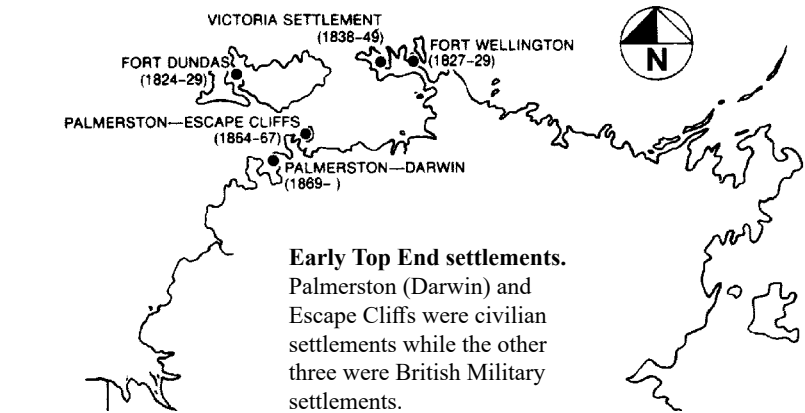
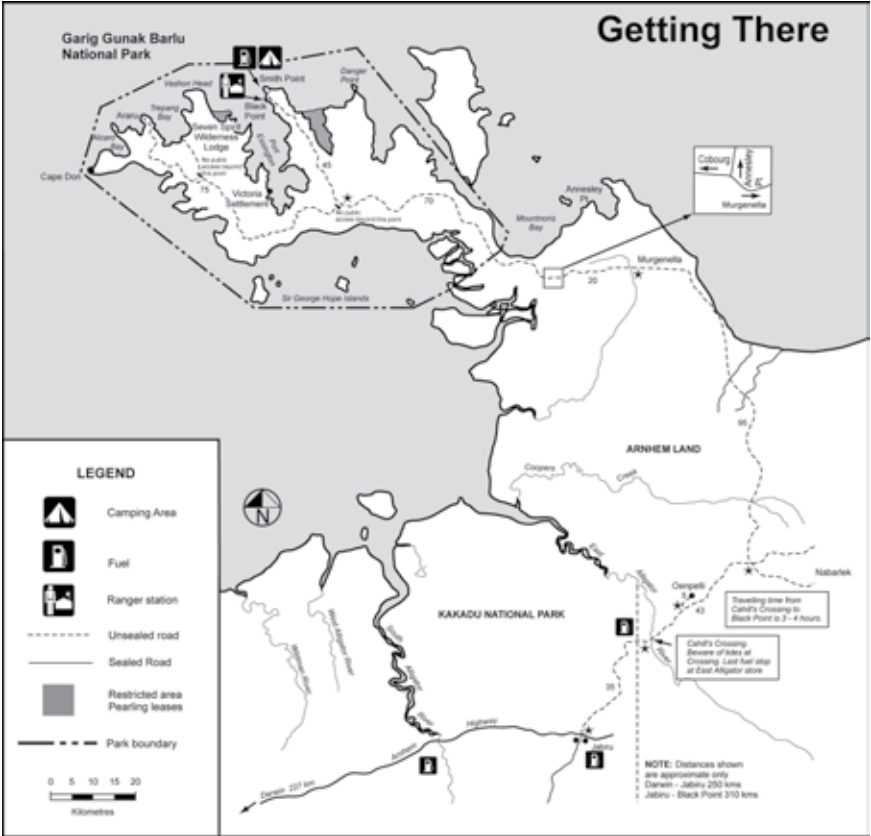


Victoria Settlement



Early Top End settlements. Palmerston (Darwin) and Escape Cliffs were civilian settlements while the other three were British Military settlements.



Please Remember

This site is of importance to all Australians. We ask that you show respect.

Please:

1. Check entry permit requirements at the Parks and Wildlife Commission, Darwin office, before visiting Cobourg Peninsula.
2. Call in to Black Point Ranger Station before you explore the peninsula, and tell the Ranger of your destination. Access may be restricted in some areas.

Leave these historic sites in the same condition as when you arrived. Do not collect souvenirs, or disturb the remains of European settlements, Macassan sites or areas of importance to Aboriginal people.

Remove all of your litter from the Park, recycle what you can at home.

For further information:

- See the Cultural Centre display at Black Point.
- Refer to 'Forsaken Settlement' by Peter G. Spillett, published by Lansdowne Press.

