GABO ISLAND LIGHTSTATION

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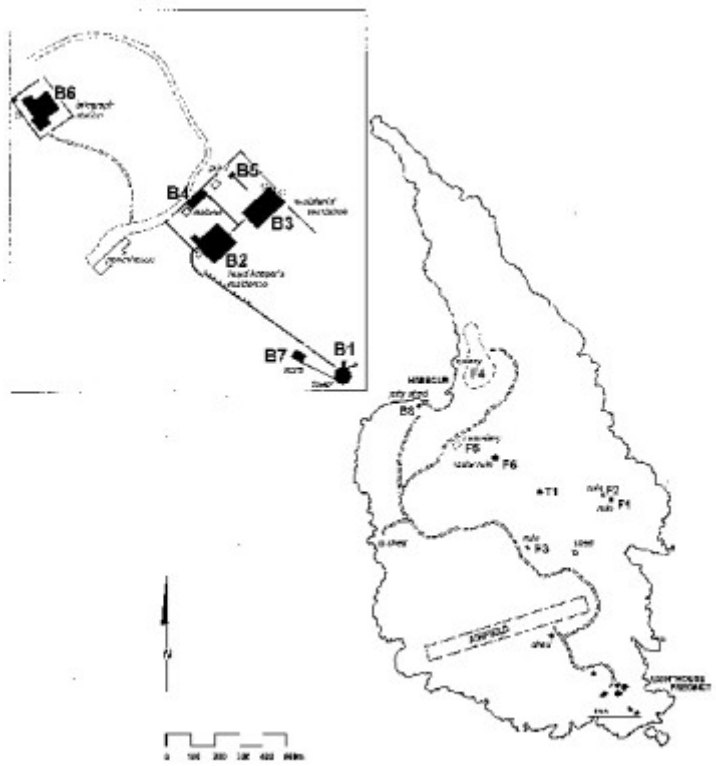

h01843 plan

Location

GABO ISLAND, UNINCORPORATED

Municipality

UNINCORPORATED

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1843

VHR Registration

November 18, 1999

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 7, 2021

What is significant?
The original decision to construct a lighthouse on Gabo Island flowed from discussions between Governors Gipps of New South Wales and Franklin of Van Diemen's Land in 1841 concerning the desirability of a system of lights to aid shipping through the difficult waters of Bass Strait. In 1848 a light was completed at Cape Otway but the construction of the original Gabo Island light was abandoned in the same year because of an unsuitable site. After the wreck of the SS Monumental City on nearby Tullaberga Island in 1853 a temporary wooden lighthouse was erected on the highest point of the island. The present lightstation, consisting of a tower and three residences, was constructed of the local pink granite in 1859-62 to the design of Victorian Public Works Department architect Charles Maplestone. In 1886-88 a telegraph operator's residence was constructed in mass concrete to the design of NSW Colonial Architect James Barnet. As well as activity connected with navigation, Gabo Island has a history of use as a sealing and whaling site, a source of fine building stone and as a Second World War radar station.

How is it significant?
The Gabo Island Lightstation is of historical, architectural and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria

Why is it significant?
Gabo Island Lightstation is historically significant as a key component in the original system of navigation aids planned for Bass Strait in 1841. The location of Gabo Island at one of the "corners" of Australia adds to this significance. Of all the early lightstations in Victoria Gabo Island is the most intact retaining all its principal buildings. The telegraph building is of historical interest as an unusual example of a New South Wales government building on Victorian soil.

Gabo Island Lightstation is architecturally significant for the high standard of its building design attributed to Charles Maplestone. The tower itself is a remarkably well proportioned structure whose finely crafted pink granite is without parallel in Australia. The profile of the ltower was replicated at all subsequent manned lighthouses in Victoria. The residences, with their typical protective walls, are similar to Maplestone?s other work at Cape Schanck, Wilsons Promontory and Cape Otway but more finely detailed. The telegraph building is of architectural interest as an early (1886) use of mass concrete in a residential building and as the only concrete lightstation residence in Victoria.

Gabo Island, and in particular the area around the harbour, is of archaeological significance for the potential and known existence of artefactual remains from many important periods including aboriginal, early sealing and whaling, early lightstation, quarrying, later lightstation, military and maritime (shipwrecks).

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must notify the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions here.

Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions:
1. All alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

* No permits are required for works which are in accordance with the conservation management plan prepared by Ivar Nelsen, Patrick Miller and Terry Sawyer dated November 1992 with the addendum prepared by RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants dated October 1999

Construction dates	1859,
Architect/Designer	Maplestone, Charles W,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered archaeological place,
Hermes Number	2022
Property Number	

History

from Ivar Nelsen, Patrick Miller and Terry Sawyer Conservation Management Plan November 1992

Aboriginal
The far east coast of Victoria is often referred to as Croajingolong in honour of the aboriginal clans of the Kurnai tribe resident in the area for thousands of years. The name Croajingolong (or Kruatungalong or Croatin-coolong) is said to mean "men of the east". The aborigines of this area have left behind much evidence of their use of the sea as a food source. The entire coast is dotted with midden sites where the discarded shells of seafood eaten by generations of aborigines over thousands of years have accumulated into large piles.

