

HERITAGE CITATION HO1A

Heritage Overlay number: **HO501**

HERMES No. XXXXXX
 Place Name: Sorrento Historic Precinct: Commercial Area
 Address: Sorrento
 Place Type: Precinct
 Level of Significance: LOCAL
 Recommendation: Existing HO1 to be amended to reflect new mapping and citation.

Map:



Table: Individually significant and contributory properties –

Number	Street	Grading
10	Constitution Hill Road	Contributory
12	Constitution Hill Road	Contributory
14	Constitution Hill Road	Contributory
1-21 A	Ocean Beach Road	State significance VHR H1896
2-4 & 6-8	Ocean Beach Road	Individual HO517
10-16	Ocean Beach Road	Individual HO518
18-24	Ocean Beach Road	Individual HO519
23	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
26	Ocean Beach Road	State significance VHR H2227
27-29	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
31-33	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
35-37	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
43-51	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
46-48	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
54-56	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
80-98	Ocean Beach Road (part)	Contributory
100-102	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
104	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
128-136	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
142-146	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
148-152	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
154-164	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory
166-168	Ocean Beach Road	Contributory

3317	Point Nepean Road	Contributory
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Description:

The Commercial Area of the Sorrento Historic Precinct is a concentrated strip of retail and commercial development on both sides of Ocean Beach Road between the Sorrento Foreshore and Melbourne Road, Sorrento. This Area has been the centre of Sorrento's tourist and retail development since the 1880s, has the greatest concentration of historic buildings and is subject to the greatest development pressures. The area is covered by HO1, Sorrento Historic Precinct and subject to Clause 22.17 Sorrento Historic Precinct Policy.

The precinct area is formed by the linear Ocean Beach Road shopping strip which rises from the Sorrento foreshore to go over a rise on which is sited the Continental Hotel. From here there are long views across the Bay and to the high dunes in the other direction on the Back Beach.

The Continental Hotel is the largest structure in the area and has landmark qualities in the precinct and beyond. Along both sides of Ocean Beach Road are Late Victorian, Federation and Inter-War commercial buildings with ground floor shopfronts, verandahs, and upper storeys which are less activated than the ground floors. Single storey buildings have large parapets and verandahs and at the west end of the Road are a number of buildings which are adapted residential buildings occupied by businesses.

At the east end of the precinct between Constitution Hill Road and the foreshore are four significant residential buildings, one the former Ballroom of the Continental Hotel and the other a residence known as Quamby, and two others. At the corner of Point Nepean Road and Ocean Beach Road is the landmark Stingers stores and a small park on the alignment of the former tramway, which allows for views over the Bay.

A number of newer developments exist along the south side of Ocean Beach Road from 63 Ocean Beach Road to the corner of Melbourne Road. These have no heritage significance. On the north side of Ocean Beach Road, there are new developments constructed as infill between significant buildings.

Some of the buildings are built of limestone, and some are of limestone/ brick or plain brick. Overall the precinct has a village character, with a broad street and pavements, and single storey or two storey buildings.

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

The Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area, part of existing HO1, Sorrento Historic Precinct, includes properties in the section of Ocean Beach Road extending from Melbourne Road to the foreshore and on Constitution Hill Road overlooking the foreshore.

The Commercial Area retains the early alignment and arrangement of Ocean Beach Road and contains significant buildings from the earliest period of development of the township to the present day. The streetscape arrangement preserves important views to the foreshore and the Bay beyond.

The buildings, views, vistas and streetscapes contribute to the significance of the precinct.

How is it significant?

The Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area, is of local historical, social, aesthetic and architectural significance to the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area is of historical significance for the role it played in the early development of the township of Sorrento as well as the establishment of Sorrento as a tourist resort. The intactness of the precinct and its ability to demonstrate these two key themes through its early buildings, streetscape and setting, is rare on the Mornington Peninsula and demonstrates a continuity of development from the 1860s until today that is highly valued by the community. (Criteria A, B & G)

The Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area demonstrates the principal characteristics of the Late Victorian, Federation and Inter-War periods of development, including the low scale of a seaside village, following the natural topography and a wide boulevard constructed to accommodate a steam tramway. It retains single and double storey commercial buildings which demonstrate typical Victorian, Federation and Inter-War forms, siting and features, constructed predominately from local limestone and brick. (Criterion D)

The Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area is of aesthetic significance for its large collection of intact limestone and brick buildings dating from the 1870s to 1915. Many of these buildings are constructed from locally sourced limestone and brick and form a vernacular building tradition on the Peninsula which is unique and highly significant. (Criteria B & E)

The Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area is of aesthetic significance for the combination of natural topography, historic buildings, streetscape qualities, vistas and views of the Bay. The seaside village character is enhanced by the landscape setting and low scale historic buildings with verandahs. Ocean Beach Road sits on a high point above the Bay and offers views to the Bay and west towards the vegetated dunes of the Back Beach. The entrance to Ocean Beach Road is particularly distinctive with the landmark four storey, limestone Continental Hotel (1875), on the south side and Stringers Stores (1886), on the north side. Buildings from the 1890s to 1940s also contribute to this aesthetic value. The streetscape qualities include the broad tree-lined street and pavements, and scale of development. (Criterion E)

The Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area is of significance as a focus for social and commercial activity for both residents and tourists since the establishment of the township. Historically, most local services were and continue to be concentrated in Ocean Beach Road. This long association is reflected in the level of community attachment to the area and many campaigns to conserve and improve the area. The Ocean Beach Road Commercial Area has landmark qualities which uniquely identifies Sorrento for the community and tourists alike. (Criterion G)

The Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area is of significance for its associations with a number of people who played an important role in the development of Sorrento and/or had strong associations with shaping the fabric and character of the area, including: George Coppin, William Hughes, Isaac Bensilum and William Joseph Croad. (Criterion H)

History:

Sorrento

The land of which Sorrento is a part is Boon wurrung/Bunurong country. The Boon wurrung/Bunurong are a predominantly coastal people whose traditional lands encompass some 7,800 square kilometres of territory around Western Port Bay and the Mornington Peninsula. The Boon wurrung/Bunurong are members of the Kulin nation who have lived in and managed their country for thousands of years. The Boon wurrung/Bunurong traditional way of life was interrupted at the turn of the nineteenth century when they made contact with sealers from Van Diemens Land and then in 1802, British sailors on board the *Lady Nelson* who were exploring Port Phillip Bay. [Butler & Context, 2012:14-19]

In September 1836, under pressure from the number of illegal occupations and squatting which had occurred, the Port Phillip land district was proclaimed open for settlement, allowing for the sale of Boon wurrung / Bunurong lands, claimed by the Crown, to be sold at auction to Europeans. Sorrento was occupied by European settlers quarrying and burning lime, fishing and practising limited agriculture. The lime burning industry was vital to the development of the Peninsula and Melbourne. In 1803 the settlers of Sullivan Bay used local lime to construct chimneys. In June 1839 John Fawkner was advertising Nepean lime for sale in Melbourne. [Port Phillip Patriot and Advertiser 22 July 1839.] Lime was transported on small lighters to boats moored out in the Channel between Sorrento Pier and the Baths. Later it became common to build kilns on the foreshore where bagged processed lime could be run out on small jetties to boats. [Hollinshed, 1982:51]

Limestone was not only an important industry on the Peninsula it has also had a lasting impact on the heritage of the area with small cottages, large public buildings, schools, hotels and mansions built from the local limestone. Nepean limestone is a vernacular tradition on the Peninsula with two distinct styles of limestone construction with early buildings being built entirely of limestone and later ones built with red brick quoining. Limestone is the dominant fabric of the northern end of Ocean Beach Road.

By the 1860s Point Nepean was recognized as not only a sublimely beautiful landscape with easy access to the Bay and the Ocean, but as a place for holidaying and respite from Melbourne. As early as 1868 George Selth Coppin (1819-1906) was planning to develop the town as a place for tourists. He purchased 225 acres and subdivided it into small allotments for shops and houses. By 1874 he had his own steamship company and then built the Continental Hotel in 1875 to accommodate them. Another influential developer of Sorrento was Charles Gavan Duffy MLA (1816-1903), who developed his 600 acres for gentleman's cliff-top villas which still line the edge of the Bay. It also laid out the alignment of Point Nepean and Hotham Roads and reserved Sorrento Park overlooking the jetty and Bay. [Butler & Context, 2012:22]

By the 1890s the township and the commercial precinct had developed further with new civic facilities such as a post office and a mechanics institute. Shops had developed on the west side of Ocean Beach Road, including Stringers Stores, the Athenaeum Theatre, the Oriental Coffee Palace and a small building (now occupied by Sportsgirl) at 54 Ocean Beach Road constructed in 1894. It was at the turn of the century that the great majority of commercial and residential buildings were constructed on both sides of Ocean Beach Road and many of these still exist. Between 1900 and 1910 a large number of buildings were constructed along Ocean Beach Road, to accommodate tourists. Many permanent and holiday homes were constructed in this period, as were schools and businesses. [Lardner, 2015:21]

The 20th century development of Sorrento has been marked by an increase in private home ownership accompanied by increasing densification and subdivision. The wealth of Melbourne's middle class after WW1 and increasing car ownership resulted in more holiday makers visiting the Peninsula, and investing in their own piece of seaside paradise. In later decades, there has been an increase in permanent residents retiring to the seaside and seeking a sea change. In recent years the increasing ease of renting properties on the internet, has led to a boom in the holiday rental market and two and three lot subdivision of existing properties.

