

# THE WESTERN DISTRICT

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**V**ICTORIA'S WESTERN DISTRICT stretches for 330 kilometres from Port Phillip Bay to the South Australian border. Its Bass Strait coastline is often rugged and treacherous, as attested by the number of shipwrecks along its length. The region's northern boundary is more difficult to define. In the west it follows the watershed between streams flowing south and those flowing north: in the plains adjoining the western Wimmera it is indistinct, but further east it becomes clearly marked by the southern ridges of the **Grampians**. Considerations of historical and geographical homogeneity led to the definition of the Central Highlands region, so the northeastern boundary of the Western District skirts the southern foothills.

Most of the region consists of undulating plains less than 200 metres above sea level. While the section west of the Glenelg River is of recent alluvial material, the vast majority of the region's lowland area consists of one of the world's largest basaltic plains. Former volcanic cones, laval depression lakes and rocky outcrops are evidence of this origin. So, too, are the drystone walls built by the early settlers who cleared and enclosed the land in one laborious process. Rich soils have resulted from the breakdown of the basaltic rocks, but their shallowness and the abundance of boulders have presented problems in many places. Natural vegetation in these areas would have been grasslands and open woodlands.

Major upland areas are the **Grampians** in the north and the **Otway Range** in the south. The latter is heavily forested, rising to 583 metres and, in places, having an annual average rainfall of over 2000 millimetres. These two rugged and less accessible areas were the last in the region to be settled.

Early European coastal exploration is incompletely documented. If there is any truth to the claim that the 'mahogany ship' (see Warrnambool) is a Spanish or Portuguese vessel that foundered sometime between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the coastline was known by Europeans much earlier than otherwise acknowledged. Whalers and sealers from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) certainly operated along the coastline and possibly landed on it before 1800. James Grant is the first European generally acknowledged to have explored the coast in any detail, touching at many points from Cape Bridgewater to Cape Otway and at least sighting the coastline further east. Matthew Flinders charted the entire Western District coastline in 1802, the year that the French explorer Nicholas Baudin undertook a similar task.

Land exploration was largely undertaken in an unobtrusive and pragmatic fashion by the early settlers and surveyors. The only 'great' explorer involved was Thomas Mitchell, who traversed the far western section in 1835–36 and travelled down the Glenelg River from the site of Dartmoor to its mouth. He was entertained shortly afterwards at the farm cottage of Francis Henty near Portland Bay. The Henty brothers' settlement in the **Portland** district was one arm of an almost simultaneous pincer movement into the Western District from east and west in the mid- to late 1830s. Edward Henty first visited Portland Bay in 1833, returning with his brothers the following year to form the Port Phillip District's first permanent European settlement. There had, however, been semipermanent sealing and whaling stations on Griffith Island (off **Port Fairy**) from as early as 1810, and in Portland Bay from the 1820s. Shortly after the Hentys arrived in the west, John Batman landed in the **Geelong** district and negotiated the purchase of much of that area and the site of **Melbourne** from

the Aborigines for a few paltry trinkets. The first settlers arrived in the Geelong district in 1836–37, soon spreading westwards to the **Colac** and **Camperdown** districts.

Most of the Western District was settled by squatters who took up large pastoral holdings in the late 1830s and throughout the 1840s. Notable among them were the Allan brothers (**Warrnambool** district, 1839); Hugh Murray (**Colac** district, 1837); the Manifold brothers (**Camperdown** district, 1838); and the Henty brothers, whose holdings extended inland to the **Casterton** district by 1837. A number of homesteads built on the original runs from as early as the 1840s survive, but the large, sumptuous mansions associated with the modern Western District 'squattocracy' tend to date from the boom years of the 1870s and 1880s.

Townships soon followed the early pastoral settlement. **Geelong** was surveyed and declared a town in 1837, though not incorporated until 1849. **Portland** township blocks were sold as early as 1840, sixteen years before its first municipal council meeting; **Colac** was surveyed in 1844; and **Warrnambool** was surveyed in 1846 and proclaimed the next year. A few other townships were surveyed and settled before 1850, chiefly on the Bellarine Peninsula, in the Glenelg River valley, or in the Colac and **Camperdown** areas. A spate of surveys and proclamations then followed throughout the 1850s, leaving only the settlements of the **Otway Range** and scattered towns to be founded later.

