



# DIRK HARTOG'S POST

A report on the site of the 1616 monument site  
at Cape Inscription, Dirk Hartog Island

and

An analysis of historical evidence of the posts  
erected there

by

Dr Martin Gibbs

for

The Department of Maritime Archaeology, WA Museum

**DRAFT**

Report - Department of Maritime Archaeology  
Western Australian Maritime Museum, No. 129



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Investigation and the Study Area

Cape Inscription, located at the northern tip of Dirk Hartog Island, Western Australia, is without doubt one of the most significant non-Aboriginal heritage sites in Australia. Despite the cruise of the *Duyfken* along the northern Australian coast half a decade earlier, the visit of the Dutch vessel *Eendracht* to the Shark Bay area in 1616 is perhaps best known to Australians as one of the earliest European investigations of the Australian coast. In particular, and of even greater significance, is the fact that Dirk Hartog, master of the *Eendracht*, raised a post and fixed an inscribed pewter plate to commemorate his visit, providing firm evidence of exactly where he visited.

Over the next 400 years a succession of notable Dutch, French and British explorers, including Willem de Vlamingh in 1696, visited the site of Dirk Hartog's monument, making it significant to the history of at least four nations. Sometimes these visitors raised their own posts, sometimes they fixed new memorials onto existing props, and occasionally they removed earlier memorials for return to Europe, participating in a tradition focussed on a single, well known site. In fact, it is the precision with which the modern visitor can fix the location of the site, and the certainty that successive explorers stood in exactly that spot, rather than a more ambiguous reference usually associated with such places, which also makes the Inscription Post site special.

The expression 'Inscription Post' and 'Inscription Post Site' has been applied to the place since at least 1824 by members of the King expedition (see below). It has subsequently been used in many descriptions of the site and is enshrined in the declaration of the 'A' Class reserve surrounding the monuments as 'Protection of Inscription Posts'. This usage is therefore continued in this document.

This study forms part of the preparation for the de Vlamingh tricentennial (1696-1996), which will include the erection of replica posts and plates at the Inscription Post site. The history of the Inscription Post site is investigated, with an emphasis upon the nature of the monuments left there by successive explorers.

While there has been a number of papers and discussions published regarding the inscribed pewter plates of Dirk Hartog and de Vlamingh (for which the site is best known), little has previously been written of the historical or physical evidence of the other plaques, plates, posts, flags and other objects left at the site. Specific

descriptions of the various monuments have been sought, and for this reason there are a number of lengthy quotes included. Where possible copies of the source documents have also been attached in an appendix as a resource for further research. However, this research is not considered exhaustive as there remain a number of previously untranslated French manuscripts, primarily journals of sailors and officers aboard early 19th century exploring vessels, which may include further reference to these matters.

It should be noted that this investigation and report has been undertaken in a voluntary capacity. The survey of the Inscription Posts Site was carried out incidental to the main objective of preparing a conservation study of the nearby Cape Inscription Lightkeepers Quarters for the National Trust of Australia (W A.). Because of the proximity of the sites, reference is made to the Lighthouse, Lightkeepers Quarters, and the *Cape Inscription Lightkeepers Quarters Conservation Plan* which considers the heritage significance of the individual sites and the whole of the Cape Inscription precinct. This latter report also discusses the impacts of possible future restoration of the c1910 buildings and the potential for the management and interpretation of the precinct as a whole

## 1.2 Study Objectives

In outline, the objectives of the study are to

- Establish the history of the Inscription Post site, with particular attention to the history of the posts and other objects left there, including their removal
- Provide where possible descriptions of these objects and the site over time
- Assess the cultural heritage significance of the Inscription Post site;
- Determine the extent of that cultural heritage significance.;
- Determine the nature and extent of any intrusive features within the precinct;
- Establish an appropriate conservation policy for the place;
- Recommend guidelines for the future management of the place to maintain and enhance the cultural heritage significance of the place.

### **1.3 Study Area**

The Inscription Post site is roughly defined by the boundaries of the A Class Reserve 12715A (Protection of Inscription Posts), which encompasses an area of 3490 square metres. This is situated immediately adjacent to the Cape inscription Lighthouse (Lot 1, 7441 square metres) and the Lightkeepers Quarters (Lot 2, 8668 square metres). Because of the nature of the Inscription Post site and the various qualities which combine to create its significance, the latter two areas must be considered in developing suitable policies for the protection of the site.

Dirk Hartog Island forms the western edge of Shark Bay, a shallow embayment at the southern end of the Carnarvon Basin. The island itself is essentially a continuation of the Edel Land Peninsula, from which it is separated by a narrow channel (South Passage). Geologically it is a continuation of the belt of Tamala Limestone which extends along the lower west coast of Western Australia. The west side of the island includes high cliffs and a high energy coastal environment, while the east coast has a significantly lower elevation and many sheltered bays and sandy beaches. The surface of the island is covered by sands, with large mobile dunes on the southern end. The environment is dry and hot (warm, dry Mediterranean), with no surface fresh water. The vegetation generally consists of low Eucalypts, Acacias and hummock grasses (Triodia).

Cape Inscription the headland at the northern tip of Dirk Hartog Island. In this location the limestone cliffs are approximately 30 m or more high, but have sandy slopes along their faces which can be climbed. Several small reefs run along the shore, which is also rocky in many places. Although the eastern side is slightly more protected and a small boat landing may be possible, the area is still subject to heavy swells. The nearest partially secure anchorage for larger vessels is at Turtle Bay, 2 kilometres to the south-east. As for the rest of the island, vegetation on the Cape is low Eucalypt and Acacia scrubland, with bushes generally under a metre in height.

A more detailed description of the Inscription Post Site is provided in the discussion of the archaeological survey.

### **1.4 SOURCES OF STUDY INFORMATION**

Materials used in the study of the Inscription Plate site and associated areas on Dirk Hartog Island were obtained through the following sources.

- Australian Archives (W.A.)
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
- Australian Heritage Commission
- J S Batty Library of Western Australia
- Reid Library, University of Western Australia
- Dr Phillip Playford, Geological Survey of W.A.
- Mr Mike McCarthy, Dept of Maritime Archaeology, W.A. Museum
- Mr Kieran Wardle of Dirk Hartog Island Tours
- On-site investigation

## 1.5 STRUCTURE OF REPORT

Although this report is not intended to comprise a full conservation and management plan for the Inscription Post site, it follows the general structure and guidelines set out in James Semple Kerr's *The Conservation Plan* (National Trust of Australia, N.S.W., 1990), and the Australia ICOMOS *Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy* (1985, revised 1988).

One of the interesting aspects of the research on this site has been the fact that, despite its widely acknowledged significance, there has not been a formal assessment and the site and it may, in fact, not be explicitly listed on any of the local, state or national heritage registers. An assessment of significance has therefore been undertaken using the Heritage Council of Western Australia's criteria for entry into the Register of Heritage Places. This format is compatible with other registers and will allow wider use of the Statement of Significance.

## 1.6 AUTHOR

Dr Martin Gibbs

## 1.7 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks must go to Christopher Paterson, Mike McCarthy (Maritime Archaeology Department, W.A. Museum) and Dr Phillip Playford who formed the rest of the expedition to Dirk Hartog Island. In particular, Mike and Phil undertook the arduous task of cleaning the site while Chris and I simply measured nearby buildings. Mr Kieran Wardle of Dirk Hartog Island Tours must also be thanked for his hospitality and assistance with accommodation, vehicles and food.

