

# Town Jetty, Esperance

## Maritime Heritage Site Inspection Report

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# Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

The purpose of this site inspection was to make a preliminary assessment of the extent of the remains of the Town Jetty and to produce a photographic record of the site and any associated material on land.

## Background

Compiled from the records of the Department of Maritime Archaeology, (MA).

Site Name: Town Jetty, Esperance.

File Name: Jetties and Port Related Structures

File Name: Esperance Wrecks

File Name: Heritage Council of WA

File No: MA 2.93

File No: MA 69.72

File No: MA 13.93

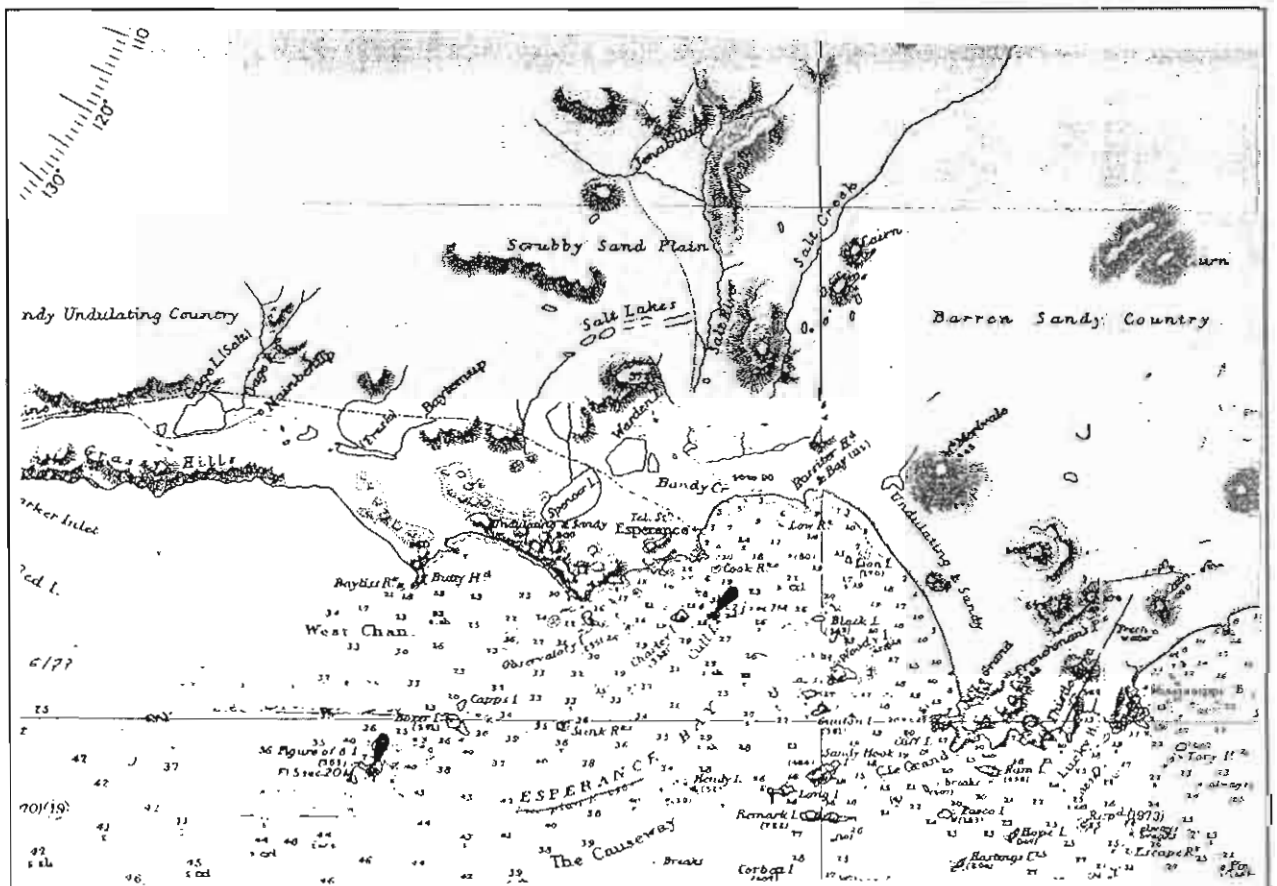


Figure 1. Chart Excerpt: BA 1059, Doubtful Island to the Head of the Great Australian Bight. 1881; 1897; 1901. 1: 610 000.

All heights are expressed in feet above High Water Springs.  
 Magnetic Variation in 1900, nearly stationary.

**SOUNDINGS IN FEET**  
 Natural Scale 1/24280

Soundings reduced to L.W. Ord. Springs, which is 57.9 in. below the level of a Bench mark & cut on the face of sloping rocks 90 yards S.E. of the south end of Esperance Beach.

