

# COLLINS SETTLEMENT SITE



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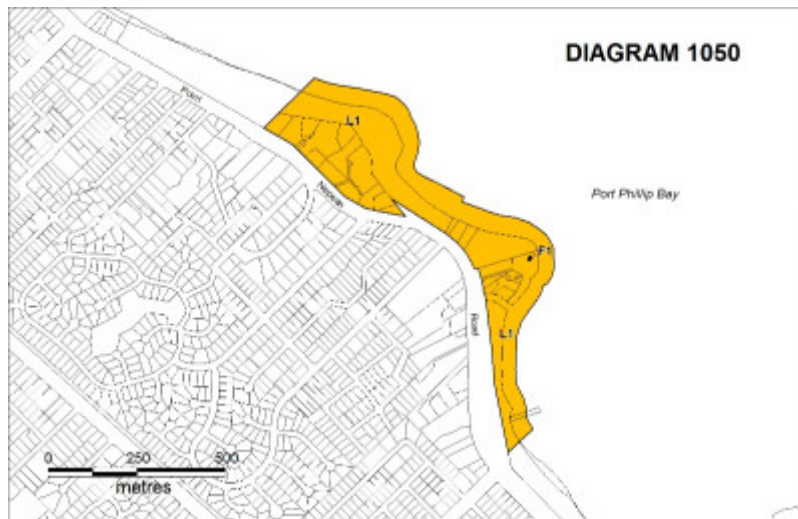
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nepean hwy sorrento  
foreshore reserve dec1996



Collins Settlement Site bottle



Collins Settlement Site bottle,  
view of the neck and lip



H1050 Collins Settlement Site Plan

## Location

2700-3148 POINT NEPEAN ROAD SORRENTO, MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

## Municipality

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1050

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO255

## VHR Registration

November 17, 1994

## Amendment to Registration

November 20, 2003

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 1, 2022

### What is significant?

The British Government's decision to establish a settlement in southern Australia appears to have been prompted by favourable reports of Port Phillip Bay and concerns about the interest of the French in the area. The colonising party despatched from England comprised military personnel, administrative staff, a few free settlers and a majority of convicts. Some were fortunate enough to be accompanied by wives and children. Lt-Governor Collins led the party of 467 persons.

The site selected for the settlement was on the southern side of Port Phillip Bay at Sullivan Bay, relatively close to the Heads, a site chosen to enable protection of Bass Strait from the French. It was a difficult site to settle, without easy access to fresh running water, an anchorage well off-shore, and poor soils for agriculture; their survey of Port Phillip Bay revealed that much of the area had similar characteristics.

The settlement was established on an area of land between the Western Sister and Eastern Sister, prominent headlands which mark each end of Sullivan Bay. Most of the settlement was close to the Eastern Sister. Initially a tent encampment, work commenced quickly on building a jetty and other timber structures, including huts. A local limestone was apparently used to construct chimneys for the huts, and for the building of the magazine. As well as barrels set into sand to trap fresh water, wells were dug, as were privies. Land was cleared for the growing of crops, perhaps totalling several acres.

In choosing this place for a settlement, the settlers directly displaced Aboriginal people from a regular camping area.

In 1804 Collins decided to move the settlement to Van Diemens Land, where John Bowen had established a settlement at Risdon Cove in 1803. They were moved as two parties, the second group leaving on 20 May, just over seven months after the settlement had been established.

Surviving physical evidence of the settlement is limited to oak barrels recovered in 1926, and artefacts thought to date to the initial settlement of the area such as the remains of a hand blown brandy bottle inscribed "Old Cognac 1795" and a pair of leg irons.

The graves site located within the Collins Settlement Historic Reserve is important for symbolic reasons in long being recognised by both the government and the community as a symbol and icon of the first attempt of European settlement in Victoria (even though historical knowledge suggests they are unlikely to be associated with the 1803-4 settlement).

### **How is it significant?**

Collins Settlement Site is of historic, archaeological, aesthetic (landscape) and social significance to the State of Victoria.

### **Why is it significant?**

Collins Settlement Site is historically significant as the site of the British Government's first official settlement in southern Australia, in 1803. From the perspectives of global colonisation, the site contains historical fabric, associations and meanings that are vital to the understanding of the history of colonisation in southern Australia. The site is one of few Australian 'founding' sites that have survived two centuries of change. Like The Rocks in Sydney and Risdon Cove in Tasmania, the landscape of Sullivan Bay has revealed evidence from its founding period. More evidence may survive to be revealed as a result of future investigations.

