
CROWS NEST CAMP SEARCHLIGHT EMPLACEMENTS

Location

THE ESPLANADE AND FLINDERS STREET QUEENSCLIFF, QUEENSCLIFFE BOROUGH

Municipality

QUEENSCLIFFE BOROUGH

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7821-0083

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 14, 2005

Part of the defensive network installed to protect Port Phillip Heads. These facilities are shown in plans dated 1918 (Read, 1918), but searchlights have been known to exist in this area before this time. Possible State Heritagesignificance as part of the defence landscape of Port Phillipand Queesncliff. Local value as part of the Queenscliff/ ShortlandsBluff defence landscape.

Interpretation of Site

Two concrete and brick searchlight emplacements with most of the lower 2ft of the structures still intact. The eastern most structure still has what may be part of the generator shed still intact. The semicircular walls remains at the southern extremity of each site are probably the searchlight enclosures.

Other Names

CROWS NEST SEARCHLIGHT EMLACEMENTS,

Hermes
Number 13704

Property
Number

History

A proposal to build electric searchlights at Crows Nest which would be controlled from the directing station at Fort Queenscliff was raised in 1908. These facilities would replace the existing searchlights, which then required four men to operate them, although it was unclear if the earlier lights were at the base of Shortlands bluff or at Crows Nest. A tender to build the facility was accepted in November and 3 acres of land to the west of the recreational reserve was cleared to accommodate it. The borough council bitterly complained about the lack of consultation and unsolicited loss of tourist facilities when the work began in late November 1908. When the facility was installed, complaints were received about the noise of the generator keeping people awake at night in 1910. The facilities are shown in plans from 1916 and 1918 (Barrett, 1916; Read, 1918). Some residents were hostile towards the defence forces after the military reclaimed areas of park reserve land for the installation of searchlights at Crows Nest, and the noise associated with their operation at night. The boom of continuous gunfire exercises and looms from fixed searchlights became a way of life in Queenscliff. The searchlights appear to have been used on a number of occasions to aid in times of shipwrecks, in particular the *Edward* which wrecked on Corsair Rock in 1912. There were two pairs of "Fighting lights" at Pt Nepean and also at Queenscliff in the 1920s, one of which was at beach level, and there was also a light at Pt Lonsdale. They had a range of about 9000 yards.

The attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 saw the realisation of the potential of air power for long distance attacks. The lights were again regained significance. Anti-aircraft guns were installed in the local football field, along with a 4 inch gun at Crows Nest to combat this threat.

A local resident, George Werry (pers comms) recalled the use of the lights during WWII: "There was night time searchlight practice at Queenscliff in those days. The planes would come down (from Melbourne or Geelong) and during the day the planes towed targets for anti-aircraft practice" (extract from Duncan, 2005 – PhD Thesis).

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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