Unlike other offshore islands, Gabo Island has always been easily accessible; at times it has been joined to the main by a sandspit. The island is rich in birdlife and shellfish and would certainly have been a resource used by the Croajingolong. An archaeological examination of Gabo Island was undertaken during December 1979 and January 1980 on behalf of the Victoria Archaeological Survey. The survey report describes numerous aboriginal midden sites on the island and mentions two aboriginal burials which had been reported to the Museum of Victoria in 1967. The name "Gabo" is thought to be a corruption by the aborigines of the name "Cape Howe". If this is true then it must be one of the great ironies of Australian toponymy.

Discovery
Gabo Island and Cape Howe constitute one of the maritime "corners" of the Australian continent. A large proportion of the shipping using Australian ports will eventually round this corner between Melbourne and Sydney. As is fitting with such an important coastal feature, this south east corner of the continent was discovered by our most important and revered naval explorer - Captain Cook. Cook's Australian landfall was made on 19th April, 1770 near Point Hicks in Victoria. Later that day he recorded in his journal:

Friday, 20th. - In the P.M. and most part of the night had a fresh Gale Westerly, with Squalls, attended with Showers of rain. In the A.M. had the Wind at S.W., with Severe weather. At 1 P.M. saw 3 Water Spouts at once; 2 were between us and the Shore, and one at some distance on our Larboard Quarter. At 6, shortened sail, and brought too for the Night, having 56 fathoms fine sandy bottom. The Northernmost land in sight bore N. by E. (half) E., and a small island lying close to a point on the Main bore W., distant 2 Leagues. This point I have named Cape Howe; it may be known by the Trending of the Coast which is N. on one Side and S.W. on the other. Lat. 37°28' S.; Long. 210°3'W. It may likewise be known by some round hills upon the main just within it.

The small island was Gabo Island, plainly visible from Cook's evening position. The point which he named Cape Howe, after the First Lord of the Admiralty, is slightly harder to pin down. The sandy point lying only a few hundred metres from the northern tip of Gabo Island and today known as Telegraph Point most closely fits Cook's description of Cape Howe, especially as it has "some round hills upon the main just within it". The overall trend, if not the immediate direction, of the coast is northerly on one side and south westerly on the other.

The misplacement of Cape Howe can be attributed to that other great explorer of the Australian coast, Matthew Flinders. In February 1798 he was on a journey to the Furneaux Islands to rescue survivors of the wreck of the Sydney Cove. In the vicinity of Cook's Cape Howe he noticed a change in the weather around a point of land and deduced, even in the absence of the island described by Cook, that it must have been Cape Howe.

On coming abreast of Cape Howe, the wind chopped round to the south west, and the dark clouds which settled over the land concealed it from our view; we observed however, that it trended to the west, but sought in vain for the small island mentioned by Captain Cook as lying close off the Cape.

Sealing
The reports of Bass and Flinders and of those involved in the salvage of the Sydney Cove concerning the enormous number of seals in Bass Strait led to a rush of speculators to the area. The incredible slaughter of seals that followed caused the extinction of two species and the near extinction of a third within a ten year period when seal products became the main export of the colony of New South Wales. After about 1810 the only sealers left were subsisting on the Bass Strait islands by hunting wallabies, catching muttonbirds, growing vegetables, and trading the occasional seal skin for luxuries. Gabo Island with its little harbour may have been used for sealing purposes but no conclusive evidence has been seen which would lead to the conclusion that it was a major sealing base.

Whaling

In nearby Eden and Boyd Town whaling was a major industry in the middle of the nineteenth century and a minor one into the early years of this century. Gabo Island was at one time used as a base for this whaling industry. In 1846 the Boyd Town correspondent of the Sydney Morning Herald reported that three deserted huts formerly used by Dr Imlay's whaling establishment remained on the island. Another attempt at setting up a whaling venture was made by John Morris, the building contractor for the lighthouse begun in 1848 and is discussed in the following section. The success or otherwise of either of these ventures is not known.

First Lighthouse Attempt

Because of its geographical position, the Cape Howe corner is a logical place for a lighthouse. The first lighthouse in Australia was the Macquarie constructed in 1818 to guide ships to Sydney Harbour, and except for a few harbour lights there were no more lighthouses built until the mid 1840s; certainly there was no systematic approach to the lighting of the long and dangerous coast of Australia.

In June 1840 the Hobart port officer, Captain William Moriarty, wrote to the governor of Van Diemen's Land, Sir John Franklin, suggesting lighthouses be erected in Banks Strait between the Furneaux Group and Tasmania as well as lights on Cape Otway, Kent's Group and Cape Howe. In February 1841 Franklin wrote to the Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps seeking his co-operation in "this beneficial measure":

This matter has occupied much of my attention from the time of my arrival in the Colony, and recent occurrences in Bass' Strait have given increased importance to the subject; within the four years of my residence here, two large barques have been entirely wrecked there, a third stranded, a brig lost with all her crew, besides two or three Colonial Schooners, whose passengers and crew shared the same fate, not to mention the loss of the "Clonmell" steamer; the prevalence of strong winds, the uncertainty of either the set or the force of the currents, the number of small rocks, islets, and shoals, which, though they appear on the chart, have been but imperfectly surveyed, combine to render Bass' Strait under any circumstance an anxious passage for a seaman to enter; and I will venture to say that the master of any merchant ship trading from the northern hemisphere to Sydney, or in the opposite direction, looks upon this portion of his voyage with the greatest apprehension.

