



# Cape Otway Lightstation

Autumn newsletter 2006



The Lightstation has just recorded its busiest February ever, with 7,279 visitors, which is an increase of four per cent on last year's numbers.

The record result comes hot on the heels of an eight per cent increase in visitor numbers during January, compared to the same month in 2005.

Altogether, 12,101 visitors toured the lightstation this January compared with 11,202 last January.

An increase in daily visitors, compared with the same months last year, has been recorded for five consecutive months.

Visitor numbers were up by eight per cent in October, four per cent in November and six per cent in December.

## Making contact

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## Basking in the limelight

We're attracting media attention from around the world, with the lightstation set to appear on a Belgian reality TV program.

The series, which focuses on six Belgian couples all vying for the top prize of a wedding and honeymoon in Australia, is bringing one pair of romantic hopefuls to the station as a mid-series reward.

The couple will be treated to a tour of the lighthouse, and then airlifted from the grounds by Twelve Apostles Helicopters for a bird's eye tour of Cape Otway and those famous stacks of rock.

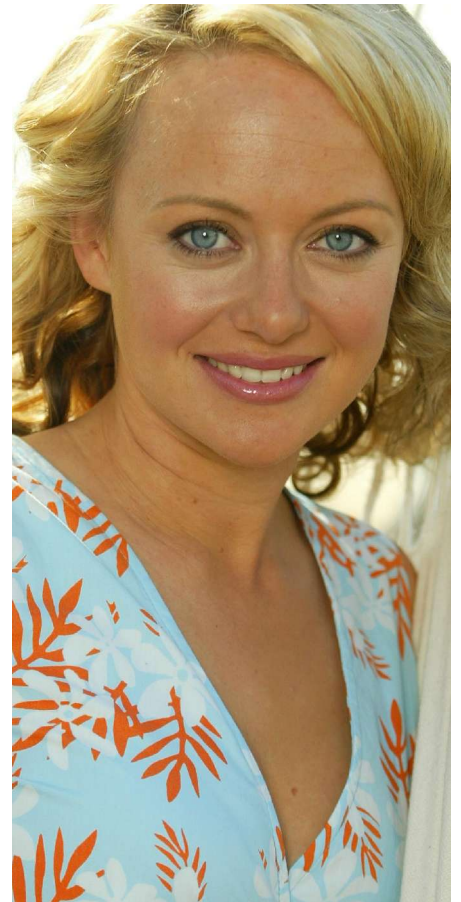
The lightstation has also been featured on Channel Ten's children's programme Totally Wild and Channel Seven's Great Outdoors.

The new Great Ocean Walk, which cuts through the station's car park, is creating a lot of media attention too.

It was the subject of the Great Outdoors programme last month and attracted a pair of New York journalists who called into the lightstation as part of an Epicurious walking tour.

A little closer to home, Lightstation happenings have also been reported in recent weeks in The Age, The Colac Herald, The Echo and on ABC Radio.

**Great Outdoors' Shelley Craft (right) paid the lightstation a visit**



## Keeping modern education real

History, mystery and excitement await 140 primary school children who are about to embark on a huge adventure - the Lighthouse Keeper's Quest.

The children from Ripponlea and Clifton Hill primary schools will find

themselves transported back to 1848, when Lieutenant James Ross Lawrence, the first lightkeeper was sacked for ungentlemanly language, drunkenness and failing to keep the light operational.

Thousands of immigrants lives are at stake if these young lightkeepers don't rise to the challenge, and ensure ships are safe from the perils of Bass Strait.

Lightstation manager Paul Thompson said the aim of the expeditions was for children to experience Australian pioneer life through the daily challenges and adventures of a lightkeeper.

Paul, who wrote the experiential education program, said children would learn about overcoming problems as a team, develop responsibility, enhance their self esteem and improve communication skills in the unique setting of the lightstation and Great Otway National Park.