Results of early contact between Europeans and Aborigines were varied. Place names such as Murdering Flat (see Casterton) and Fighting Waterholes bring to mind massacres of Aborigines for sheep stealing and other alleged crimes. The Perrin Allek (Pirron Yallock) Border Police Station set up in the 1840s was an attempt to prevent Aboriginal raids on the pastoral stations and the almost inevitable revenge. On the other hand, a series of missions and reserves was established to protect and 'civilise' the indigenous population. Many reminders of the original inhabitants remain, including stone fish traps; Victoria's only rock carvings; unique post-contact stone houses; and a rock art gallery that was the first in Victoria to be discovered by Europeans (1859) and the first to be professionally described (1897).



*Dam on the Koort Koort-Nong homestead near Camperdown. Oil by Eugène von Guérard, 1860.*

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Victoria's gold rush, beginning in the 1850s, had little direct effect on the region, but a major indirect effect on particular towns. Minor finds, chiefly alluvial gold, were made on streams flowing from the **Grampians**, the Central Highlands and even the **Otway Range**. The chief result, however, was the increased activity and prosperity diggers en route to and from the fields further north brought to the ports, particularly **Geelong**, **Port Fairy** and **Warrnambool**, and to towns such as **Mortlake** on the routes inland. Farmers and pastoralists enjoyed larger markets and inflated prices for their produce.

**Geelong**, **Port Fairy** and **Warrnambool** provided valuable access to the interior when land transport was by coach and wagon on poor roads. Port Fairy, Australia's second largest port for a brief period in the 1850s, and Warrnambool have ceased to be important ports, but their waterfronts do retain much from their earlier days. Geelong continues to be a major port, and **Portland** has more recently emerged as Victoria's third most important.

Two processes of change that took place in the last decades of the nineteenth century transformed the region: railway building and closer settlement. Together they opened the way for new primary industries, particularly dairying, but also for crops such as potatoes where conditions were suitable.

The region's railway network reached its maximum extent in 1924. **Geelong** and **Melbourne** were connected by rail in 1859, Geelong and **Ballarat** in 1862. The main western line reached **Colac** by 1876 and was extended to **Warrnambool** by 1890, then to **Hamilton** in the 1890s. **Portland** and Hamilton had been joined to Melbourne in the 1870s by a circuitous route through **Ararat** and **Ballarat**. Many branch lines were opened through the period to 1924. Since World War II, most of these branch lines have again been closed, as has the Warrnambool to Hamilton link. The only remaining scheduled passenger service is from Geelong to Warrnambool. Narrow-gauge lines to settlements in the **Otway Range**, opened between 1890 and 1914 and abandoned between 1957 and 1962, were of particular importance in opening the area to settlement.

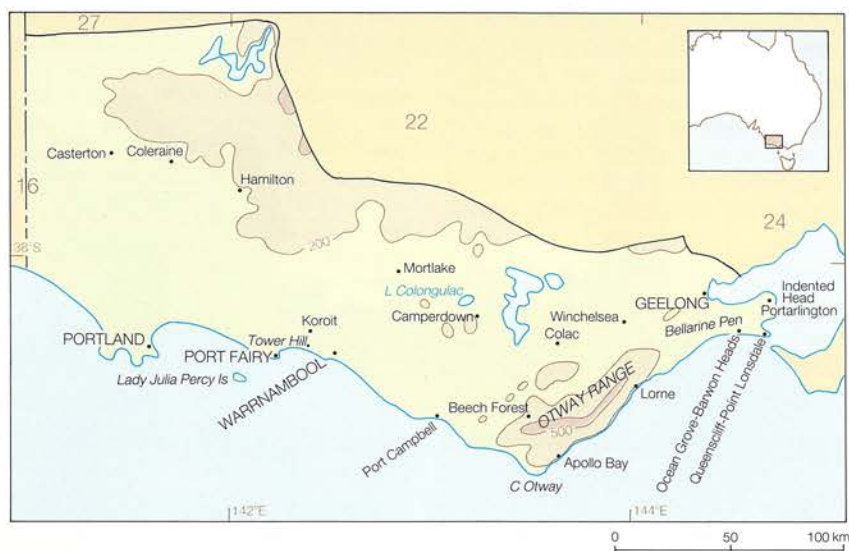
A second crucial factor was the subdivision of large pastoral runs for closer settlement. This process began with important new land legislation in the 1860s, gaining impetus in the 1880s and 1890s when it was often connected with the establishment of dairy factories. Calls for greater opportunities for small farmers also led to the opening of large areas of the **Otway Range** for selection, but continuing isolation militated against success, many holdings were abandoned and the land deteriorated. Timber became more important than farming. Two periods of postwar soldier settlement also led to closer settlement schemes in many parts of the region.