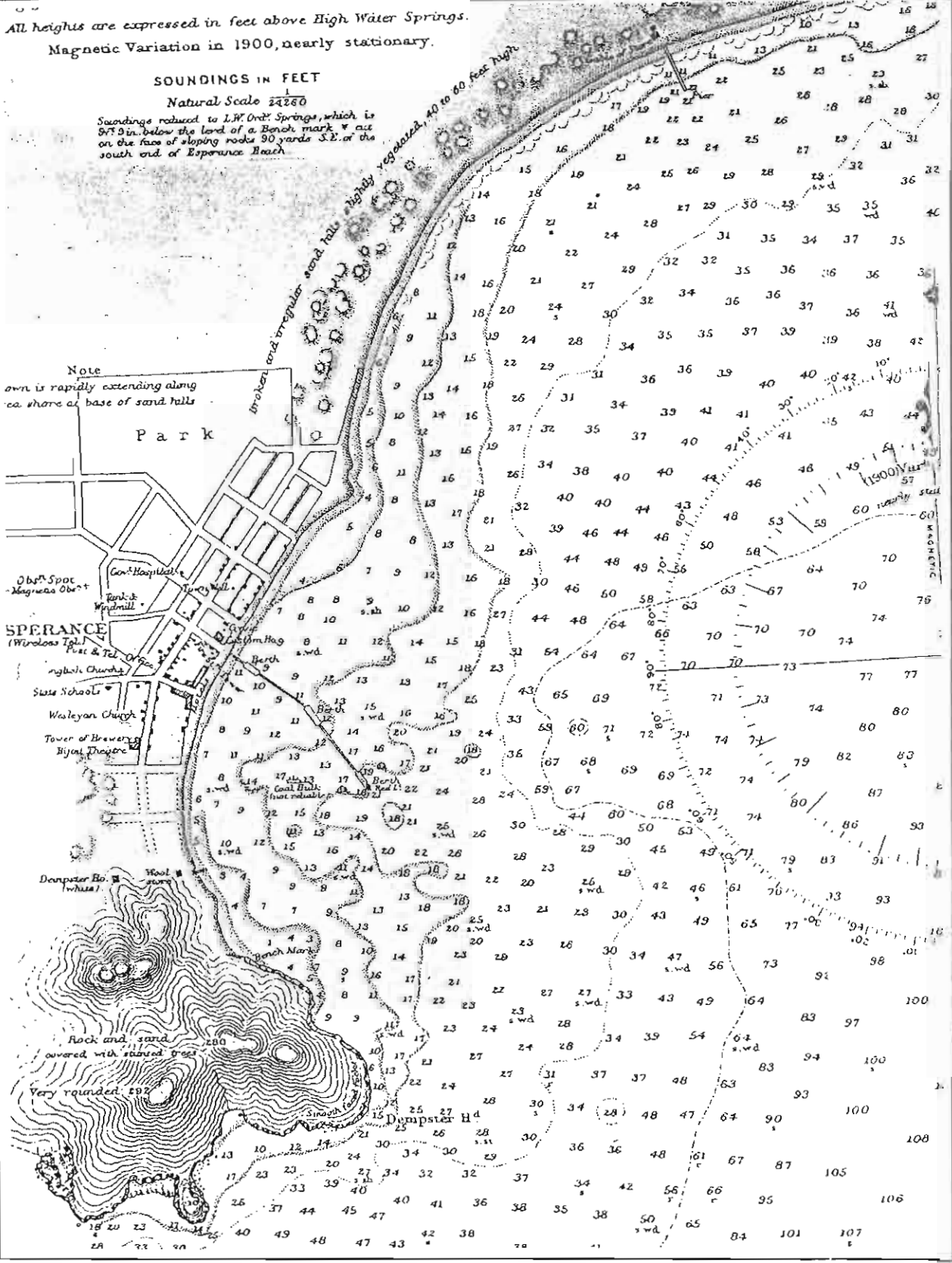


Figure 2. Chart Excerpt: BA 2973, Esperance Bay Anchorage, 1897. 1: 24,260.