He then mentioned that he had already begun the work of lighting Banks Strait with two lighthouses - Swan and Goose Islands - and went on to say:

I consider that the passage through Bass' Strait would be rendered secure, as far as the knowledge of a vessel's exact position would make it, by placing Light Houses on Cape Otway, the south-west part of Sir Roger Curtis' Island, and on Cape Howe ...

Gipps responded by setting up a committee which broadly agreed with Franklin's concerns but differed in detail. Specifically, it was thought that the northern end of King Island was preferable to Cape Otway and that Deal Island was better than Curtis Island.

It appears to your Committee, ... that a Light on Cape Howe would also be most desirable; indeed, so far as the trade to Sydney is concerned, it is considered that a Light in that position would be quite as useful as the proposed Lights in the [Bass] Strait; it would serve as a beacon from whence to take a departure either way, and would thus in a great measure free the Masters of Vessels from the great anxiety of mind which they now experience when in that neighbourhood, in consequence of the danger to be apprehended from the strong inset of the Sea on Long Beach - a place much dreaded by Mariners - and it being nevertheless requisite to make that headland.

Despite the zeal of Sir John Franklin and the deliberations of the NSW Committee, it was several years before the lights were exhibited. The Swan Island light was the first to be shown in November 1845; the Goose Island light followed in February 1846, and the first showing of the Deal Island and Cape Otway lights took place in February and August 1848 respectively. With the egregious absence of a light on Cape Howe, the first stage of the Bass Strait network of highway lights was complete. This system now gave mariners the confidence which they had hitherto generally lacked since the discoveries of Bass and Flinders to use the more direct route from Britain.

As part of the survey connected with the planned system, the land commissioner for Gippsland, C.J. Tyers was directed to examine the best site for a lighthouse at Cape Howe in 1846. Cape Howe itself is low and sandy and not suitable for a lighthouse; as well, Gabo Island would be an obstacle for ships steering for such a light from the west. Tyers chose Gabo Island as the most eligible site. In keeping with the decision to place the Kent Group

lighthouse on the summit of Deal Island, and having regard to the fact that mariners traditionally gave Cape Howe a wide berth, Tyers examined the highest point on Gabo Island, a sand hill in the centre of the island. He found that the summit of the hill was

composed of hard or sandy soil, through which I was unable to penetrate with an iron rod or jumper beyond eight feet, at which depth the soil appears to be very compact.

If he had dug down to his "compact" base he could have saved the useless expenditure of money and resources that was to follow.

A design for a stone lighthouse, identical to the one built at Cape Otway, was prepared in the office of the New South Wales Colonial Architect, Mortimer Lewis in 1846. In August 1846 a contract was let to John Morris for the construction. The tender was for excavation and construction at rates per cubic yard and the government had voted funds of £1,800 to complete the work. Morris failed to find the compact soil that Tyers had described. Despite the obvious folly of such an action he continued to follow to the letter his instructions to dig down to solid rock. Finally it became obvious to the authorities in Sydney that the foundations would have to be on the granite some 68 feet below the summit of the hill and that Morris had already expended most of the budget for construction in excavation and the construction of a railway line to the quarries at the southern tip of the island near where the present lighthouse stands. Morris the contractor and Lewis the Colonial Architect appear to have had a strained relationship; correspondence between them was terse and at one point Lewis wrote:

The general tenor, and uncalled for threats contained in your letter, of what you will and what you will not do under your contract, are of that nature that to stop any attempt which it is your apparent intention to take every advantage of the Government, in the first instance and hereafter, ...

On 27 September 1847 Captain Owen Stanley RN of HMS Rattlesnake visited the island in the schooner Bramble and surveyed the works. Stanley was dismayed with the both the siting of the proposed light and with the work being performed. He strongly suggested that the Gabo Island lighthouse be constructed near the quarries on the southern tip of the island where there was ample building material and a safe site.

On the Southern side of the Island is a position better adapted in a nautical point of view for a Light house as being nearer the extreme point; the solid rock composing the lower part of Gabo Island is quite clear of sand and within from 3 to 500 yards of the Quarry, a spot may be selected where no excavation whatever would be required for the foundations which would then be at the same height above the level of the sea as the rock the contractor expects to reach when the excavation is completed so that no more masonry would be required to raise the tower to the height proposed, the expense and time of making the railway would be saved, and from the vicinity of the Quarry much time and expense would also be saved transporting the stone, and lastly the building might at once be commenced without waiting for the completion of the excavation which judging from the time (11 months) the workmen have been at present employed on it, would require some considerable time.