## 2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although the historical events associated with the successive visits to Cape Inscription are firmly embedded within the context of the European exploration of the Indian Ocean region and Australia, comprehensive discussions are already available in a number of sources (eg Hardy and Frost 1989) and need not be repeated here.

Halls (1964, 1974) has already presented a brief history of the various visits to the site and the general nature of the posts and monuments. The following section therefore focuses on describing the events and observations associated specifically with the Inscription Post site, using quotes from the various journals and other articles. It should be noted that the wording of the several plates is recorded in many of the accounts, and in general has not been repeated here. Where the text of a plate has been omitted, this is indicated with squared brackets [ ].

### 2.1 1616 Dirk Hartog

There is no surviving log which describes the cruise of the VOC ship *Eendracht* from the Netherlands, from which it departed in January 1616, to Java, where it arrived in December of the same year. There is also no first hand account of the ship's Skipper Dirk Hartog ordering a landfall on 25th October and erecting an inscribed pewter plate on the northern point of the island. However, several letters in Dutch archives dating from 1617 to 1627 make specific reference to the *Eendracht's* discovery of an island or land (Cygnet n.d.). Further confirmation is provided in a 1618 chart by the VOC's official map maker, Hessel Geertisz, in which he incorporated Hartog's discoveries and marked in " 't land van d'Eendracht" (Eisler and Smith 1988:105). "Dirck Hartogsz ree" (roadstead) is also indicated on later maps.

### 2.2 1696 de Vlamingh

On 30th January of 1697 a flotilla of three Dutch ships, sent to search for the lost VOC (Dutch East India Company) vessel *Ridderschap van* and to obtain further detail of the southland, dropped anchor in Shark Bay. The vessels were *Nyptangh* and *Weseltje*, skippered by Gerrit Colaart and Cornelis de Vlamingh respectively, and *Geelvinck*, skippered by the expedition commander and father of Cornelis, Willem de Vlamingh.



On 1st February two boats from the *Nyptangh* and *Geelvinck* were sent to "fix up a commemorative tablet" on the nearby land and commence investigations (Major 1859:129). On 3rd February the uppersteersman of the *Geelvinck*, Michael Bloem, returned and reported an interesting discovery to the Commander. The *Geelvinck* Journal (Schilder 1985:134) records:

*Two hours after sunrise they came to the farthest headland on the seaside of the island, where they berthed the pinnace and climbed a mountain to look seaward to see if there were something else of remnants of ships or anything else. On the mountaintop they found a post fixed near which lay a pewter plate which they brought along aboard, on which there was letter by letter: 1616, the 25 October arrived here the ship Eendragt of Amsterdam, the upper steersman Gillis Miebaïs of Liege, skipper Dirk Hartoog of Amsterdam, having put to sea bound for Bantam the 27th ditto, the under-merchant Jan Stins, the upper-steersman Pieter Dockes of Bil. Through this report found the inlet to be Dirk Hartooghs roadstead.*

The *Nyptangh* Journal (Major 1859:130) records:

*On the 3rd, Vlaming's chief pilot returned on board, he reported that he had explored eighteen leagues, and that it was an island. He brought with him a tin plate, which in lapse of time had fallen from a post to which it had been attached, and on which was cut the name of the captain, Dirk Hartog, as well as the names of the first and second merchants, and of the chief pilot of the vessel *De Eendragt*, which arrived here in the year 1616, on the 25th October, and left for Bantam on the 27th of the same month.*

A later report by the Governor General (of Batavia) and Council of India to the Directors of the Council of Seventeen also reported on the expedition (Major 1859 115).

*A single memorial, however, was seen by them. On an island situated on or near the Southland in 25° latitude, was found a pole, nearly decayed, but still standing upright, with a common middle-sized tin plate, which had been beaten flat and attached to the pole, and which was still lying near it. On this plate the following words were still legible. ... [description of plate]*

*This old plate, brought to us by Willem de Vlamingh, we have now handed over to the commander, in order that he may bring it to Your Nobilities, and that you may marvel at how it remained there through such a number of years unaffected by air, rain or sun. They erected on the same spot another pole, with a flat tin plate as a memorial, and wrote on it as to be read in the journals.*

Of this new monument, the *Geelvinck* journal (Schilder 1985:136) states

*[February] the 11th Monday in the morning the wind as before, fine weather. had a pewter plate hammered flat on which I had the following written [wording from Vlamingh plate].*

It is not known whether this replaced the commemorative tablet which the boats had sent to be erected on 1st February, prior to the discovery of Dirk Hartog's post and plate.

The flotilla continued on to Jakarta and presented its report. There is then no evidence for other visits to the site for another century, despite other explorers passing nearby. The French vessel *Gros Ventre*, commanded by Francois St. Allouam anchored in Turtle Bay in March 1772 and sent a party ashore to explore the surrounding country for three or four leagues, although there is no evidence that they approached Cape Inscription. Before departing the party raised the French flag at Turtle Bay, recorded in writing that they had taken possession of the land in the name of the France, and placed a copy of the message together with two six-franc coins into a bottle which they buried at the foot of a young tree (Caldwell 1934).

### 2.3 1801 Hamelin

On 17th July, 1801 the French vessel *Naturaliste*, commanded by Jacques Felix Hamelin, anchored off what would be named Cape Levillain to await the arrival of her companion vessel *Geographe*, commanded by Nicolas Baudin. While waiting, Hamelin ordered collections of the flora and fauna as well as completing comprehensive surveys

Marchant (1982:176) states that Lt. Louis de Freycinet was sent to Dirk Hartog Island to find a landing place and suitably conspicuous position in which to establish a camp at which to keep a lookout for *Geographe*. On 20th July a party of three men, including the chief coxswain Jean Murette, the zoologist Stanilslas Levillain, and Bourgeois, a sailor, were sent to set up the camp. This varies slightly from Levillain's account (BL 409A), who reports Commandant Letier, Murette and Bourgeois "sent in order to place the flag and the bottle which I have previously talked". The account continues:

*Once arrived on the northern end of this island, they found a lead plate on which was written in Dutch the matters on the opposite page. It was pulled off from the wood it had formerly nailed to. The stick was still half existing and was held between two rocks...*

*Anyway, Commandant Letier coming back on board brought that plate to the captain who read it and took a copy of it, and had it nailed again on its piece of wood, having added a small dutch flag. On the same time he had another plate prepared on which was written the following:*

*French Republic  
Discoveries Expedition  
Under Captain Baudin's command  
Corvette Le Naturaliste  
Captain Hamelin  
The 27th of Messidor 9th year - 16th of July 1801*

*This lead plate has been nailed with copper nails on to a piece of wood covered with black paint, and Commandant Bellefin, a doctor, was instructed to have it placed where ever he thought best, suggesting he put it in a position where it would be most easily seen. In that way there are (now) two places where we have left traces of our sojourn in that country.*

(Levillain 1801)

Francois Peron, the spirited zoologist-anthropologist for the expedition, also records the discovery in his published account of the journey.

