

Great Ocean Walk™

Interpretive Notes

PLACE NAMES OF INTEREST ALONG THE GREAT OCEAN WALK (from east to west)

APOLLO BAY

Named after a small trading vessel named Apollo stranded there in the 1850's, owned by the Henty brothers of Portland. This stretch of coast was first sighted from the sea by Lt James Grant in 1801. He attempted to land without success describing the bold coast, naming Cape Otway and Cape Patten to the east – names we have today. Grant named the coast in the region of Apollo Bay "Wights Land" after an Admiralty colleague, but the name was never taken up and eclipsed by the amazing mapping work of Matthew Flinders less than two years later.

CAPE MARENGO

One of the few names deriving from the French expedition of 1800-1804 to New Holland and under Post Captain Nicholas Baudin – a rival of Matthew Flinders – that was not expunged from the maps by Royal Navy cartographers. This coast was first surveyed by this French expedition in 1802 – they referred to the whole of the southern coast of New Holland as Terre Napoleon. Marengo was one of the many battles won by Napoleon over the Austrians in Northern Italy just a few months before the Baudin expedition left Le Havre for the antipodes. Baudin died in Mauritius on the way back to France and the expedition was considered a failure by the French as while it brought home crate loads of exotic animals, birds and plants for scientific study it failed to gain territory in New Holland.

BLANKET BAY

Its name derives from the primary role this wide and open bay played as a campsite for those using the Cape Otway, Apollo Bay to Birregurra to Geelong track in the 1840's. A blanket was for resting – the bay gave fresh water and was for over three decades used as the landing place for the supplies (and staff) of the Cape Otway Lighthouse. Remains of the 1880's jetty built for the easier handling of lighthouse supplies can still be seen at low tide. It was here at Blanket Bay in 1895 that three sailors crewing the lighthouse vessel Lady Loch's whale boat drowned when the boat overturned. Some of their remains are buried in the Cape Otway Lighthouse cemetery.

POINT FRANKLIN

Named after the Van Diemen's Land Governor and Artic explorer Admiral John Franklin who first visited this coast as a midshipman under Flinders in 1802. He took a particular interest in the construction of lighthouses in Bass Strait in the 1840's. He was lost in the 1849 expedition by the Royal Navy to find the North West Passage linking the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean through the frozen labyrinth of northern Canada. He and his ships disappeared without trace.

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PARKER RIVER

Named by Port Phillip District Government surveyor George Douglas Smythe after his fiancée Amelia Parker in 1846 when completing his survey of the southern coastline.

CAPE (ALBANY) OTWAY

Named by Lt James Grant in December 1800 (after a Royal Navy Admiral and supporter of Grant) when in charge of the survey vessel Lady Nelson, as it made the first recorded passage west to east through Bass Strait. This high feature would become known as a landfall cape by generations of ship's masters, its great white stone tower erected in 1848 – hence the saying in Liverpool Hotels in the 1850's – "Last sight the Mersey – next The Otway".

STATION BEACH

*Located west of Cape Otway this long beach with Rainbow Falls nearby derived its name from the massive **pastoral station** taken up in 1846 by the Roadknight family on the Aire River.*

AIRE RIVER

Named after the River Aire in Scotland. Sadly it was the scene of the massacre of remnants of the Otway Tribe of native people in 1846.

JOHANNA BEACH

Named after the small brig Joanna wrecked there in 1843. The survivors were assisted in reaching Geelong by the local natives. A disastrous attempt to salvage the cargo of spirits resulted in three drownings several months later. La Trobe recounts the full story in the journals written at the time of his expedition to Cape Otway in 1846. Interestingly there were originally two mouths for the river – the western one closed over in the first decade of the 20th century.

MILANESIA BEACH

Named after a large sailing ship that was stranded in the shallows there for over a week in 1902. A very lucky escape!

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RYANS DEN

Named after Dr Charles Ryan, who in the early 1900's, broke his leg down on the beach and crawled all the way back up to the main ridge over a period of four days, then down to the Gellibrand River, then floated down to Princetown on a log.

CAPE VOLNEY

The other name (with Marengo) deriving for the Baudin expedition of 1802 that was not expunged from the maps by Royal Navy Hydrographers.

MOONLIGHT HEAD

Named by Matthew Flinders in 1802 – reportedly because of the prominence of this high headland in the moonlight. The Baudin name given a week prior was lost from use – war and rivalry leaves little room for courtesies of nomenclature.

Prepared by Donald Walker

Donald Walker is the author of "Beacons of Hope" – a history of the Cape Otway and King Island Lighthouses at the western entrance to Bass Strait. This work sets out the story of the rugged Otway Coast that the Great Ocean Walk now follows - its shipwrecks and settlements, its explorers and peoples. A practicing architect he continues to draw inspiration for his work in the Otways from the high ranges mist filled gullies as well as the cliff rimmed bays and the bold headlands the coast is known for.

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