To Date: Tourism has become the major industry. Most employment is in entertainment, construction and services which can be attributed to the number of visitors. It is estimated that there are approximately 3.5 million visitors to Phillip Island each year.

Further Information:
Phillip Island & District Historical Society
Thompson Avenue, Cowes
(at Bass Coast Shire Council Offices).
Contact: Secretary Christine Grayden
Phone: (03) 5956 8501
Email: history@waterfront.net.au
Website: www.home.waterfront.net.au/phillipislandhistory

Opening times:
All year except Christmas and Boxing Day,
New Years Day and Anzac Day.
Saturday: 10.00am to 12.00 noon
Sunday: 2.00pm to 4.30pm
Thursday: 2.00pm to 4.30pm (school holidays only).
Groups by arrangement and admission by gold coin donation.

For more information
Cowes Visitor Information Centre
91 – 97 Thompson Avenue
Cowes VIC 3922
1300 366 422

Inverloch Visitor Information Centre
16 A’Beckett Street
Inverloch VIC 3996
1300 762 433

Phillip Island Visitor Information Centre
895 Phillip Island Road
Newhaven VIC 3925
1300 366 422

Wonthaggi Visitor Information Centre
1 Bent Street
Wonthaggi VIC 3995
1300 854 334

National Relay Service
(for people with communication difficulties)
13 36 77

Disclaimer: While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, Bass Coast Shire Council does not accept any responsibility for inaccuracies, omissions, incorrect information or action taken as a result of any information detailed in this guide.
October 2012
At the end of 1801 Governor King sent Lieutenant Western Port Bay and anchored in Elizabeth Cove.

Surgeon George Bass sailed a whaleboat from Governor Arthur Phillip.

first crops in Victoria on Churchill Island (named Sydney to chart and explore the Victorian coastline, the ‘Lady Nelson’, sailing into the bay and naming the 1840s most of the surviving families left the settlement, the Wonthaggi area was home to early sealers and whalers, together with European diseases, caused rapid population decline and by the 1840s most of the surviving families left the area to join other Koolin tribes in the Melbourne area.

1798: Surgeon George Bass sailed a whaleboat from Sydney to chart and explore the Victorian coastline, the ‘Lady Nelson’, sailing into the bay and naming the area.

1801: In March, Lieutenant James Grant entered Western Port Bay and anchored in Elizabeth Cove. He thought the land on his right resembled a horseman’s helmet/snapper’s head, so he named it ‘Snapper Island’ (Cape Woolamai). He planted the first crops in Victoria on Churchill Island (named after the Devon farmer who gave him the seeds). At the end of 1801 Governor King sent Lieutenant Murray to further map the area. He commanded the ‘Lady Nelson’, sailing into the bay and naming it ‘Port King’. On returning to Port Phillip Bay, he made his first recorded mention of Snapper Island as Phillip Island, renaming the island after the first Governor Arthur Phillip.

1826: The Island had been used by sealers for 20 to 30 years before settlement in 1826. The first occupants of the Island were Captain Wright and his crew. They made a settlement in Rhyll however this was soon abandoned due to a lack of fresh water, they moved to Corinella on the mainland where fresh water was plentiful.

1842: John and William McHaffie from Scotland were granted the right to use the Island as a sheep run. The McHaffie brothers were responsible for clearing some of the Island’s vegetation and the introduction of fowllow deer, rabbits and kangaroos for the purpose of game hunting.

1865: After another survey was completed on the Island, Cowes was officially named. Commander Cox thought the Island resembled the “Isle of Wight” in England. Upon completion of the survey, the Island was thrown open for free selection.

1870: The first Chicory crop was grown on Phillip Island. John and Solomon West built the first kiln in 1873. Chicory was used as a bulk additive to coffee and also made into an essence. The chicory industry boomed from the mid 1930s to the early 1940s, through the years of the great depression and the Second World War. The last operational chicory kiln closed in the early 1980s.

1872: Samuel Amess, former Lord Mayor of Melbourne, purchased Churchill Island from John Rogers. Rogers Cottage and Amess Homestead still stand on Churchill Island and can be visited as part of the Churchill Island Heritage Farm.

1880: Koalas were introduced to Phillip Island and the koala population on the Island today is quite low, as chlamydia and traffic have had a dramatic effect on their numbers.

1882: Many farmers found it difficult to survive with small land blocks, often in exposed areas. Many eventually sold out to wealthier farmers, who in turn increased the size of their properties. By 1882 William Harbison owned 23 per cent and John Cleeoland owned 40 per cent of the rural land; their properties were used for cattle and sheep.

1940: Before the first bridge was constructed in 1940, the Island was dependent on ferry transport. The ferries ran between San Remo and Newhaven across the Eastern Passage and between Coves and Stony Point on the Mornington Peninsula. The suspension bridge saw an increase in visitors to the Island. The suspension bridge had a load limit of 6 tons, large milk tankers could not cross and tourist buses had to unload before crossing. A new concrete bridge was opened in 1969 at a cost of $3.2 million.

Motor Racing on Phillip Island: Between 1928 and 1938 Phillip Island was host to the Grand Prix for cars. The circuit was around some of the Island’s roads and signs indicating part of the old track are near Wimbledon Heights. In 1952 the Phillip Island Auto Racing Club (PIARC) formed a steering committee to develop and build Australia’s first international Grand Prix circuit. Building commenced in 1952 and they officially opened the circuit in 1956. Numerous races including the Trophy Race and the Armstrong 500 were held on the circuit. The track closed in 1962 due to the PIARC being unable to repair damages to the track. Len Lukey purchased the circuit in 1963 and reopened it for sportscar racing but in the late 1970s the track closed due to damage and was used as farm land. In 1985 the circuit was sold to Placetac Pty Ltd who reopened it and between 1989-1999 held the 500cc World Motorcycle championships. 1990 saw the World Superbikes and 1993 saw the V8 Supercars held at the circuit. In 1997 the 500cc World Motorcycle Grand Prix returned to Phillip Island and in 2004 the property was purchased by the Linfox Corporation.

Phillip Island Nature Parks: In the 1930s visitors were taken by car to Summerland Beach to see the little penguins come ashore; by the 1950s so many visitors came that fences were installed. In 1955 the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife established a large reserve and in 1981 the Penguin Reserve Committee of Management was formed. The Phillip Island Nature Parks was created in 1996 and is owned by the Victorian State Government; however it is self funding commercial attraction for the purpose of animal conservation and research. The Phillip Island Nature Parks covers over 1805 hectares including Pyramid Rock, Rhyll Inlet, Seal Rocks (including the Nobbies Centre), Cape Woolamai, Koala Conservation Centre (featuring viewing of Koalas close up in their natural habitat), Churchill Island (with its working heritage farm) and the famous Penguin Parade where 500,000 people visit every year.

www.phillipislandcircuit.com.au

Further information: (03) 5952 9400 or www.penguins.org.au