INFORMATION SHEET



Garig Gunak Barlu National Park



Victoria Settlement



The ruins of Victoria Settlement bear a poignant reminder of hardship and desperation of the early years of colonisation.

With your information sheet in hand, explore the ruins. Make sure you wear strong footwear, a hat and take drinking water with you. See 'Please Remember' on the last page of this brochure.

Boating to the Settlement

Victoria Settlement is located 25 km from Black Point on the shores of Port Essington and accessible only by sea. You will require a minimum of 6 hours and at least a 20 HP boat. Before proceeding past Black Point please tell the Rangers of your plans. The most convenient landing spots at the settlement are at the beach to the south of the old jetty and Adam Head. (See map overleaf).

Aboriginal Ownership

Aboriginal people have seen many strangers come to their land and have observed many phases of settlement on their land. Members of the Madjunbalmi clan are the traditional land owners and play an important role in the management of the area.

Ancient Traders

The Macassans travelled from the city of Macassar in the Celebes (Sulawesi) in Indonesia in search of trepang ('sea slugs' or 'beche-de-mer'). The trepang formed the basis of a flourishing trade with China, where it was considered a delicacy.

There was trade between the Macassans and Aboriginal people of the area.

European History Begins

In 1818, Captain Phillip Parker King explored and named Cobourg Peninsula and Port Essington. His surveys also determined the locations of the first European settlements in northern Australia: Fort Dundas, Fort Wellington and Victoria.

With the fear of Dutch and French expansion in the southern East Indies, the British Government decided to establish a settlement along Australia's northern coastline. After the failure and abandonment of two settlements, Victoria was constructed.

An Optimistic Start

Shortly after its establishment in 1838, Victoria had developed the appearance of a considerable village. A Governor's house, church, hospital and a collection of military buildings created a British colonial character. Cottages with shingled or thatched roofs housed the new settlers. Next to each cottage small gardens supplemented the settlement's main gardens with crops of pumpkin, cabbage and a variety of fruit.

Gordon Bremer, first commander of the Settlement, wrote in praise of the community, of the conduct of officers and men, and of the cheerfulness with which they went about their laborious duties.

Decline of Structure and Spirit

By the seventh year of its existence, progress on the Settlement had ceased. Expectations of trade had not been met and over the following years supplies became infrequent and fever and death more common. Gradually the long periods of isolation, together with the oppressive conditions and climate, drained the settlers of spirit and life. Buildings were no longer maintained and the fate of Victoria was sealed.

Abandonment of the Settlement in November 1849 produced mixed feelings.

Some settlers were pleased to escape Victoria's hardships while others had difficulty in realizing that eleven years of their misery was all to no purpose.

Long after Victoria Settlement was abandoned, the region continued to be used by pearlers, trepang fishermen, pastoralists, salt gatherers, buffalo shooters and timber cutters.

Since the Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land, Sanctuary and Marine Park Act came into being in 1981, the Peninsula has been managed by the Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary and Marine Park Board. The area remains Aboriginal land for the use and occupation of the traditional owners, but is also managed as a National Park for the benefit and enjoyment of all people.

Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory

nt.gov.au/parks

Regional Office
Level 4 Goyder Building
25 Chung Wah Tce, PALMERSTON
PO Box 496 PALMERSTON NT 0831

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Ruins of Victoria Settlement

This map will help you explore Victoria Settlement and provide an insight into a brave attempt by British settlers to establish a small, isolated community in the 1830s. Amongst the settlement's ruins you will find evidence of previous Aboriginal occupation and the influence of Macassan trepangers, as well as the structures of later pastoralists. As you walk, read the story which corresponds with the label on the map. The circled numbers are visible ruins you'll pass on the way.

1. Lewis' cottage, later ruins

A few flagging stones are all that remains of the house, stockyards and boatshed built by John Lewis who came overland from Pine Creek in the early 1870s. With his partners, he leased part of the Peninsula with the intention of providing buffalo meat for the Darwin market. These stones were probably taken from settlement buildings.

Aboriginal Midden

Victoria Settlement is part of the land of the Madjunbalmi clan, one of the clans that have traditionally used Cobourg Peninsula. The midden, where they gathered to eat shellfish and other seafoods, can be identified by the dense vegetation cover and shell fragments littering the ground.

