

SINGLE HOUSE UNDER THREAT

Dorney on Porter Hill
Sandy Bay Hobart Tasmania
&
Knowing what is heritage
when you see it

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Tasmanian Heritage Register

- THR C7429 Comprises the remains of Fort Nelson & a 1978 dwelling THR C7429

This place is listed for:

- (a) evolutionary pattern
- (b) rarity
- (c) research potential
- (d) representative value
- (e) creative/technical/aesthetic value
- (g) associational value

At Porter Hill

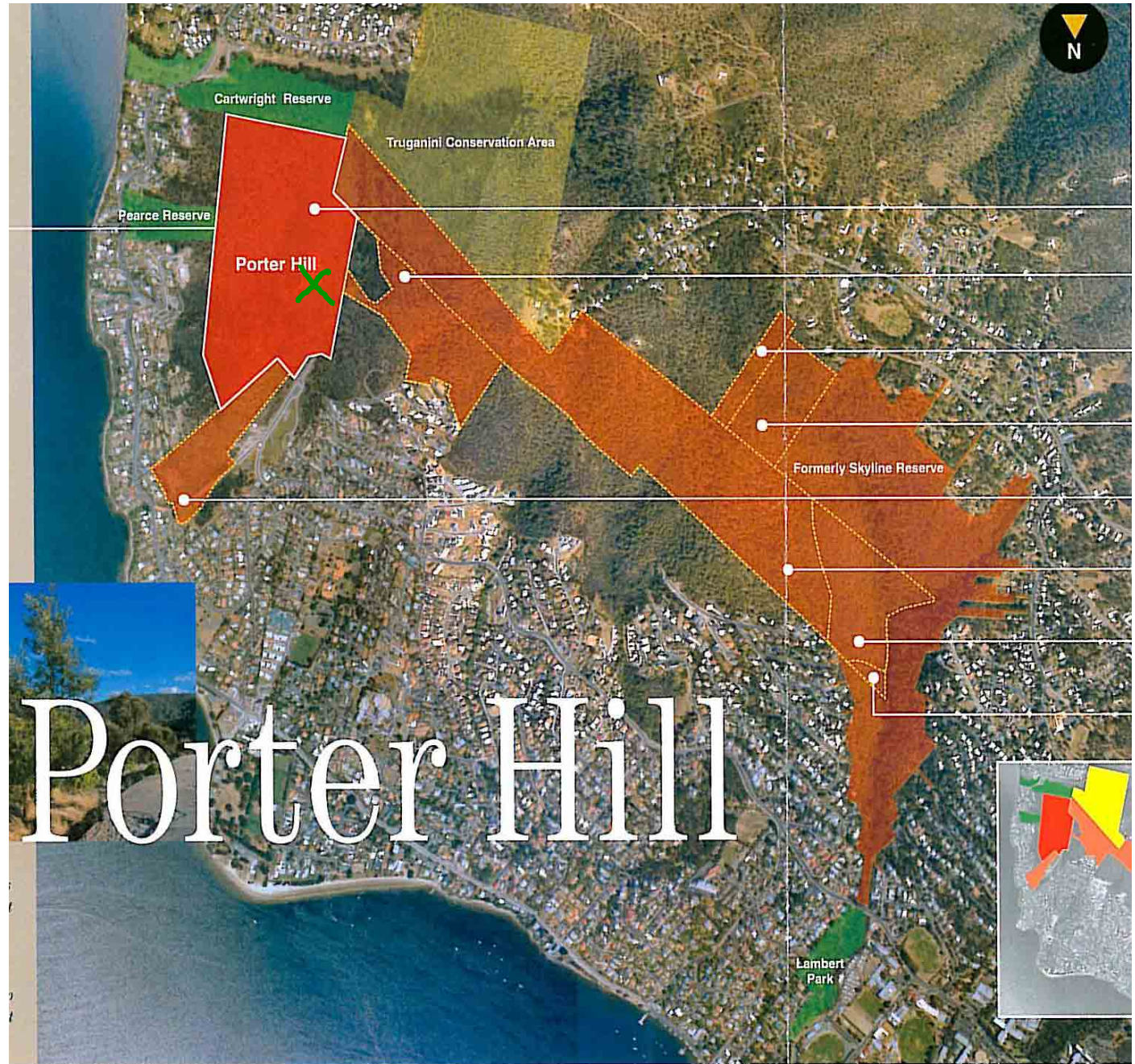
- Only Archaeology & Built Structure Listed
- Fauna & Flora barely mentioned
- Natural beauty & shoulder to Sandy Bay

Map of Porter Hill

Showing location
of the
Dorney House



marks the spot



The hill

showing the locations of the batteries that protected Hobart



The track



The barracks site



The arrival



The battery & sleep out



The house



The view



The event @ Burra Burra

- In 1966 the Venice Charter was drawn up
- In 1979 the Burra Charter was adopted as a consequence of the ICOMOS Conference at Burra in South Australia

Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975

Prior 1973 the built heritage was protected by the state chapters of the National Trust.

During 1973 a survey of the National Estate was carried out by a committee of inquiry.

In 1975 the Australian Heritage Commission was set up and became operational in 1976

The 1977 NSW Heritage Act

- This Act gave power to the NSW Heritage Council to administer all matters relating to heritage in the state.
- From 1979 the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act allowed heritage matters to be referred to the Land and Environment Court (division of the NSW Supreme Court)

HISTORIC CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT 1995 (Tasmania)

- **Required criteria for entry in Register**
- The Heritage Council may enter a place of **historic** cultural heritage significance in the Heritage Register if, in its opinion, it meets one or more of the following criteria:
- (a) it is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of **Tasmania's history**;
- (b) it demonstrates **rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Tasmania's heritage**;
- (c) it has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history;
- (d) it is important as a representative in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of cultural places;
- (e) it is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;
- (f) it **has strong or special meaning for any group** or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;
- (g) it **has a special association with the life or work of a person**, a group or an organisation that was important in Tasmania's history.