In 1848 Morris was ordered to stop work and to appear before a select committee. The committee heard evidence from a number of witnesses including the Clerk of Works at Gabo, Francis Rodgers. It was clear that the two had been at loggerheads from the outset. Rodgers had sent in report after report citing improper practices by Morris. At one stage he reported that Morris had built a number of buildings unconnected with the lighthouse and which were to be used in a speculative whale fishery.

The men here is chiefly employed building a store, a boat house and a temporary wharf. The two aforesaid is one building the boats to occupy one end and the other for a store and store keeper, the size of the building is as follows, length 60 feet, width over walls 21 feet, height 8 feet, this house and part of the wharf is a building with round loose stones, which has been from their appearance cast up on the beach opposite the building ... if my informant tells the truth ... the contractor says he intends to follow whale fishing here next season.

The select committee chaired by William Wentworth found that Morris's work was unsatisfactory and that a new site should be chosen with work to proceed under direct government supervision.

Plans for Iron Lighthouse

Nothing further was done at Gabo Island for some years. In the meantime the Wilkins lantern which had been ordered from England lay in storage in Sydney. In 1850 Victoria was declared a separate colony with the border defined as a line from Cape Howe to the head-waters of the Murray. Accordingly Gabo Island was now Victorian territory. Still it remained the logical place for a lighthouse and in 1851 Commander John Lort Stokes suggested

that an iron column could be employed to support the lantern. In November 1852 a Mr Weaver was despatched from Sydney to Gabo to examine a possible site for such a column. Despite the understandable slowness of the New South Wales government to act (after the first fiasco and now that the island was no longer in its territory) there was Victorian government and public interest in the question of a light on Gabo Island. After pressure from the Victorian Chief Secretary, William Lonsdale, in early 1853 and articles in the press, the New South Wales Colonial Secretary informed the Victorian government of the deliberations of the Legislative Council with regard to the New South Wales government's position on Gabo Island.

1st. That there being already in the Colony a first class light, this Government should to prevent delay take the necessary steps for procuring from England an Iron Pillar on which to erect the light. The Pillar to be of such a height that the light when erected shall be 120 feet above the level of the sea.
2nd. That when the necessary Pillar has been procured it will be convenient that the erection of it should be undertaken by the Government of Victoria. Gabo Island being situated within the limits of that Colony - and that for the same reason it will be desirable that the maintenance of the light should be undertaken by that Government.
3rd. That the entire expense as well of the original outlay for the Pillar and Lantern as for the maintenance of the Light should be borne in equal proportions between this Colony and Victoria.
4th In conclusion I am directed to request that you will have the goodness to apprise me of the views of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria on the proposal now communicated to you.

The iron tower was never ordered. Instead, a marine tragedy was the catalyst for the next stage of lighthouse development.

Temporary Wooden Lighthouse
The tragic loss of the Monumental City occurred on nearby Tullabergo Island on 15 May 1853 with the loss of thirty three lives. The news of the wreck did not reach Sydney until 30 May 1853 and seems to have had no hurrying effect on the Legislative Council's plans to order an iron tower from England. Nonetheless in the Colonial Architect's Office, on the same day that the tragic news was received, a temporary wooden tower was designed which could carry the stored lantern. Although the New South Wales government was at first unwilling to unilaterally erect a light on what, since 1850, had become Victorian soil, it succumbed to pressure from the press and so the prefabricated light was built, shipped, erected, and shown by November 1853.

This temporary light was called the "Flinders Light" in honour of Matthew Flinders. The Wilkins and Co fixed light consisting two rings of Argand oil lamps with parabolic reflectors was situated on the ridge of high sand dunes in the centre of the island. It was staffed and maintained by New South Wales with Victoria paying half the cost. At one point in 1854, due to a number of misunderstandings and confusion over responsibilities, the light was extinguished and the keepers were in severe want of provisions. There was a great deal of press indignation but it appears that there was no one person to whom the blame could be attributed. But the principle that New South Wales and Victoria would equally share the cost of maintaining the light (or constructing a new one) was firmly in place.

2.1.8 Present Granite Lighthouse

Somewhere about 1856 the responsibility for superintendence and maintenance of the temporary light passed from New South Wales to Victoria. In August of that year the first intercolonial meeting of the principal marine officers was held. A commission of enquiry had been suggested by the New South Wales Government and was held in Melbourne as being central to the colonies taking part - New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. The Lighthouse Commission first considered whether it were possible to set up a board to supervise the planning, construction, maintenance and financing of Australian lighthouses. Because each of the colonies approached the provision of lights in a different manner and each was wary about handing over any financial powers to a body not directly under its control

the Commissioners have considered it hopeless, under the circumstances, to establish a Board that will combine the materials requisite for a vigorous management, and have therefore decided that, in their opinion, the same results may be brought about by ascertaining, in the first instance, where additional Lighthouses ought to be erected, and then by apportioning the expense of their erection and maintenance between the Colonies interested, in such proportions as the amount of tonnage passing these Lights will indicate.

