



SELF-GUIDED BROCHURE



The history of Point Nepean spans back thousands of years to the Bunurong people. Since then, the area has been used to quarantine people arriving in Victoria, siting of defence forts and for military training.

It is a place that protects the unique plants and animals, celebrates its rich history and welcomes the community to its stunning landscapes.

This is a self-guided walk around some of the historic and fascinating features of the western tip of Point Nepean National Park.

Start at Gunners Cottage and visit the Point Nepean Cemetery, remnants of the former quarantine cattle jetty at Observatory Point, and the bay beach with its stunning views across Port Phillip. Discover the nearby former Range Area used for military training.

Walk to the top of Cheviot Hill, past a World War II gun emplacement to the highest point of the park and enjoy views across the coastline. Overlook the infamous Cheviot Beach where Prime Minister Harold Holt went missing, and the treacherous waters of Bass Strait where many ships have met their demise.

Head to the very tip of the park at Fort Nepean to explore a unique place steeped in military history with its labyrinth of tunnels and military fortifications.

Point Nepean has a diversity of places to see with so many stories to tell. We hope you enjoy this special place and keep returning to explore its rich history and stunning landscapes.

A self-guided brochure for the Quarantine Station is also available. Audio tours of the entire park are available from the Point Nepean Information Centre.

Due to its fragility and past use as a military site, access is restricted to specific areas. Stay on defined tracks and observe warnings and directional signage, to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable visit. Please remember all wildlife is protected so keep an appropriate distance. Take care while discovering Point Nepean as there are uneven surfaces and hazards. Swimming is not permitted in this part of the park. There is no drinking water available beyond Gunners Cottage so be prepared before you leave.



This Australian Red Ensign flag was used from 1901 to 1954 by state and local governments, mercantile marine, private organisations and individuals. It was based on the traditional British Red Ensign and featured the Southern Cross and Commonwealth Star. The Blue Ensign was reserved for use by the Commonwealth Government, the Australian Olympic team and the military as a saluting flag. Both flags were used at Point Nepean depending on the occasion until the Flags Act 1953 was passed and the restriction on civilians flying the Blue Ensign was lifted, after which use of the Red Ensign on land became a rarity.

POINT NEPEAN NATIONAL PARK  
Open daily  
[parks.vic.gov.au](http://parks.vic.gov.au)  
13 1963



COMMEMORATING THE FIRST SHOT – 100 YEARS ON

Between 2014 and 2018, Australia commemorated the ANZAC Centenary, marking 100 years since our nation's involvement in World War I.

The first shot of the British Empire was fired from Gun Emplacement 6 at Fort Nepean, on the 5th August 1914 at 12:45pm, just 3 hours 45 minutes after war was declared in London. The shot was fired in order to prevent the German merchant vessel *SS Pfalz* from escaping Port Phillip to the open sea. The shot was successful – the *SS Pfalz* surrendered.

Of all the millions of rounds that were fired over the next four long, hard and sad years by the member nations of the British Empire, the shot fired from Fort Nepean was the very first.

Point Nepean was a critical part of Victoria's defences from 1878 until 1948. It was the largest and most heavily armed installation in the network of fortifications around the entrance to Port Phillip. After World War II, Soldiers were removed and the buildings and fortifications declared redundant.

Point Nepean remained closed to the public and used as an occasional firing range and training ground until 1988 when, as part of Australian Bicentennial celebrations, control of the site was transferred to Victoria, declared a national park and opened to the public. Today, it remains an outstanding example of the evolution of gun technology and Australia's early defence strategies.

To acknowledge the significance of the First Shot anniversary, the Victorian Government, through Parks Victoria and Veterans' Affairs, has undertaken vital conservation and visitor experience improvements at Point Nepean. This will ensure record of important military history is not lost, and provide new ways for current and future generations to connect with this special place.

This commemorative edition brochure provides visitors with a memento of the First Shot anniversary and a record of the stories around Point Nepean's important contribution to Australia's military history.





### OBSERVATORY POINT

In 1878, a cattle quarantine facility was established at Observatory Point, serviced by this remnant jetty, to prevent the spread of disease to local livestock from incoming animals of new settlers. A holding yard with four stables and two small cottages was located nearby. Animal quarantine facilities were later moved to the Melbourne Zoo, Coode Island and eventually Spotswood. A small collection of huts nearby was used to house those suffering from leprosy. The coastal scrub has now grown over the remains.



