

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE GREAT OCEAN WALK

The track: Officially launched in January 2006, the Great Ocean Walk is an 'integrated linked trail system' which cost \$2.3 million to build. The 105km track, from Apollo Bay to Glenample, consists predominantly of soil or sand surfaces, (with some areas highlighted by boardwalks and crushed rock to protect areas from erosion). The Great Ocean Walk enables you to experience 'spectacular coast and forest scenery including rocky platforms, sheltered beaches, rivers, forests and coastal heathland'¹

The track takes you through the Great Otway and Port Campbell National Parks and blends beautifully with its surrounding environment. This is largely due to the way the track was constructed.

The track alignment for The Great Ocean Walk was decided after comprehensive environmental, landscape, heritage and cultural assessment, along with geo-technical investigations. From there, 'nearly the entire track was constructed by hand with basic tools such as mattocks, shovels and crowbars'¹. As you traverse the track, you will pass over 1200 hand built steps, produced from stone that has been carefully moved from around the track.

The Gadabund people: The Great Ocean Walk enables you to travel through 'the Gadabanud people's traditional Country.' This Country 'transcends what is known today as the Otway coastline. Rich and diverse in plant and animal life, this area has been a gathering, ceremonial and feasting place for thousands of years. Many sites and spiritual links remain today.'² You will walk across low boardwalks, created from re-positioned fallen logs and pass over many aboriginal middens. 'These middens allow us to step back in time and witness the varied diet of the Gadabanud people. They contain fragments of turban shells, abalone, periwinkle, elephant fish, chiton, beaked mussel and limpets'.².

Local Gadabanud and Aboriginal people have worked closely with Parks Victoria to ensure the maintenance, protection, restoration and management of significant sites along the track. **'Please respect and help preserve Australia's cultural heritage by staying on designated tracks along the walk'**²

The flora and fauna²: Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Black Wallabies, long nosed potoroo's, red-necked wallabies and echidnas can all be seen on the forest floor. Up above in the tree tops around Cape Otway, koalas can be seen casually grazing on the eucalypt leaves. Observe a myriad of bird life including King Parrots, Rufous Bristlebirds, Crimson Rosellas, Singing Honeyeaters, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos and Gang-gang Cockatoos. Wedge-tailed Eagles and White-bellied Sea-eagles can also be seen. Along the coast, watch out for majestic dolphins, Australian fur seals and migrating whales from June-September. Flocks of Crested Terns, larger Pied or 'Sooty Oystercatchers', and occasionally Little Fairy Penguins can also be spotted. Keep a watchful eye out on the ground for some infamous

Otway invertebrates, including the carnivorous Otway black snail and the luminous forest glow-worm. These amazing larvae, of the fungus gnat produce light in their body cells which create an amazing display on a dark night. (*Evening glow worm tours are available close to Apollo Bay. Please ask Walk 91 for details.*)

The Otway's high rainfall gives way to dense forest cover dominated by Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) the world's tallest flowering plant reaching heights of more than 100 metres. These very tall, straight trunked tree's, have rough bark at the bottom. Long ribbons with a smooth greenish-grey/white bark form further up the trunk, clusters appear, followed by pear shaped fruit. This magnificent tree's timber is hard and durable and often milled for construction, flooring and pulped for paper.

"Under the Mountain Ash canopy, Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) and Mountain Hickory Wattle (*Acacia obliquinervia*) can be found" along with "a dense layer of small trees and shrubs, including Hazel Pomaderris (*Pomaderris aspera*), Prickly Current Bush (*Coprososma quadrifa*), Musk Daisy Bush (*olearia argophylla*) & Blanket Leaf (*Bedfordia aborescens*)." ⁴

The lower levels are predominantly made up of tree ferns such as Soft Tree-fern (*Dicksonia Antarctica* 2-15m) and Rough Tree-fern (*Cyathea australis* 2-12m) which occupy from the forest floor up to 15 metres in height.

The final layer of ground cover consists of Austral Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum* up to 1m) and other plants that tolerate the shady, damp conditions on the forest floor. The dense layers of forest vegetation provide food for many species and a habitat to numerous animals.

The landscape: The Great Ocean Walk takes you through the spectacular Otway's which have been formed on sandstone and mudstone, uplifted and deeply dissected to form a steep and rugged terrain. 'The exposure of rock formations along the coastline gives a fascinating glimpse into the earth's structure and the long journey through time in the development of the south-west coast'.