What does the Dorney House tell us?

Geology

Topography

Flora

Fauna

Indigenous Culture

Early European Activities

Military Heritage

Military Archaeology

The interim period

The calling of tenders

The first Dorney House

The second Dorney House

The third Dorney House

The transfer to HCC

Geology Topography Flora Fauna

- Porter Hill is considered to be geologically unstable and there is significant history of seismic readings being recorded on the site.
- The Hill is in the main basaltic rock with many loose boulders strewn around.
- The Hill is a major precinct of residual indigenous flora within a urban environment and an important link of vegetation from the Derwent River up to about 300 metres above the river. The vegetated zone continues through to the Mt Nelson Signal Station and beyond. The vegetation has been fire ravaged many times and there is some invasion of introduced native and exotic species and weeds.

There is a reasonable community of the Swift Parrot on the Hill, this is an endangered species and the maintenance of its habitat may be critical to its survival. There are also small marsupials and raptors with in the Porter Hill precinct.



Swift parrot

Image: Dave Watts

Indigenous Culture

Early European Activities

- There can be no doubt that the Tasmania Aboriginal Community would have observed, hunted and collected throughout the Porter Hill bushland and although there is no evidence of middens in the precinct it must be considered an area of spiritual significance.
- Early Europeans used the beaches along the Derwent River for many of their intrusive activities particularly marine animal harvesting. There is historic evidence that smugglers used tracks over Porter Hill to transport illicit imports into Hobart Town.

Military Heritage Military Archaeology

- In 1908 the Commonwealth of Australia established Fort Nelson on Porter Hill.
- Guns were installed to defend the City of Hobart, they were never fired in anger.
- The Fort was decommissioned at the end of the Second World War.
- The land was sold to Esmond Dorney in 1949.
- Dorney built a house on the concrete base-works of the battery.
- The base-works and some remnant footings where the barracks once stood remain.

The calling of tenders
The first Dorney House
The second Dorney House
The third Dorney House

- 1949 Dorney acquired by successful tender the 35 Hectare site.
- 1949 – Dorney builds his first house.
- 1967 – Dorney builds a substantial second house adjacent to the rather rudimentary first house.
- 1978 – Bush fires destroy the second house and damage other buildings.
- 1978 – Dorney builds the third and final house that remains substantially extant.

May 2006

- In May 2006 the ownership of whole of the Porter Hill site including the Dorney House was transferred to the Hobart City Council.
- The Council has maintained and conserved the site.
- Improved the fire fighting capability by installing tanked water supply.
- Currently the building is occupied by residential tenants.
- The future of the site is currently under review.

Are we able to determine heritage as it happens?

- Since 1975 when the Commonwealth gazetted the Australian Heritage Commission Act we all should have been aware of the need to record heritage.
- Prior to 1975 heritage was generally considered as an activity of community minded organisations like, and dominated by, the National Trust.
- The generally held position was to identify unique historically important buildings and then agitate for their retention.
- It was equivalent to collecting antiques.
- This should no longer be the case, there should be a mechanism to identify, record, study, compare and disseminate information on current social, cultural and physical activities that have likely heritage value.

How can contemporary built environments be assessed for potential heritage values?

- Every LGA should have a process to identify applications for non-standard building designs.
- These should be referred to a panel of people with social, cultural and architectural awareness, experience and qualification.
- Public comment should be sought when planning applications are exhibited.
- Applicants and their designers should be provided with an opportunity to lodge a ***Future Heritage Prospects Study***.
- LGA should be encouraged to prepare, potential heritage reports on contemporary buildings constructed in their LGA.
- Universities and other research bodies should be encouraged to research potential heritage designs.
- A data collection, retrieval and updating system should be set up where comparative on-line studies can be made of the evolving built environment.

What is being done now?

- Portugal – The Heritage at Risk Survey as part of the Inventory of Architectural Heritage.
- USA – The Born-Digital Architectural and Design Archive at the Art Institute of Chicago.
- Australia – The Louis Laybourne School Architectural Museum, University of South Australia.

*'The Architecture Museum holds more than 200,000 items including approximately 20,000 drawings and a 2000-volume library. The holdings relate to the work of private practitioners (State Records of South Australia holds Government architects records). The **focus is on** materials produced in **the 20th century** and particularly in the period c.1910-1980. The University of South Australia's Collections and Museums Policy and the Architecture Museums General Policy and Collection Policy documents guide decisions regarding acquisitions.'*

- CAN Archives
- ERPA Scotland Netherlands Italy inter university
- STORS Australia

icam

international
confederation
of
architectural
museums

- **icam** Code of Ethics for Architecture Museums, Centres and Collections
- icam code provides recommendations of conduct for icam members and professionals dealing with
- architectural documents, collections and archives.
- Objectives
- -Preservation of the integrity of architectural archives
- -Protection of cultural property of national or local historical significance or interest
- -Protecting the policies of all institutions regardless of size or wealth

The Future of Heritage is Now

- If we do not collect the information on the potential heritage of contemporary buildings and their associated cultural and social links, we are doomed to a future of searching through the trash bins of history to reconstruct the heritage of today.
- It does not have to be this way – how good it would be if we could all, at the click of a keyboard, read or listen to the views of the designers, owners and occupiers of the buildings we inhabit.