Recent years have seen the growing importance of road transport and tourism. **Geelong**, **Warrnambool** and **Portland** remain the most important towns. Each has an industrial base, as well as supplying services to the surrounding rural areas. Tourism has become particularly important along the **Otway Range** and Bellarine Peninsula coastlines and the peninsula also serves as a dormitory for Geelong. Dairying is the major industry in the area from Warrnambool to **Colac**; timber remains important in the Otway Range; and beef cattle and sheep are dominant over large areas. While no longer the 'granary of the colony', the Bellarine Peninsula provides fruit, vegetables and fish for the Geelong and **Melbourne** markets.

Graeme Aplin

#### SUGGESTED READING

- M. Kiddle, *Men of yesterday: a social history of the Western District of Victoria, 1834–1890*, Melbourne 1962.  
 J.M. MacKenzie, *Sealing, sailing and settling in south-western Victoria* (Historical Briefs series, No 5), Kilmore 1976.  
 J.M. Powell, *The public lands of Australia Felix: settlement and land appraisal in Victoria 1834–91 with special reference to the Western Plains*, Melbourne 1970.  
 C.E. Sayers, *By these we flourish: a history of Warrnambool*, Melbourne 1969.



**APOLLO BAY** [38°43'S 143°41'E]  
 Popn: 224 (1891), 982 (1961), 921 (1981). Named after schooner *Apollo*. Formerly known as Middleton (1874–75) and Krambruk (1875–1952). Officially Apollo Bay from 1952, but popularly much earlier. Henty estab whaling station nearby in the 1830s: whalers pioneered district to the 1850s. Permanently settled by timbercutters c1850. Some settlement under the 1869 land act, but major opening of area for selection in 1878–79 after pressure for smallholdings. Township surveyed in 1874. Large timber mills in the 1870s–80s linked to port by tramways. General development hampered by poor road access until 1927 when section of Great Ocean Road opened.

**BEECH FOREST** [38°38'S 143°34'E]  
 Popn: 629 (1911), 188 (1966). Named for 'beech' (myrtle) trees. Pressure to open **Otway Range** for settlement in 1870s–80s: first selection here in 1884. Hotel estab in 1888. Selectors took over much of forest area 1887–1901. Rlwy from Colac opened in 1902, extended to Crowes 1911–14: this was the longest narrow-gauge line in Vic (70 km), and was closed in 1962. Town grew as loading point for 29 timber mills within a 26 km radius. Potato growing important from 1917. Town burned out in 1919, rebuilt to east.

**CAMPERDOWN** [38°13'S 143°10'E]  
 Popn: 415 (1861), 1627 (1891), 3473 (1911), 3205 (1954), 3545 (1981). Named after Earl of Camperdown in 1854. District settled by Manifold brothers in 1838: Purrumbete homestead (RNE) built for them in 1842. Township from 1850; borough from 1852; town from 1959. Old Timboon Inn (RNE) west of town built in 1853–55, operated to 1859: one of two remaining buildings of Old Timboon, a settlement eclipsed by Camperdown. Rlwy opened in 1883. In the 1880s–90s, district monopolised by large graziers who influenced management of cheese factory estab in

1891, while smallholders supplied the milk. Large co-operative dairy factory estab in 1914.

