft from the elements. In the 1930s the Victorian Government extended the breakwater at Middle Brighton Pier to help protect yachts from storms. Not long after the war a breakwater at Sandringham, together with land reclamation at the site, was intended for use by 'yacht clubs and other foreshore interests'.[322]

Rowing, angling and pleasure boating

Rowing featured as part of the early regattas staged during the 1850s. Competitive rowing, based on the Yarra River, took off in Melbourne during the 1860s. Rowing grew in popularity in the 1870s when the Clarke Challenge Cup was held on the Maribyrnong River, home of the Footscray Rowing Club from 1873. A number of boatsheds belonging to clubs, schools and universities were and still are situated on the south bank of the Yarra near the Alexandra Gardens. Essendon's Rowing Club, which took over from the Maribyrnong Rowing Club, built new premises in 1920, but these have been replaced with a more modern structure in recent times. Rowing clubs were also based on the Barwon River at Geelong and on lakes, such as Albert Park Lake.

For those not particularly interested in competitive rowing, 'boating' became popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Commonly, recreational boating was done in hired boats from which one could fish or just row for pleasure. Public and private boathouses, which supplied boats for hire, were often also used by rowing clubs to store their craft.[323] Many such establishments were located on the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers, as well as on inland lakes, such as Lake Daylesford. The Studley Park and Fairfield boathouses, built in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century[324] are two examples. Proudfoot's boathouse on the Hopkins River at Warrnambool opened in 1885 and survives today. The boathouse, with associated jetties, offered accommodation, boat hire, tackle and bait and even post office services by 1888.[325] It remained in the hands of the Proudfoot family (and its descendants) until 1979.[326]

Though the popularity of 'boating' declined after World War II, the incidence of private ownership of dinghies, motor boats, cruisers and sailing boats surged. From the nineteenth century, privately-owned small craft often belonged to fishermen, both professional and amateur, who moored their craft in safe harbours, such as the lagoon at Port Melbourne. Here the Melbourne Harbor Trust had provided a safe haven for small craft in the 1880s. The lagoon was filled in in the 1920s, but a concrete wall and timber breakwater continued to provide shelter for small craft after this, until the area was taken over during World War II by the navy for HMAS *Lonsdale*.[327] At Williamstown small craft had sheltered between Gellibrand and Railway Piers until this area was reclaimed for oil storage after World War II. It is possible that it was at this time that

The beach and camping area at Dromana circa 1940–1960. *La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.*

a small boat harbour, known locally as 'Jimmy's Creek' was constructed on the corner of the Esplanade and Bayview Street, Williamstown. Still in use, the small boat harbour constructed of bluestone rubble, was featured in a painting by John Perceval now held by the National Gallery of Victoria.

'Jimmy's Creek' is a stark contrast to the many other marinas constructed in the decades after World War II. Sometimes existing port facilities, as at Port Welshpool, have been adapted for small and privately-owned craft. In other locations expensive new marinas have offered space for boat-owners to moor their boats. Some residential developments in the latter decades of the twentieth century were developed around the concept of private waterways and moorings. Perhaps the best known of these was 'Patterson Lakes' developed by the Gladesville Company south of the man-made Patterson River in the 1960s and 1970s. Canals and waterways were constructed to feed into the Patterson River.[328]

Foreshore landscapes and protection

The early reservation of much of the foreshore along Victoria's coast has left a legacy of public space. In the late nineteenth century some Victorian resorts made use of open space near the beach to create parks where visitors could promenade, listen to music or indulge in sporting competitions. But parks and gardens by the sea were probably outnumbered by such facilities at inland towns. St Kilda had an esplanade by the 1860s, while Queenscliff had public gardens. Sorrento and Mornington both had well-laid out parks by the 1890s, as did Barwon Heads. For two decades the Emerald Hill Council petitioned the government to turn the military road along the beach into a 'promenade'. In 1887 the government finally agreed and work began on constructing Beaconsfield Parade. To keep sand off the road a stone sea wall was also constructed at South Melbourne in the 1890s.[329] Late in the same decade trees were planted along the promenade.[330]

Around the turn of the century local progress or tourist associations began to appear in some coastal settlements. They attempted to attract visitors by beautifying foreshore areas, planting trees and sometimes constructing facilities such as tracks, steps or shelters. St Kilda formed a special committee to enhance its position as Melbourne's premier beach resort. The St Kilda Foreshore Committee, with representatives from the Lands Department, as well as local councillors, planned to beautify the coastal strip from West St

Kilda to Elwood.[331] Carlo Catani, the State Surveyor General, provided a design. The focal point was the landscaping of what were subsequently called Catani Gardens at St Kilda. Here, on reclaimed land (including the site of Captain Kenny's bathing ship), Catani laid out paths and planted cypress and palms to create a Mediteranean-style landscape.[332] At the same time as Catani's plan was put into place, other developments at St Kilda helped to cement its position as a 'peoples' playground'. A pavilion was built at the end of the pier, the open-air Paradise Pictures opened, a tea house (now the Stokehouse) opened on the beach, and in 1912, Luna Park was unveiled.

