



The story of Port Fairy : "the pearl of the Southern Ocean"

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PORT FAIRY



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THE STORY OF PORT FAIRY

"THE PEARL OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN"

On the 25th April, 1810, Captain James Wishart, with a crew of two able seamen, sailed into the bay in the cutter "FAIRY," seeking shelter from the fury of the equinoctial gales. Crossing the bar, he sailed up the river, where the prospect so delighted him that he named the place PORT FAIRY, after his graceful little craft, and for many years afterwards while on his sealing expeditions, he returned to find shelter and solace within its welcoming waters. Thus commenced the story of Port Fairy, so far as the white man is concerned.

Whales abounded in the area, and whaling crews came from Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) and Sydney, establishing stations at Griffiths Island, and on the adjacent mainland. During the whaling season of 1836 over 100 expert hands were engaged, and the whaling firms of Messrs. Hewett & Co., the Henty Bros. (of Portland fame), and the Griffiths Bros., were notable names among the whaling fraternity.

In 1835, Lieut. Surveyor Wedge visited Port Fairy on behalf of the N.S.W. Government - which then included Victoria in its territories - to report on its suitability as a harbour. His report inspired a Sydney Solicitor, James Atkinson, to apply for a grant of land in a parish un-named at Port Fairy."

Despite the protests of the N.S.W. Government Agent, Latrobe at Port Phillip, he was successful, and thus became the virtual owner of Port Fairy, 5,120 acres at £1 per acre, later sold at boom prices.

James Atkinson named his new possession BELFAST, after his native city in Northern Ireland, until in later years - by Act of Parliament - it reverted to its former title of Port Fairy.

Settlers began to arrive, and being unable to secure land locally, moved east and north into the virgin bushlands, and thus the natural development was retarded. By the time the "Special Survey" was broken up, the initiative of expansion had passed to other centres.

There were many vigorous personalities in the town, and despite the "Special Survey" restrictions - the port became the virtual centre of Western District trade, and for a time, was the busiest port in Australasia, outside Sydney. Messrs. Rutledge & Co. - merchant princes and bankers - gave brilliant service to a young pioneering community.

Bullock wagons lumbered into town, unloading wool and produce into lighters, and later, from a jetty built out into the bay, vessels were loaded direct for London, returning with new settlers and goods for the colonists.

In 1884, the export trade from Port Fairy reached an all-time record of £447,310, with vessels loading for England and the Continent.

The District of Belfast was the first municipality established in the Colony of Victoria, in 1852. The PORT was proclaimed in October 1852, and with the aid of the central government was greatly developed. Harbour improvements were carried out, partially on the plans and advice of the late Sir John Coode, the eminent British Harbour engineer.

At one stage, immigrant barracks were built to house the new settlers arriving direct from London and via Portland until they were drafted up-country; or absorbed into local enterprise.

Those were stirring days, when the fast clipper ships filled the bay anchorages on their comings and goings from the high-seas. Many exciting wrecks occurred in the vicinity, including that of the famous schooner "THISTLE" - which in 1834 carried the Hentys to found their Portland settlement.

Many well known vessels used the Port, the best-loved of which was affectionately known as "The Grand Old-Lady" of the Western trade - the S.S. CASINO. (Later wrecked in Apollo Bay in 1932.)

Intrastate seaborne trade gradually yielded to the coming of the railway, and later to motor transport, until today such trade is no more.

Almost one and a half centuries of pioneering romance and adventure have passed over Port Fairy, and what of it today?

It is now reputed to possess the finest fishing port on the coast, with great activity when the fishing fleet comes in with its silver harvest from the sea.

A striking testimony to the progress of Port Fairy is the development of the renowned Glaxo-Allenburys (Australia), Pty., Ltd., undertaking. This comprises the production of Milk Products and Antibiotics.

The environs of the Port have been richly endowed by nature with miles of white gleaming beaches and surf; an island at its portals replete with lighthouse and mutton bird rookeries; glorious ocean vistas and a bracing climate, where stimulating breezes sweep in from the deep south.

And in the town, a sense of peace and tranquility, which adorns its old-world charm, and imparts a feeling that here indeed is a fragment of Mother England, nestling close to the sea-shore, beneath the starry banner of the Southern Cross.

Places of interest in and around —

PORT FAIRY

Main Shopping Centre — Sackville and Bank Streets

Beaches — East beach, via Gipps St. east and footbridge for surfing,

South beach, via James St., safe sea bathing inside reef.