Due to the steep hills rising from the sea, the rainfall levels are high (roughly 1000mm) resulting in muddy tracks, slippery slopes and high stream levels creating spectacular waterfalls during Winter and Spring. "Fundamental to understanding this stretch of coast and what it has in store for those who seek to walk it, is to appreciate that the Southern Ocean is the world's largest ocean and the waves that ceaselessly crash on the cliffs you skirt have travelled from as far as Patagonia and Cape Horn at South America's tip. The GOW is set in latitude 39 degrees south which is 300km below Africa's southern tip". The track takes you from 'mild' in the east to 'wild' in the west as the walk becomes more remote and challenging. You will experience some of the highest sea cliffs in Mainland Australia (near the Gables) and view the locations of shipwrecks and 'strandings', which are a constant reminder of the coasts treacherous history.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

LA TROBE

The Great Ocean Walk follows the route first blazed by Port Phillip District Superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe in March 1846.

In August of the year before, in the western approaches of Bass Strait, what is still Australia's worst peacetime shipwreck had occurred on the west coast of King Island. The lack of lighthouses in this sector of these waters was the principle reason for the terrible loss of life – 399 of 408. Those passengers and crew persons had drowned over a period of three days as the enormous seas that assail this low rocky coast swept over the fatally stranded emigrant vessel half a kilometre from shore.

If this long promised lighthouse was to be built at Cape Otway it was necessary for the site to be surveyed and a report prepared as to ease of access and supply for what was very delicate machinery – as well as all the workmen and building materials.

Governor Gipps directed C.J. La Trobe to obtain answers to these questions and as speedily as possible. He could not have chosen a better qualified man for the task.

C.J. La Trobe possessed a passionate interest in science, literature and the rights of the individual. He had grown up in London, coming from a French-Swiss family with Moravian Church heritage. The La Trobes and their circle of friends that filled their home for debates and concerts were instrumental, to take just one case, in the establishment of the Anti-Slavery Movement – William Wilberforce was a family friend. Not your average Colonial Administrator, C.J. La Trobe even before he arrived in the fledgling colony of Victoria, had published four popular books on his “rambles” in North America, Mexico and much of Switzerland and northern Italy. He had walked and ridden by horse from the east coast of the USA to the west coast in 1833. Prior to leaving for his Antipodean assignment in Port Phillip he had completed a two year assignment in the West Indies compiling a major report on the educational needs of the recently liberated slaves.

La Trobe found a colony bereft of any institutions of learning and debate. He was aged 38 when he took up office as the first Superintendent of the Port Phillip District of NSW in October, 1839. His Swiss wife Sophie and their young children accompanied him. Before he left in 1853 he had established Melbourne University and the Melbourne Public Library. Through that decade and a half he had more than his fair share of disagreement with the settlers – often over land and taxing to pay for institutions that were viewed by most as not a very high priority.

La Trobe reported to Governor Gipps in Sydney. He resided in the “kit” prefabricated residence in the inner East Melbourne suburb of Jolimont, a name chosen by Sophie La Trobe and where they had honeymooned near Neuchatel in Switzerland. This is the man that accepted the direction to find a “practicable route” to Cape Otway. The Otways and other spectacular parts of Victoria presented a delicious mix of challenge and distraction from the tedious affairs of state for La Trobe. He made numerous excursions to nearly all corners of what would become known in 1851, with separation from NSW, as Victoria. When visiting mission stations, settlers' holdings, town hall meetings, and land disputes, La Trobe's powers of observation shone through in his writings and superb pen and ink washes or quick pencil sketches.

La Trobe was intimately involved in endeavours to protect the native peoples with only limited success. He was under resourced and sometimes, it has to be admitted, indecisive. This inability to halt the slow decline of the health and morale of the District's original inhabitants troubled him greatly. The Buntingdale Mission at Birregurra in the foothills of the Otways was a place he regularly visited, especially when journeying to Warrnambool or the Otway Coast as he was in 1845 and 1846.