The commission heard some 100 pages of evidence from a large number of master mariners. Based on this

evidence the report of the commission had this to say about the lights which were already in existence:

the evidence adduced will justify the Commissioners in arriving at the conclusion that they are suitably placed, and sufficiently powerful for the purposes for which they were erected. The evidence, however, has produced an impression on their minds that the Light on Gabo Island, being only an erection of a temporary character, and therefore liable to destruction by fire, might, with advantage to the navigation of the coast, be constructed more substantially, and be at the same time removed to the South-Eastern extremity of the island, at such an increased altitude as would extend its radius of vision to twenty miles. Some witnesses state that this Light is not always of such a brilliancy as might be expected from a lantern of its capacity and power, but this deficiency may perhaps be attributable either to its low altitude, or to some defect in its management. The necessity of maintaining a Light of the greatest efficiency on this important turning point of the Australian coast is obvious to every one.

As well as the replacement of the temporary light on Gabo, the commission recommended the construction of six new coastal lights, all of which were carried out within five years.

South Australia Cape Borda 1858
Cape Northumberland 1859

Victoria Cape Schanck 1859
Wilsons Promontory 1859

Tasmania Cape Wickham 1861

New South Wales Cape St George 1860

In Victoria the two new lights, Cape Schanck and Wilsons Promontory took precedence and planning and construction were put in hand almost immediately. When these lights were completed the task at Gabo was begun.

Design

The new Gabo Island lighthouse was designed in 1859 as a tapering column of smooth red granite topped with a new pattern Chance Brothers lantern containing a fixed light. The Cape Schanck light exhibited that year proved that the new single lamp dioptric type of light was the most advanced type available out performing the multi-lamp catoptric type. Between 1859 and 1861 there was a Royal Commission in Britain into the all facets of navigational aids to mariners. In the course of gathering information on behalf of the commission, in April 1860 the Astronomer Royal, Professor Sir George Airy

visited [the Chance Brothers works at] Spon Lane, and made a thorough scientific examination of a large apparatus in course of construction for the Government of Victoria. He found the individual prisms to be all properly curved and all well adjusted, and he could not say that one was better than another.

Although there had been a suggestion in 1856 that the character of the new light should be revolving instead of flashing (in order to have a sequence of fixed and flashing lights up the coast of New South Wales) it was not seriously entertained.

The lighthouse on Gabo Island, Cape Howe, has been erected for some years and is marked on all charts used throughout the world as a fixed light. To change the distinctive character of a well-known and well-established light on such an important headland as Cape Howe would, in my opinion, be attended with great danger; and, with all the precautions which could be taken to give publicity to the proposed change (if carried out), I fear many masters of vessels would still be found using the charts in their possession which now describe the light as fixed.

The architect of the Gabo Island lighthouse was almost certainly Charles Maplestone of the Victorian Public Works Department, although the design is often attributed to the Victorian Inspector-General of Public Works, William Wardell. Wardell certainly visited the site in 1860 but this is not conclusive evidence that he designed the light.

There is no doubt that the floor plans for the original residences at Gabo Island were formulated by Charles Maplestone and not by Wardell. In a letter of June 1857 Charles Maplestone reported that he

expected to be engaged shortly in preparing drawings for two new lighthouses ... at Cape Schanck and Wilsons Promontory.

An examination of the drawings for the residences at Cape Schanck and Wilsons Promontory show that they were drawn by Maplestone. The plans of the Gabo Island residences are almost identical to the Cape Schanck and Wilsons Promontory designs which were drawn before Wardell arrived in Australia.

Any involvement that Wardell may have had in the design must date from after his appointment to the position of Chief Architect and Inspecting Clerk of Works in February 1859. Maplestone records his commencement of the Gabo Island drawings shortly after in a letter to England of April 1859.

I shall soon be putting in hand a lighthouse of Red Granite 150 feet high - I have got the drawings in hand, and have sent home for the lantern and apparatus.

In June 1859 Maplestone wrote "I have started my Gabo Island lighthouse ...", and in the same month a decision was recorded to increase the height of the tower (due to a miscalculation made in the level of the base of the tower above sea level). Wardell may have had some involvement in the revised design at this time but the only working drawing for the tower as built in existence from this period is a drawing marked "Public Works Office Melbourne 27/6/60. Drawn by C.M. Traced by C.W.S.". The C.M. is Charles Maplestone.

The case for attribution to Maplestone is further strengthened by written evidence given to the Civil Service Commission in January 1860 by the former Inspector General for Public Works Charles Pasley. Pasley clarified the duties of officers and makes an important reflection on the design responsibility of the Gabo Island lightstation. In replying to questions on the amount of time spent away from Melbourne on inspection tours of country works Pasley responded:

At present only a portion of the time of each District Inspector or Clerk of Works under the Public Works Department is occupied in his tours of inspection. The greater part of his time is occupied in Melbourne in designing and preparing specifications for buildings or other works. One of them has designed and has charge of the erection of lighthouses on the coast.

This reference certainly refers to Maplestone who officially held a position of Clerk of Works and Draftsman at the time. Unless further evidence is revealed to establish the influence of Wardell there seems no reason to refute Maplestone's claim of 1861 that "I shall have designed and built all the lighthouses in the colony but one [Cape Otway]".

