



Point Nepean
Community Trust

An Australian Government Initiative

Point Nepean Community Trust Preparing the Quarantine Station for Use FACT SHEET



Point Nepean History



The Point Nepean Community Trust (PNCT) has managed the Quarantine Station/Norris Barracks since June 2004 on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. On 16 June 2006, the Commonwealth made two important announcements impacting on the site's future when it provided \$27 million in extra funding to the PNCT and added Point Nepean to the National Heritage List.

Point Nepean's historic fabric includes nineteenth century archaeological remains and evidence of over 100 years of quarantine activity and defensive fortifications, which contribute to a richly layered historic cultural landscape.

The land was well known to Indigenous people long before European settlement and with adjoining areas around Port Phillip Bay forms the traditional lands of the Boonwurrung people. Recent archaeological research indicates that their occupation, long thought of as seasonal, might also have included long term base camps.

Pastoralists settled the land in the late 1830s, and an 1845-54 shepherd's hut on the Quarantine Station site is thought to be Victoria's oldest remaining building.

By the early 1850s, gold was discovered and shiploads of migrants began pouring through The Heads soon revealing the colony's inadequate quarantine arrangements. These were forcibly addressed in November 1852 with the arrival of the clipper *Ticonderoga*, a third of whose crew and passengers were either dead from typhus or suffering from it.

A temporary hospital was built at Point Nepean and the Quarantine Station officially gazetted in 1854. Buildings including five two-storey limestone hospital blocks were built during the 1850s with more amenities added over the next 100 years.

In 1912, a record 1295 passengers from one ship were quarantined there. During the 1918-1919 influenza epidemic some 128,000 travellers were examined, mostly soldiers returning from World War 1. There was a flurry of activity once more associated with post World War 2 immigration, but between 1952 and 1967 only 12 people were quarantined and the station officially closed in 1980.

The Point Nepean Quarantine Station is the second oldest permanent quarantine facility after North Head (1832), but is in far better condition. Point Nepean's oldest purpose built quarantine buildings pre-date the oldest quarantine facilities at North Head, Sydney by 16 years. As a relatively complete 1850s to 1870s complex, they offer crucial insights into quarantine practices and philosophies during a period of mass immigration.

Since the 1870s Point Nepean formed part of the strategic outer line defence of Melbourne's ports and harbours in conjunction with forts at South Channel, Swan Island and Queenscliff. By the 1880s, Fort Nepean was known as Victoria's 'Gibraltar'.

John Monash (the later Sir) was attached to the Garrison Artillery at Fort Nepean and became its commanding officer in 1897. He went on to become commander of Australian Forces in World War 1 and is regarded as one of the great World War 1 generals. The first shot fired by Australian forces in World War 1 (at a German steamer beating a retreat on declaration of war) was from batteries at Point Nepean.

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Significant fortification sites continued to be erected until 1945. In 1952, the Army took over much of the Quarantine Station site for an Officer Cadet College, which commissioned more than 3,000 line officers suited to battlefield duties over the next 35 years. In 1988 the School of Army relocated from Healesville to Point Nepean and renamed the former Quarantine Station, Norris Barracks. The School of Army Health was both military and civilian and conducted courses for soldiers and officers in health and military related subjects.

In 1998, the Army left and the Quarantine Station was vacant and in basic caretaker mode until the establishment of the Trust, but for a period in 1999 when it housed Kosovar refugees.

Point Nepean's Cheviot Beach is historically significant also as the place from which Australia's seventeenth Prime Minister, Harold Holt, disappeared while swimming in heavy surf on December 17, 1967.

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