*Six years into his appointment emigrant ships were sailing regularly direct for Port Phillip. There was a shortage of shepherds and other skilled agricultural workers that had to be overcome. And so it was the Melbourne bound *Cataraqui* became the terrible statistic previously cited. The furore over the loss of life saw the House of Commons in London calling for the Secretary of State for the Colonies to resign. The NSW Legislative Council was not surprisingly condemned by the Colonial Secretary for not building lighthouses in Bass Strait. So down the chain of command came the direction to La Trobe and he was equal to the challenge of establishing a practical route to Cape Otway – engaging Henry Allan from Allansford near Warrnambool and Aboriginal guides. After three attempts over five months La Trobe was successful.*

A belated knighthood conferred in 1865 was some small recognition by his colonial masters for the founding role he played in the Colony of Victoria. He died in England in 1875 and is buried beside his beloved Sophie. He would be pleased to know that every day a fresh crop of “fellow rambles” are discovering the delights of the coast he first saw in 1846 and remembered for the rest of his days. You could do worse than drink a toast to this urbane and erudite “colonial administrator” as you spend a night at a campsite along this coast and hear the roar of the mighty Southern Ocean that enraptured Charles Joseph La Trobe.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COAST

The Great Ocean Walk (GOW) skirts the interface of the Southern Ocean and the land mass of Australia. Visitors can now walk along this stretch of hitherto all but inaccessible coastline. As likely however, few walkers will be aware of events of international maritime significance that played out along this ironbound coast a century and a half ago – as critical to the building of the Eastern Australian colonies as the coast is memorable.

This melding of rugged beauty and a fascinating history make the GOW all the more special for both the new visitor to Victoria and those who for years may have wondered just what mysteries this coast held.

Hopes, dreams and frustrations of colonial explorers, confident settlers seeking well watered pastures and a native people who knew it as their home for millennia– have played out along this coast.

Every beach and headland along the Walk has a story to tell, whether it be of shipwreck, massacre, drowning, rescue or refuge, industry or indolence.

Fundamental to understanding this stretch of coast and what it has in store for those who seek to walk it, is to appreciate that the Southern Ocean is the world's largest ocean and the waves that ceaselessly crash on the cliffs you skirt have travelled from as far as Patagonia

and Cape Horn at South America's tip. The GOW is set in latitude 39 deg south which is 300 km below Africa's southern tip.

Storms in the Southern Ocean are continually propelling waves out and into "The Funnel" or "Eye of the Needle" - two 19th century terms used by mariners to describe the most dangerous passage of water on the long voyage from Europe to the Australian colonies - the entrance to Bass Strait.

This section of coast, where the GOW now runs and further west to Portland, was the Landfall Coast for generations of Australians and was preferred over low lying, all but invisible by night, King Island - when winds allowed and a Clipper ship captain's courage held.

As you walk the GOW you are unaware of King Island, unseen over the gently curving southern horizon line - though on most nights you can see the flash of the King Island Lighthouse (Cape Wickham) from The Otway Ridge between Lavers Hill and Beech Forest.

The gap is narrow (75 km) and had to be "threaded", very often in the pitch blackness of night with only an approximate idea of your vessel's true position. This was after an 80 day voyage from Europe and after 1851, when the Great Circle Route was adopted, without sight of land because of the savings in time such a route provided. That was what emigration to Australia entailed and the cliffs that the GOW now skirts were the first sight of land for tens of thousands of "New Australians".

*Terrible wrecks occurred in western Bass Strait. The worst was the emigrant ship *Cataraqui* (Australia's worst loss of life in peacetime shipwreck) in 1845 when 399 died of 408 aboard. A decade earlier 300 drowned aboard the convict transport *Neva*. Both wrecks were on the west coast of King Island.*

Cape Otway was identified in a NSW Legislative Council Enquiry into Lighthouses in Bass Straits as the location for a beacon, principally because high cliffs made for a safer landfall and were silhouetted against all but the blackest of night skies.

In the mid 1840's the coastline of today's GOW was all but unvisited by citizens of the decade old Port Phillip District settlement on the Yarra River or the slightly older Portland to the west.

Enter Charles Joseph La Trobe, Superintendent of Port Phillip District. He had been six years in Port Phillip and it was another six years before Victoria separated from New South Wales. The "unlit" status of Bass Strait at night for vessels had become sufficiently important that the Superintendent himself was directed from Sydney to satisfy himself on the matter of how a lighthouse might be built at Cape Otway. For more background on La Trobe and his love affair with the outdoors and exploration you may care to refer to .CJ. La Trobe Fact Sheet.

La Trobe had to ascertain the salient features of the cape - its elevation, geology, ease of access from the sea, then mark a suitable site with firm ground capable of supporting a tower of, at this stage, unknown height.

His first attempt from the Colac-Winchelsea side of the Otway Ranges was unsuccessful and so early in 1846 he decide to attempt to find a route from the west by working along the coast from Warrnambool and Port Campbell. Though initially optimistic upon reaching the

Gellibrand River, within four days he had admitted defeat in the thickest scrub in the hills above Cape Volney and Milanesia Beach. This today contains some of the most rugged sections of the GOW.

