

Historical archaeological site card

Heritage Inventory number and name

H7621-0010

OLD COACH ROAD, DEANS MARSH-LORNE ROAD

H7621-0010

Date received

Thursday, 22 May 2025

Date accepted

2/6/2025

Hermes Number

7026

1. Place details

Place name: OLD COACH ROAD, DEANS MARSH-LORNE ROAD.

Heritage Inventory Number (if any): H7621-0010

Other or former names:

Municipal Council: Surf Coast Shire

Address: PENNYROYAL-WYMBOOLIEL RD BENWERRIN, SURF COAST SHIRE

Geographical coordinates (GDA94 or WGS84)
expressed in degrees and decimals of a degree:

Mapsheet name and number (1:100,000 only): 7521-7621

2. Cadastral location

County:

Parish:

Historical archaeological site card

Township:

Section:

Allotment:

Standard Parcel Identifier (SPI):

3. Details of site owner or land manager (where known)

First Name:

Surname:

Business or organisation name: Department of Transport and Planning

Position title:

Address: 1 Spring Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Email address:

Telephone: 9655 6666

4. Details of site occupier (where known)

First Name:

Surname:

Business or organisation name:

Position title:

Address:

Email address:

Telephone:

5. Aboriginal cultural values

Site has known Aboriginal values NO

Site is recorded on the Victorian
Aboriginal Heritage Register NO

6. Current description of site

Please provide description:

The Old Coach Road represents the earliest European pathway for horses and wheeled traffic through the Otway Forest between Deans Marsh and Lorne. The first inland route to Lorne was used by Europeans from the 1840s. As visitation to Lorne increased, the route from Deans-Marsh underwent several upgrades and realignments. There have been at least three major routes from Deans Marsh to Lorne, with the most recent being the current road alignment, dating from the 1950s.

In the early 2000s, a fibre optic cable was installed along what is referred to as Old Coach Road. It is understood that there may have been attempts to minimise the impacts of the trenching to the original route, by trenching through the middle of the track, however, it is unlikely that much of the original route survives.

The current VHI extent represents section of Deans Marsh-Lorne Road where the original and other former routes are believed to intersect with the modern roadway; OCR N1 represents a section of the former track north of Benwerrin Mt Sabine Road (Figures 1-4) and OCR S1, a section south of Benwerrin Mt Sabine Road (Figures 5-8). These locations have been determined through a desktop review, comprising the rectification of old plans and maps and a brief site inspection which found that tracks and break in vegetation are visible from the roadway. Photographs of these locations have been taken from the edge of roadway; however, no formal survey of the site has taken place.

Where the extent veers from the current roadway, a cleared section of track is visible, along which fibre optic markers are placed is visible (see Figure 2). These cleared locations are assumed to be associated with Old Coach Road.

Date recorded: Wednesday, 01 April 1998

On Victorian Heritage Register

On Heritage Overlay

Associated sites: H7621-0011, Sexton's Store

7. Place history

Please provide a brief history of the place (at least 1 to 2 paragraphs):

Known as Loutitt Bay, the Lorne area was first settled by Europeans in the mid-1850s, when a small pastoral holding was established in the area in 1852 (Victorian Places, 2015). The primary industry of the region was timber-cutting and logging, however, the area's natural appeal was quickly renowned and by 1869, a guest house was opened to accommodate the growing number of visitors (Victorian Places, 2025). Subdivision of the town and surroundings also began at this time, with the township being named Lorne in 1871.

During this period, the only access to Lorne was by boat along the coast, or via Deans Marsh and down through the mountains, as the Great Ocean Road would not be constructed until the 1920s. The first track used by Europeans to Lorne from the 1840s was by foot. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that this track followed an Aboriginal pathway through the Otway Forest, as it followed ridgelines to the coast (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). By the 1860s, the track was a well-established bridle track. Coinciding with the subdivision, in 1869, the Winchelsea Shire sought funding to widen and upgrade the track to make it suitable for wheeled transport (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). In 1872, the track was surveyed and cleared for wheeled traffic. Cobb & Co. and Mountjoy coaches were operating between the railway station at Winchelsea to Lorne by 1880 with the journey through the Otway Ranges taking around 6 hours (Lorne Historical Society).