Thematic History:

At Sorrento, Ocean Beach Road developed rapidly as the main commercial spine of the town from the 1880s and today there is ample evidence of the types of business premises which were established at the northern end of this road to service the holiday-makers and local residents. The Oriental Coffee Palace and the Stringers Stores are the most intact examples of commercial developments of the 1880s while more modest shops appear to have been redeveloped at the turn of the century.

With their central commercial and service role in the community, local shops were sometimes associated with prominent local families and individuals. In February 1877 Godfrey Burdett Wilson opened a butcher's shop in a small timber shop in Point Nepean Road opposite the Sorrento Park. This shop had been built in 1876 for Charles Gavan Duffy, a substantial property owner on the Peninsula, politician and Premier of Victoria in 1871-2. In 1904 the Wilsons moved their business to the main street buying land from George Coppin and building a more substantial limestone shop and dwelling which was run by Godfreys oldest son, Henry Wilson.

Shops such as Morleys Shop built in 1903 for Edward Morley were also hailed as contributing to the architectural worth of the town. Morleys shop (later Sullivans Bakery) and six roomed dwelling was built by the prolific Sorrento builder, William Joseph Croad. While many shops have changed usage over time, others like Thorns Pharmacy (1911) have since had a remarkable continuity of use. [Butler & Context, 2012:96]

On the hill beside the Continental Hotel are a group of residences, Kinver (1889), Quamby (c.1910) and Nairn (1923) which were holiday houses built in a prime location for wealthy Melbourne residents. [Context 1992, 1997]

History of the Place:

HLCD Pty Ltd has written an extensive history of the precinct in a Cultural Significance Report undertaken for Council in May 2015, and much of what follows is taken from this report.

During the 1880s and 1890s and into the first decade of the 20th century, a cluster of commercial and residential buildings was constructed along Ocean Amphitheatre Road (later named Ocean Beach Road) to service holiday-makers and residents. They included groups of buildings on both the north and south sides at the east end of the road where it intersected Portsea Road. Many of these early commercial and residential buildings remain and form an important part of Sorrento's heritage.

By c.1900, according to a map held by the Nepean Historical Society, most of the small allotments along Ocean Amphitheatre Road had been sold to local families like the Erlandsens, Hibberts and Croads, and bigger businessmen like Isaac Bensilum and George Coppin purchased large allotments.

Up until c.1900 the concentration of buildings appears to have been isolated to the eastern end of Ocean Amphitheatre Road where views of the Bay can still be achieved. The buildings dating from before 1900, in the Late Victorian period includes:

- The Continental Hotel, 1-21A Ocean beach Road (1875)
- Stringers Stores, 2-8 Ocean Beach Road (1886 & 1892)
- Oriental Coffee Palace, 18 Ocean beach Road (1887/8)
- Kinver, 12 Constitution Hill Road (1889)
- Athenaeum Theatre, 26-36 Ocean Beach Road (1894)
- Shop, 54 Ocean Beach Road (c.1893)

In the Federation period, there was another surge of activity. A high percentage of significant buildings date from this period including:

- Former Continental Hotel Ballroom, 14 Constitution Hill Road (1904)
- Former Sorrento Post Office, 10-16 Ocean Beach Road (1905)
- Shop, 23 Ocean Beach Road (1902/3)
- Quamby, 3317 Point Nepean Road (circa 1910)
- Shops, 27- 29 Ocean Beach Road (circa 1910)
- Shop, 31-33 Ocean Beach Road (1911)

- Shop, 35-37 Ocean Beach Road (1905)
- Gannawarra, 128-136 Ocean Beach Road (1904/5)
- Carmel, 142-146 Ocean Beach Road (1904/5)
- Shop, 148-152 Ocean Beach Road (1906)
- Former house, 154-164 Ocean Beach Road (1905)
- Medical centre, 166-168 Ocean Beach Road (circa 1910)