*Our chief Coxswain, on his return from the island of Dirck-Hartighs, brought us a pewter plate, of about six inches diameter, on which was roughly engraven two Dutch inscriptions, the first dated the 25th of October, 1616, and the second dated the 4th of February 1697. This plate had been found on the northern point of the island, which for this reason we named Cape Inscription. When found, it was half covered with sand, near the remains of a post of oak wood, to which it seemed to have been originally nailed. The following is the translation of the two inscriptions... [Vlamingh's Plate]*

*After having carefully copied these inscriptions, Captain Hamelin had another post made, and erected on the spot, and replaced the plate in the same place where it had been found. Captain Hamelin would have thought it sacrilege to carry away this plate, which had been respected for near two centuries, by time, and by all the navigators who might have visited these shores. The captain also ordered to be placed on the N.E. of the island, a second plate, on which was inscribed the name of our corvette, and the date of our arrival on these shores.*

(Peron 1809: 152)

Finally, there is Hamelin's own journal report

(Hamelin) .

No contemporary evidence has yet been found to suggest that Lieutenant de Freycinet contested the return of Vlamingh's plate

## **2.4 1818 de Freycinet**

Freycinet's return to Shark Bay in 1818 as Captain of the *Uranie* saw a small party despatched to relocate and remove de Vlamingh's plate. Rose de Freycinet, who had been stowed away on the *Uranie* (Bassett 1962), simply reported:

*On the 13th Louis sent a boat to Dirk Hatich's to take away an inscription left by the Dutch, who landed there about 1600. It is something precious to take back to Paris.*

(DuPlomb 1927)

Fabre and Quoy were able to relocate the site, finding the post, with the de Vlamingh's plate still nailed to the post, fallen over in the sand. Several years later in 1821 when Freycinet presented the plate to the Royal Academy of Inscriptions, he described the

deteriorating condition of the plate as "the posts belonging to it having disappeared", and stating

*... to have nailed this plate de Vlamingh's to a new post would have been to risk losing it all together. Thinking it would be of historical interest I thought it my duty to bring it back to France.*

(Translation contained in Halls 1974:24)

\*\*\*\*\* (Insert copies of FREYCINET'S LETTER, (1821?)

Investigate existence of DR QUOY'S JOURNAL, FABRE'S JOURNAL ad other contemporary accounts).

## 2.5 1822 King & Roe

Several years after the departure of the *Uranie*, the British vessel *Bathurst* commanded by Phillip Parker King arrived at Shark Bay.

*Jan 20 1822: Upon rounding the cape, two posts were descried upon its summit, which we conjectured to be those on which the French affixed a record of their visit, as well as the more ancient one of the Dutch navigators, Dirk Hartog and Vlaming [sic]; for they were very conspicuously placed, and appeared to be in good preservation*

*21 Jan 1822: The following morning we landed at the Cape, and with eager steps ascended the rocky face of the hill, to examine the interesting memonals that were affixed to the post; but found to our great mortification, that they had been removed; the only vestige that remained was the nails by which they had been secured. One of the posts was about two feet high, and evidently made of the wood of the callitris, that grows upon Rottnest Island; it appeared to be broken down; the other was still erect, and seemed to have been either the heel of a ship's royal-mast, or part of a studding sail boom; upon one side of it a flag had been fastened with nails. A careful search was made all around, but as no signs of the Dutch plate, or the more recent French inscription were seen; it was conjectured that they had been removed by the natives; but since our return to England, I have learnt that they are preserved in the Museum of the Institute at Paris, where they were deposited by M. de Freycinet, upon his return from his late voyage around the world. After this disappointment we returned to the sea beach.*

*On the 24th of January, 1822, Mr Roe visited the Cape, to fix on the post a memorial of our visit; an inscription was carved upon a small piece of wood, in the back of which was deposited another memorandum written upon vellum; the wood was of the size of the sheave hole of the larger post, into which it was fixed, and near it Mr Roe piled up a heap of stones.*

Allan Cunningham, the botanist on the expedition, provided his own account which correponds closely to King's.

*Upon approach to this memorable extremity of the island, previus to our anchorage in the Road, we most distinctly perceived the spot whereon Captain Dirk Hartog had erected a cross in 1616. It was on the verge of a high cliff which we ascended the following morning, each of us being anxious*

*to behold the original metallic testimonial of the discovery of the island which had been there at so late a period as 1801. To our disappointment we simply found two posts of recent erection of different lengths, standing by being fixed in between the deep fissures of the rocks but without the plate attached to either which could not be found in or about the vicinity of the spot, although a very diligent search was made. One of the staffs was of fir seemingly part of a top-gallant mast, the other appearing to be of the Callitris of Rottnest and was probably erected by Captain Freycinet of L'Uranie in 1818. The fir post was probably that to which Baudin had in 1801 again fixed the original platter. Our conclusions were that, although Dirk Hartog's post which was of oak had remained undisturbed by natives 185 years it is nevertheless probable that the appearance of the new one had so excited the wonder and doubts of the barbarous wandering aborigines as to induce them to deface it.*

(Lee 1925:478)

Roe either did not keep a personal diary of this expedition, or it has otherwise not survived. His daily logs which recorded positions and ships activities are available for January of 1824, although the entries tend to be terse. On 20th of January, anchored off the end of Dirk Hartog Island, he records taking a sighting on the "Inscription post of the Cape of that name" (BL 491A). On the 25th he reports "Sent a boat ashore with an Inscription and piece of parchment to be fixed on the post at Cape Inscription". This slightly contradicts King's account in that it suggests Roe wasn't present when the new inscription was fixed, although this may simply be that the log is being written in the third person.

The most interesting contribution by Roe is his sketched elevation of the east coast of Dirk Hartog Island (BL 491A). This drawing (although slightly blurred on the copy reproduced as Figure \*\*), echoes Victor Victorszoon's (1697) sketch in that it notes above the site, "posts with inscriptions by Dirk Hartog".

This is the last known account of the posts being visited in the 19th century. However, by this time and particularly during the 1840s the Western Australian coast was being visited by hundreds of European vessels, especially American whaleships. By the late 1850s Shark Bay was the focus of interest of the European colonists who had settled at the Swan River in 1829. John Septimus Roe had returned to Australia as Surveyor-General, and the *Perth Gazette* of 24th December of 1836 recalled his previous visit by publishing a section of King's account. Two years previously the colonial vessel *Monkey* had made an expedition to Shark Bay, although no mention is made of Cape Inscription.



## 2.6 Modern Period.

The next documented report of the site resulted from the proposal to construct a lighthouse on Cape Inscription and the preliminary surveys of the area in 1907. Correspondence at that time suggests ~~the suggestion~~ that there were fears that the workmen at the lighthouse site would inadvertently remove and burn the posts for firewood (BL Acc 1066/131, Harbour and Lights Dept file 650/10).