Botanic Gardens — via Gipps St., east - Inaugurated in 1858.

Battery Hill — via Gipps St., east and Griffiths St., and via footbridge

This old fort and signal station standing at an elevation of 45ft. gives a fine panoramic vista of the East Beach, River entrance, Port Fairy Bay, and Tower Hill. Lighthouse (built in 1859) and Griffiths Island, the river berths and the town. In heavy weather the sea breaking across the reef at the South West Passage presents an awe inspiring sight.

Court House — Built in 1860 - Gipps St.

Golf Course — Southcombe Park, south end of Sackville St.

Griffiths Island — with lighthouse and Mutton Bird rookeries, access by water only.

Government Wharf — Gipps St., the fishing fleet and Fishermens Co-operative Society.

Lady Julia Percy Island — The home of vast seal colony and sea birds. First sighted by Lt. James Grant in 1800, can only be reached by sea in good weather.

King George Square and Casino Monument — Gipps St., Cr. Campbell St.

Library and Lecture Hall — The Mechanics Institute was established in 1856. The six-pounder gun to be seen at the entrance, was from the wreck of the Sir John Byng (1852).

Municipal Chambers — Bank Street.

Martin's Point — via Gipps St., (south), with views of river and the sou' west passage, overlooking Griffiths Island

Race Course — on Southcombe Park, via Sackville Street, (south).

Southcombe Park — via Sackville St. (south), with entrance to Caravan Park via. James Street.

Sports Oval and Tennis Courts — via Gipps st. east) adjoining Botanic Gardens. The OVAL is in a setting claimed to be the most beautiful in Australia.

Showgrounds .. via Orford Road and Regent Street

Tower Hill — One of the scenic wonders of Australia, 7 miles east of Port Fairy, along the Princes' Highway. Extinct Volcano.

A circuit of 10 miles can be made around the Crater Rim by road.

There are many spectacular views of the volcanic cones and crater lake. To the south may be seen the broad expanse of the Southern Ocean, while to the north and east may be seen the rich volcanic plains of Victoria's world-famed Western District.

The Crag — Coastal scenery west of Port Fairy

The Shepherd's Grave — On north side of Prince's Highway, beyond Durban Junction, approaching Yambuk.

Yambuk Lake and beach — 11 miles west of Port Fairy, turn off Prince's Highway at Yambuk — with a view of Lady Julia Percy Island.

Mt. Eccles — Extinct Volcano with Caves and Sunken Lake, via Macarthur.

Port Fairy is noted for its many old and quaint buildings. The Anglican Church of St. John is an interesting example of old-time craftsmanship and architecture.

The following important towns are within easy reach of Port Fairy, Population 2,000

Warrnambool, 18 miles (east) population 11,000

Hamilton, 53 miles (north west) population 8,000

Koroit, 12 miles (north east), population 1,400

Portland, 45 miles (west), population 4,500

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TOURIST INFORMATION

For special enquiries apply to the following :—

The Town Clerk, Municipal Chambers, Bank St., Tel. 7

The Secretary, Chamber of Commerce, 65 Sackville St., Tel. 47

Accommodation — Caledonian Hotel, 41 Bank St., Phone 44

Commercial Hotel, 9 Bank St., Phone 18

Star of the West Hotel, C/o. Bank & Sackville Sts., Phone 12

Tennyson's Hotel, 54 Sackville St., Phone 35

Victoria Hotel, 42 Bank Street, Phone 46

Guest Houses —

Douglas House, 89 Gipps Street, Phone 16

Seacombe House, Sackville St., Phone 82

Enquiries re accommodation to —

J. B. Holden & Co. 15 Bank St., Phone 31

E. V. Walliker & Co., 65 Sackville St., Phone 47

Taylor's Holiday Homes, Griffiths St., Phone 152

Camping Grounds and Caravan Park — Southcombe Park south along James St. (Municipal)

Gardens Oval — via. Gipps St., east across river bridge. (municip.)

"Moynes" Caravan Park — via Gipps St. east near Bridge (private)

Cinema — Bank St., Pictures on Mon., Tues., Thurs., Frid.

Sat., at 7.50 p.m. For reservations, telephone 16.

Churches — Services as advertised in Local Press.

Anglican — St John's off Bank St., near Municipal Chambers.

Roman Catholic — St. Patrick's, Prince's Highway, west.

Church of Christ — William Street.

Methodist Church — James Street, east.

Presbyterian Church (St. Andrew's) — William Street

Press — PORT FAIRY "GAZETTE" established 1849, Sackville St.,

Telephone 14. Published Monday and Thursdays.

