
SOUTH CHANNEL PILE LIGHT



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1 south channel pile light light after relocation front view

Location

PORT PHILLIP BAY, UNINCORPORATED

Municipality

UNINCORPORATED

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1519

VHR Registration

August 20, 1982

Amendment to Registration

May 23, 1998

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 14, 1997

What is significant?

The South Channel Pile Light was built between 1872 and 1874 to a design by the Public Works Department; the contract was let to Robert McColl. It was installed as a navigational aid for ships approaching Melbourne along the South Channel. It was installed in conjunction with the construction of the iron Eastern Lighthouse at McCrae, which together formed a leading navigational line along the South Channel. The South and the West Channels were the two major shipping channels for all vessels entering Port Phillip Bay on their way to Melbourne. The light operated continuously from 1874 until 1985, but was extinguished for a brief period at the height of the Russian scare in 1885.

The South Channel Pile Light was constructed with a framework of timber screw-driven piles above which rests an octagonal platform. A single-storey octagonal timber building is mounted on the platform. This comprised the light-keepers' quarters and included a bedroom, living-room, storeroom, and an external verandah. There were also two rainwater tanks for domestic use. A metal lantern, which housed the light, was mounted above the quarters and was accessed via a spiral staircase. Between 1905 and 1913, the light-keeper painted murals of ships on the interior walls of the quarters. In 1979, these were relocated to the Melbourne Maritime Museum (Polly Woodside). The quarters were manned by the light-keeper until bottled acetylene gas was introduced for lighting purposes in 1925.

In 1985, after service of 111 years, the light was extinguished. In 1998, due to significant deterioration of the timber structure, the pile light and attached living quarters were removed from the timber piles. Following restoration, this was relocated on new timber piles at a position 3 kilometres off the Rye pier. The timber piles remain in their original position.

How is it significant?

The South Channel Pile Light is of historical, architectural and technological (maritime) significance to the State of Victoria. The original timber piles are of archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The South Channel Pile Light is historically and architecturally significant as a rare and relatively intact example of a pile light that serviced shipping in Port Phillip Bay. The South Channel and West Channel Pile Lights are the only surviving examples of the four manned pile lights that originally serviced ships entering Port Phillip Bay. These were integral to navigational operations along the South and West channels of Port Phillip Bay at a time of heavy traffic in shipping and when passage by sea represented the major form of transport to Melbourne from overseas and interstate.

The South Channel Pile Light is architecturally significant as a rare early construction of channel lighting. Significant construction elements include the framework of timber screw-driven piles. Although now separated from its original pile and relocated, the South Channel Pile Light Quarters are historically and architecturally significant as a rare example of a light-keeper's quarters, which demonstrates a now vanished way of life.

The timber piles remain at their original location but with the quarters removed. This site is an important archaeological site.

The South Channel Pile Light is also of technological (maritime) significance for its intact lantern, which is an important example of nineteenth-century light technology in Victoria. The purpose of channel lighting is rare in Victoria. The West Channel and South Channel pile lights are the only kind of their type in Australia.

[Online Data Upgrade Project 2004]

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 exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. 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 works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan.

General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. 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 must 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	1874,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	931
Property Number	

History

The draft statement of significance and the above history were produced as part of an Online Date Upgrade Project 2004. Sources were as follows:

Australian Heritage Commission. *Register of the National Estate*.
SLV 'Pictoria'.

Parks Victoria website: http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1process_details.cfm?place=14

'South Channel Pile Light: Conservation Plan', 1997. [Infralib]

Sinclair Knight Mertz, 'Contract for relocation and conservation of the South Channel Pile Light: Tender documents', 1998. [Infralib]

Extent of Registration

Amendment of Register of Government Buildings

Port Phillip Bay

South Channel Pile Light, 4km north west of Rosebud, in latitude 38°19.9' south, longitude 140°45.5' (sic) east.
[*Victoria Government Gazette* No. G39 12 October 1988 p.3092]

Transferred to the Victorian Heritage Register 23 May 1998 (2 years after the proclamation of the Heritage Act 1995 pursuant to the transitional provisions of the Act)

[Note: longitude should read 144 degrees)

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/>