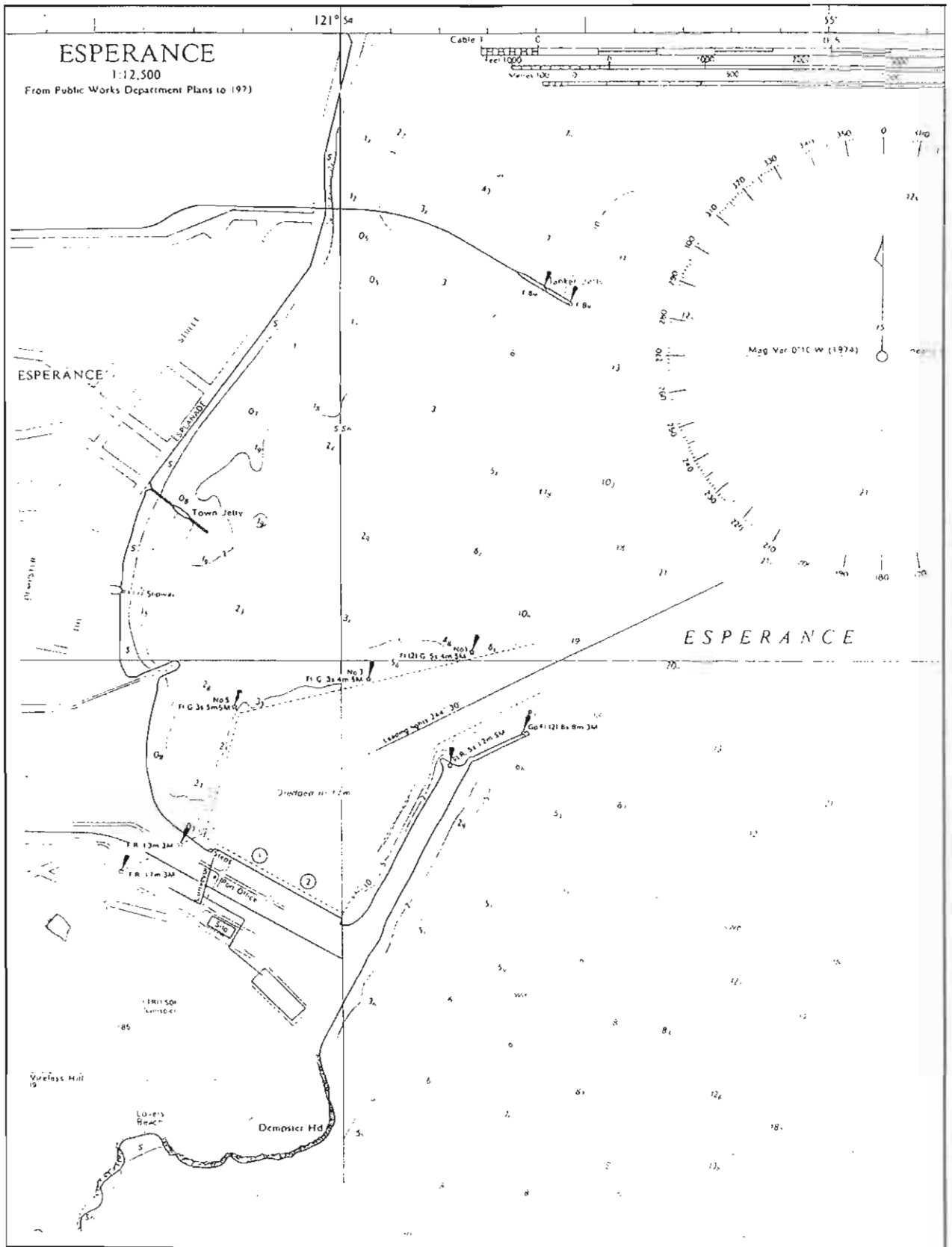


Figure 3. Chart Excerpt: AUS 119, Approaches to Esperance, 1974. 1: 12 500

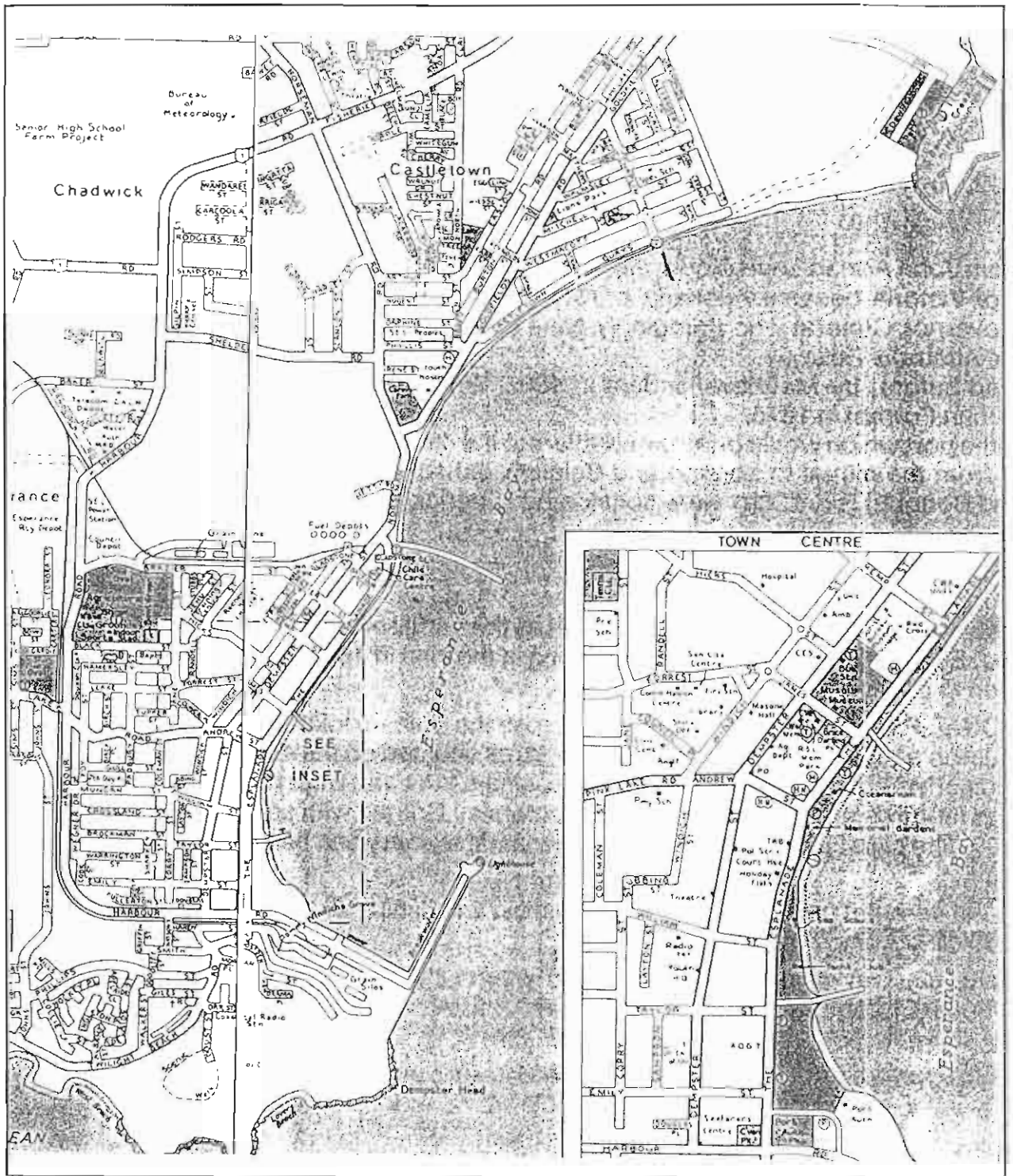


Figure 4. Map: Esperance (Gregory's Touring Guide, 1988, p32.)

## Technical Data

**Date of Inspection:** 1 April 1994

**Personnel:** Denis Cumming, Dena Garratt, Bob Richards, Ray Shaw.

**Approximate Location:** The jetty site is situated in Esperance Bay, opposite the Esperance Museum and at the corner of James Street and The Esplanade.