Aboriginal people generally lived in harmony with the garrison and traded with them. Aboriginal people traded turtles, hearts of cabbage tree palms and shellfish for metal implements, clothing, tobacco and bottles.

2. Magazine

Ammunition for the garrison was stored in the magazine which was sunk into the ground to minimise damage in the event of an explosion. The magazine is all that remains of the fortification which once included a large square timber tower and blockhouse.

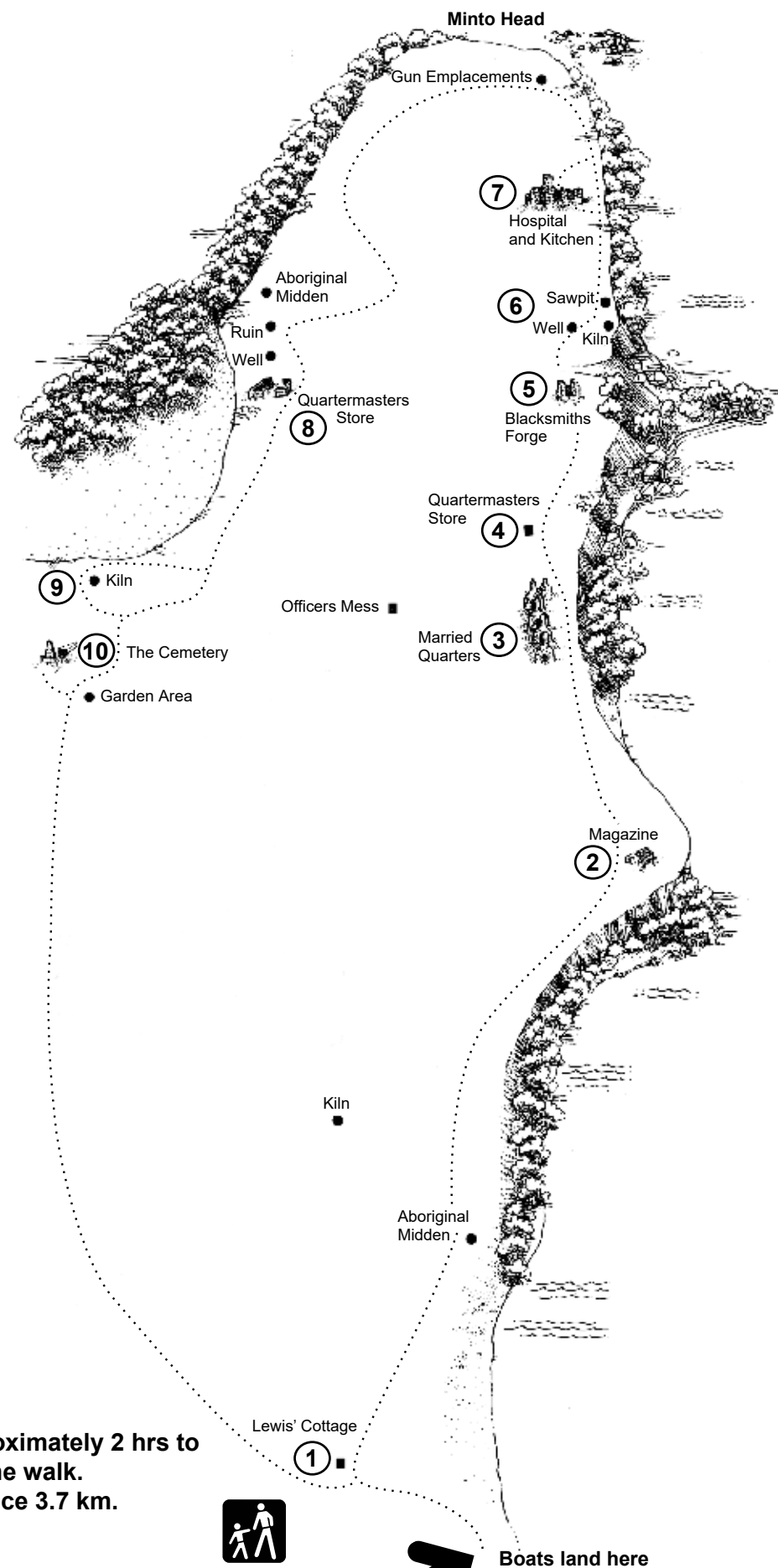
Government House

A series of stone piers indicate the site of Government House which was a prefabricated building transported from Sydney. Placed on stone piers to overcome the need to level the ground, it was found that a raised building helped to relieve the problem of termites and made it more comfortable in the tropical climate. A cyclone in 1839 lifted it off its piers and dropped it three metres away. This was one of Australia's earliest elevated dwellings, a form of architecture now common in tropical Australia.