**CASTERTON** [37°34'S 141°25'E]  
 Popn: 165 (1861), 1099 (1891), 2492 (1966), 1945 (1981). Named after village in Westmorland, England. The Henty brothers took up land in 1837: Muntham homestead (RNE) is centred on their original 1837 hut. Property became leading Vic sheep stud in the 1850s. Township grew from crossing place on river: surveyed in 1840. Warrock homestead (RNE) built in 1843 as weatherboard cottage, now centre of extant group of 30 buildings built by George Robertson. Rlwy opened in 1884: western terminus of Vic system and coaches to SA. Kangaroo skin tannery estab in 1885; cheese factory in 1892. Wheat production fell in the 1890s due to soil exhaustion and pressure for closer settlement: dairying and meat industries became correspondingly more important. Mary Gilmore lived in town and district 1902–12. Warrock Estate Soldier Settlement Scheme in district estab in 1958. Area in district known as Murdering Flat because Aborigines were massacred at favourite camping and corroboree location by cannon loaded with bolts, nails and gravel, allegedly for eating stolen sheep.

**COLAC** [38°20'S 143°37'E]  
 Popn: 746 (1861), 2204 (1891), 5503 (1933), 10 587 (1981). Name: Aborig *kolak* = 'sand' or 'freshwater of lake'; or after local Coladjin Aborigines. District settled as direct result of the 1836 Squatting Act of NSW: Hugh Murray was first European settler in 1837. Alexander Dennis settled in district in 1841, built Tamdwarncoot homestead (RNE) in 1848. He crossed Merino and Lincoln sheep to give new Polwarth breed, better suited to higher rainfall areas. Township grew around coaching inn at southern end of lake. Surveyed in 1844, founded in 1845 as one of oldest townships in Port Phillip District. Created borough



Looking along Gheringhap Street, Geelong, towards the post office, opened in 1841, and the City Hall, built in 1855. Photograph by Ray Joyce.

WELDON TRANNIES

in 1938, town in 1948, city in 1960. Postal link to Melbourne from 1848. First flour mill estab in 1852. Many churches and public buildings built in the early 1850s. In 1864, unsuccessful attempt made to extract sugar from *Xanthorrhoea* (grass-tree) plants. In 1858–67 Colac Fish Acclimatization Soc placed 30 000 fish in district lakes. First community hospital in Vic estab in 1879. Rlwy opened in 1876. In the 1880s the meat preserving company canned 5.5m rabbits at factories here and at Camperdown for export to UK in 900 g canisters. Original runs subdivided for closer settlement, then further divided after World War I for Dreeite Estate soldier allotments. First Vic country town with sewerage, 1923.

### COLERAINE

[37°35'S 141°43'E]

Popn: 179 (1861), 1489 (1911), 945 (1933), 1518 (1966), 1232 (1981). Name: Irish-Celtic *cuil-rathain* = 'fern covered land'. Formerly known as Bryan's Creek Crossing. Settled by selector John Bryan in 1839. Koroit Inn estab then, became Cobb & Co station. Originally extensive properties, later subdivided, mainly by returned soldiers in the 1920s. Adam Lindsay Gordon lived and wrote here in the 1870s. Cheese factory estab in 1892. Presbyterian village settlement in the 1890s on crown land in district in response to demand for smallholdings: Melbourne unemployed took up allotments, later abandoned them to locals. By 1914, sheep on large pastoral estates, smallholders around their edges. Rlwy opened in 1882.

### GEELONG

[38°08'S 144°20'E]

Popn: 1370 (1846), 20 115 (1854), 16 613 (1861), 17 445 (1891), 39 223 (1933), 105 059 (1966), 125 279 (1981).

Name: Aborig *jillong* = 'white seabird' or 'swamp where native companions live'.

**Early district history** Lieut John Murray visited Corio Bay in 1802, as did Matthew Flinders; Hamilton Hume and William Hovell noted name in 1824. Geelong and Dutigalla Assoc formed in Van Diemen's Land in 1835 to estab settlement in Port Phillip District, later known as Port Phillip Assoc. J. C. Gellibrand and George Hesse landed here in 1837 and followed Barwon R to Leigh R junction. First European settlers arrived in 1837. Gov Charles La Trobe influenced Swiss to immigrate: 11 settled in district in 1842 and estab Neuchatel vineyard whose first wines were produced in 1845. Many Germans settled in the 1850s and further vineyards were estab but the industry was ruined by phylloxera in the 1870s; all vines were uprooted by govt orders. Gold discov at Mercer's Hill (Stephen's Diggings) in 1857: worked until 1862, but no major field estab.