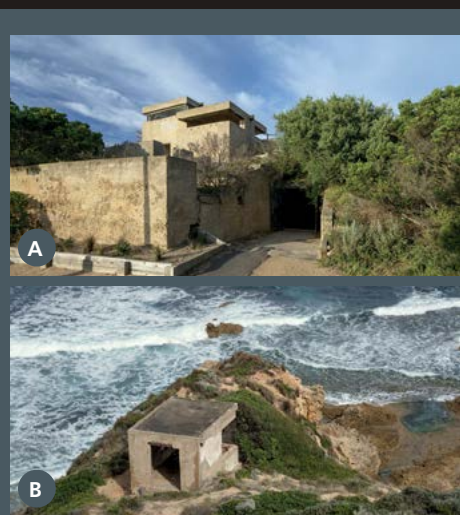
### COLES TRACK

Once a sandy trail, Coles Track was established in the 1940s for telegraph services. The remnant poles beside the track carried a telephone line installed to improve communications between Melbourne and Fort Nepean during World War II. Coles Track also provided access between Fort Nepean and the cattle jetty at Observatory Point which was used by the military when weather conditions were unsuitable for docking at Fort Nepean jetty.



### POINT NEPEAN CEMETERY

The cemetery was established in 1854 replacing the Quarantine Station Cemetery after beach erosion had unearthed burials. There are over 300 people buried at the Point Nepean Cemetery and they represent the varied history of the park. There are many unmarked graves of early settlers, quarantine and shipwreck victims, and those posted here during Point Nepean's military use; 230 of those buried in both cemeteries have been identified and listed by name.



### BATTERY OBSERVATION POSTS

Battery Observation Posts, such as the ones located above the Parade Ground at Fort Nepean and near Fort Pearce, Eagles Nest and Cheviot Hill gun emplacements, were built to house the Army Engineers who were responsible for operating the Depression Rangefinders. The Rangefinders were used to determine the distance and direction of enemy ships, which were then relayed to the Artillerymen stationed at the nearby battery gun who moved the gun into its correct firing position.

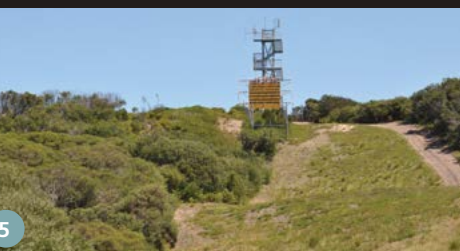
### SEARCHLIGHTS

After 1888, searchlights were progressively introduced to the forts for night defence and were controlled by the Army Engineers from the Battery Observation Posts. Outlying smaller searchlight stations were also constructed at ideal vantage points.



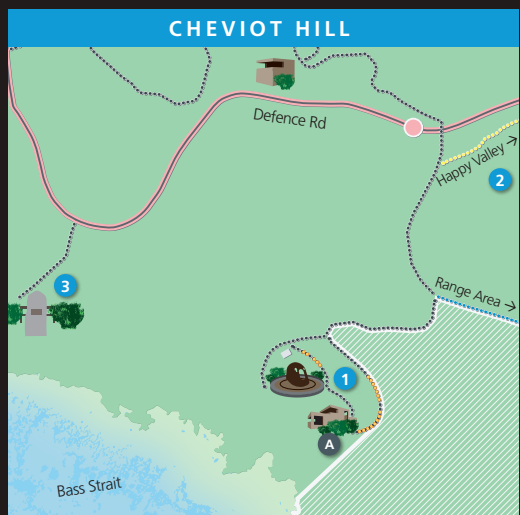
### RANGE AREA

The Range Area was used by the Army Officer Cadet School from 1952–1985. Referred to as the Defence Reserve, it was used to train cadets in firing rifles, sub-machine and machine guns. A 1.8 kilometre walking track meanders through the coastal shrub and links the Quarantine Station and Cheviot Hill. Along the way it diverts to Monash Break and Light where visitors can climb the tower and take in sweeping views of the park and coastline.