Collins Settlement Site has aesthetic significance due to the survival of much of the pre-settlement landscape of Sullivan Bay, including the enclosing headlands, the old growth Moonah woodland, the shallow waters of the bay, the views between the Eastern and Western Sister and the Western Sister and St Paul's, and to Arthurs Seat. Collins Settlement Site has archaeological significance due to its potential to contain relics relating to the historic occupation of the site.

Collins Settlement Site has social significance for long being recognised as the site of the 1803 settlement. The Melbourne and Peninsula communities have strongly defended the site during times when its long term protection seemed in jeopardy.

## **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:**

All exempted works are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works 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 alterations shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to obtain relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable.

#### Regular Site Maintenance

The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act 1995*,

- a) Regular site maintenance provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b) the maintenance of an item to retain its conditions or operation without the removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the introduction of new materials;
- c) cleaning including the removal of surface deposits, organic growths, or graffiti by the use of low pressure water and natural detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing;
- d) repairs, conservation and maintenance to plaques, memorials, roads and paths, fences and gates and drainage and irrigation.
- e) The replacement of existing services such as cabling, plumbing, wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits or voids, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric.

#### Fire Suppression Duties

The following fire suppression duties are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act 1995*,

- a) Fire suppression and fire fighting duties provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b) Fire suppression activities such as fuel reduction burns, and fire control line construction, provided all significant historical and archaeological features are appropriately recognised and protected;

Note: Fire management authorities should be aware of the location, extent and significance of historical and archaeological places when developing fire suppression and fire fighting strategies. The importance of places listed in the Heritage Register must be considered when strategies for fire suppression and management are being developed.

#### Landscape Maintenance

The following landscape maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act 1995*,

- a) Landscape maintenance works provided the activities do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b) Watering, mowing, top-dressing and fertilising necessary for the continued health of plants, without damage or major alterations to layout, contours, plant species or other significant landscape features;
- c) Pruning to control size, improve shape, flowering or fruiting and the removal of diseased, dead or dangerous material, not exceeding 20% of the crown of the tree within a period of two years;
- d) Tree surgery by a qualified horticulturalist or tree surgeon necessary for the health of those plants.

#### Public Safety and Security

The following public safety and security activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act 1995*,

- a) Public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b) The erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect significant fabric of the place including archaeological features;

c) Development including emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a site feature has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public.

### Signage and Site Interpretation

The following Signage and Site Interpretation activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act* 1995,

a) Signage and site interpretation activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;

b) The erection of non-illuminated signage for the purpose of ensuring public safety or to assist in the interpretation of the heritage significance of the place or object and which will not adversely affect significant fabric including landscape or archaeological features of the place or obstruct significant views of and from heritage values or items;

c) Signage and site interpretation products must be located and be of a suitable size so as not to obscure or damage significant fabric of the place;

d) Signage and site interpretation products must be able to be later removed without causing damage to the significant fabric of the place;

Note: The development of signage and site interpretation products must be consistent in the use of format, text, logos, themes and other display materials.

Note: Where possible, the signage and interpretation material should be consistent with other schemes developed on similar or associated sites. It may be necessary to consult with land managers and other stakeholders concerning existing schemes and strategies for signage and site interpretation.

### Minor Works

Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the *Heritage Act*. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit.

If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Construction dates	1803,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered archaeological place,
Other Names	Sullivan Bay, Sullivan's Bay, First Settlement site,
Hermes Number	4653
Property Number	

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## History

(The following summary history has been taken from the Shire of Flinders Heritage Study (1992))

The British Government's decision to establish a settlement in southern Australia appears to have been prompted by favourable reports of Port Phillip Bay and concerns about the interest of the French in the area. The colonising party despatched from England comprised military personnel, administrative staff, a few free settlers and a majority of convicts. Some were fortunate enough to be accompanied by wives and children. Lt-Governor Collins

led the party of 467 persons.

Another view about the reasons for the establishment of the settlement at Sorrento is advanced by Richard Cotter in *No place for a colony* where he argues that it was to avoid sending convicts to Sydney to provide time for Sydney's moral recovery or renewal.