In the Inter-War period much of the township remained the same, although there were numerous changes to the arrangement of the streetscape with the rise of the motor car tourist and the removal of the steam tram in 1921. Parking was created along Ocean Beach Road, and trees removed from the medians to accommodate the tourists' cars. New buildings were constructed to fill in empty blocks, most with cantilever verandahs and built of brick or timber. Some of these are significant, including:

- Nairn, 10 Constitution Hill Road, (1923)
- Shops and flats, 43-51 Ocean Beach Road (1933)
- Shop, 46 Ocean Beach Road (c.1930s)
- Hardware shop, 80-98 (part) Ocean Beach Road (1945)
- Shop, 102 Ocean Beach Road (c.1920s)
- Former House, 104-106 Ocean Beach Road (1923)

In the Inter-War and Post-War period a number of significant buildings were altered, with new verandahs, infill buildings and a new arrangement of the streetscape. The Oriental Coffee Palace was converted to downstairs shops and upstairs accommodation and the facade of the Continental Hotel was altered to enclose verandahs and extend dining areas to the street. New buildings have been constructed at the bottom of Point Nepean Road behind the former Mornington Hotel. Some buildings have been improved in recent years with conservation works to facades and the restoration of verandahs. Most original shopfronts have now been removed in favour of modern all glass shopfronts. Trees have been reintroduced to the streetscape to good effect.

Thematic Context: (Graeme Butler, 2008 and Context Pty Ltd, 2012)

Theme 7: Building settlements and towns

Theme 7.1: Selecting township sites and planning settlements

Theme 7.3: Establishing commercial and retail centres

Sources:

Shire of Flinders Rate Books

Wills and Probate records

Land Title certificates

Hollinshed, Charles, Goss, Noel and Bird, ECF, 1982, *Lime, Land, Leisure; Peninsular History in the Shire of Flinders*

Graeme Butler & Associates, Context Pty Ltd (editors), 2012 *Mornington Peninsula Shire Thematic History*

Context Pty Ltd, 1992, 1997, *Flinders Heritage Study*

HLCD Pty Ltd, 2015, *Ocean Beach Road Commercial Precinct Sorrento Heritage Policy, Cultural Significance Report*.

Comparative precincts:

HO329, Mornington Main Street and Esplanade Civic Precinct.

This precinct is most comparative to the commercial area of Sorrento as it has a similar variety of building and shop types, but has more civic buildings. It similarly has a mix of Late Victorian, Federation and Inter-War styles which indicate a continuity of development and use, however the limestone buildings of Sorrento are very distinctive and remarkable by comparison.

HO317 Station Street Precinct, Somerville

This precinct has representative housing dating to circa 1890-1945. This collection of Federation and Inter-War houses in both timber and masonry is a precinct of comparatively well preserved suburban houses in Somerville. It has some comparisons to Sorrento but was mainly owned and developed by locals.

HO318 Crib Point Precinct

This precinct of houses and a single timber church is representative of the development of the town after the Flinders Naval depot was established post WW1. The housing estate was developed by a local fisherman and designed by Saxil Tuxen who also designed Ranelagh Estate, Mount Eliza. The houses were all built between 1915 and 1929 and mostly were occupied by locals.

HO92 Hansens Lane, Beach Houses Precinct, Balnarring Beach

This precinct of small, cheap beach houses developed in the Inter War period and has some comparisons to East Sorrento in its informal layout and street character. It is characteristic of the first beachside weekender suburbs in the district. The small informal cottages are set among native vegetation close to the water.

HO333 Cook Street Flinders Precinct

This town centre precinct is most comparable to Sorrento Historic Precinct Commercial Area. The precinct contains a mix of church, Post Office, public hall, shopfronts and houses with infill buildings from the twentieth century. It is significant for the important evidence it provides of a pattern of development from the 1860s. Similar to Sorrento, it retains evidence of early allotment patterns and demonstrates continuity from the time of first subdivision, and early development of tourism and local services.

Recommendations:

Extent of curtilage:

The whole of the precinct

Significant elements or design features:

Limestone and brick buildings from Late Victorian, Federation and Inter-war periods, timber and brick buildings from Inter-War period, original shopfronts and verandahs, views and vistas to the Bay and the Back Beach sand dunes.

Extent of fabric to be retained:

All of the Late Victorian, Federation and Inter-War fabric.

Schedule:

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences and Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses	No
Incorporated plan	-
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

Other recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as a new precinct with its own HO, to the extent of the whole precinct as defined by the accompanying mapping.