**Municipal history** Town surveyed and declared by Gov Richard Bourke in 1837, incorporated in 1849. Created a city in 1910. Geelong West created a borough in 1875, a town in 1922, a city in 1929. Newtown and Chilwell created a borough in 1858, a town in 1924, a city in 1949: name shortened to Newtown in 1967.

**Buildings and services** Police station, second in Vic, estab in 1837. Wooden customs house (RNE) built in 1838, became Geelong's first telegraph station in 1845: oldest building still extant in Vic, reputedly prefabricated in Sydney. Bi-weekly mail to Melbourne estab in 1838, post office opened in 1841. Presbyterian church (RNE) built in 1841–42. Christ

Church Anglican church (RNE) designed by Edmund Blacket and built 1843–47, is the oldest Anglican church in Vic in continuous use. Baptist church, Newtown (RNE) built in 1853, first in Vic outside Melbourne. Vic's first provincial newspaper, the *Geelong Advertiser*, estab in 1840 as weekly with James Harrison as editor. Prison (RNE) built 1849–64. Many terraces, houses, hotels of the 1850s survive (RNE): the 1850s were a boom period as Geelong served as port for Central Vic goldfields. Rlwy to Melbourne begun in 1853, section to **Williamstown** finished in 1857, that to Melbourne in 1859: rlwy to **Ballarat** opened in 1862. Orphanage Asylum, Newtown (RNE) built in 1855. Town hall (RNE) designed by Joseph Reid and built in 1855 is one of the oldest in Vic. Later customs house (RNE) built in 1856. Corio Villa (RNE), also built in 1856, is a unique prefabricated iron house made in Scotland. Armytage House (The Hermitage, RNE) built 1857–60 for George Armytage who had arrived from Van Diemen's Land and settled on site in 1837. Many late 19th cent woolstores and warehouses (RNE) still stand near waterfront. Geelong Grammar School estab in 1855, building (RNE) dates from 1857. Geelong College estab in 1912. Gordon Institute estab in 1887, chosen in 1946 to be a textile college: CSIRO Div of Textile Industry estab in conjunction in 1949. First local radio station in Vic. First city in Aust with automatic telephone exchange, 1912. Deakin University estab in 1971.

**Industry** Flour mills, tanneries, soapworks estab on Barwon R in the 1840s. Lime kiln (RNE) at Geelong East, possibly estab pre-1841, among the first in Vic. In 1856, James Harrison developed Aust's first ice plant, became world pioneer in many forms of refrigeration. First woollen mill in Vic estab here: the later Federal Woollen Mill was estab in 1912. In 1922, first semicommercial pulping plant in Aust to use 75 per cent eucalypt stock for paper, but commercial development elsewhere. Rayon spinning factory estab in 1952. Large ALCOA aluminium smelter estab at Point Henry in 1963.

**Port of Geelong** On Corio Bay. Sandbar prevented earlier growth, though became a major port of entry for Central Vic goldfields. Hopetoun Channel through Corio Bay formed in 1885. Geelong Harbour Trust estab in 1905, reconstituted in 1933. Major improvements made to berths and channel depths increased in the 1960s.

#### HAMILTON [37°43'S 142°03'E]

Popn: 1197 (1861), 5786 (1933), 10054 (1966), 9751 (1981). Named after Duke of Hamilton, Scotland. Thomas Mitchell crossed site in 1836. Settlement began in 1838 as a public house near a ford on the river. Site surveyed in 1850, name adopted in 1851. Became a township in 1859; a borough in 1863; a town in 1928; a city in 1949. Major Cobb & Co coaching centre. Botanic gardens (RNE) estab in 1870. Rlwy to **Portland** opened in 1878. German Lutheran settlers in district in the late 19th cent. First Vic regional veterinary diagnostic laboratory, concerned mainly with sheep diseases, opened in 1971.

#### KOROIT [38°16'S 142°23'E]

Popn: 1644 (1881), 1698 (1933), 988 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'fire', alluding to the extinct volcano of Tower Hill. District settled by Europeans from 1857. Town site surveyed in 1857; borough from 1870. Koroit butter factory estab in 1888. Henry Handel Richardson lived here: her father, who inspired *The fortunes of Richard Mahony*, was buried in the town in 1879.