Until 1879, the road between Deans Marsh and Lorne was a cleared track (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). In 1879, the area was surveyed and the route formally defined. The surveyed route was then upgraded. Typically, early roads were graded using horse-drawn graders and then gravelled, which would have been left and tampered down by traffic (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). The gravelled surface would then have been watered down and hand-raked to a smooth finish. This style of road is known as a 'waterbound macadam' and is understood to have performed well until the introduction of cars (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). There is no evidence, however, that this method was implemented along Old Coach Road.

The road would have been maintained along the original route until around WWI, when the road was upgraded again for cars. These upgrades saw the route deviate, as cars meant that the road could have less curves and steeper grades (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). The road was also asphalted for cars and was classed as an 'all weather road' by 1926. It is assumed that this route is depicted in the 1933 tourist map of Lorne as 'road from Dean Marsh to Lorne'.

The road was again re-aligned in the 1950s, which represents the current road route.

8. Analysis of site (interpretation)

Include phases in the development of the site, functions and activities represented, as well as current place use:

The history of the route between Deans Marsh and Lorne indicates that there were at least three roads (Figure 10):

1. Old Coach Road
2. The 'all weather road'
3. The current roadway

Historical archaeological site card

These routes did not follow each exactly, rather, changes in the course, curve and grade that occurred in response to changes in transport meant that the routes did not run parallel and often crossed over one another.

The route was first identified in 1997 and formally surveyed in 1998 as part of investigations for the proposed fibre optic cable (Murphy 1997 and 1998; Figure 11). The survey found that the original route was gravelled with any rock material as typical water-bound macadam, but rather was only roughly graded dirt track approximately 3.5 metres wide (Murphy, 1998, p. 9). The survey found the earliest Deans Marsh to Lorne Road was preserved between Seaview Road and Benwerrin, where it retained its original profile. The route is described as being in a good state of preservation until the it intersects with the transmission line, where the route's profile was disturbed. The condition of the road route was described as improved when the transmission line shifts to a more direct way to Lorne. The road was said to be in-tact until it ended at the Lorne cemetery.

The 1997 and 1998 investigations state that Old Coach Road was the preferred alignment for the installation of the fibre optic cable (Murphy 1997; Murphy 1998). It is also understood that Heritage Victoria issued Consent 001, relating to the destruction of over 50% of the site to facilitate the installation of the fibre optic cable in 1999. The installation of this cable would have involved significant trenching and would have likely impacted the majority of the track identified during the survey (Murphy 1998). It was recommended that opportunities to limit impacts to the former road by trenching through the middle of the 3.5 metre track and retaining the outer edges should be considered, however, there is no evidence of this methodology being employed (Murphy, 1998, p. 25).

There is no question that a fibre optic cable was installed. Evidence of the cable was identified during site inspections where telecommunication markers were identified. Rectification of the alignment of the cable from Before You Dig data (BYD, 2025) indicates that the cable follows a very similar alignment as the surveyed track Murphy (1998) identified as Old Coach Road. While slightly offset from Murphy's survey of Old Coach Road, this divergence is likely the result of errors and inaccuracies from the geo-rectification of hand-drawn plans into modern GIS systems. It is more likely, based on the reporting associated with Old Coach Road, that the cable was installed directly along Old Coach Road.

Reporting associated with Old Coach Road, and evidence of the installed fibre optic cable would indicate that much, if not all, of the original route was destroyed when trenching for the cable occurred. The current extent of Old Coach Road is intended to represent portions of Deans Marsh-Lorne Road where historical plans and survey results indicate that the modern road intersects with Old Coach Road and other historical tracks through the Otway Forest. Former tracks veering from the current road are visible in these locations, as are fibre optic cable markers, which lends to the idea that these locations are associated with the original road.

9. Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The original route from Deans Marsh to Lorne, 'Old Coach Road' is significant.

How is it significant?



Historical archaeological site card

Old Coach Road is of archaeological and historical significance.

Why is it significant?

Old Coach Road has low archaeological potential due to previous disturbance associated with the installation of the fibre optic cable. Trenching for this cable is likely to have destroyed or at least significantly impacted any areas where the alignment was installed directly along the Old Coach Road. For this reason, and the fact that the track is reported as a 'roughly graded dirt track', without a gravel surface typical of water-bound macadam roads, Old Coach Road is unlikely to retain meaningful archaeological deposits related to the former road.

Despite the low archaeological potential of the site, the alignment of Old Coach Road retains historical significance as a representation of colonial movement throughout the state and into western Victoria. As the earliest way for wheeled traffic to travel from Deans Marsh to Lorne, the route is associated with the increase in industry and tourism along the Victorian coast. The various iterations of the road from the late 19th and early 20th centuries speaks of the importance of the route prior to the construction of the Great Ocean Road and demonstrates how changes to travel and the introduction of cars altered roads and pathways through the state.

10. Suggested Protection :

11. Threat

Is the place under any threat? If so, what is the threat?

12. References / Informants

Please list books or other sources that may provide historical information about this place.

13. Attachments

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

14. Recording archaeologist's details

First Name:

Surname:

Business or organisation name: Major Road Projects Victoria

Position title:

Business or company address: 230 Colac Road, Highton Victoria 3216

Email address:

Telephone: 0457040386

15. Declaration

I state that the information I have given on this form is correct to the best of my knowledge.



MAY 2025

H7621-0010

Old Coach Road

Site Card Application

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....2

Site details 3

Site Assessment..... 3

Place History..... 6

Analysis of the Site (Interpretation) 8

Statement of Significance..... 11

H7621-0010 Old Coach Road

Site details

Site Name

Old Coach Road, Deans Marsh-Lorne Road

Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI) Number

H7621-0010

Other or former names

N/A

Responsible Authority

Surf Coast Shire

Is the site entirely on Crown Land?

No

Address or GPS Coordinates

Deans Marsh-Lorne Road, Benwerrin, Victoria

Map Sheet Number

- 7520-7620 (Princetown Otway)
- 7521-7621 (Corangamite-Colac)

Site Assessment

Current description of the site

The Old Coach Road represents the earliest European pathway for horses and wheeled traffic through the Otway Forest between Deans Marsh and Lorne. The first inland route to Lorne was used by Europeans from the 1840s. As visitation to Lorne increased, the route from Deans-Marsh underwent several upgrades and realignments. There have been at least three major routes from Deans Marsh to Lorne, with the most recent being the current road alignment, dating from the 1950s.

In the early 2000s, a fibre optic cable was installed along what is referred to as Old Coach Road. It is understood that there may have been attempts to minimise the impacts of the trenching to the original route, by trenching through the middle of the track, however, it is unlikely that much of the original route survives.

The current VHI extent represents section of Deans Marsh-Lorne Road where the original and other former routes are believed to intersect with the modern roadway; OCR N1 represents a section of the former track north of Benwerrin Mt Sabine Road (Figures 1-4) and OCR S1, a section south of Benwerrin Mt Sabine Road (Figures 5-8). These locations have been determined through a desktop review, comprising the rectification of old plans and maps and a brief site inspection which found that tracks and break in vegetation are visible from the roadway. Photographs of these locations have been taken from the edge of roadway; however, no formal survey of the site has taken place.

Where the extent veers from the current roadway, a cleared section of track is visible, along which fibre optic markers are places is visible (see Figure 2). These cleared locations are assumed to be associated with Old Coach Road.



Figure 1: South-eastern section of OCR N1, facing east showing fire track that likely following the alignment of Old Coach Road (photo: Whelans 2025).



Figure 2: North eastern section of OCR N1, facing south-east, showing fire track that likely following the alignment of Old Coach Road and a fibre optic cable marker (photo: Whelans 2025).