The ensuing discussion during May 1907 is quite revealing, in that it appears that opinion was divided as to whether to attempt to preserve the posts in-situ, remove them to the museum for safe keeping with eventual return, or simply remove them permanently. It is interesting to note that the final decision, endorsed by the Premier, was to allow the posts to remain, protected by a fence. However, this instruction was received too late by the Harbour and Lights Department, and correspondence of the following month suggests that instructions had already been issued to remove the posts for safe keeping, to be re-erected later (CSO 1773/07). Assistant Engineer Shields, visiting Cape Inscription on the Bullara, was to fix the position of the post (only the singular is mentioned), and to remove it to a safe place

The following account of the expedition was presented in the West Australian of 11/6/1907

*While at Dirk Hartog Island the party dug up two historical posts Dirk Hartog's Post, of which only 2 ft was visible above the ground, was sunk 5 ft. below the surface, and evidently had been a ship's spar, the wood being Baltic pine. Vlaming's post was also about 7 ft. in length and, presumably had done duty as a top-gallant masthead, having a mortice on one end. About a foot from the top is a cluster of nails. Viewing the post in a perpendicular position, these nails convey no meaning, but on laying the post horizontally the word "King" and the date "1822" (?) are clearly discernible while underneath is the word "Roe" cut into the wood.*

Photographs of the site and the posts which probably originated from this expedition were published in the Western Mail (22/6/1907, 25/12/1907), while another is found in the correspondence files of the Harbour and Rivers Department (BL CSO 1773/07)

For several months the posts were kept at the Carnarvon Police Station, after which they were sent back to Perth. Eventually they were forwarded to the Western Australian Museum, although there are limited records held by the museum itself. Despite the original intention to either return the originals or create exact replicas of the same wood, in 1908 the Western Australian Government simply erected two ne



w (non-replica) posts with plaques to mark the site of the original monuments (Drake Brockman 1966). By 1938 the plaques had been removed by persons unknown, with notes in files of the Royal W.A. Historical Society Memorials Committee in 1938 stating that there was no record available of the wording of these inscriptions.

Further action to protect and commemorate the site also took place in 1910 when a memo from the Minister for Lands recommended that the area around the posts be set aside as 'A' Class Reserve 12715 'Protection of Inscription Posts' (Lands and Surveys Department File 3643/07). The boundaries of this reserve are shown in Figure \*\*

In the late 1930s there were fears that the cliff face would soon collapse into the sea, based on a report by a geologist, Dr Wade (Anon 19\*\*), although correspondence in RWAHS files suggests some at least did not believe this to be the case. Despite this, it was decided that a permanent monument to the explorers should be erected in the form of a brass plaque mounted on the wall of the lighthouse, situated approximately 120 metres to the northwest. Money was raised for this purpose, including a substantial contribution from the Commonwealth. Detailed accounts of the erection of this plaque in 1938 are provided in the Journal of the RWAHS and the files of the memorials committee (Anon 19\*\*, Drake Brockman 1966). It

### 3.0 SITE SURVEY

The Inscription Posts site is located on the edge of the cliffs at the eastern side of Cape Inscription. The modern memorial posts are situated in a crevice in the rock averaging 20cm wide and which runs approximately 20m NNE. The depth of the crevice varies from 80cm on the northern side of the former enclosure for the posts, to 35 cm in the area between the posts (225cm south), and then to 180cm on the southern side of the former enclosure (a further 225cm south). This depth increases to the north and south.

A section of the cliff adjacent to the posts has broken away, creating a ravine approximately 3 m wide and 3 m or more deep. The sandy surface slopes away to the south, allowing a relatively easy scramble down (or up) the side of the cliffs down to the small sandy beach below. Several other large sections of cliff have also broken away and are scattered down the slope. Despite the crevice in which the memorials are seated, the section of cliff in which the Inscription Posts site is situated does not appear to be in danger of collapse.

The two modern (jarrah?) memorial posts are seated in the crevice, projecting approximately 1.2 m above ground level, with the northern post being 5.75" by 6", and the southern being 6.5" by 7.5". Both posts have been roughly squares with tapered tops. The copper screws of the former brass inscription plates are still evident, and the plates themselves appear to have measured 235mm tall by 105mm wide, and were fastened to the upper part of the posts on the western side. Both posts have been wedged into the crevice with wooden wedges and local stone.

The fence which formerly surrounded the site (presumed c1908) is well recorded by photographs over the years. The solid iron posts were 1.5" diameter spaced north-south at 226cm centres, and east-west at 271cm centres. Each post stood 3' (1 m) high, with an eye at the top for the chain to pass through. The chain links were 2" each. The posts were suffering varying amounts of corrosion, with the northwest post broken through and collapsed.

Excluding the small quantities of modern glass scattered around the top of the cliff, there is a deposit of early 20th century domestic material in the ravine below the memorials, as well as several larger elements of corrugated galvanised iron and guttering which had blown in from the former Lightkeepers Quarters (since removed). A more substantial deposit of early 20th century domestic materials is scattered down the slope to the

north-east of the site, and almost certainly relates to the occupation of the Lightkeepers Quarters

It is interesting to note that a modern tin plate, painted with names of visitors, had been nailed to the northern post. This relic from modern day explorers continuing the tradition has been removed to the W.A. Museum.

## 4.0 ANALYSIS OF SOURCES AND EVIDENCE REGARDING THE POSTS AND MONUMENTS.

The following section analyses the combined historical and physical evidence for the location and nature of the various monuments erected on Dirk Hartog Island.

### 4.1 Dirk Hartog's Post and Plate

The fate of Dirk Hartog's plate after its removal from its post has already been recorded in detail elsewhere (Halls 1964). In brief, after being presented to the Council of the Indies by Vlamingh, the plate was returned to Holland for presentation to the Directors of the East India Company. In 1883 it was placed in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, where it remains.

There has been no physical evidence yet discovered for the post erected by Dirk Hartog. Given the nature of the timber available on the island, it is assumed that the post must have been a timber from the ship, prepared at the same time as the plate was engraved. Unfortunately the accounts by Vlamingh's crew provide no evidence, other than indicating that the post was deteriorating. Cunningham's statement, which describes Dirk Hartog's post as being of oak, must be treated with caution given that no other contemporary account mentions this. — Yes the French (Peron) —

Despite the passage of 380 years, there is a remote possibility that fragments of wood from Dirk Hartog's post may survive in the base of the narrow crevice in which the current memorial posts are now situated (the archaeological potential of the site is addressed further, below). This, however, raises the question of whether we can be sure that the site of the current memorial is the same site as the original Dirk Hartog post. This is discussed further below.

### 4.2 de Vlamingh's Post

The story of Vlamingh's plate following the removal by Freycinet has also been documented elsewhere (Bassett 1962, Halls 1964, 1974).

The identification of Vlamingh's post as Callitris (Rottneest Island Pine) is first made by King and the botanist Cunningham in 1822. Peron's 1801 identification of Vlamingh's post as oak (Peron 1809) appears to be based on second hand information. Since this

time the assumption appears to have been made that the post was one of the timbers collected by Vlamingh on Rottneest during his investigations. There does not, however, appear to have been any modern effort to confirm this identification through testing.

There is no historical evidence by which to precisely determine the original height of Vlamingh's post, although at the time of Hamelin's visit in 1801, Levillain (1801) describe the pole as only "half existing". Allowing for some license, this statement may indicate that the post was roughly half it's original height, although it might also indicate a general state of decay. Sixteen years later, Freycinet reports the post having fallen over again, with King (18\*\*), four years later, stating that the remaining post was only about two foot high above ground. Despite the passage of a century, Shields (WA 11/6/1907) also describes about two feet projecting above ground. Allowing for the vagaries of description, deterioration of the post, and the likelihood that the fallen upper portion would be slightly taller than the surviving section, can we suppose that Vlamingh's post was originally somewhere between four and six feet tall?

As to it's position on the site, one of the 1907 photographs (Figure \*\*) shows what is almost certainly the base of the post situated about a metre and a half south of Hamelin's post. Shields' statement that there was a further five feet of wood below surface level is certainly possible, given that the current depth of the crevice on the south side of the modern memorials is nearly six feet.