The site selected for the settlement was on the southern side of Port Phillip Bay at Sullivan Bay, relatively close to the Heads, a site chosen to enable protection of Bass Strait from the French. It was a difficult site to settle, without easy access to fresh running water, an anchorage well off-shore, and poor soils for agriculture; their survey of Port Phillip Bay revealed that much of the area had similar characteristics.

The settlement was established on an area of land between the Western Sister and Eastern Sister, prominent headlands which mark each end of Sullivan Bay. Most of the settlement was close to the Eastern Sister. Initially a tent encampment, work commenced quickly on building a jetty and other timber structures, including huts. Local limestone was apparently used to construct chimneys for the huts, and for the building of the magazine. As well as barrels set into sand to trap fresh water, wells were dug, as were privies. Land was cleared for the growing of crops, perhaps totalling several acres.

Contact between Europeans and the Boonerwung (Bunurong) people (the traditional Aboriginal custodians) in the Port Phillip Bay area first occurred in 1802 during Lt Murray's exploratory visit to the area in the *Lady Nelson*. A meeting between Murray's party and a group of about 20 Aborigines occurred in the general vicinity of Sullivan Bay on 17 February. There was an exchange of gifts, but a disagreement followed, leading to the death of an Aborigine and shots being fired from the *Lady Nelson*. The Collins party's first encounter with Aborigines on the north-western side of Port Phillip Bay was greeted by hostility, and this pattern was repeated many times, perhaps provoked by the Murray expedition's initial actions. The extensive Aboriginal shell middens at Sullivan Bay were noticed by the white settlers, along with their huts and hearths. In choosing this place for a settlement, the British had directly displaced Aboriginal people from a regular camping area.

In 1804 Collins decided to move the settlement to Van Diemens Land, where John Bowen had established a settlement at Risdon Cove in 1803. They were moved as two parties, the second group leaving on 20 May, just over seven months after the settlement had been established.

Post 1836 settlement

(The following summary history has been taken from the Shire of Flinders Heritage Study (1992))

The land around the eastern Sister became freehold in 1875, with CA65A being acquired by D.A Hughes, and a portion set aside within this allotment to protect and allow access to the graves. An allotment on the western Sister (CA71A) was also acquired by Hughes. between the two allotments and along the foreshore west of CA65A was an extensive area of land reserved for recreation. The land held in private ownership has been since subdivided several times; the alignment of the Nepean Highway (now Point Nepean Road) has also been varied.

A small part of the 1803 site was reserved as public land in 1875 when this area was first surveyed and sold as freehold. This was the "Graves Reserve".

In 1982, following proposals to subdivide Lot 3 (CA65A, Parish of Nepean) into three more residential

#### PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH COLLINS SETTLEMENT SITE

**William Buckley** (1780-1856) Buckley was a member of the convict labourers sent to work at the site. He and two companions absconded from the settlement. While his 2 companions turned back and were never heard of again, Buckley was befriended by the Watouroung people, whom he lived with for the next 30 years. In 1835 with the arrival of other white settlers in the Port Phillip district, Buckley returned to European society. He eventually settled in Tasmania and died in 1856.

**John Pascoe Fawkner** (1792-1869) As a child Fawkner accompanied his convict father to the Sullivan's Bay Settlement Site. Fawkner returned to the Port Phillip District in 1835 and was one of the early settlers of Melbourne.

**David Collins** (1756-1810) Lieutenant Governor of the Colony of NSW, Collins agreed to lead the settlement to Sullivan's Bay (Sorrento), after a few months Collins asked Governor King if they could remove to what is now

Hobart.

## **Extent of Registration**

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended in that Heritage Register Number 1050 in the category described as a Archaeological place, Heritage place is now described as:

Collins Settlement Site, Point Nepean Road, Sorrento, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

#### EXTENT:

1. All the land and water bounded by: the Point Nepean Road to the south; 100m to the east of the Camerons Bight jetty on the east; the eastern edge of the Sorrento Sailing Club land to the west, and a line 50 metres out from high water mark to the north, as marked L1 on Plan No. H1050 held by the Executive Director.
2. All the features known as 'Settlers Graves' as marked F1 on Plan No. H1050 held by the Executive Director.

Dated 20 November 2003

RAY TONKIN  
Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 47 20 November 2003 2900-2901]

*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/>*