#### LORNE [38°30'S 143°59'E]

Popn: 149 (1881), 1080 (1961), 893 (1981). Named after Marquis of Lorne, Scotland. Formerly known as Loutit Bay after first boat to take wool from Geelong to London in 1869. Settled by woodcutters in 1849: they camped on the beach and timber from the **Otway Range** was floated through the surf to vessels in the bay for shipment to Geelong or Melbourne. Cattle station estab in 1853 after Otway Range crossed. Area opened to visitors after Lorne to **Winchelsea** coach service estab in 1876. Erskine House estab in 1876; several large hotels in the 1880s. Popular holiday resort in the early 20th century. Badly affected by bushfires in early 1983.

#### MORTLAKE [38°03'S 142°50'E]

Popn: 126 (1861), 1332 (1911), 976 (1947), 1056 (1981). Named after village in Surrey, England. District sighted by Thomas Mitchell in 1836. Settled in 1839 by David Fisher of the Derwent Co, successor to the Port Phillip Assoc. Township surveyed in 1853. Prosperous when **Ararat** gold diggings at height as on direct road from port at **Warrnambool**. Flour mill (RNE) estab in 1856 by George Bostock: wind-powered, converted to steam in 1857. Rlwy opened in the 1890s, closed in the 1960s.

#### OCEAN GROVE–BARWON HEADS

[38°16'S 144°30'E]

Popn: 136 (1891), 327 (1911), 3144 (1966), 6777 (1981). Ocean Grove named in 1887 by a Methodist syndicate who founded a temperance settlement similar to project in New Jersey, USA. Farming rush in 1835. Rapid development from c1950 as holiday resort, residential area and fishing port.

#### OTWAY RANGE [38°38'S 143°43'E]

Northern slopes of range settled by squatters in 1839–40. Timber harvested as early as 1848. First forestry reservation in 1873. There was pressure in the 1880s to open the area for settlement by smallholders as an alternative to subdividing large pastoral holdings on the volcanic plains to the north. In 1887–1901 selectors took over much of the forest area, but tended to exploit the timber instead of farming, often abandoning their land when the timber was exhausted. A number of small settlements such as Forrest, **Beech Forest**, Gellibrand and Lavers Hill grew as a result. After an 1899 royal commission, unoccupied land was withdrawn and a 63940 ha state forest reserve was declared. Lack of transport, schools and other services added to difficulties of farmers. Much of the milk was made into cheese which became a major product.

There were 150 timber mills at their peak. Narrow-gauge rlwys built to Forrest by 1891 and to Crowes 1911–14. Large pine plantations in Aire R valley estab in the 1930s. The rlwys were abandoned in the 1950s and many settlements have declined in the 20th century. Otway Nat Pk estab in 1978 with timbercutting within it to cease by 1988 and all holiday cottages to be removed by 1990. Serious bushfires in early 1983.

**PORTARLINGTON** [38°07'S 144°39'E]  
Popn: 619 (1881), 538 (1933), 1863 (1981). Named after Lord Arlington in 1851. Surveyed in 1853–54. Flour mill estab in 1857, important in 1860s when Bellarine Peninsula was the 'granary of the colony': its 4-storey, sandstone building (RNE) closed in 1874. Port for 60–70 scallop boats during boom in Port Phillip Bay in the 1960s.

**PORT CAMPBELL** [38°37'S 143°00'E]  
Popn: 256 (1881), 323 (1961), 158 (1966). Named after Capt Alexander Campbell. Formerly known as Campbell's Creek. Campbell, the 'last of the buccaneers', settled and traded out of the tiny port. Although it had acted as a distribution point since the 1840s it was only surveyed in 1875, with the first land sales in 1878. Beacon built in 1874, jetty in 1880. Rlwy surveyed to Port Campbell, but only built to Timboon (1892): tram service between the two places for tourists. Port Campbell Nat Pk declared in 1964. There were five shipwrecks along this stretch of coast between 1855 and 1908, including the iron clipper *Loch Ard* wrecked at Loch Ard Gorge in 1878 with the death of 45 of the 47 on board.