**Charts:** BA 1059, *Doubtful Island to the Head of the Great Australian Bight*, 1881; 1897; 1901, 1: 610 000.  
BA 2619, *King George Sound and Princess Royal Harbour*, 1879; 1910. 1: 48 530.  
BA 2973, *Esperance Bay Anchorage*, 1897. 1: 24,240.  
AUS 119, *Approaches to Esperance*, 1974. 1: 75 000.

**Maps:** *Esperance*, SI 51-6, 1: 250 00  
*Esperance*, 3230, 1: 1000 000

**Historic Plans:** *Plan of Esperance Town-site*, public plan, 1: 1584 (1" to 2 ch), 1893.  
c No. 504 226.  
*Plan of Esperance Town-site*, public plan, 1: 1584 (1" to 2 ch), 1896.  
c No. 504 227.  
*Plan of Esperance Locality*, public plan, 1: 15840 (1" to 20 ch), 1912.  
c No. 002 960.  
*Plan of Esperance Locality*, public plan, 1: 31680 (1" to 40 ch), 1912.  
c No. 504 228.

**Latitude:** 33° 52' S      **Longitude:** 121° 53' E

**Directions:** The pile stumps can be located approximately 20 metres to the right (south) of the small boat harbour.

**Site Photographs:** (Held in File No. 2.93 awaiting accessioning)

B/W: Neg. No. 13-16 (D. Cumming)

Colour: Neg. No. 17-22 (D. Cumming)

Slides:

Video:

Historic: Town Jetty 1898. (Esperance Museum).

### Site Conditions on Inspection:

Swell: Nil

Visibility: 1 m

Current: Nil

Sea-bed coverage: Sandy seabed with patches of *Posidonia* seagrass.

### Chemical Measurements:

Temperature:

Salinity:

pH:

Dissolved O<sub>2</sub>:

Corrosion Potential:

No measurements were deemed necessary in this instance, however all chemical measurements should be recorded if a full archaeological investigation of the site is undertaken.

**Biological Data:**

Colonising fauna and flora: The piles have been colonised with several species of seaweed and sponges that will be identified if further research is undertaken.

**Site Condition and Integrity:** Little remains of the jetty structure. The piles have been either removed or cut down to within centimetres of the seabed. The area around the seaward end of the jetty has been extensively modified by dredging operations.

## Management Considerations

- (i) Natural forces: The remaining structure and associated artefacts are not in any immediate danger from natural forces. The site is situated within the protected waters of Esperance Harbour.
- (ii) Present and future human forces: Apart from the ever-present threat of vandalism, there is no apparent threat from human forces. The only likely danger may be some disturbance from the propeller wash of small craft, however the remaining structure presents no hazard to navigation and the area is designated for recreational activities only.
- (iii) Projected general site stability: The jetty remains do not appear to be in any immediate danger from either environmental or human forces. There is little likelihood that future harbour dredging operations will impinge on the jetty site.