Figure 3: North-western view of OCR N1, facing west, showing possible continuation of old track (photo: Whelans 2025).



Figure 4: North-western view of OCR N1, facing west, showing possible continuation of old track (photo: Whelans 2025).



Figure 5: View of OCR S1, facing south, showing slight break in vegetation that likely represents the former road (photo: Whelans 2025).



Figure 6: View of OCR S1, facing south, at break in vegetation that can be seen as extending south into the forest (photo: Whelans 2025).



Figure 7: View of OCR S1, facing north, showing a possible break in vegetation continuing to the north east (photo: Whelans 2025).



Figure 8: View of OCR S1, facing south from a break in the vegetation that possibly represents the former Road (photo: Whelans 2025).

Date recorded

1997

Is it on the Victorian Heritage Register (HVR)?

No

Is it on the Heritage Overlay (HO)?

No

Are there any associated sites?

Yes, H7621-0011, Sexton's Store

Place History

Known as Loutitt Bay, the Lorne area was first settled by Europeans in the mid-1850s, when a small pastoral holding was established in the area in 1852 (Victorian Places, 2015). The primary industry of the region was timber-cutting and logging, however, the area's natural appeal was quickly renowned and by 1869, a guest house was opened to accommodate the growing number of visitors (Victorian Places, 2025). Subdivision of the town and surroundings also began at this time, with the township being named Lorne in 1871.

During this period, the only access to Lorne was by boat along the coast, or via Deans Marsh and down through the mountains, as the Great Ocean Road would not be constructed until the 1920s. The first track used by Europeans to Lorne from the 1840s was by foot. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that this track followed an Aboriginal pathway through the Otway Forest, as it followed ridgelines to the coast (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). By the 1860s, the track was a well-established bridle track. Coinciding with the subdivision, in 1869, the Winchelsea Shire sought funding to widen and upgrade the track to make it suitable for wheeled transport (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). In 1872, the track was surveyed and cleared for wheeled traffic. Cobb & Co. and Mountjoy coaches were operating between the railway station at Winchelsea to Lorne by 1880 with the journey through the Otway Ranges taking around 6 hours (Lorne Historical Society).

Until 1879, the road between Deans Marsh and Lorne was a cleared track (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). In 1879, the area was surveyed and the route formally defined. The surveyed route was then upgraded. Typically, early roads were graded using horse-drawn graders and then gravelled, which would have been left and tampered down by traffic (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). The gravelled surface would then have been watered down and hand-raked to a smooth finish. This style of road is known as a 'waterbound macadam' and is understood to have performed well until the introduction of cars (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). There is no evidence, however, that this method was implemented along Old Coach Road.

The road would have been maintained along the original route until around WWI, when the road was upgraded again for cars. These upgrades saw the route deviate, as cars meant that the road could have less curves and steeper grades (Murphy, 1998, p. 5). The road was also asphalted for cars and was classed as an 'all weather road' by 1926. It is assumed that this route is depicted in the 1933 tourist map of Lorne as 'road from Dean Marsh to Lorne'.

The road was again re-aligned in the 1950s, which represents the current road route.

