



7 CLEELAND ROAD CAPE WOOLAMAI, BASS COAST SHIRE

## **Municipality**

BASS COAST SHIRE

## **Level of significance**

Registered

## **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H0666

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO180

## **VHR Registration**

September 16, 1987

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - June 24, 1999

"Wollomai House" near Newhaven is a pastoral homestead which has important links with the early history of Phillip Island and the racing industry. It is of weatherboard construction with a slate and iron roof and is typical in form, having a cross wing with a verandah flanked by a gabled side wings with bay windows. The detailing is Italianate and is highlighted by a two storey tower with a pointed arch entry. A dormer window adds to the asymmetry of the roof line at the front. The house was built in several stages beginning c.1876 with additions reflecting the changing use of the property.

Elements of the Victorian garden remain at the front with the mature trees including an avenue of Norfolk Island pines forming an important part of the landscape. At the rear of the house there are a verandah and two dormers with a low kitchen wing to one side and a well. Outbuildings are set some distance away to form a layer open yard.

The house was built in 1876 for John Cleeland who arrived in Victoria from County Down, Northern Ireland in 1840. Then aged about fourteen he settled with his family on Darebin creek before sailing the South Pacific for many years finally as captain of his own schooner. In 1859 he returned to Melbourne and purchased the Albion hotel in Bourke Street, the starting point for all up country Cobb & Co coaches, keeping it for twenty two years. Cleeland's interest in racing apparently began about this time but it was not until the early 1870s that he purchased several allotments on Phillip Island, including the one on which the house now stands. Soon after this he bought and trained the racehorse "Wollomai" which had been bred by John David McHaffie, one of the lessees of the Phillip Island run. "Wollomai" won the Melbourne Cup in 1875, the first time it was run on a Tuesday.

The following year work began on Cleeland's New Haven residence which, like the racehorse, was named after Cape Wollomai. In 1881 he returned there to engage in pastoral pursuits and horse breeding until his death in 1914. The property remained in the hands of the Cleeland family until 1982. The largest and possibly oldest

residence on the Island "Wollomai House" is a rare survivor of the substantial homestead complexes built for Gippsland pastoralists during the last century.

## 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](#).

Construction dates	1876,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	WOOLAMAI HOUSE (official place name of area), WOLLAMAI HOUSE (spelling on some charts),
Hermes Number	874
Property Number	

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## History

Notes on spelling Wollomai, Wollamai, Woolamai

Chris Richards  
'Cape Woolamai' How it shaped our history?  
from Placenames Australia  
Newsletter of the Australian National Placenames Survey  
December 2002

Captain James Cook reached the east coast of Australia in May 1770. In sailing northwards he named a large number of geographical features, the first three of which are in present day Victoria- Point Hicks, Ram Head and Cape Howe (where the Vic/NSW border meets the coast). As Cook had been sailing westwards from New Zealand and did not go ashore until he reached Botany Bay, he was not in a position to apply any Aboriginal names in Victoria.

George Bass subsequently sailed along part of the Victorian coast in 1797/8, during his epic whaleboat voyage from Sydney to Western Port (which he named), effectively proving the existence of Bass Strait. Bass wrote about Cape Woolamai in his journal as follows-

The eastern entrance of this place has so conspicuous an appearance by the gap it makes in the land that it cannot fail of being known by any one coming from the eastward.

The point of the island, which is a high cape, like a snapper's head, forms an island. The entrance appears like a passage between it and the main.

When Matthew Flinders published (1814) the account of his circumnavigation of Australia entitled, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, his comments for 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1802, include the following-

'We then steered eastward along the south side of Phillip Island, and passed a needle-like rock lying under the shore. Cape Wollamai is the east end of the island, and forms one side of the small, eastern entrance to the port. Wollamai is the native name for a fish at Port Jackson, sometimes called by the settlers, light-horseman, from the bones of the head having some resemblance to a helmet; and the form of this cape bearing a likeness to the head of a fish, induced Mr. Bass to give it the name of Wollamai.

In addition to this journal entry, Flinders included Cape Wollamai on one of his charts entitled, 'South Coast', that accompanied the 1814 book publication. Bass and Flinders were close friends and undertook several historically important voyages of exploration together. Consequently, there seems little reason to question Flinders' comments about the naming of Cape Wollamai by Bass, even though the latter used the expression 'like a snapper's head', rather than the actual Aboriginal word.

George Bass and Matthew Flinders did not make any contact with local Aboriginal people while they were on the Victorian coast. So where then did the name Wollamai come from? Part of the answer can be found in Captain John Hunter's book entitled, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea*, which was originally published in 1793. This book contains a list of Aboriginal words collected around the Sydney area by Governor Arthur Phillip and the Judge Advocate and Secretary to the Colony, David Collins, which had been enlarged upon by Hunter. The list includes the word 'woolamie', which is recorded as meaning, 'a fish called a light-horse-man'. Hunter's book is based on his experiences in New South Wales with the First Fleet. He sailed back to England and then returned to the colony in 1793 as the second Governor. With Hunter on this return journey was George Bass, who was sailing to Australia for the first time.

Another part of the answer can be found with a third passenger on this voyage to Sydney; Bennelong. He was a member of the Eora people (who lived in the area around Sydney) and had been taken to England by Governor Phillip, when the latter went home with health problems. While the three were en-route to Sydney, Bennelong became sick and was treated by Bass, a naval surgeon.

It can be seen from the above, that Bass had an opportunity to acquire some insights into the Aboriginal language used around the Sydney area. In his biography of George Bass, Keith Macrae Bowden writes as follows-

Under Bass's care the native made a good recovery and he proved of some use on the voyage. From him, Bass learnt what he could of the native language spoken about Port Jackson.

Bennelong was an important figure in the early contact between Aboriginal people and the First Fleeters. He is remembered in the name of Bennelong Point on which the Sydney Opera House is located.

Bass would have had further opportunities to learn some more about the language of the Eora people after he arrived at Sydney. Some of the Eora had already become fringe-dwellers around the new settlement, while some colonists (see above) had prepared basic word lists.

Current maps and the Victorian Register of Geographic Names spell the name of the eastern tip of Phillip Island as Cape Woolamai. The earliest reference to this spelling that I have been able to locate is a map of the County of Mornington prepared by the Crown Lands Department in Melbourne in 1858. However, I have located some naval charts prepared after this date that preserve Flinders' spelling of Wollamai.

John Cleeland was one of the early settlers on Phillip Island (remembered in the name of Cleeland Bight), establishing a property that he called Wollomai (named after the cape near which it is located); this is a fourth spelling variant. Cleeland raised a horse called Wollomai, which was entered in and won the Melbourne Cup of 1875, the first Cup to be run on the first Tuesday in November.

A parish of Woolamai was created on the mainland east of Phillip Island, in which a small village/locality of Woolamai can be found. Nearby is the Woolamai racecourse, where popular picnic race meetings are held.

## **Extent of Registration**

### AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic Buildings No. 666.

Wollomai House, Newhaven, Phillip Island, to the extent of the House, Outbuildings and Land contained in Certificate of Title, Volume 9471, Folio 860.

[*Victoria Government Gazette* No. G36 16 September 1987 p. 2488]

*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/>*