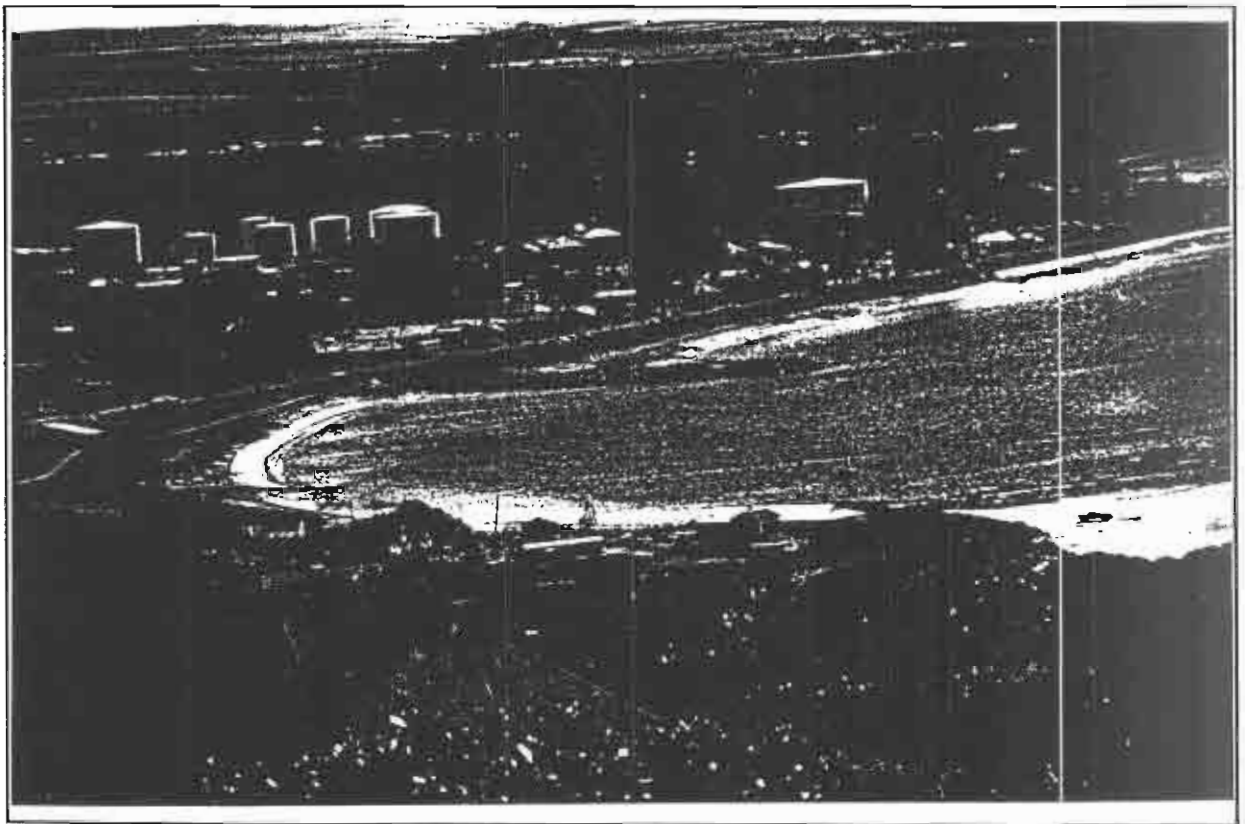
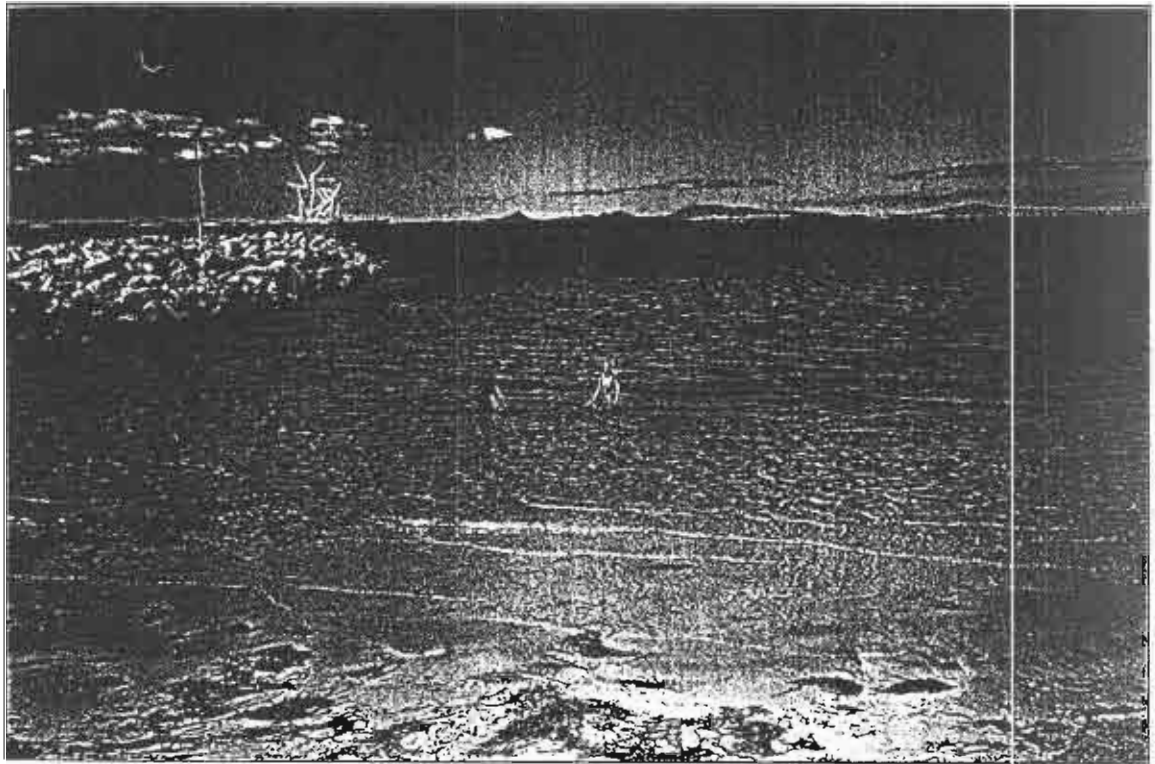


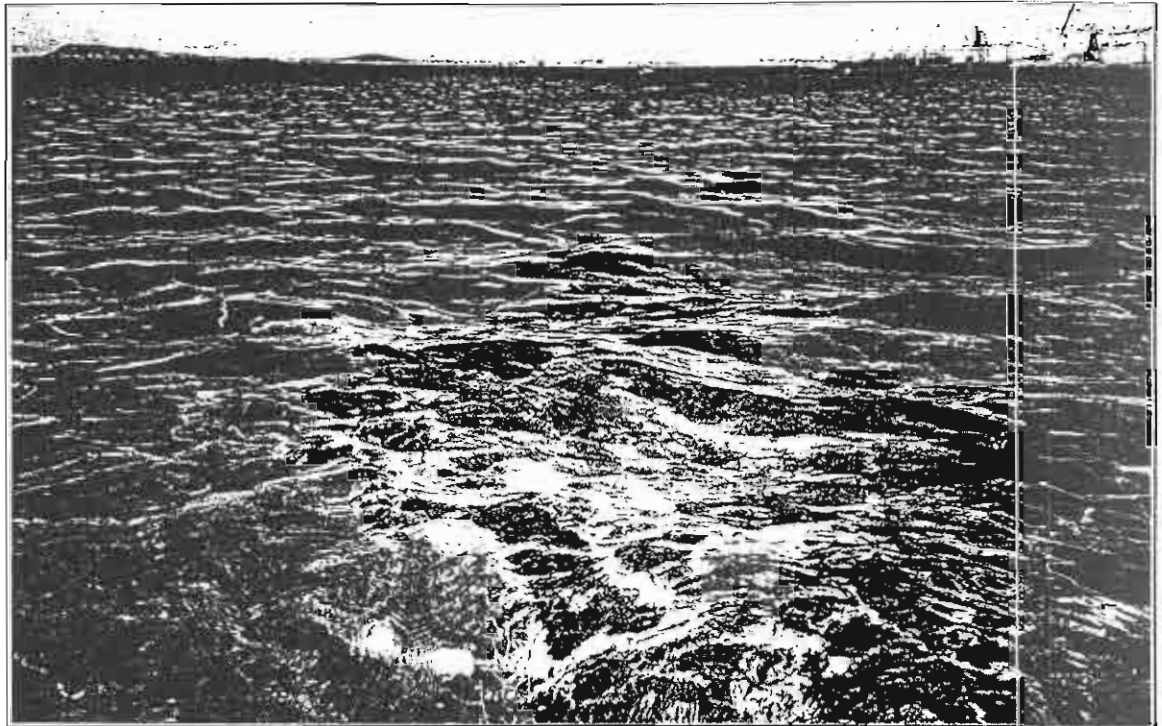
Figure 5. Town Jetty site looking north. (D Cumming, 1984)