While Levillain's (1801) account suggests that Vlamingh's plate was nailed back onto it's original post with a small Dutch flag added along the side, this would seem difficult given that the preceding accounts indicate that remaining stump at this time was probably only two foot tall. It is possible that the surviving fragment in the W A Museum may still bear vestiges of the nails from both the plate and flag. The absence of nails may further indicate the potential for archaeological deposits fallen into the crevice in which the posts are fixed.

Levillain's description is also of interest in that it explicitly states that the original post was "held between two rocks", possibly indicating that these were used to wedge the pole into the crevice.

Vlamingh's post is currently on display at the W A Maritime Museum.

### 4.3 Hamelin' Post and Plate

There seems little doubt that the "heel of a royal mast, or part of a studding sail boom" is Hamelin's post, described by Levillain as covered in black paint. Hamelin's plate is described as a lead plate nailed with copper nails. There is no contemporary mention of a flag being nailed on to the post, although King describes the nails along the side which had fixed it on. It might be considered that Hamelin had ordered a French flag nailed onto his new post, to match the Dutch flag the crew were to nail onto Vlamingh's post.

The fate of Hamelin's plate is unknown. It is not mentioned by Freycinet in his return visit to the island to reclaim Vlamingh's inscription, or by any subsequent visitor. It is possible that Freycinet removed both plates in 1818, although according to Halls (1964) many of Freycinet's scientific specimens were lost during the wreck of *L'Uranie* in the Falkland islands in 1820, while it was another year before he donated Vlamingh's plate to the Academie des Inscriptions. Despite this, the possibility that Hamelin's plate still survives in France must still be entertained.

There are at least two drawings recording the text of Hamelin's plate and suggesting its relative positioning. Halls (1974) provides a drawing of the plate (see Figure \*\*) but was unable to provide a source. The translation of Levillain's description (by Anne-Marie Caton BL 409A) has already been quoted in a previous section, although it should be noted that the Halls' (1974) translation records 27th Thermidor.

The remains of the Hamelin post in the W A Museum are 9 feet 6 inches high.

### 4.4 de Freycinet

While Freycinet is known to have removed Vlamingh's plate and is suspected of removing Hamelin's, there is no indication that he made any other change or left any other marker at Cape Inscription.

### 4.5 King & Roe

There is no account of the wording on either the inscribed piece of wood or the piece of vellum which King had fixed into the sheave hole of Hamelin's post. Nor is the fate of these fragments known, although as described above, after the 1820s Shark Bay was almost certainly being visited with increasing frequency.

X No  
he sees  
the  
sailed  
Halls 1974.

Yes - see Harcourt, 1997: 323.



*of Hamelin - best in ref.*

Neither King, Cunningham or Roe mention nailing or carving names onto Hamelin's post. However, it seems unlikely that a later visitor would take the trouble to record the names of what were effectively later and minor figures in the history of the site. Some of the nails are visible on the 1907 photograph of the post (Plate 3), and some would already appear to be missing, increasing the potential for archaeological deposits in and around the crevice.

The 'heap of stones' piled up by Roe is recorded as a cairn on the 1907 surveys, situated slightly west of the posts (Figure \*\*\*). This might be the stones seen in Plate 2, situated slightly to the left (west) of the posts, visible between the horse's legs. No cairn is currently visible on the site, although it may be that loose stone has been salvaged for use in creating the border of the path which leads up to the site from the Lightkeepers Quarters.

#### 4.6 Modern Period

The background and nature of the modern memorial posts has already been described in the physical evidence section. As noted, the archaeological deposits in the ravine and nearby areas are at least in part associated with the occupation of the Lightkeepers quarters and the deterioration of the structures after abandonment.

#### 4.7 Identifying the Site -

Can we be sure this was where Dirk Hartog Landed?

The continuity of site use by the different explorers has always been assumed by historians and writers. However, the evidence for this should be considered.

The position of Dirk Hartog's post close to the northern end of the island is clearly indicated on the coastal profile recorded by Victor Victorszoon, who was employed aboard Vlamingh's expedition to make topographic sections and maps (Eisler and Smith 1988: 105). The caption above the spot indicated reads "hier d'tinne schotel gevonden", which translates as "here found the pewter plate" (Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1976: 38). While this does not provide a precise location, it is clearly on the north-east end of Dirk Hartog Island. There is no reason to believe that Vlamingh, who recognised the significance of the earlier monument, would have chosen a different location, particularly if there was an existing crevice which he could use to erect his own post.

Hamelin in turn was aware of the historical status of the site, although both LeVillain's and Peron's contemporary accounts as to exactly where the new post was erected are

slightly ambiguous. However, both King's and Cunningham's descriptions note the presence of two posts, with the older, deteriorated pole of Callitris which matches the earlier description of Vlamingh's post situated nearby. Roe's sketch and the 1907 survey leave little doubt that the sites are the same.

The 1907 surveys clearly show the Hamelin and Vlamingh posts lodged the crevice in the same approximate positions as the current memorial posts. Rocks appear to have been used to wedge the posts in, as described by earlier writers.

## 5.0 ASSESSMENT AND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### 5.1 CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

The *Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance* state that:

*Cultural significance is a concept which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations.*

*Although there are a variety of adjectives used in definitions of cultural significance in Australia, the adjectives 'aesthetic', 'historic', 'scientific' and 'social', given alphabetically in the Burra Charter, can encompass all other values*

The Inscription Posts Site, and the whole of the Cape Inscription precinct is considered to be a significant heritage place on the basis of the documentary and physical evidence presented above. The criteria which have been used for assessing the significance of the study area are those set out by the Heritage Council of Western Australia for entry on its Register of Heritage Places

The significance of the adjacent Lighthouse and Lightkeepers quarters has been outlined in the *Cape Inscription Lightkeepers Quarters Conservation Plan* (Palassis 1996) and is not discussed here

### 5.2 AESTHETIC VALUE

*Criterion 1. The place is significant in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the community.*

- The Inscription Posts Site and the Cape Inscription precinct as a whole is significant for its picturesque setting on the cliffs at the northern end of Dirk Hartog Island.

### 5.3 HISTORIC VALUE

*Criterion 2: The place is significant in the evolution or pattern of the history of Western Australia.*

- Cape Inscription is one of the most historically significant places in Australia as the earliest firmly located and dated site of a European visit to the continent.
- Cape Inscription is historically significant as the site of repeated visits by major Dutch, French and English exploration parties since 1616, and for its association with notable explorers including Dirk Hartog, Willem de Vlamingh, Jacques Hamelin, Louis de Freycinet, Phillip Parker King, John Septimus Roe and others.
- The Inscription Posts site demonstrates the historical practice by explorers of erecting monuments and markers to commemorate their visits to new areas

### 5.4 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

*Criterion 3A: It has demonstrable potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the natural or cultural history of Australia*

*Criterion 3B: It is significant in demonstrating a high degree of technical innovation or achievement.*

- The Inscription Posts site is the oldest European archaeological site in Australia
- The site of the inscription posts has scientific significance for its potential to contain information and other materials relevant to the earlier posts and Commemorative plates placed at the site.

### 5.5 SOCIAL VALUE

*Criterion 4: It is significant through association with a community or cultural group in Western Australia for social, cultural, educational or spiritual reasons.*

- The site of the inscription posts is well known to all Australians as the oldest known European site in Australia, and as the site of repeated visits by Dutch, French and English explorers. This also makes the site a place of significance to several other nations

## 5.6 RARITY

*Criterion 5: It demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the cultural heritage of Western Australia.*

- The Inscription Posts site is unique and irreplaceable as the oldest known European site in Australia.