Paul said the schools' visits in April would boost the local economy, with more than \$35,000 being shared among the lightstation, Hutchinson's Bus company from Birregurra, Apollo Bay Surf and Kayak, and Cape Otway Ocean Lodge. All provisions for the hungry little keepers will be sourced from within Colac Otway Shire.



Highlight of the Great Ocean Road - **Café** **Tours** **Accommodation** **Functions** **Schools**



Did you know?

By 1891 the Cape Otway Lighthouse's 21 Argand Lamps were replaced by a single light source - the massive first order lens, which remains here today and is valued at \$5 million. Although beacon technology had advanced considerably since the lighthouse opened in 1848, Cape Otway remained a remote and isolated destination. Having made it all the way from Birmingham, the delicate lens components still had to survive an assault course. They were off-loaded from the supply vessel onto row boats, carried through the surf and onto Blanket Bay beach, before the overland safari to the lightstation where the components were reassembled to produce the station's signatory white flashes in groups of three every minute.

## Station continues to add attractions

THE secret war history of Cape Otway's radar station, is destined to become better known as part of an ongoing refurbishment of the natural, cultural and historical features of the lightstation.

In a rarely remembered, but vital story of Australia's war history, a US merchant ship sank off Cape Otway after being hit by a German mine. The SS City of Rayville was struck by one of 40 mines laid off Cape Otway. All but one of the 37 crewmen were rescued by fisherman on November 8, 1940. The lost seaman was America's first WW II casualty.

A rare style of radar bunker was built at Cape Otway in response to the 100 mines the Germans laid in Bass Strait. Although little is known about the bunker, the lightstation management want to preserve its fascinating history.

Recent press about the bunker's mysterious past has attracted war veterans who are prepared to share their memories of the bunker. Their stories will be used to interpret the site.

The radar station is undergoing a \$20,000 restoration and a trail to the bunker has been upgraded and is now suitable for limited ability access.

The \$380,000 worth of roadworks to seal the last 500 metres of the Lightstation Road, where it joins the car park, has been completed and more than \$45,000 has been spent on a makeover of the kiosk and reception which now has a new covered deck with picnic tables.

## Big plans to preserve Otways' significant Aboriginal history

SOUTHERN Otway Indigenous Group has joined forces with Cape Otway Lightstation in an exciting new project planned to promote the rich Aboriginal heritage of the Otways.

They have made a joint funding submission to the Federal Department of Environment and Heritage Program, and hope to build a 1km long indigenous heritage trail within the 98ha Lightstation reserve.

The Government has been asked to fund almost \$97,000 of the \$117,000 project, with the remainder being funded by the lightstation lessee Tourism Great Ocean Road.

Lightstation assistant manager Craig Donahoo said: "The trail will be constructed along the coast and inland through ancient dune systems, near archeological sites, and through a

variety of vegetation and habitat areas which were important to the traditional owners - the Gadabanud.

"The visitor will be connected to the environment through the interpretation of indigenous culture, and this will be achieved using a variety of mediums, including signs, art, and a camp."

A section of the trail will be built specifically for indigenous ceremony and other cultural activities, and will include a traditional-style shelter.

Visitors to the site will be able to self-guide along the walk and local indigenous guides will be employed as part of the scheme.

An indigenous cultural display is currently housed in one of the historic lightkeeper buildings, but in the long term it is hoped the precinct will become a registered Keeping Place.



## Isn't it time you escaped?

**Couples can enjoy a romantic getaway to Cape Otway Lightstation with three nights for the price of two, enjoying a complimentary Devonshire tea on arrival.**

**After 5pm you'll have the grounds of the lightstation all to yourselves. Soak up the sunsets, watch the kangaroos and koalas, and enjoy the ocean views.**

This is the first Cape Otway Lightstation quarterly newsletter, designed to keep neighbours, business partners, tourism operators and friends up to date with happenings at our iconic tourist attraction.



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