## Description of Site

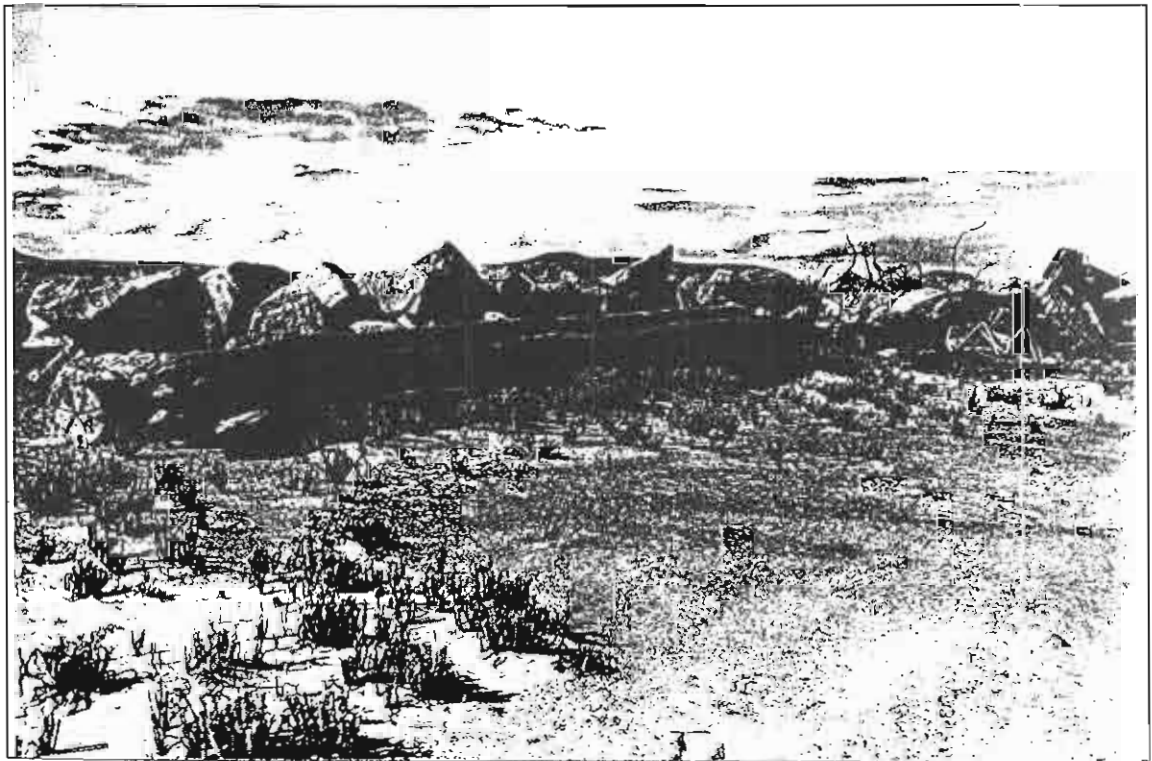
Town Jetty extended out into Esperance Bay in a southerly direction for 856.7 metres (2810 feet) with a 91 metres (300 ft) head to a depth of 5.5 metres (18 feet) at low tide. There is little evidence of the jetty, apart from pile stumps that have been cut down to the seabed. The line of the jetty can be readily determined from the orientation of the stumps. Apart from the jetty timbers, no evidence of archaeological material was found on the seabed. It is likely that artefacts will be buried beneath the sand as a result of dredging activities in the Esperance Harbour from 1963 to 1965, and the construction of the small boat harbour adjacent to the site in the 1980's. The seaward end of the jetty site was completely destroyed during the dredging operations. Much of the jetty superstructure was removed and dumped onto the breakwater, (see Figures 8 to 11). A total of 2.5 million yards of material over an area of 67 acres was removed and converted to 90 acres of reclamation for the land backed berth in Esperance Harbour. (*The Port of Esperance*, 1966.)



*Figure 6.* Location of the town Jetty (R. Shaw)



*Figure 7.* Pile stumps in the shallows with Esperance Harbour in the background.  
(WA Maritime Museum)