### MONASH LIGHT

Monash Light was first established in 1930, and was an important navigational feature for Port Phillip. The name commemorates Sir John Monash, who served at Point Nepean as Commanding Officer from 1897 to 1908. The light was later removed as the base was found to be structurally unsound, and the existing light was reconstructed to the original form in the 1980s. The light itself has been extinguished but the tower is used as a relay transmission for tidal buoys.



### CHEVIOT HILL

Cheviot Hill gained its name after the shipwreck of the SS Cheviot on 19 October 1887, which became stranded on the coastal reef when its propeller broke during heavy night seas. Tragically, 35 passengers drowned. In 1942, two gun emplacements, a Battery Observation Post and living quarters were built here as vulnerability to air attack elsewhere became apparent. The emplacements were equipped with steel canopies and camouflage nets.



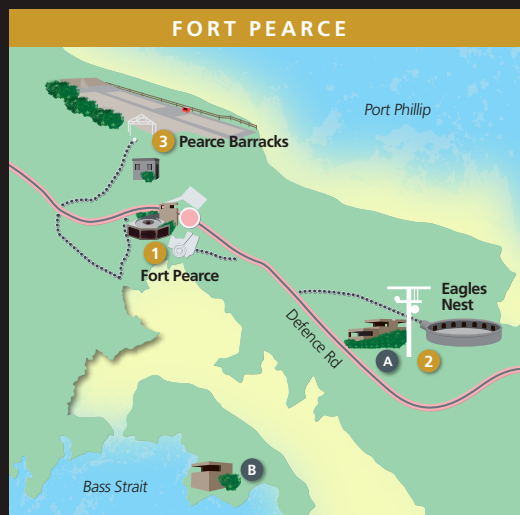
### HAPPY VALLEY

Happy Valley was once a series of buildings which were home to the engineers and artillery men stationed at the Cheviot Hill Gun Emplacement during World War II and also housed Italian prisoners of war. The area had a number of accommodation buildings, a kitchen, soldiers' barracks, a sergeants' mess and an officers' mess. It was ironically called Happy Valley by those living there as accommodation was cramped and it was infested with mosquitoes, flies and there was no running water.



### HAROLD HOLT MEMORIAL

Prime Minister Harold Holt went missing on 17 December 1967 while swimming in the waters at Cheviot Beach. Australia's biggest search operation to that date took place but he was never seen or heard from again. The disappearance created world headlines and fuelled multiple conspiracy theories including abduction, assassination and suicide. In 2005, a coronial inquest found that the Prime Minister accidentally drowned while swimming.



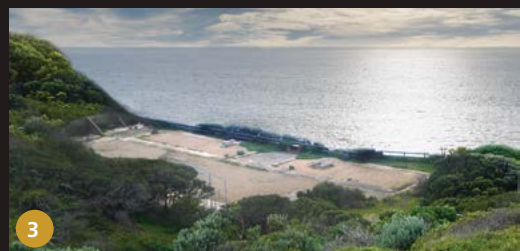
### FORT PEARCE

Fort Pearce was established in 1911, and was designed to take advantage of the 12.5 kilometre firing range of the 6-inch Mark VII guns being introduced into coastal defence batteries around this time. Directly below the guns was a large magazine complex that serviced and operated the guns. By 1942, its exposed guns were determined to be highly vulnerable to air attack so the guns were moved to Cheviot Hill, and dummy guns were placed here instead.



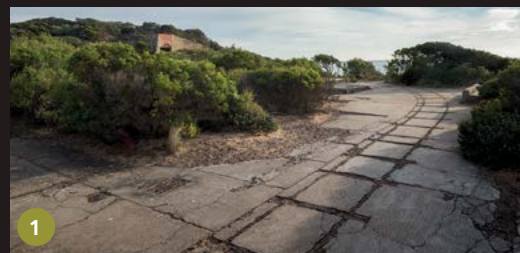
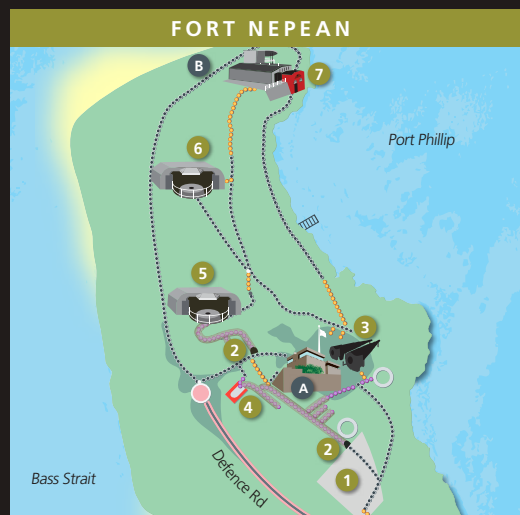
### EAGLES NEST