Charles Maplestone was born in Suffolk in 1809 and entered the office of William Cubitt at an early age. He arrived in Melbourne on 26 April 1853 and joined the Public Works Department in June 1853. By 1854 Maplestone was employed on making alterations and additions, and redecorating Toorak House in preparation for its occupation by the Governor of Victoria.

In 1857 Maplestone began work on documentation and supervision of both coastal and harbour lights, and this work was to occupy him for much of the remainder of his public works career. He retired from the public service in 1869 and concentrated upon his successful vineyard, Ivanhoe Lodge near Heidelberg. Maplestone was regarded as an authority on viticulture and wine making in Victoria and his wines were awarded medals in international competitions. He died in 1878.

Construction

As early as 1846 a newspaper report noted the similarity of the Gabo Island rock to Aberdeenshire granite remarking that "from its hard nature we think there will be considerable difficulty and expense in cutting it." In 1860 questions were raised in the Victorian parliament in relation to the finish of the proposed tower querying the cost of the proposed smooth finish as opposed to rock faced work. The Minister replied that the Inspector-General of Works considered it desirable that the stone be roughly punched as described in the specification and he was confirmed in that opinion by the New South Wales Colonial Architect (but he added that no cost comparison had been made between the two).

Tenders were called for the erection of the lighthouse and quarters at Gabo Island in July 1860. In line with the shared cost arrangements for the construction, full particulars of the proposed light were available at both the

Melbourne and Sydney public works offices. The tender was won by the Melbourne contractor Robert Huckson for £14,950 against thirteen other tenderers. Huckson would have been well-known to the Victorian government as he had recently completed the new Treasury Building which was admired as one of Melbourne's finest public edifices.

Maplestone was clearly very proud of his design and pleased with Huckson's work at Gabo Island. In a letter of April 1861 he wrote

I was well pleased with my job at Gabo Island - the masonry to the tower is being done in splendid style - nearly every stone in the lower storey is from 5 to 8 tons weight, of beautiful red granite, very similar to Peterhead granite at home.

Huckson was awarded with an addition to his original contract of £1506 18s 10d in December 1861 with half of the sum to be recovered from "other Governments".

Early in 1862 Maplestone wrote:

When the last mail sailed, I was on a cruise to three of my lighthouses, that at Gabo Island ... is not yet finished - the poor contractor is ruined, having lost £7000 by it.

While it is possible that Huckson was able to complete the masonry work of the light tower before his financial collapse, his contract was transferred to Alexander Cairns and Henry Mills in February 1862. A Notice to Mariners of May 1862 reported that the masonry of the new tower had been completed and the light was expected to be shown on about 15 August 1862. An agreement for £878 17s 9d of further works (half of which as usual was charged to the New South Wales government) was made with Cairns and Mills in November 1862.

On 23 August 1849 aged 24, Robert Huckson (variously identified as a carpenter and stonemason), arrived in Adelaide and soon after moved to Melbourne where he commenced work as a building contractor. In 1858 he built the new Treasury Building. His successful tender for the Gabo Island lighthouse put him in financial difficulties which resulted in the collapse of his company. He moved to Tasmania where from 1886 he was involved in lightstation work for Marine Board of Hobart. He died in Tasmania in 1902.

Operation

The Gabo Island light began operation in late 1862 with a head keeper and two assistants and their families. The lantern of the former temporary lighthouse was dismantled but the wooden structure remained visible for years afterward. The lives of the keepers followed the pattern of other isolated lightstations with the exception that at various times there might be up to seventy quarrymen and their families working the pink granite for the building and monumental trade in Melbourne.

A keeper who arrived on Gabo Island in 1879 recalled the appearance of the island at the time of arrival. The jetty and nearby store and two weatherboard houses which were the former residences of the lighthouse keepers of the temporary light. Mention was also made of the graves of three or four people who died on the island while the lighthouse was being built, the old wooden lighthouse tower, vegetable gardens and springs, and the four houses on the station which included a house occupied by a young man who operated as a telegraph officer.

Telegraph

Telegraphic communication was the lifeline of rural New South Wales with the town of Sydney. By 1868 the telegraph line had reached Eden on the southern New South Wales coast and in 1870 the line was extended to Gabo Island. Telegraph operators were appointed from New South Wales as the line was part of the New South Wales telegraph network but the costs were born equally by New South Wales and Victoria. Amongst the Appropriation of Revenue for the year 1887/1888 submitted by New South Wales to the Victorian Parliament was a claim of £452 as a contribution towards the maintenance of the telegraph stations at Flinders Island and Gabo Island. The line was originally carried on posts on the spit which occasionally joined the island to the mainland but after this washed away a line was laid along the sea bed.

The first telegraph office was a timber building immediately to the east of the assistants' quarters. In November 1886 drawings for a new quarters for a signalman and telegraph officer were prepared in the office of the New South Wales Colonial Architect James Barnet but the contract for the construction was not actually let until 7 October 1887. The building which was composed of a residence and an office and look-out room was unusual in that it was constructed of mass concrete as were its surrounding garden walls. A flagstaff stood nearby to the

south-east of the building. As the New South Wales government paid for the construction of this building, the usual arrangement for payment was reversed with the Victorian government paying New South Wales £810 for their share of the construction costs.