## 5.7 REPRESENTATIVENESS

*Criterion 6 It is significant in demonstrating the characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments in the State*

- The site of the inscription posts is representative of the places where early European explorers left posts, plates, cairns and other memorials to commemorate their visits

## 5.8 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- The Inscription Post site has exceptional National *historic significance* as the oldest known landing place of Europeans on Australia (Dirk Hartog in 1616), and as the site of subsequent visits by major Dutch, French and English explorers
- The Inscription Posts site has *aesthetic value* for its impressive location on the edge of the cliffs at the northern end of Dirk Hartog Island, with a sweeping view over the bay, islands and other peninsula
- The inscription Posts site has *scientific value* for it's potential to contain archaeological deposits associated with the earlier monuments erected there.

- The Inscription Posts site has exceptional *rarity value* as the oldest known landing place of Europeans on the Australian continent.
- The Inscription Posts site is *representative* of the practice by early European explorers of erecting monuments at sites which they had visited.

## 5.9 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While it is probable that most of the major historical accounts of the erection and removal of the various monuments and posts at Cape Inscription have been located, there is always the possibility that further unpublished or published journals or descriptions may be located. In particular, it is possible that descriptions of the site by vessels other than those described above, may be located which will shed further light on the nature of the place and posts, and possibly the fate of the Hamelin Plate and King's inscription. If additional records are found, previously unknown but important information may be uncovered and the statement of significance may need to be reconsidered.

Archaeological investigation within the crevice in which the posts were erected has the potential to recover material including wood and metal fragments associated with the posts and monuments. However, given the difficulties of access, careful consideration must be given to developing appropriate techniques by which to undertake this without damaging the fabric of the site. Under no circumstances should the rock of the crevice be disturbed in any way.

## 5.10 GRADING OF SIGNIFICANCE

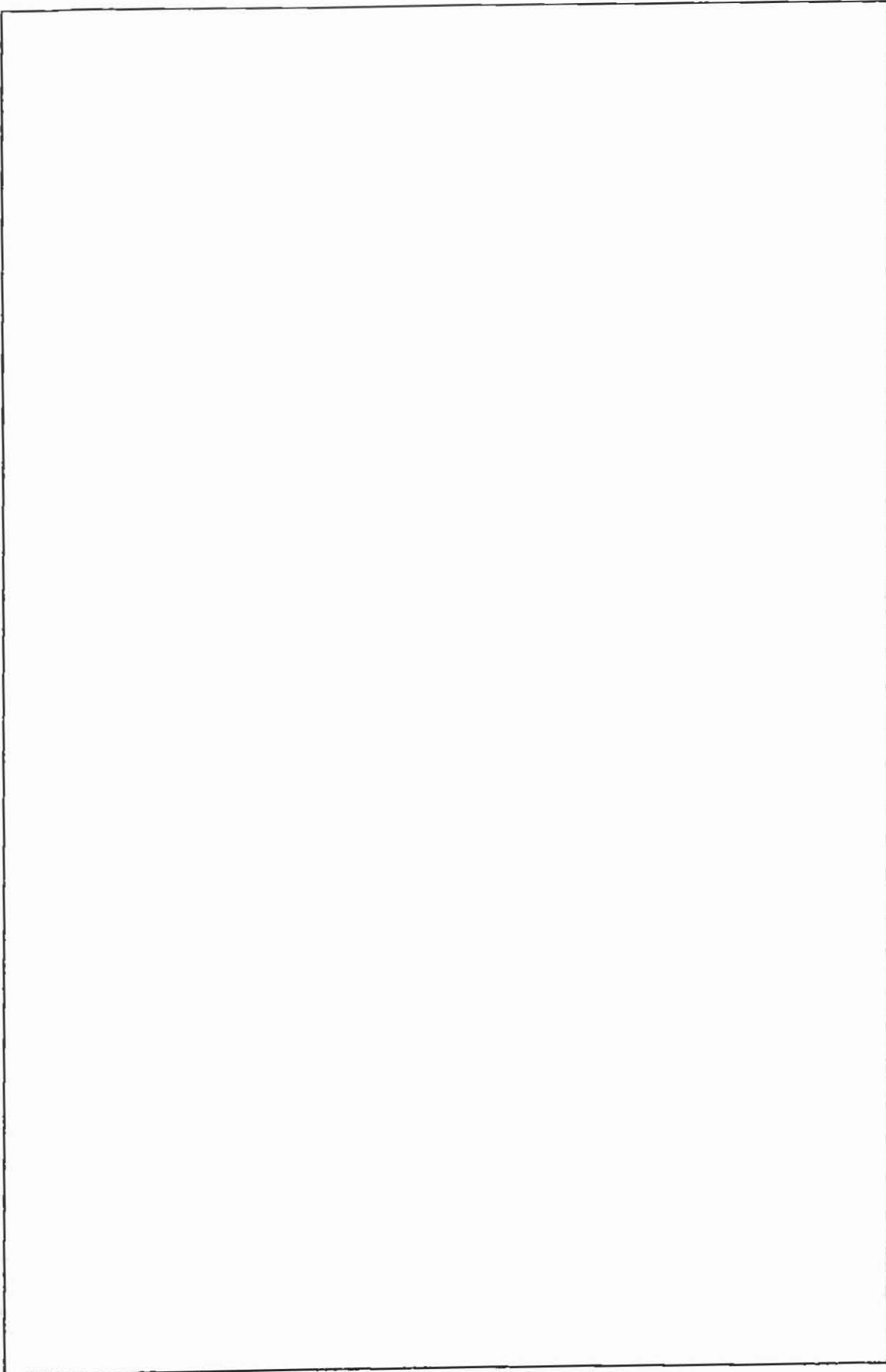
Elements within the Cape Inscription precinct are graded to indicate their level or degree of significance. In addition to the statement of significance, the elements' authenticity, condition and integrity contributes to the grading of significance. The following definitions indicate the different degrees of significance as given in the brief:

- **Exceptional significance-**  
Of national importance, worthy of inclusion on any heritage register.
- **Considerable significance-**  
Of state importance, worthy of inclusion on any heritage register.



- **Some significance-**  
Of local importance. Threshold for entry onto the Heritage Council's (WA) Register of Heritage Places, the Australian Heritage Commission's Register of the National Estate, or the National Trust of Australia (WA) Classified Lists.
- **Little significance-**  
Elements which have a neutral or slightly intrusive impact on the overall significance of the place. Often these are the result of alterations or additions made to accommodate changing requirements. They tend to be expedient and ephemeral and their impact on the significance of the place ranges from neutral to moderately intrusive.
- **Intrusive-**  
Elements which, in their present form, detract from the overall significance of the place.

The significance of individual elements within the Cape Inscription precinct is indicated on Figure 5.1



**Figure 5.1** Cape Inscription - Grading of Significance

## 6.0 CONSERVATION POLICY - CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The site is exceptional

### 6.1 INHERENT CONSTRAINTS

A number of *Inherent Constraints* have become apparent relating to the conservation of the identified cultural significance. These constraints are the direct result of the *assessment of significance*, the *statement of significance* and the *grading of significance* as shown in Figure 5 1

#### 6.1.1 Exceptional Significance

Elements within the Cape Inscription precinct considered to be of *exceptional* significance include

- The Inscription Posts site and any associated archaeological deposits

Areas graded as *exceptional* should be conserved and appropriately interpreted with no adaptation allowed. Development of adjacent areas (including the Lightkeepers Quarters) must not impinge upon the significant values of these places (inclusive of structures, archaeological deposits, landscape and other features)

#### 6.1.2 Considerable Significance

Elements in and adjacent to the Inscription Posts Site which are considered to have *considerable* significance include

- The Lighthouse, Oil store, Lightkeepers Quarters and associated structures and sites.
- The archaeological deposits within the precinct, including the archaeological deposits 20 m north of the Inscription Post site.
- The natural landscapes and vegetation surrounding the evidence of human activity

Areas or elements of *considerable* significance should be conserved to original form unless an extremely strong argument can be demonstrated for adaptation.