FISHING —

Port Fairy, 180 miles from Melbourne by road, rail and air (via. Warrnambool - Mairor' Flat aerodrome) is situated on the banks of the River Moyne.

In the river, mullet, salmon, trout, haddock, silver bream, whiting cod, and trevally make excellent sport for the adherents of the piscatorial art.

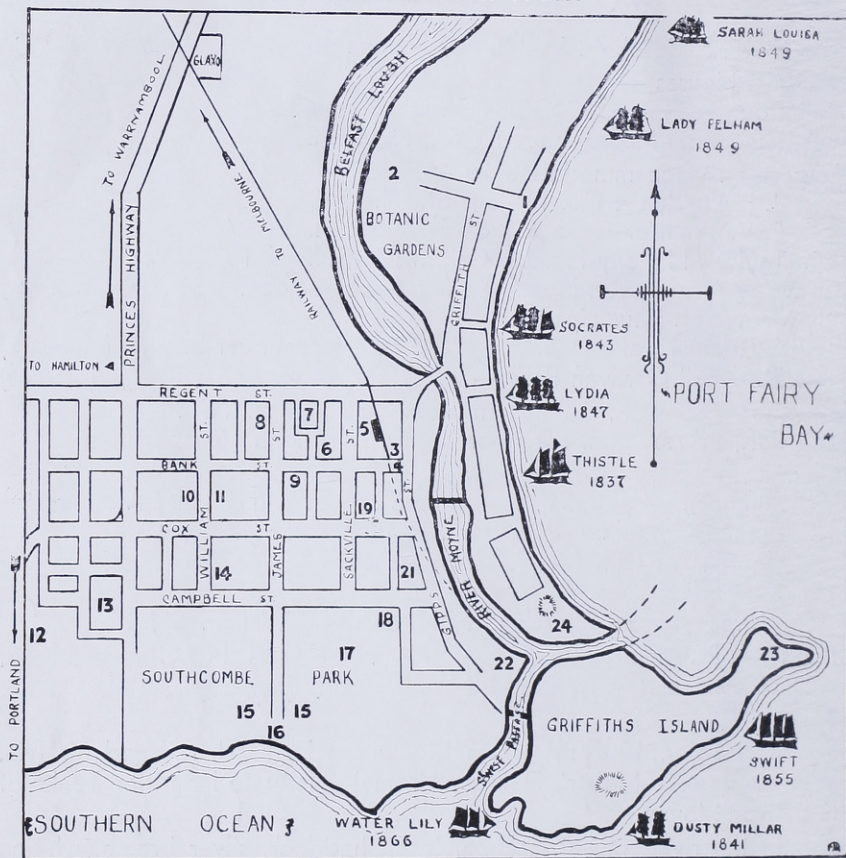
Garfish, parrot fish and sweep may be caught from the rocks while in the more adventurous ocean fishing brings ample reward with snapper, tuna, barracouta, and shark to test the fisherman's skill.

The SHAW RIVER, 11 miles west of Port Fairy, along the Prince's Highway, is renowned for bream and salmon trout.

At the CRAIGS and 7 MILE ROCKS, west of Port Fairy, there is good fishing for sweep, rockfish and crayfish.

Note. The Fisheries and Game Department have an inspector stationed at Port Fairy from whom information relating to licenses and etc., can be obtained.

GUIDE TO PORT FAIRY



LEGEND

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| 1. East Beach | 13. State School |
| 2. Botanic Gardens, Sports Oval, Tennis Courts, Caravan Park. | 14. Convent School |
| 3. Bowling Club | 15. Caravan Park |
| 4. R.S.L. Hall | 16. South Beach |
| 5. Port Fairy Railway Station | 17. Racecourse |
| 6. Borough Chambers | 18. Golf Course |
| 7. Church of England | 19. Post Office, Shire Office |
| 8. Methodist Church | 20. Police Court George Square, Government Wharf, Fishermen's Co-operative, Wireless Station. |
| 9. Cinema | 21. Martin's Point. |
| 10. Presbyterian Church | 22. Lighthouse |
| 11. Church of Christ | 23. Battery Hill and Signal Station. |
| 12. Roman Catholic Church | |

Note :— Ship silhouettes indicate actual wreck sites showing name of ship and year of wrecking. Many other wrecks have been recorded in the vicinity of Port Fairy, practically all disasters occurring during the era of sail, with vessels caught at Bay anchorages and unable to make the open sea during heavy storms.