Victoria received many visitors. In April 1839 a team of French naturalists visited the Settlement and were entertained at Government House. The seals from a French Brandy and a Chateau Margaux Claret label, found on the site, indicate it was a festive occasion.

3. Married Quarters

The semicircular stone chimneys of the married quarters are examples of the distinctive Cornish round chimney, indicating perhaps that amongst the Marines were one or more Cornishmen. The ironstone with which the chimneys were constructed was used extensively in the Settlement and was quarried on site. Timber was also used in the construction and the lime mortar and rendering on the interior walls was probably made from coral and shells in one of the kilns in the Settlement.



Allow approximately 2 hrs to complete the walk.
Total distance 3.7 km.



Start of walk



Boats land here

4. Quartermaster's Store

Stores for the Settlement came from many places including Sydney, India, Timor and Kissa Island (off Java). Stores often ran low, particularly medical supplies.

Unexpected visitors, like the survivors of two shipwrecks in 1845, put further pressure on limited supplies.

5. Blacksmith's Forge

A cyclone in 1839 had a tremendous impact on the Settlement. Stores were lost, buildings damaged and Her Majesty's sloop 'Pelorus' ran aground.

With the skills of Victoria's men and the use of local materials, rebuilding soon commenced. A sawpit was dug, the blacksmith made iron implements and fortunately for the Settlement, a crew member from the 'Pelorus' was a brickmaker. While the ship was being repaired he produced bricks for the Settlement using a combination of clay, sand and ironstone.

The Jetty

The original jetty (43 metres long) was constructed early in 1839 but was destroyed by the cyclone later that year. A second jetty was built shortly afterwards.

6. Well

Captain Phillip Parker King surveyed this coastline at the end of the wet season and falsely surmised that the region had an adequate water supply. In actual fact, the area had a long dry season and many wells had to be dug for fresh water.

The Sawpit

Was constructed after the cyclone to assist with the rebuilding efforts.

7. Hospital and Kitchen

The ruins of the hospital kitchen and bakehouse are on a rise overlooking the foundations of the hospital rooms below.

The garrison suffered from dysentery, diarrhoea, influenza, scurvy and malaria. At times the hospital was crowded with half the garrison being desperately ill with fever and others being only capable of light duties. At such times maintenance of the stock and gardens was not always possible and buildings fell into disrepair.

Aboriginal Midden

See previous description.

8. Quartermaster's Store

See number 4.

9. Lime Kiln

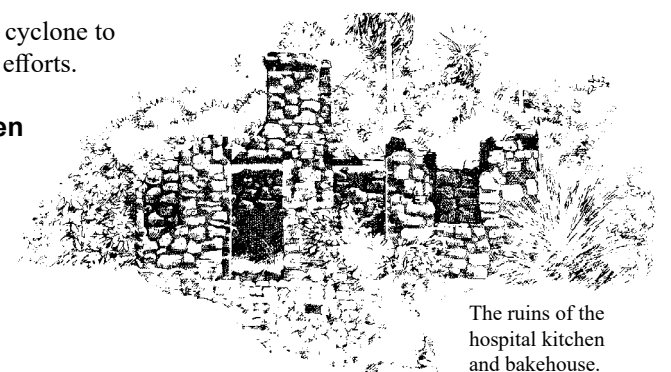
Shells and coral were fired in the kilns to produce the lime mortar which was used in the construction of many buildings in the Settlement.

10. The Cemetery

Most people in the Settlement were stricken with malaria at one time or another. It eventually took the lives of almost a quarter of the residents.

Garden

The garden adjacent to the cemetery was one of a series which supplied the Settlement with a range of crops such as bananas, oranges, lemons, tamarinds, sugar cane and guavas. However, despite the settlers' hard labour in establishing the gardens, poor soils produced disappointing crops and unharvested food was often eaten by rats. Agriculture, it seems, never rose above subsistence level. A few old fence posts mark the location of the gardens.



The ruins of the hospital kitchen and bakehouse.

Magazine