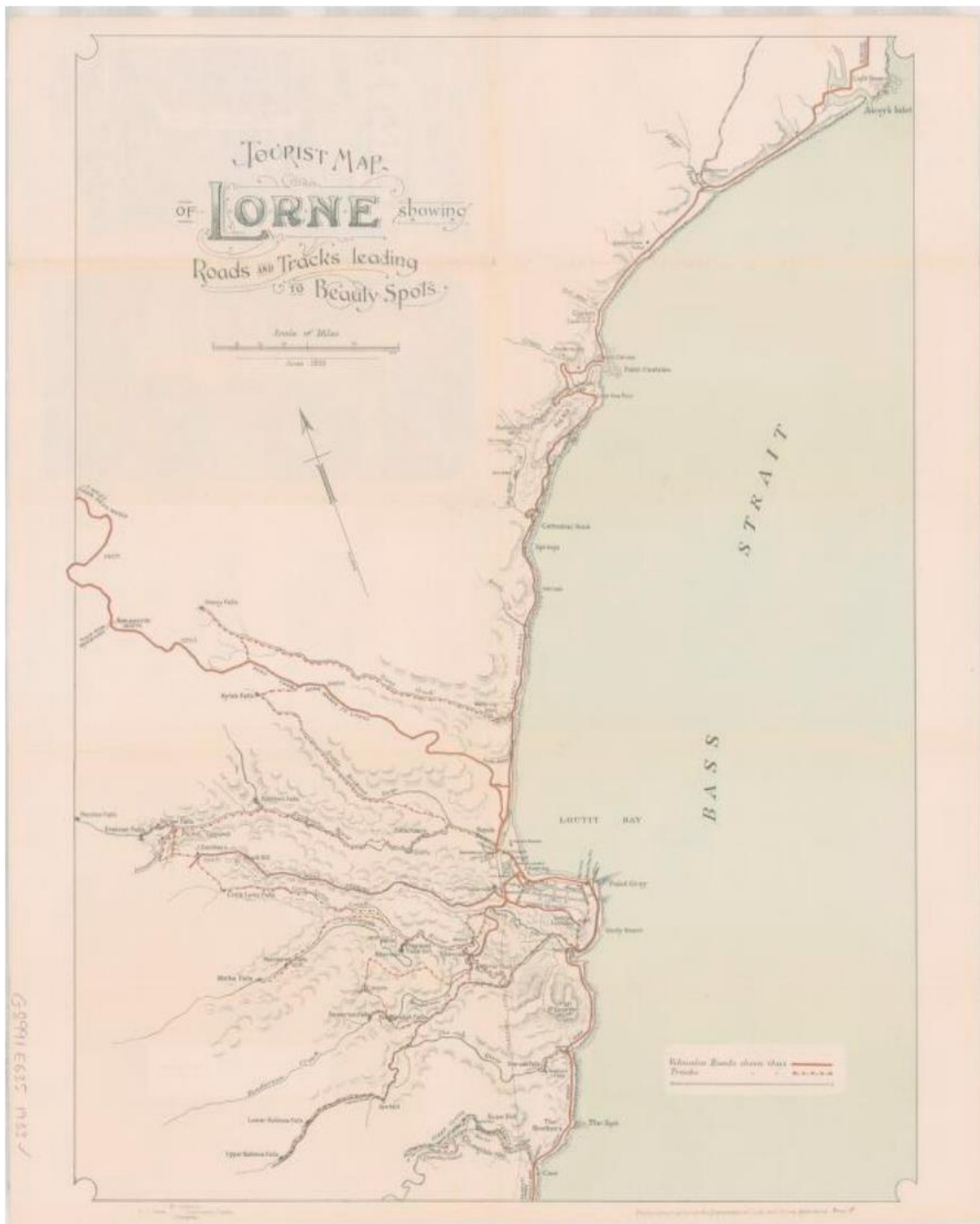


Figure 9: 1933 tourist map of Lorne, showing the 'road from Deans Marsh to Lorne' thought to be the all weather road upgrade of Old Coach Road (source: Trove 2025).

Analysis of the Site (Interpretation)

The history of the route between Deans Marsh and Lorne indicates that there were at least three roads (Figure 10):

1. Old Coach Road
2. The 'all weather road'
3. The current roadway

These routes did not follow each other. Changes in the course, curve and grade that occurred in response to changes in transport meant that the routes did not run parallel and often crossed over one another.

The route was first identified in 1997 and formally surveyed in 1998 as part of investigations for the proposed fibre optic cable (Murphy 1997 and 1998; Figure 11). The survey found that the original route was gravelled with any rock material as typical water-bound macadam, but rather was only roughly graded dirt track approximately 3.5 metres wide (Murphy, 1998, p. 9). The survey found the earliest Deans Marsh to Lorne Road was preserved between Seaview Road and Benwerrin, where it retained its original profile. The route is described as being in a good state of preservation until the it intersects with the transmission line, where the route's profile was disturbed. The condition of the former road was described as improved when the transmission line shifts to a more direct way to Lorne. The road was said to be in-tact until it ended at the Lorne cemetery.