In the next two decades a similarly ambitious foreshore beautification scheme was carried out at Geelong Eastern Beach, where again, land was reclaimed and landscaped, paths and staircases built, a toddlers' wading pool built and, finally, an enclosed sea swimming pool.

At Mordialloc, the carnival committee provided many of the funds for foreshore improvements. Beginning in 1923, the carnival provided enough money to build a bandstand, a sea-wall (which was later destroyed by storms), a promenade and concrete seating. The carnival itself became a long-running feature of summer times at Mordialloc, running every summer until 1968. At the same time as the carnival committee began providing funds for foreshore amenities, the newly-formed Mordialloc Council invested in other beachside facilities. A concrete kiosk, with a 'flat roof for sunbathing and dancing' was constructed at Mordialloc, along with dressing accommodation at Mentone baths.[333]

By the time that the Mordialloc folk were building this infrastructure, it was recognised that heavy use of beach and foreshore areas around Port Phillip Bay was resulting in the degradation of many foreshore areas. Though the stylised parks at some locations were highly valued, by the 1930s it was realised that 'with the spread of close settlement along the Bayside came destruction to plant life on the foreshore'.[334] Indigenous ti-tree had been removed, cliffs were eroded and storms flooded low-lying suburbs and removed sand. In the 1930s the Public Works Department, in conjunction with a number of local councils, began an ambitious program of foreshore protection. It planned that a rubble sea-wall would eventually be built stretching from Werribee in the west to Frankston in the east.[335] Using unemployed labour and stone recycled from city buildings (including the Old Melbourne

The Joy Ark, Geelong.
*La Trobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria.*

This silent movie cinema and
entertainment venue was built
on the water at Geelong's
Eastern Beach in 1912.

Gaol) the Department constructed approximately five miles of seawall between 1935 and 1939, mainly at Sandringham, Brighton, Mentone, South Melbourne and Altona, but also at West Geelong, Paynesville (on the Gippsland Lakes), Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff, Sorrento, Lakes Entrance, Inverloch and Torquay.[336] Basket–walling, made of ti-tree, and timber groynes were installed at several other locations. Rubble was also used to protect the underside of cliffs at places such as Mentone and Sandringham. Promenades built along the base of these cliffs lent a 'continental air'. At Ricketts Point, motorists were discouraged from driving their vehicles onto the beach by the installation of an 'ornamental log and stone' fence.[337] Unemployed relief funds were also used to construct beach amenities at many Victorian beaches. These included public conveniences, promenades and dressing shelters at such locations as Lakes Entrance, Sorrento, Port Campbell, Barwon Heads, Port Albert and Waratah Bay.[338]

After the war the Public Works Department's Engineer was keen to continue with foreshore improvements, particularly the provision of conveniences and dressing shelters at various bayside locations.[339] Though it is not known whether all of these improvements were carried out, work began in 1949 to reclaim about 13 acres of foreshore for public gardens and a car park at Brighton, a breakwater at Sandringham for yacht clubs and other 'foreshore interests'. Such improvements were almost portents of growing post-war affluence.

Surf-lifesaving clubs

The earliest form of surf-lifesaving equipment that appeared on Victorian beaches was a simple life buoy fixed to a post.[340] In 1914 the Royal Life Saving Club began advocating the use of surf reels, which were soon installed on a number of Victorian beaches. The first mention of a lifesaving shed being built at a Victorian beach is in 1914, when a life-saving station, complete with life-saving apparatus and an ambulance first aid station, was built at Point Lonsdale on the ocean beach opposite Glaneuse reef.[341] Locals had requested the life-saving station, to be known as the 'Seabrook Memorial' after the death of Mr William Thomas Seabrook during his attempt to rescue a young woman on the beach. Most early life-saving clubs, even those begun after World War II, started out in 'hastily put together shacks or sheds', which have since been replaced.[342] This was particularly true of the clubs formed on the ocean beaches. Many bayside life saving clubs have rebuilt their premises after damage by fire, storms or vandals, while some of these clubs have become redundant. West St Kilda Life-saving club, for instance, became the state centre for the Surf Life Saving Association in the 1960s, undergoing renovations at the same time. Others, such as Bonbeach Life Saving Club, display the marks of beach architecture of the mid-twentieth century. Many life-saving club houses along Victoria's ocean beaches have been rebuilt in ostentatious style in recent decades.

Conclusion

In his history of Australians' relationship with the sea, Frank Broeze argues that, though Australia's maritime identity was as important as 'sheep and land, railways and goldmines, bushrangers and bankers' in shaping Australian identity, Australian historians have tended to largely ignore its contribution to the creation of our self-image.[343] The sea has had a vital and complex role in Victoria's economic, social and physical development, touching on all aspects of Victorian life since pre-contact times. Maritime infrastructure – from rocket sheds to beach kiosks to jetties and piers – is the tangible evidence of this significant strand of our past.

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