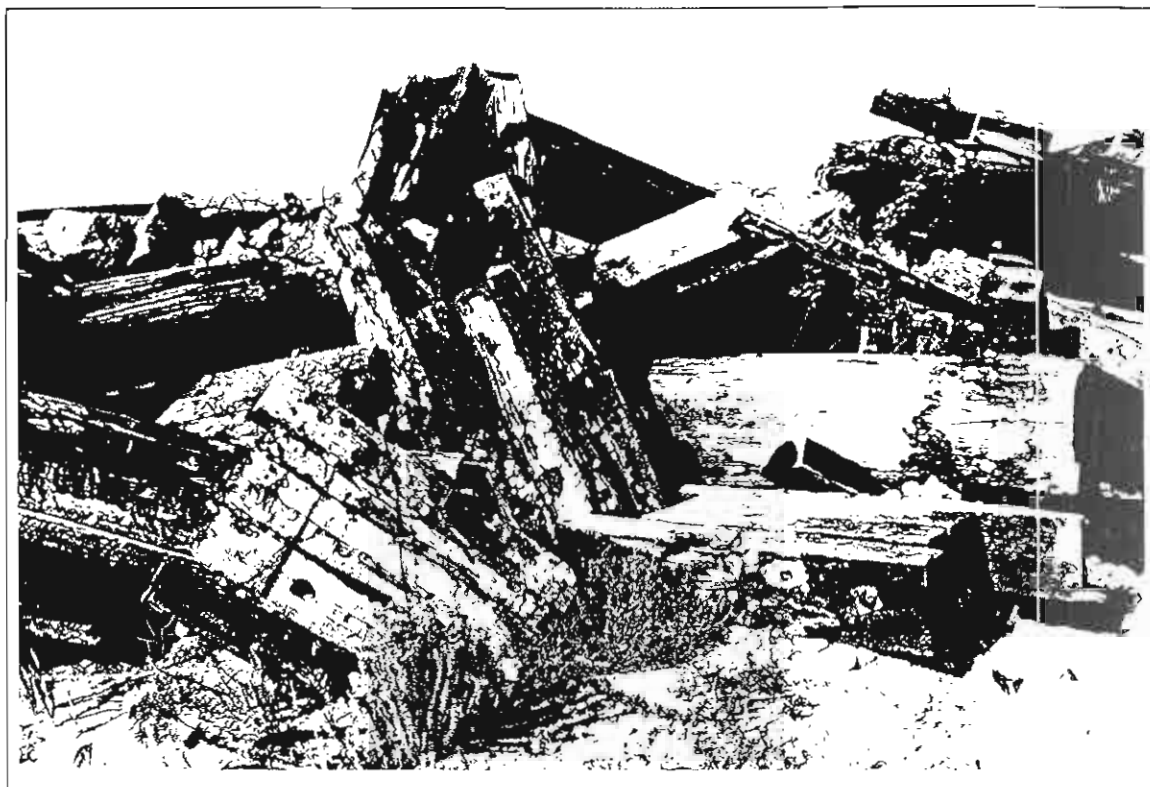
*Figure 8.* Material from Town Jetty dumped on the inner end of the Esperance harbour breakwater.  
(D. Cumming 1994.)



*Figure 9.* Material from Town Jetty dumped on the inner end of the Esperance harbour breakwater. (D. Cumming 1994)



*Figure 10.* Material from Town Jetty dumped on the inner end of the Esperance harbour breakwater. (D. Cumming 1994.)



*Figure 11.* Material from Town Jetty dumped on the inner end of the Esperance harbour breakwater. (D. Cumming 1994)

**Site Identification Comments:** (From research notes compiled by D. Cumming from information supplied by Martin Olive of the Esperance Bay Museum).

Following the discovery of gold at Coolgardie in 1892 and at Kalgoorlie and Norseman (Dundas) in 1893, many men arrived at Fanny Cove, Esperance for the goldfields. Esperance was gazetted a township in the same year.

F.W.S. Reid built a jetty 103.5 metres (340 ft) long with a head of 30.5 metres (100 ft) in 3 metres of water (10 ft) and a goods store in James Street in 1895.

This first jetty proved inadequate as even small steamers such as the 353.5-tonne (348 tons gross) SS *Helen Nicholl* was unable to berth. Passengers and cargo had to be ferried to the jetty. A report in the *Esperance Chronicle* of 13 January 1896 noted that the steamers *McGregor* of 259 tonnes (255 tons) and *Flinders* of 962 tonnes (947 tons) were both aground at the town jetty.

The town jetty was finally lengthened in 1897 to 856.7 metres (2810 ft), however trade with Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie declined after the railway was extended from Southern Cross in the same year. Traffic decreased further when the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman was completed in 1909.

In 1898 the Premier of Western Australia visited Esperance aboard the 2541-tonne (2501 tons) vessel, SS *Innaminka*.

The *WA Year Book* of 1902-4 reported that Esperance was the principal town in the district between Hamersley River and Eucla, and had a population of about 300 persons (down from 1500 in 1897).