The 1997 and 1998 investigations state that Old Coach Road was the preferred alignment for the installation of the fibre optic cable (Murphy 1997; Murphy 1998). It is also understood that Heritage Victoria issued Consent 001, relating to the destruction of over 50% of the site to facilitate the installation of the fibre optic cable in 1999. The installation of this cable would have involved significant trenching and would have likely impacted the majority of the track identified during the survey (Murphy 1998). It was recommended that opportunities to limit impacts to the former road by trenching through the middle of the 3.5 metre track and retaining the outer edges should be considered, however, there is no evidence of this methodology being employed (Murphy, 1998, p. 25).

There is no question that a fibre optic cable was installed. Evidence of the cable was identified during site inspections where telecommunication markers were identified (Figure 2). Rectification of the alignment of the cable from Before You Dig data (BYD, 2025) indicates that the cable follows a very similar alignment as the surveyed track Murphy (1998) identified as Old Coach Road. While slightly offset from Murphy's survey of Old Coach Road, this divergence is likely the result of errors and inaccuracies from the geo-rectification of hand-drawn plans into modern GIS systems. It is more likely, based on the reporting associated with Old Coach Road, that the cable was installed directly along Old Coach Road.

Reporting associated with Old Coach Road, and evidence of the installed fibre optic cable would indicate that much, if not all, of the original route was destroyed when trenching for the cable occurred. The current extent of Old Coach Road is intended to represent portions of Deans Marsh-Lorne Road where historical plans and survey results indicate that the modern road intersects with Old Coach Road and other historical tracks through the Otway Forest. Former tracks veering from the current road are visible in these locations, as are fibre optic cable markers, which lends to the idea that these locations are associated with the original road.