James Johnstone Barnet, the designer of the Gabo Island signalman and telegraph operator's quarters, occupied the position of Colonial Architect of New South Wales for twenty-five years and played a pivotal role in the development of public works architecture in that state. He studied architecture under C.J. Richardson in London before departing for Australia in 1854. Barnet was appointed New South Wales Colonial Architect in 1865 and over the next twenty five years, was responsible for a series of major and distinguished public buildings. Criticism by a Royal Commission precipitated Barnet's retirement in 1890.

Alterations
In 1873 a contract was let to Robert Thornton for £791 for the construction of a jetty for the lighthouse station. The log books for the station for this period record the anticipation of the completion of the jetty in the last week of October of 1874 and the completion of a new roof and cementing of walls to the big store. This was not the first jetty as Morris mentions one in 1848 and Maplestone mentions two in 1861.

Some deterioration to the wall finishes of the stone residences due to water penetration had occurred in the fifty years since their construction and at an unknown date but probably around the time of the First World War the internal existing stone walls to the residences were battened and sheeted. Additional verandahs were added to three sides of the assistants quarters as part of the same building contract.

In 1894 fixed red auxiliary lights were attached to several Victorian lighthouses, including Gabo Island. This change reflected the policy of the marine authorities to warn vessels which might be steering for a light to keep clear of off-lying dangers. Such auxiliary lights had been incorporated into the design of other new lights such as Split Point, Point Lonsdale and Cape Everard (Point Hicks). In his survey of and recommendations on coastal lights of 1913, Commander Brewis recommended that this auxiliary red light be discontinued as its visibility could not be relied upon. Brewis noted that fixed red lights had been criticized at a Royal Commission into lighthouses in Britain of 1908 as being capable of being mistaken for harbour lights or fixed lights on other objects.

Brewis reported that the light had been last altered in 1909 when the wick lamp was replaced by an incandescent kerosene mantle and the dwellings repaired in 1911. He concluded that while the tower, lantern and optical apparatus were in good and serviceable condition, the light required to be given a distinctive character. The light was altered in 1913 in accordance with the Brewis recommendations. A clockwork driven occulting screen was inserted in the existing lantern house to alter the character of the light from fixed to flashing. The red auxiliary light was discontinued and the frequency of firing explosive rocket fog signals was also altered .

The incandescent kerosene mantle burner was replaced by an acetylene flasher in 1917 and the character changed to group flashing. A 1930s plan to convert the lightstation to an unattended automatic acetylene light was not carried out and instead the station was given two electric generators in 1935. The 1860 Chance Brothers fixed lens was removed to Wollongong and from November 1935 the generators powered a small 250mm revolving lens which revolved around a single electric lamp.

In 1912 the Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher wrote to the Premier of Victoria seeking a grant of 2 acres of land for "the purposes of a Wireless Telegraph Station". In the event the station was not proceeded with. But in 1963 a radio beacon, part of a chain covering Bass Strait, was installed at the island. In 1975 the existing radio room and generator building were joined by a workshop, all in red brick with a flat concrete roof. The radio beacon was discontinued on 17 January 1992.

Since the earliest days transport of stores and personnel to the island was done by sea. Occasionally there has been a sandspit connecting the island with the mainland but this is not much use for resupply purposes as there is no serviceable road to Telegraph Point. In 1972-3 an airstrip was constructed across the island about 200 metres north of building 5. This grass airstrip allows resupply by small single and twin engined aircraft. Fuel for the generators and vehicles is delivered by helicopter. Major items of heavy equipment are still carried by sea but are now brought ashore by LARC (lighter amphibious resupply cargo).

After more than 100 years service and water penetration to the inner surface of the walls, the stairs to the tower had suffered serious deterioration. The replacement of the original cast iron stair to the tower with a replica began in about 1978 and was completed in about 1988. The original steps are stored in the jetty store awaiting disposal.

New kitchens were added to the head keeper's and assistants residences in 1981.

Quarrying

Charles Maplestone compared the red porphyritic granite of Gabo Island to that found at Peterhead near Aberdeen in Scotland. Peterhead granite has been called "the most beautiful that Scotland affords; indeed, in point of beauty, it is only surpassed by the oriental granites." Quarrying of the beautiful Gabo Island granite occurred in two major locations. On the south west tip of the island were the quarries used for both the failed 1848 lighthouse and the present lighthouse of 1862. John Morris, the contractor for the first lighthouse, built a railway between this quarry site and the excavation site on the sand ridge in the middle of the island. As far as can be ascertained, none of the rock quarried in the southern workings was exported from the island but stayed as buildings.

There are also quarries on the northern end of the island but these were commercial quarries intended for the export of stone. The first commercial quarry on Gabo Island was operated from 1853 by S.C. Johnson, an engineer who had been shipwrecked there in 1852 and had been impressed by the stone. The hard red granite was used in the plinth of the new Melbourne Customs House. Johnson's workings were taken over by Glaister and Co who supplied the stone for the plinth of the Melbourne General Post Office.