Eagles Nest is comprised of a gun emplacement and Battery Observation Post. It was built in 1889 and was once regarded as a major part of the Port Phillip defence system. The gun located here was the largest disappearing gun in Australia with a 10-inch diameter barrel. The fort was abandoned when the 6-inch Mark VII Guns were introduced to Point Nepean and the defences were concentrated out to Bass Strait.



### PEARCE BARRACKS

This was the site of Pearce Barracks, established during World War I and provided accommodation for the artillery men who managed and maintained the guns at Fort Pearce. The sheltered location of the barracks, offices, messes and storage sheds meant they were not visible to enemy warships in Bass Strait. In 1943, the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) was stationed at Point Nepean and called Pearce Barracks home. Their duties included range finding, signals, clerical, transport, stores, cooking and medical.



### UPPER BARRACKS AND TRACKS

The Upper Barracks were home to the artillery men stationed at Fort Nepean. Some of the accommodation buildings were established here as early as 1885. Other buildings included the Artillery Headquarters, Garrison Artillery, permanent barracks, mess rooms and offices, stores and coal shed. Abandoned in 1945 after World War II ended, the buildings were finally demolished in 1958. The remnant trolley tracks visible in the concrete were used to transport goods like food, ammunition and other supplies around Fort Nepean.



### TUNNELS

The tunnels of Gun Emplacements 1–4 and 5, constructed from 1882, formed part of the underground complex serving working gun emplacements, giving access to lower level explosives magazines. Charges were hoisted up by pulley to be packed into shells, then rolled along the ground to the guns and fitted with fuses. All these components only came together at the gun when it was ready to be loaded and fired.



### PARADE GROUND AND GUN BARRELS

From about 1887, this was where daily orders were issued by the Company Sergeant Major. Several small stores were built here in World War I. In World War II, when almost 200 soldiers were stationed here, the necessary additional barracks were constructed on this site. All these buildings were demolished in 1958. The gun barrels located here played a significant part in Australia's military history. Barrel 1489 fired the British Empire's first shot of World War I and barrel 1317 fired Australia's first shot of World War II.



### GUN EMPLACEMENTS 1–4

Gun Emplacements 1–4 were part of the original six 'en barbette' gun emplacements constructed at Fort Nepean between 1882–1884. The u-shaped red brick emplacements originally housed 80-pounder muzzle loading guns. Their designs were altered over the years as gun technology and defence strategies advanced, housing hydro-pneumatic or 'disappearing' guns, conversion into salt-water tanks, and in one case use as a storage shed.



### GUN EMPLACEMENT 5

Construction of Gun Emplacement 5 began in 1882 and was continuously altered and updated until the end of World War II. Initially it comprised two u-shaped emplacements housing a pair of 80-pounder muzzle loading guns. In 1888 it was converted into a single gun emplacement to house a hydro-pneumatic 'disappearing' gun, and then in 1911, it was altered again to house a 6-inch Mark VII gun. During World War II, a concrete hood was placed on the gun to protect and conceal the gun and its crew from air attack.



### GUN EMPLACEMENT 6

Built in 1888 during Fort Nepean's third phase of construction, Gun Emplacement 6 initially housed a 9.2-inch breech loading hydro-pneumatic 'disappearing' gun to cover the arc of fire at the entrance of Port Phillip. As gun technology improved and military strategies changed this emplacement was altered to house 6-inch Mark VII guns which had a range of up to 12.5 kilometres. Gun Emplacement 6 was where the British Empire's first shot of World War I and Australia's first shot of World War II was fired.



### ENGINE HOUSE

The Engine House powered the searchlights of Fort Nepean and was built in two stages. The lower section, dating from 1882, contained a coal-fire boiler to produce steam for electricity generation. The electricity powered the Coastal Artillery Searchlights. In 1910 a new engine house was built on the second floor to power four new Defence Electric Lights. Each light was run individually from a separate kerosene generator. Today solar energy is used to power batteries that service visitor facilities at Fort Nepean.