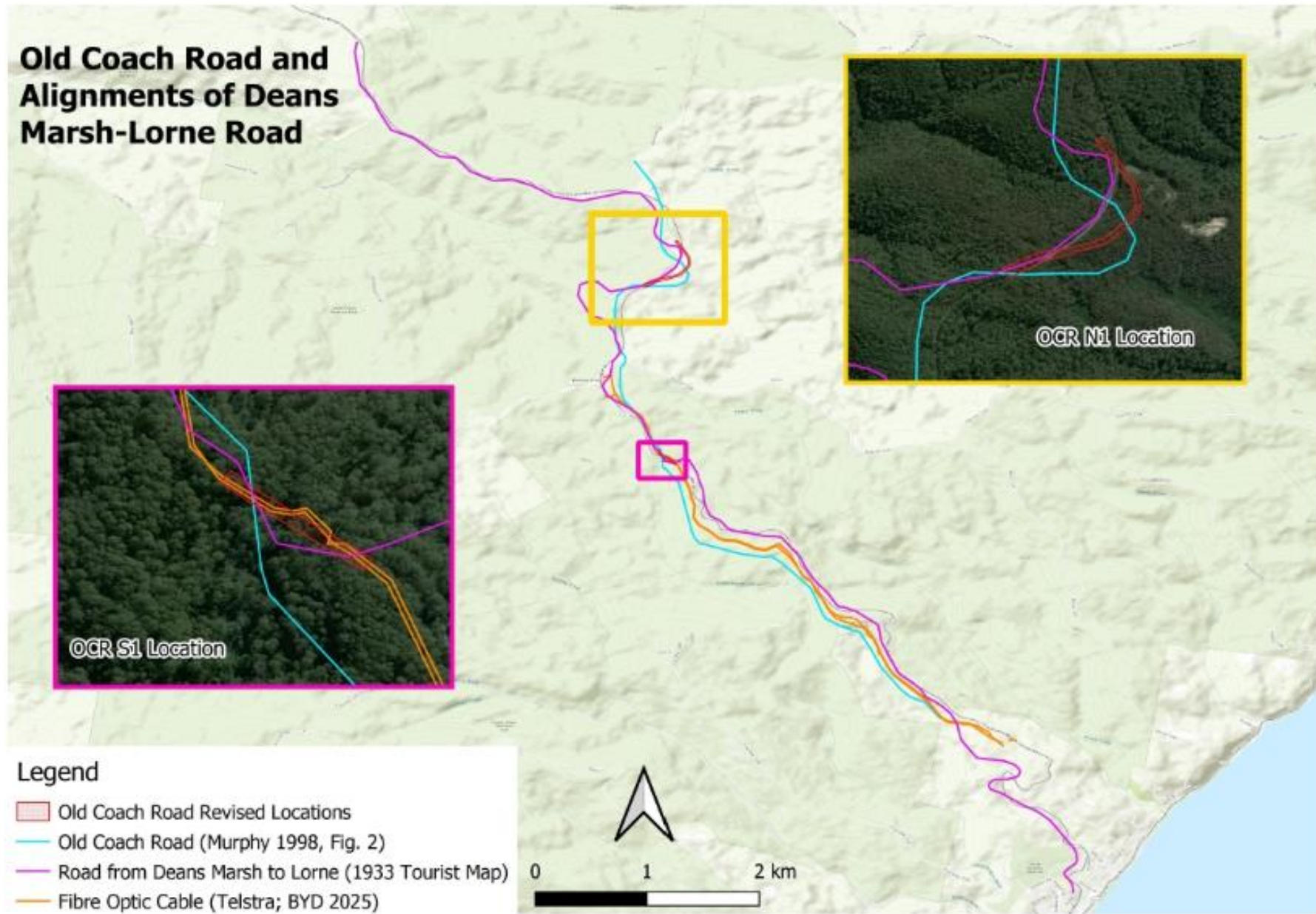


Figure 10: Old Coach Road and Alignments of Deans-Marsh-Lorne Road showing the current road reserve in grey.