A correspondent of the Argus travelling with an official Victorian delegation called at Gabo Island in 1877 and found it to be a barren and uninteresting spot remarkable only for the fine granite lighthouse whose first order light he judged to be not surpassed by any light on the Australian coast. He also noted that the Gabo Island granite was

pretty well known in Melbourne, for the columns which adorn the front of the Alliance Assurance Company's office, in Collins Street, were bought from Gabo Island, and their handsome appearance is noticed by most visitors to the city.

In the 1880s Glaister's workings were taken over by James Taylor and John Colhoun, monumental masons of Footscray. In 1888 they applied to the Lands Department for permission to build a stone jetty. The granite groin is still a major feature of Gabo Harbour. The quantities of stone quarried at Gabo Island can be gauged to some extent by the enormous number of rough hewn blocks which still remain at both quarry sites.

Wartime Occupation

From about 1938 until the end of the Second World War there was a small naval contingent present on Gabo Island. The men were housed in corrugated iron huts to the north east of the assistants' quarters.

A radar station manned by air force personnel was constructed on the site of the former temporary lighthouse.

Shipwrecks

Gabo Island is a dangerous feature on a dangerous coast and as such has been the site of many wrecks. Some which have left their mark on the island are mentioned here.

In 1852 the Mary Wilson went ashore at Gabo Harbour after sheltering there and was wrecked. The owner, who was aboard, was an engineer named S.C. Johnson. He spent several days on Gabo Island and was taken with the quality of the stone. He was the first to begin commercial quarrying on the island.

The most famous wreck, the Monumental City of 15th May 1853, did not even occur on Gabo Island but off nearby Tullabergo Island. The American steamer had crossed the Pacific to Sydney in the previous month and was returning there from Melbourne when the wreck occurred. It was this wreck which precipitated the lighting of Gabo Island.

A monument was erected to the victims of the Monumental City during the construction of the lighthouse in 1861. Charles Maplestone wrote to his clerk of works on Gabo Island advising him to choose some suitable stone and suggesting

perhaps you would like a little amusement in lettering if I send a short inscription.

At first the monument was to be erected over the remains on Tullabergo but when this plan proved impractical it was erected facing that island. Undermining by penguins led to its toppling but it was re-erected on granite in 1963.

In 1908 the steamer Easby with a load of potatoes came into Gabo Harbour with damage caused by rocks further east along the coast. The ship sank at anchor not far from the jetty. An anchor has been recovered and is displayed between the two sets of quarters.

In 1982 a competitor a round the world solo yacht race ran Sir Francis Chichester's former yacht Gypsy Moth V ashore just below the lighthouse. The skipper was asleep when the yacht wedged itself into a crevice in the rock. Only the keel remains.

Automation and Destaffing
From about 1975 there has been a programme of automation and subsequent destaffing of Australian lighthouses. This program was given political sanction with the 1983 report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure entitled Lighthouses: do we keep the keepers? The savings indicated for Gabo Island over a 20 year period were $1.16 million. The findings which refer specifically to Gabo Island are:

Finding 17: There are significant benefits for search and rescue that derive from a human presence at ... 11 lightstations [including Gabo Island].

Finding 20: There are significant benefits for weather information required by the Bureau of Meteorology that derive from a human presence at ... 16 lightstations [including Gabo Island].

Finding 26: There are significant benefits for the natural environment that derive from a human presence at ... 21 lightstations [including Gabo Island].

Finding 29: For ... 33 lightstations [including Gabo Island] the Committee is of the opinion that the benefits that derive from the human presence are greater than the cost savings of automation and unmanning.

Finding 32: For personnel safety reasons remote stations should be operated by two persons. Therefore, out of the 33 stations the Committee said should continue to be operated manned ... 7 stations [including Gabo Island] should be operated by two persons.

The report recommended a policy of consultation between Commonwealth and State bodies regarding manned presence and that all reasonable measures be taken to continue manning provided others pay the costs.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion A
The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

Criterion B
The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.
Criterion C

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

Criterion D
The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

Criterion E
The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

Criterion F
The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

Criterion G

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations.

Criterion H
Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 1843 in the category described as a Heritage and Archaeological place:

Gabo Island Lighstation, Gabo Island, Unincorporated.

EXTENT:

1. All of the buildings and features marked as follows on Diagram 1843 held by the Executive Director:

B1 Lighthouse and associated stone walls
B2 Head Lightkeeper's Residence and associated stone walls
B3 Assistant Lightkeepers' Residences and associated stone walls
B4 Stables
B5 Privy
B6 Telegraph Operator's Residence and associated concrete walls and privy
B7 Store
B8 Jetty Shed
F1, F2 & F3 Ruins of stone buildings
F4 Quarry and associated stone groin
F5 Cemetery
F6 Ruins of radar and early wooden lighthouse
F7 Monument to the wreck of the SS Monumental City
T1 Pear Tree (Pyrus cv.)

2. All of the land comprising Gabo Island as shown on Diagram 1843 held by the Executive Director being the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 5833 Folio 464 and including all archaeological relics and deposits.

Dated: 4 November 1999.

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 46 18 November 1999 p2455]

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.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/