Archaeological deposits should be the subject of professional investigation prior to any disturbance.

### 6.1.3 Some Significance

Elements adjacent to the Inscription Post site considered to have *some* significance include:

- The 1908 posts (both as historic monuments in their own right and as markers of the positions of the earlier posts)
- The stone-lined pathways between the Inscription Posts Site and the Lightkeepers Quarters

Areas or elements of *some* significance should be conserved to original form where possible, but may be subject to minor adaptation that does diminish the significance of the whole or nearby elements. Any adaptation must be reversible and fully recorded photographically and in drawn format.

### 6.1.4 Little Significance

There are no elements immediately adjacent to the Inscription Posts site considered to have *little* significance, although the iron and chain fence which previously surrounded the posts might have fallen into this category. If any areas or elements of *little* significance may be conserved to a known form, or adapted to suit client requirements. Any adaptation must not diminish the significance of the whole, or nearby elements. Any adaptation must be fully recorded photographically and in drawn format.

### 6.1.5 Intrusive

Elements within the Lightkeepers Quarters study area considered to be intrusive include:

- Modern refuse including storm debris from the Lightkeepers Quarters which has accumulated adjacent to the Inscription Posts Site

Element that are *intrusive* should be removed, adapted or screened so as to enhance the significance of the place.

## 6.2 USER REQUIREMENTS

The Inscription Posts Site is one of the most significant heritage places in Australia, and must be conserved and treated as such. In general, the user requirement is that the site be available for visitation, with appropriate interpretation available. However, no development in or around the site, including installation of interpretation, must be allowed to compromise this significance.

## 6.3 OPPORTUNITIES

The Inscription Posts Site has been identified as being of exceptional cultural significance for the people of Australia, and to a lesser extent of France, Britain and Holland, for the reasons outlined above. Opportunities for conservation and interpretation are made with reference to this significance of the place and the limitations described above.

The opportunity exists for the following:

- Conservation of the natural fabric of the Inscription Post Site, including the rock of the site, the crevice in which the posts were set, and the other landforms of the site
- Conservation of the existing posts, with possible re-instatement of interpretive plaques
- Removal of the existing posts and replacement with replicas of earlier posts, based on historical descriptions, photographs and physical evidence, including methods of fixing the posts in place.
- Installation of new interpretation that increase the visitor's understanding of the place, at a point which in no way impinges upon the fabric, nature or vistas of the Inscription Posts Site.

This is by no means an exhaustive listing, and it is expected that the circulation of this report, together with further consultation and consideration, will generate new ideas. However, any new opportunities identified must be considered carefully with regard to the significance assessment provided above and the conservation principles and policies discussed below.

## **7.0 POLICY STATEMENT**

### **7.1 HERITAGE LISTINGS**

#### **7.1.1 Register of the National Estate (Aust. Heritage Commission).**

There is currently no specific Register of the National Estate listing for the Inscription Post Site. However, on 21/3/1978 Dirk Hartog Island was Registered on the basis of its natural environment values, although the assessment included explicit references to historic sites including the Inscription Posts Site.

#### **7.1.2 Register of Heritage Places (Heritage Council of W.A.)**

\*\*\*\*\* The Inscription Post Site is listed on the Register of Heritage Places.

#### **7.1.3 Register of the National Trust of Australia (W.A.)**

\*\*\*\*\* The inscription Post Site has been Classified by the National Trust of Australia (W.A.).

#### **7.1.4 Local Government Municipal Inventory**

The Inscription Post Site has been listed on the Municipal Inventory developed for the Shire of Shark Bay.

#### **7.1.5 Local Government Planning Scheme**

The Inscription Post Site is recognised as a significant place in the town planning scheme of the Shire of Shark Bay

## **7.2 CONSERVATION PROCEDURES**

The purpose of the conservation plan is to maintain or enhance the cultural significance of the Inscription Post Site. In this instance the exceptional significance of the place means that great care must be taken to ensure the long term heritage integrity of site. Consequently, to maintain the cultural significance of the place, a number of different actions may be required.

The following is an extract from the Burra Charter, giving definitions for the various terms used in conservation works:

### 7.2.1 Definitions

- *Place* means site, area, building or other work, group of buildings or other works together with associated contents and surrounds.
- *Cultural significance* means aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations
- *Fabric* means all the physical material of the *place*.
- *Conservation* means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its *cultural significance*. It includes maintenance and may according to circumstance include *preservation, restoration, reconstruction* and *adaptation* and will be commonly a combination of more than one of these.
- *Maintenance* means the continuous protective care of the *fabric*, contents and setting of a *place* and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves *restoration* or *reconstruction* and it should be treated accordingly.
- *Preservation* means maintaining the fabric of a *place* in its existing state and retarding deterioration.
- *Restoration* means returning the EXISTING *fabric* of a *place* to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material
- *Reconstruction* means returning a *place* as nearly as possible to a known earlier state and is distinguished by the introduction of materials (new or old) into the *fabric*. This is not to be confused with either recreation or conjectural reconstruction which are outside the scope of this Charter.
- *Adaptation* means modifying a *place* to suit proposed compatible uses.



- *Compatible use* means a use which involves no change to the culturally significant fabric, changes which are substantially reversible, or changes which require a minimal impact.

The *Burra Charter*, reproduced as an appendix to this report, indicates clearly that changes to the culturally significant fabric should be reversible or require minimal impact.

The *Burra Charter* does make provision for allowing re-use of the place with 'compatible uses' and that maintaining the fabric and providing security to a place

For this reason the place has been assessed and graded elements of significance established. As a general principle, adaptation should be restricted to areas of fabric of little significance, although some essential works may be required to meet health and safety issues in areas of some or considerable significance. Adaptation of areas of some or considerable significance should only be considered where all other approaches have been exhausted and should be reversible where ever possible.

#### 7.2.2 Recent Site Actions

Because of the remote location and limited access to the site, several conservation actions were undertaken during the February 1996 site visit. These were done outside of the context of the conservation study, but are consistent with the general requirements outlined below

The first action was the removal of the iron fence posts and chains which had surrounded the site, and which had partially collapsed as a result of corrosion as described above. It was possible to remove the posts at ground level by either breaking or chiselling them. It was also possible to remove or conceal the associated iron staining on the stone surfaces so that no evidence of the posts was visible without very close and deliberate inspection

The second action was the collection and removal of the large items of building refuse which had collected around the site and in the ravine adjacent to cliff. While modern glass along the cliff edge was also removed, the older glass, bone shell and other small artefacts (which were possibly associated with the Lightkeepers) in the ravine to the east of the site was allowed to remain in situ, or where visually intrusive, covered with sand. No actions were taken with regard to the more substantial spill of early 20th century material to the north of the ravine.