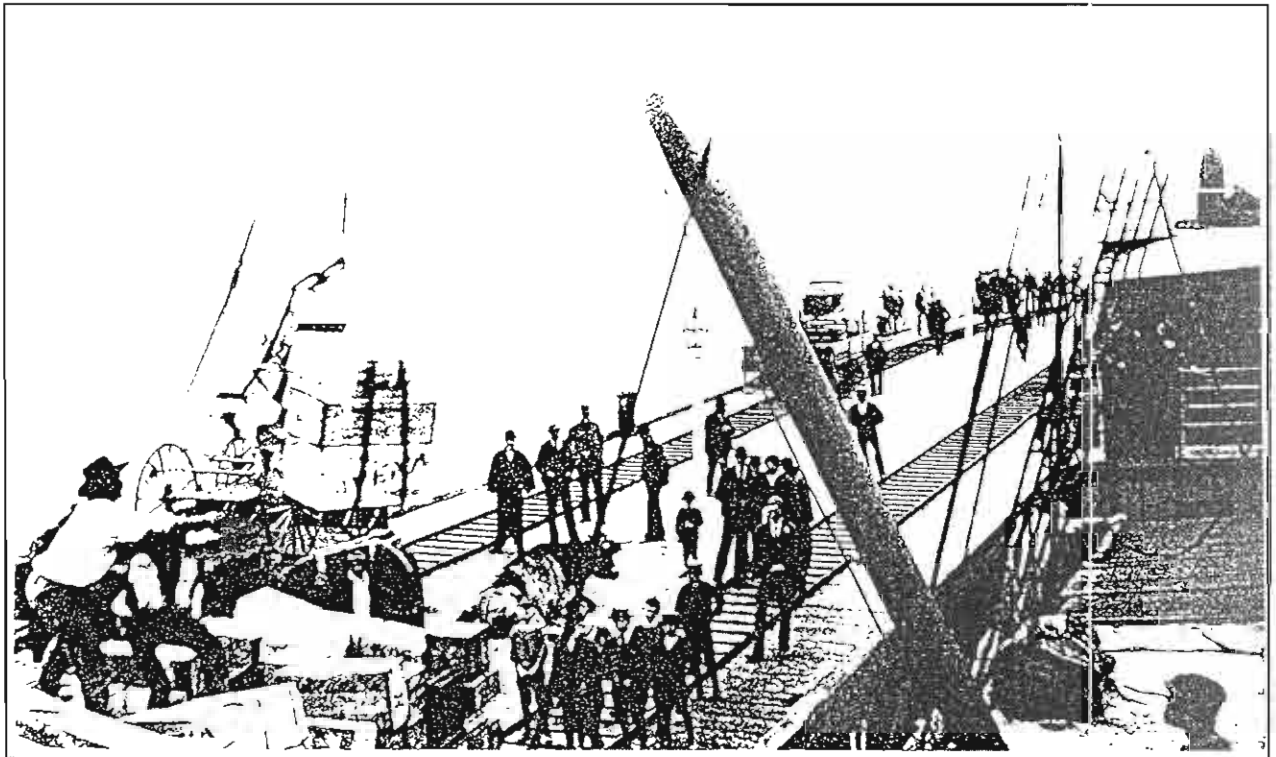


Figure 12. Town Jetty, c1900. (Esperance Museum)

**Shipping:** In the early days of Esperance, the settlers of this isolated district depended on small sailing vessels and coastal steamers for their mail and supplies. Sailing vessels such as the *Mary Ann*, *Agnes*, *Ettie*, *Swift* and *Grace Darling* and the steamers *Rob Roy*, *Flinders*, *Lubra*, *Innamincka*, *Helen Nicholl*, *Iris*, *Herbert*, *Franklin*, *Croydon* and *Ferret* plied the waters of the south-east coast, servicing Bremer Bay, Hopetoun, Fanny Cove, Esperance, Point Malcolm, Israelite Bay, Eyre and Eucla. In 1901 the SS *Franklin* took over the mail run from the SS *Herbert* on the weekly steamer service from Albany. After the *Franklin* was wrecked near Point Malcolm in 1902, the South West Mail Service was continued by the SS *Meinderry* until 1903 and subsequently by the SS *Dawn*.

The State Shipping Service began a regular service in 1912 between Fremantle and Eucla via Bunbury, Busselton, and Albany with the 181-tonne (178 tons) SS *Una*. The SS *Eucla* continued on the service to Hopetoun, Esperance and Israelite Bay until 1926 when she was scrapped. The MV *Kybra* of 965 tonnes (950 tons) continued this service until 1936.

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## Associated Shipwrecks and Land Sites

File No: 69.72  
File No: 102.91  
File No: 93.73

File Name: Esperance Wrecks  
File Name: Area - Eyre  
File Name: Wreck Inspection Reports

#### *Mary Ann*

In June 1876, the 104-tonne schooner, *Mary Ann* was engaged as a survey and supply vessel for the construction of the telegraph line between Esperance and Eucla. It was on this occasion that Israelite Bay was chosen as the most suitable site for the third station. The vessel was wrecked on the return voyage near Bellingier Island, about 40 km (25 miles) south-west of Israelite Bay. (The east-west telegraph, 1875-7, *WA Historical Society*. 1978, p28).

#### Lights and Lighthouses

A red ordinary lantern was fixed to the jetty in 1901. (Colonial Harbour Master, 1911)

## Assessment of Site Significance

- (i) Historical: The Town Jetty played a significant role in the commerce of the township of Esperance and the development of the community and served as an important link with the rest of the world for the local population between 1896 and 1935.
- (ii) Technological:
- (iii) Scientific: Information on corrosion rates can be gained from iron artefacts on the site.
- (iv) Educational: All heritage remains have the potential of being a focus for educational activity if properly marked and documented. It is an ideal site for interpretation, due to its accessibility and its proximity to the Esperance Museum.
- (v) Recreational: The clarity and depth of the water on the site is ideal for snorkelling.
- (vi) Cultural: There is undoubted cultural significance in the remains of the jetty. They represent the point of contact with the rest of the world and a focal point for commerce and social activities for the residents of Esperance.
- (vii) Archaeological: The site has the potential to be included in a comparative study of jetty sites, particularly with regard to the patterns of deposition and distribution of artefacts along jetties. The Town Jetty site has similar characteristics to the Long Jetty in Fremantle and Albany's Town Jetty, in Western Australia and the Glenelg Jetty in Holdfast Bay, South Australia. Partial excavations of the Long Jetty and the Glenelg Jetty yielded over 1500 artefacts respectively. Given the similarities, it can be assumed that this jetty should also be rich in artefacts.
- (viii) Rarity:
- (ix) Representativeness: The remains of the jetty and its associated machinery is representative of jetty construction techniques of the late 19th century.

## Recommendations

### The options are:

- (i) Recommend that the site be gazetted as an Historic Site in the same manner as the Long Jetty in Fremantle.
- (ii) Erect a marker at the site that will include interpretive material.
- (iii) Consider an archaeological survey of the jetty site, with the provision for the rehabilitation of the excavated areas and the conservation, and display of any artefacts recovered from the site.

## Further Comments

Regardless of the outcome of the above, it is recommended that the Town Jetty site be more widely publicised as a reminder of an important era in the development of WA's regional centres. Further to this, the significance of the jetty in relation to the history of Esperance should be highlighted in the displays at the Esperance Museum

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