**PORT FAIRY** [38°21'S 142°15'E]  
Popn: 2342 (1861), 1757 (1881), 2579 (1966), 2276 (1981). Named after Capt Wishart's cutter *Fairy*. Formerly known as Belfast.

**Early history** Wishart estab whaling station in 1810. Capt Jonathan Griffith, **Launceston** whaler and shipwright, had whaling station on Griffith Island in the 1820s, then headed that at Port Fairy 1836–43 and became harbour master and pilot in 1851. J.M. McKenzie also had whaling station on island 1836–44. Last whale caught off Port Fairy from shore station in



The township of Port Campbell spreads in haphazard fashion across the landscape. Photograph by Bruce Rigby, 1985.

1848. Mills brothers ran sealing station until colonies depleted in 1832. Grants of land made in 1839–43 to Atkinson and Rutledge under a special survey system to encourage settlement of remote parts of NSW.

**Municipal history, buildings and services** Township estab in 1856 and named Belfast by Atkinson. A borough from 1863. Name changed in 1888 as result of residents' request. Capt Mill's cottage (RNE, pre-1845) survives, as does Woodbine farmhouse built east of town in 1845–46 for Charles Mills. This farm was a leading agricultural establishment of many yrs and has one of oldest surviving farmhouses in Vic (RNE). A number of bluestone whalers' cottages remain (RNE) together with other 1840s–50s buildings. Store opened by John Cox in 1839. Shipbuilding yard estab in 1839; flour mill in 1840. Wattle and daub Presbyterian church built in 1843. Caledonian Inn estab in 1844, possibly the oldest continually licensed one in Vic. *Port Fairy Gazette* estab in 1849 and office (RNE) built. Bank built in 1857, courthouse in 1859–60. Rlwy opened in 1889. In 1920, South Western Co-op Milk and Trading Co formed to supply milk to Glaxo baby food factory.

**Port** In the 1850s Port Fairy was the second busiest port in Aust after **Sydney**: trade at peak with gold from Central Highlands, supplies to goldfields, and wheat from Western District shipped directly to London. Lack of handling facilities for wool and of rail and road transport, together with land monopoly and restrictions imposed by the Atkinson family, led to decline and to port being surpassed by **Warrnambool**. Port improvements by John Coode in 1902 after his work in **Melbourne**. Commercial fishing port.

**Defence** Fear of Russian invasion in 1855 led to formation of Volunteer Rifle Corps, probably first colonial defence unit recruited from settlers. French manoeuvres in Pacific led to another invasion scare in the late 1850s: powder magazine (RNE) built in 1860, also coastal defence gun batteries near river mouth. Fort estab on Battery Hill in 1886, never fired in anger.

**PORTLAND** [38°19'S 141°37'E]  
Popn: 2804 (1861), 2185 (1901), 4759 (1954), 9353 (1981). Named after Duke of Portland. Portland Bay probably used by Bass Strait sealers before 1800. Officially reached by Lieut James Grant in *Lady Nelson* in 1800: more closely examined in 1802 by Nicholas Baudin who called it Tourville. First European settler was William Dutton, whaler, who built house and whaling station in 1829. Other whaling stations followed: approx 2000 tonnes of oil shipped out each season at height of industry. Last great whale chase in Portland Bay was in 1866. Edward Henty first visited the area in 1833. The Henty brothers landed to form the first permanent European settlement in Vic in 1834, also planting Vic's first vines that year. Major Thomas Mitchell visited Francis Henty in his cottage in 1836. Burswood (RNE) built for Henty in 1853. Sale of township blocks in 1840. First municipal council meeting in 1856. Created a borough in 1863, a town in 1949. *Portland Guardian* estab in 1842, Vic's second oldest country newspaper. Steam Packet

Hotel, timber pre-fabricated building from Van Diemen's Land (RNE), built in 1842. Old London Inn (RNE) built 1842–53. Many buildings from the 1840s onwards still stand, including woolstores built in 1845–46 (RNE); Vic's oldest surviving courthouse (RNE) in 1853; customs house (RNE) in 1849–50; and the *Guardian* office in 1842. Rlwy opened in 1878. Freezing works estab in 1895, the first in the Western District. Portland Harbour Trust estab in 1949. Deep-sea harbour built 1952–60 with modern port facilities and two breakwaters. Wool sales estab in 1963. ALCOA aluminium smelter built in late 1970s–early 1980s amid controversy.