A third attempt was demanded of him by NSW Governor Gipps in Sydney, and by April 1846 La Trobe was back at the Gellibrand River. This time, after a five day struggle, he with Henry Allan of Allansford and an escort of Border and Native Police eventually reached Cape Otway.

His journal records the exultation he felt – the more appreciated now by all those who have themselves walked the GOW:

“Push forward and reach the highest sandhill amongst the Cups and Saucers and know that we have really found Cape Otway. Receding line of Coast on both sides. East to C. Patten(sic) and West to Moonlight Head. An hours halt and then return, on our steps, to our camp on the Joanna River. The soft deal board. A gusty night.”

He had camped at Joanna River (today known as Johanna) and the effort involved in a 15 km “bush bashing sprint” from Johanna to Cape Otway and return in a day can only be imagined. It is as well that La Trobe could draw on years of exploring Swiss mountain passes and trekking east to west across America as a 30-year-old in 1832. Today the GOW passes behind the Cape Otway Lighthouse and it is from here, the southern most point of land west of Melbourne, that the visitor begins to appreciate the sweep of the coast back eastward into Bass Strait and westward out toward the horizon over which the great sailing ships appeared, 65 days out from Liverpool a century and a half ago.

The lighthouse was designed by Mortimer Lewis, the New South Wales Government Architect, from information furnished by La Trobe and completed over a period of two years. It commenced operating on August 29, 1848 and, although upgraded a number of times, operated continuously until automation in 1994. That was the end of the Light keepers at Cape Otway.

The construction of the 26 metre high tower proved more difficult than expected with the Geelong contractor Alexander McGillivray being dismissed by the Public Works Department mid contract. The Colonial Government took the work over and completed the works using casual labour and skilled tradesmen.

Supplies, equipment and materials as well as the delicate mechanism of the lighthouse, all had to be landed through the surf at the Parker River 3km to the east of the lighthouse reserve. This was a treacherous business - a number of seamen drowning on one occasion at Crayfish Bay in 1847. You can imagine the difficulty this entailed as you tarry a while at Parker River or Blanket Bay.

Today the reassuring beam of the lighthouse commands all but a few portions of the GOW - a white tower by day and beacon by night – still guarding this coast and warning all vessels who approach too close to beware.

La Trobe returned in 1849 to Cape Otway to see the light house in operation. He went via the new bridle track cut between Winchelsea and the infant Apollo Bay settlement, continuing on to the Cape.

This track is today part of the GOW. He stayed overnight with the Ford family and then set out westward back across the route he took in 1846 – again, part of today’s GOW. In pushing his way up behind Milanesia Beach he wrote that night in his journal most likely camped near Ryan’s Den “had a day of the most severe exertion I ever encountered”.

Delayed for two days because of fires near Moonlight Head he eventually reached Warrnambool. He had a public meeting and records: “The deputation sits till 10pm though I never had my clothes off for eight nights.”

The Ford family would in charge be at The Otway for another 29 years – the longest continuous service rendered at one lighthouse in Victoria.

To walk the GOW today is to experience the same splendid isolation that so attracted the erudite La Trobe in the 1840’s – one of many expeditions or what he called “his rambles”, be they in Mexico, Switzerland, Jamaica or here in the new colony of Victoria

SHIPWRECK AND RESCUE

The route of the Great Ocean Walk (GOW) takes in a number of locations of shipwrecks as well as strandings. As a rule survivors of these wrecks had a long walk or wait for assistance, but whether their doomed vessel was a three masted Clipper carrying over a hectare of sail with 500 passengers and crew or a two masted ketch plying Bass Strait and this forbidding coast’s towns – the terror engendered was the same.

JOANNA (two masted barque) - shipwrecked September 1843

This near new Van Diemen’s Land built vessel was driven ashore at Johanna River while sailing from Launceston to Port Fairy west of Cape Otway. No lives were lost in the initial wreck and survivors made their way back around the coast in eight days to Geelong with the aid of the local native tribe. The newspaper reports of the day record that the coastal tribe showed the bewildered party from the boat which plants were edible and where water could be found.

The Joanna’s cargo included flour, sugar, and brandy. A salvage operation organised by the ship’s owners in Launceston went terribly wrong when a ship’s boat overturned in the surf and two crew members drowned. Another salvage party then came from Port Fairy and had a month of, what La Trobe described three years later when he saw what remained of the wreck as, “a six weeks spell of drinking, quarrelling and fighting” – the liquor on board being the principal attraction.

