Near Demons Bluff 2015

Western boundary of Point Addis MNP 2015

Near Anglesea (note people on cliff top) 2015

is a distinct colour change from almost black to a much lighter colour part-way up the cliff face. The dark colour suggests a high proportion of carbon from organic matter deposited in a swampy near-coastal environment around 37 million years ago.

The mouth of the Anglesea River is often closed by sand but even if it is flowing, it is usually shallow enough to cross easily, or you could take the Surf Coast Walk beside the river into town to cross on the road bridge.

Anglesea

Anglesea history

The infertile soils around Anglesea had little attraction for serious pastoralists; naval Lieutenant J M C Airey, who took up the first grazing licence in the district in 1839 near Point Roadknight, was more speculator than squatter.

Swampy Creek was the name of the creek and the locality until 1884. The first land sales took place in 1868, when James Noble purchased land west of the creek. The house that he built was destroyed in January 1875 on a day when much of the state was ravaged by bushfires. He rebuilt in time to take a holiday with some friends in 1878.

By the 1880s, Swampy Creek was gaining a reputation as a fishing destination and the place started to develop. Land on the east side of the creek was put up for sale, including the blocks where the shops are now, and some of Noble's land on the west side was subdivided. A township east of the creek was proclaimed in 1885 with the new name of Anglesea River. The Council decided on the new name 'under the belief that the name of Swampy Creek acts as a deterrent to persons visiting that locality for health and recreation'.

It is assumed that the Anglesea name comes from Anglesey on the coast of Wales, but it may also be a nod to the Aboriginal name Angahook adopted for the parish, or Anglohawk, the pastoral run.

By 1890 there were a couple of guest-houses, the Anglesea Hotel on its present site with a new liquor licence, coach services to Geelong, churches and a post office. A bridge over the Anglesea River, built in 1892,
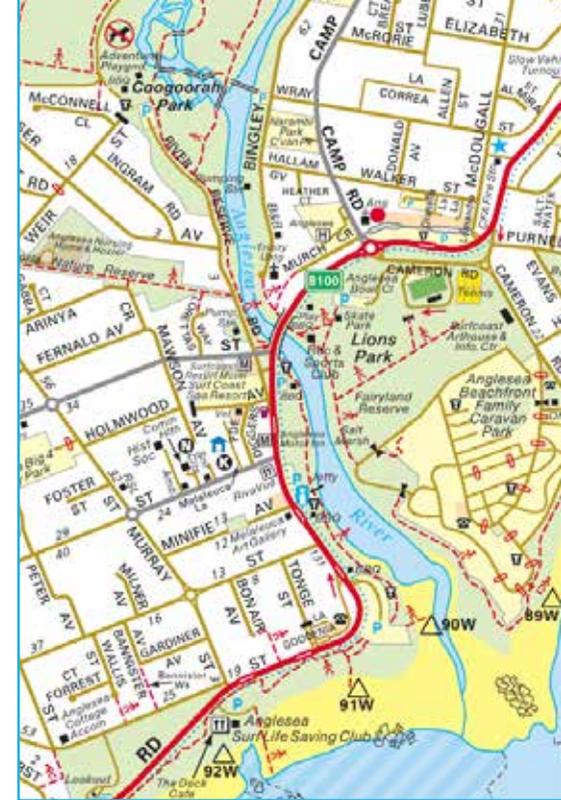
joined the previously divided portions of the settlement.

Although Anglesea had become popular with visitors, there were very few permanent residents until the Great Ocean Road was built (33). Along the Surf Coast Walk, you pass some of the early holiday houses facing the Anglesea River. The Anglesea General Store nearby, erected in 1929, is also of Heritage significance.

Anglesea's economy was boosted in the 1960s when the government granted Alcoa a mining lease over a large area of land behind the town. Fuelled by brown coal mined at the site, a power station was built at Anglesea. It provided almost half the electricity needed by Alcoa's aluminium smelter and mill at Point Henry near Geelong. By 2015 the operation had become uneconomic and both the Point Henry plant and the Anglesea power station and mine were closed. The power station was demolished in 2018. Apart from Alcoa employees and other beneficiaries, many Anglesea residents were pleased to see it go. Burning brown coal emits more greenhouse gases than any other fuel, and the Anglesea coal is particularly high in sulfur pollutants.

The unspoilt area of the Alcoa lease known as the Anglesea Heathlands has been incorporated into the Great Otway National Park. It has many orchids and other significant plants. In 2018, the Government released a plan for the use of the remaining Alcoa area which provides for conservation, recreation and eco- and adventure-based tourism and other commercial uses.

Anglesea Hotel, before 1954
(State Library of Victoria)

Anglesea, before 1940 Photo: Charles Daniel Pratt 'Airspy' (State Library of Victoria)