### QUEENSLIFF–POINT LONSDALE

[38°16'S 144°39'E]

Popn: 608 (1861), 2054 (1911), 3420 (1981). Queenscliff named by Gov Charles La Trobe after Queen Victoria. Formerly known as Whale Head, Shortland's Bluff. Queenscliff township estab in 1846; a borough from 1863. Fishing village in the 1840s. Escaped convict William Buckley said to have lived with Aborigines in cave near foot of lighthouses for 32 yrs (1803–35). Telegraph station (RNE) estab in 1856. 'Black' lighthouse (RNE) of Scottish bluestone assembled in 1863; lines up with 'white' lighthouse nearby for easy steering through the rip to Port Phillip Bay. Port Phillip pilot service based here from 1848. Rlwy opened in 1879. Fort (RNE) built in 1884–85 as result of Russian invasion scare, important element in Port Phillip defences with second battery on Swan Island opposite. First regular wireless telegraph service in Aust by Marconi Co from Queenscliff to Devonport, Tasmania.

### WARRNAMBOOL [38°21'S 142°30'E]

Popn: 2211 (1861), 6582 (1891), 10 850 (1954), 21 414 (1981). Name: Aborig *wirrimble* = 'place of plenty', or *warwanbool* = 'growing tree'.

**Early and municipal history** Lady Bay sighted by Nicholas Baudin in 1802. Initially used by sealers and whalers: bay surveyed and named by whalers from the *Adelaide* in 1844. Many shipwrecks in area: 'mahogany ship' a local legend, estimated to have foundered c1756, probably Spanish, first seen by sealers in 1836, then by reliable witnesses to 1880. Hull covered by drifting sand, never found again despite very considerable effort. Important squatters in district by 1843 included the Boldens and Thomas Manifold. Town site surveyed in 1846: township proclaimed in 1847; municipality in 1855; borough in 1863; town in 1883; city in 1918.

**Port** Important port for about 100 years. In earliest years of European contact beaches used for repairing boats and processing seal and whale catches. Thornton's Jetty built in 1850. Became important port, partly because private ownership of Port Fairy inhibited latter's trade. Declared free port in 1854. Shipped wool, wheat and dairy products. Town lost inhabitants to goldfields at first but town and port subsequently gained prosperity from goldfields trade.



*The Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum at Warrnambool gives visitors a glimpse of what the city was like when it was an important port in the mid to late nineteenth century.*

*Photograph by Reg Morrison.*

WELDON TRANNIES

Lighthouse built in 1859 on lower bluff of Middle Island, moved to Flagstaff Hill (RNE) in 1871. Gun emplacements erected on hill in 1880s because of fear of Russian invasion. Breakwater built in 1890. Silting led to virtual closure of port in the 1920s: monthly collier service ended in 1942. Attempts to improve and reactivate port in 1944, later failed. Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum recreates town of sailing port days.

**Buildings and services** *Warrnambool Examiner* estab in 1851: J.F. Archibald began career here in 1871, later co-founder of *The Bulletin*. Tramway built by municipality in 1858, superseded by rlwy in 1890. Woollen mills started as public venture with subscribed capital in 1874, burned out in 1882, reopened in 1910, now important for rugs and blankets. Wollaston Bridge, a suspension span, built in 1890 using cables from early Melbourne tramways system. Merri R Water Supply Scheme brought reliable supply in 1893, pumps electrified in 1925. Fletcher Jones' clothing factory opened in 1948 with large degree of staff involvement: employed 900 in c1970.

### WINCHELSEA [38°13'S 143°59'E]

Popn: 314 (1861), 189 (1891), 1057 (1961), 825 (1981). Named after either the English seaport or the Earl of Winchelsea. Formerly known as Austin's Ford and Barwon. Barwon Hotel built in 1842 as watering place for coach traffic on road from Geelong to Warrnambool. Thomas Austin of Barwon Park homestead (RNE, built in 1869) acclimatised fauna: in 1859 he imported pheasants, foxes, quail and field rabbits. Rabbits escaped and multiplied to plague proportions in district: Austin chiefly responsible for Aust's rabbit problems. Rlwy opened in 1876.