At the time of the wreck and when La Trobe camped there in 1846, the Joanna (now know as Johanna following a sign writer’s error on the long since closed Joanna Post Office) River had two mouths. The western outlet can still be traced in the sand dunes just before the eastern headland of the main beach when walking from Cape Otway. It silted up in the first decade of the 20th century – possibly from the impact of farming and stripping of the giant forests in the hills behind.

Johanna Beach, with its pounding surf and views west ward to the high cliffs of Milanesia and Cape Volney, is a highlight of the GOW. After winter gales the sand dunes occasionally

give up reminders of the ships whose timbers have been washed ashore here a century or more ago.

SCHOMBERG - lost at Peterborough, Boxing Day 1855

The largest of the British built Clippers, the Schomberg, was lost on her maiden voyage to Melbourne under the command of the redoubtable, record breaking passage master, Capt Bully Forbes. The year before Forbes had driven the ship Lightning at unprecedented speeds across the Southern Ocean and set the record for out to Melbourne and back to Liverpool - five months and 21 days.

Although the beach Schomberg drove ashore on is west of the GOW, the Southern Ocean in the weeks following her stranding and the failed attempts to pull her off, smashed her triple plank thickness hull and 80 metre high masts into house size sections of flotsam. Some made their way as far away as the west coast of New Zealand and still lie there.

One of Schomberg's spars can occasionally be seen in the sands at Parker River. Schomberg was the largest vessel of her day and her owners had promised to break the "out and back to Melbourne" record held at the time by the Clipper ship Lightning. It was not to be.

JENNY OF HULL - lost at Brown's Creek West of Cape Otway, February 1858

This brig had sailed from Hull in the United Kingdom and was driven ashore at night, breaking up in the days following and becoming a total loss. All 12 crew were saved and were given emergency accommodation at the Cape Otway Lighthouse for nearly a month. Henry Bayles Ford reported the wreck to the Chief Harbour Master in Melbourne.

Remains of the lighter Jenny of Hull carried out as deck cargo were found three decades ago in the mouth of Browns Creek. The 1850s were the height of the Victorian gold rush and with the majority of wharf labourers at the goldfields it was common practice for vessels to carry a lighter to make unloading and loading cargo easier.

MARIE GABRIELLE – lost at Moonlight Head 25th November 1869

This large steel hulled French registered and crewed barque was driven ashore at Wreck Beach at Moonlight Head at 1am in the morning. She was carrying a cargo of tea loaded in China.

At daylight, as seas calmed, the crew got ashore safely via the ships boat and a small party set off to walk around the coast to Cape Otway and the lighthouse visible away to the east. Four of the crew waited at the wreck. By the third day the main party were without water and cut badly by the dense scrub. Next day they saw the lighthouse tower as close and called for help.

Children of the light keepers were playing down on the beach below the lighthouse and mistaking the cries of the crew (in French naturally) and alarmed by their appearance ran away and told the lighthouse superintendent Henry Ford.

A rescue party set out for Moonlight Head and brought the remaining crew members to the lighthouse. The survivors stayed at Cape Otway and at the Aire River Station, established by the Roadknight family in the 1840's, for over a month and were conveyed to Melbourne when the lighthouse supply vessel made its next (twice yearly) supply trip.

The Ford's corresponded with the Marie Gabrielle's master for a number of years – the hospitality not soon forgotten. Today you can see one of the anchors and a windlass from this ship on the reef west of the Moonlight Head car park – easily reached off the GOW. Your walk should be easier than it was for the crew of the Marie Gabrielle.

FIJI – lost at Moonlight Head 6th September 1891

The GOW passes the site of one of the worst wrecks on this section of coast in terms of loss of life but a wreck that brought an early Christmas to many of the local settlers. The 1400 ton ship Fiji was caught on a lee shore at night as the Moonlight Head coast loomed out of the night. An attempt at tacking off shore and away failed and the ship was driven ashore by the large seas running at the time.

As well as general cargo for Melbourne, the Fiji carried 200 cases of dynamite in her rear hold. The crew were even more than usual in cases of shipwreck, wanting to abandon ship as quick as possible notwithstanding the fact that their doomed vessel was 150 meters off shore and hard aground with a broken back. The ship's boat was launched but immediately capsized in the boiling seas.