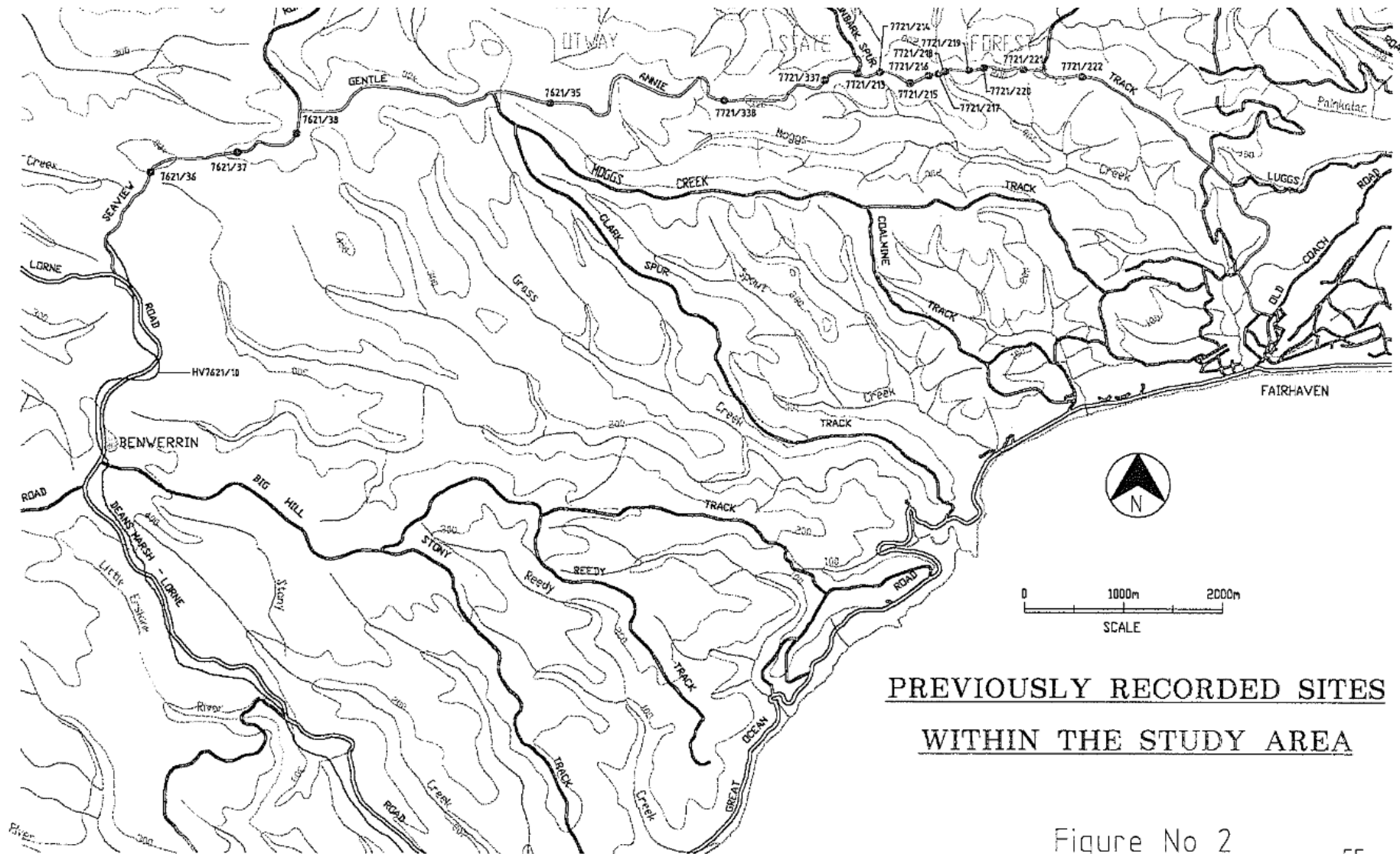


Figure 11: Plan showing H7621-0010 Old Coach Road (source: Murphy 1998).

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The original route from Deans Marsh to Lorne, 'Old Coach Road' is significant.

How is it significant?

Old Coach Road is of archaeological and historical significance.

Why is it significant?

Old Coach Road has low archaeological potential due to previous disturbance associated with the installation of the fibre optic cable. Trenching for this cable is likely to have destroyed or at least significantly impacted any areas where the alignment was installed directly along the Old Coach Road. For this reason, and the fact that the track is reported as a 'roughly graded dirt track', without a gravel surface typical of water-bound macadam roads, Old Coach Road is unlikely to retain meaningful archaeological deposits related to the former road.

Despite the low archaeological potential of the site, the alignment of Old Coach Road retains historical significance as a representation of colonial movement throughout the state and into western Victoria. As the earliest way for wheeled traffic to travel from Deans Marsh to Lorne, the route is associated with the increase in industry and tourism along the Victorian coast. The various iterations of the road from the late 19th and early 20th centuries speaks of the importance of the route prior to the construction of the Great Ocean Road and demonstrates how changes to travel and the introduction of cars altered roads and pathways through the state.

Key Sources

Before You Dig Australia (BYDA). <https://www.byda.com.au/>. Accessed 19/03/2025.

Lorne Historical Society. 'Lorne Historical Society Timeline', *Lorne Historical Society*. <https://www.lornehistoricalsociety.org.au/lhs-timeline/>. Accessed 13/05/2025.

Murphy, A., 1997. *Archaeological Investigation of Proposed Optical Fibre Cable Routes; Aireys Inlet – Lorne, and Bamganie T.O. – Bamganie, Victoria*. Unpublished report to Telstra.

Murphy, A., 1998. *Further Archaeological Investigations of Historic Site 7621/10 ('Old Coach Road') and 15 Aboriginal Archaeological Sites Located on 'Gentle Annie Track, Lorne, Victoria*. Unpublished report to Telstra.

Victorian Places, 2015. 'Lorne', *Victorian Places*. <https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/lorne>. Accessed 13/05/2025.