When the Port Campbell Rescue Rocket team's heavy line failed to make it to Moonlight Head and night was approaching, the crew decided to use the light line fired to them earlier in the day to get ashore. One by one 10 men were swept away to their deaths while 16 made it to shore. The GOW passes the monument to the German sailors who lost their lives in the wreck of the ship Fiji in 1891 and of a local settler, Wilkinson who swam out to the wreck but was caught up in the wreckage and drowned after striking his head on the anchor chain.

To pass along this section of the GOW is to recall that lonely night the survivors spent on the beach and the terrible choice they were faced with. The non arrival of the heavy line became an important issue for the subsequent inquest. To this day no definitive reason can be given.

LADY LOCH – Blanket Bay Disaster 21st March 1896

The GOW passes behind Blanket Bay and this wide open beach has been popular with generations of holiday makers from the Colac-Otway District and further a field. It has always had a sense of the remote with a "no frills approach" to what a holiday constitutes.

Canvas rather than holiday homes - beach shacks dotted its shoreline up to the late 1970's and the location of a long gone jetty was betrayed by scores of pile stumps marching out into the bay. A number of these shacks were converted lighthouse store sheds as Blanket Bay was where all the supplies for Cape Otway were landed for decades. Annually, and from the

1870's, twice yearly, supplies came ashore and were then taken by wagon around to the lighthouse. This was a job that all at the lighthouse were required to help with. It was a time of great excitement for the lighthouse families as the Lady Loch Supply Vessel brought furniture, flour and any special item keepers had purchased when "up in town". Mechanics were also aboard who would service the lighthouse machinery.

Parker River Inlet – also accessible from the GOW, was used for the first 20 years of supplying Cape Otway, but it was far more dangerous and there was no margin for error with the narrow entrance.

In March 1896 the Lady Loch's supply boat capsized in the surf at Blanket Bay and three men drowned. Two are buried at the Cape Otway cemetery - accessible from the GOW - while the Chief Mate Thomas Griffith's body was brought back to Melbourne and is buried at Williamstown.

When the narrow gauge railway reached the Otway Ridge towns within a decade of this accident – Cape Otway Lighthouse received the majority of its supplies over the Otway Ranges – the same ranges that had defeated explorers 60 years previous.

MILANESIA – 1902The ship Milanesia was stranded for some days in 1902 on the beach that now bares its name. It is rare for ships to escape this coast when embayed between Moonlight Head and Cape Otway as this vessel was.

THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS - GUARDIANS OF THE COAST

The lives of the Cape Otway Keepers and their families were inextricably bound up with the coast their beacon guarded. From Cape Otway they could survey this coast all the way to Moonlight Head. They could see ships under sail coming in on this lee shore when the southerlies blew and then wave or fly signal flags as crews tacked back out away into Bass Strait.

The three keepers took various watches through the night and the light was maintained in all weathers – this was their sworn duty. The third assistant keeper generally cleaned the light at dawn ready for the next night's duty. In cases of shipwreck keepers rendered assistance but the nearest rescue rocket teams were based at Port Campbell. In times of mist, when the light could not be seen, exploding fog rockets were fired from the tower and could be heard out to sea and back around the coast. The rear stone shed at Cape Otway was where shipwreck survivors were housed.

The isolation of Cape Otway was slightly reduced in 1859 when the telegraph was connected to Geelong along the coast. From the GOW you can see the Signal Station (minus its wonderful tower) sitting high on the easternmost sand hill inside the Lighthouse reserve. An informative museum is housed here and explains the "cutting edge" technology this installation represented in confident Victoria at the time – the first cable link with Tasmania. The names of incoming vessels were telegraphed to Melbourne and other colonial capitals

on the eastern seaboard with any other important news via signal flags they carried aboard. The massive signal mast at Cape Otway, used for replying to these vessels, was restored in 2001 and is a permanent reminder of the excitement felt by all seeing their first sight of a new land and future. The Signal Station also housed the Cape Otway State School in the 1890's providing a regular Victorian syllabus for these most isolated of children. Nearby settlers' children rode along the coast from the Aire River to this school as well.¹

1. Extract taken from Parks Victoria Great Ocean Walk fact sheet prepared by Donald walker

2. Extract taken from the Great Ocean Walk information map Dec 2007 3. Extract taken from Pascoe and Harwood 1997

4. Extract taken from the Department of Sustainability and Environment 2003 5. Extract taken from the Lighthouse website

6. Otway ranges environmental network