It was originally intended to remove the c1908 commemorative markers in preparation for the installation of the new posts. However, after discussion this was deferred until the completion of this report for the following reasons:

- to allow the significance of the markers themselves to be evaluated.
- to continue to provide interpretive markers for tourists, until it proves possible to replace them replica posts.
- to provide markers of the positions for the later installation of the replica posts
- to protect any archaeological deposits which may underlay the posts.

### **7.3 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The policy recommendations should be read in conjunction with Figure 5.1 which illustrates the grading of significance of the elements of the Inscription Post Site.

The Inscription Post Site should be conserved in accordance with the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter*, and the general philosophy embodied in that document. Attention should also be given to the recommendations contained in the *Cape Inscription Lightkeepers Quarters Precinct Conservation and Management Plan* (Palassis 1996), and the *Strategic Environmental Management Plan for Dirk Hartog Island 1995-2005* (Saunders 1995). Specific recommendations which should be followed in the conservation of the Inscription Posts Site include.

#### **7.3.1. Proposed Works - General Procedure**

- All proposed works should be assessed against this conservation plan, and with consideration of any new evidence that may become available.
- All proposed works should be considered with the input of a recognised historical archaeologist and should always attempt to maintain or enhance the cultural significance of the place.
- Any works to the place should use the conservation plan and original documentation as principal sources of information.

### 7.3.2. Heritage Registers

- The existing Register of the National Estate assessment regarding the Inscription Posts Site should be supplemented with information from this report. This will lend support to any possible future applications for conservation funding.
- The Inscription Post Site should be clearly nominated to the Heritage Council of W.A. Register of Heritage Places as a means of ensuring extra protection.

### 7.3.3. Lightkeepers Quarters and General Precinct

- Conservation actions associated with the Lightkeepers Quarters and the Cape Inscription area in general, including vehicle access and are described in detail in the *Cape Inscription Conservation and Management Plan* (Palassis 1996)
- In the event of the Lightkeepers Quarters being leased or sold, it is vital that the lessees or owners acknowledge and agree to strictly follow the guidelines set out in the conservation plan. Failure to meet these condition should be severely penalised, including termination of the lease and possible prosecution under the Heritage of Western Australia Act (1990).

### 7.3.4. Site Disturbance and Archaeological Investigations

- The crevice in which the posts sit should not be disturbed or modified, including widening or clearing of rubble to install new memorials, although the latter may be possible if supervised by a qualified archaeologist
- No invasive archaeological investigation should be allowed in or around the site without consultation and consent with relevant authorities, including the Heritage Council of Western Australia. This includes attempts to remove material from within the crevice in which the posts sit
- The surrounding land surface, in particular the land within the 'A' class reserve, should not be disturbed or modified (see also 'vegetation' and 'new development').

### 7.3.5 Vegetation

- The natural vegetation should be conserved wherever possible. No foreign vegetation or species not found on the island should be introduced to the site. However, there is no evidence that trees grew near to the site (other than in the adjacent ravine, and should therefore not be planted.

### 7.3.6 New Development

- No new development should be allowed within the A class Reserve. Great caution should be taken should any development, adaptation or restoration be planned for the Lightkeepers Quarters. Detailed discussion and recommendations are provided in the *Cape Inscription Conservation and Management Plan* (Palassis 1996).
- The vistas from and to the Inscription Post Site are of great significance and should not be altered by either development or addition of vegetation, displays or interpretation.

### 7.3.7 Visitor Access and Movement

- Visitor movement around the site is of great concern for its potential to alter the land surface, particularly should visitor numbers increase, such as through restoration and use of the quarters. The stone lined pathway between the quarters and Inscription Posts Site should be cleared of vegetation and reinstated as the main approach for visitors, although it should not be paved or gravelled.

### 7.3.8. Interpretation

- The future interpretation of the Inscription Posts Site is of great importance in the conservation of the place, and is considered in detail in the following section. .

## 7.4 INTERPRETIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Inscription Posts Site is one of the most significant heritage places in Australia and should be recognised and interpreted in a way that increases the visitor's understanding of the place while not endangering its heritage value.

Given the close proximity of the lighthouse and the keeper's quarters, and the nature of the surrounding natural environment, an integrated approach to interpretation which incorporates all aspects of the area is essential. This is detailed in the *Cape Inscription Lightkeepers Quarters Conservation Plan* (Palassis 1996).

### 7.4.1 Current Interpretation

Interpretation at the Inscription Posts site currently consists of the two 1908 posts. While these have served in the past, there is the opportunity for improving the interpretation.

### 7.4.2 Presentation of Information

The key recommendation is that no of any kind should be installed on or near to the Inscription Posts site. Detailed text, photographs and interpretive materials can, if considered desirable, be installed in one of the other buildings near the site, such as within the former oil store or in restored section of the Lightkeepers quarters.

Themes directly associated with the interpretation of the Inscription Posts site might include.

- The history of the Inscription Post site and the different monuments placed there since 1616
- The history of the European exploration of the Shark Bay region, Western Australia and Australia.
- The explorers associated with the site.
- The significance of the site in a wider context
- Interpretation of the local natural environment.

Further themes will emerge in relation to the Inscription Posts site, the Lighthouse complex and the natural environment.

Several options emerge for the site itself:

- a. Retention and conservation of the existing posts.
- b. Removal of the existing posts.
- c. Installation of new monuments.
- d. Installation of new monuments reproducing earlier posts.

Some marker is necessary at the site. The current posts have served their purpose but are now deteriorating and contribute limited information other than marking the site and indicating that for much of its existence there were two posts. The opportunity exists to replace these with a more informative but still non-intrusive form of interpretation in the form of replicas of the earlier historic monuments.

The installation of replica posts has been suggested for the Vlamingh Tricentennial celebration. Reconstructions of Vlamingh's and Dirk Hartog's posts, together with replicas of the plates, has been specifically mentioned. This poses some difficulties in relation to the historical nature of the site, in particular,

- The Dirk Hartog and Vlamingh plates were never contemporary, with the latter being removed put in place only after the former was removed



- There is no historical or physical evidence of the nature or wood type of Dirk Hartog's post

This does not eliminate the possibility of creating a conjectural reconstruction of the Dirk Hartog post, although there would need to be careful discussion as to the nature of the timber to be used (oak, Baltic pine, etc.), the height, the finish and the height at which to fix the plate. Any replica of the Vlamingh post should be made from Rottneest Island Pine (pending tests of the surviving timber) and roughly hewn to match the nature and size of the original. As discussed in the physical evidence section, there is some historical evidence for the post being between nine and eleven feet tall (five of which was below the ground surface).

An alternative would be to create replicas of Vlamingh's and Hamelin's posts for the following reasons

- The posts and plates were contemporary (despite Vlamingh's post having deteriorated).

- There is ample historical, photographic and physical evidence of the nature of the posts and the manner in which they were fixed at the site.
- There is ample historical and photographic and physical evidence of the original positions of the posts

The difficulty is that while the original of the Vlamingh plate is available for reproduction, our knowledge of the Hamelin Plate is limited to drawings, although these may be sufficient to make a satisfactory semi-conjectural reconstruction. It should also be recalled that, at the time the two posts and plates were contemporary, the nailed 'King' markings and 'Roe' carving were not present, and should therefore not be present on the reproductions

A variation of this last scenario is to partially complete one of the original directives of 1908 by placing replicas of the two posts (as removed) back in their original positions at the site. In this scenario it would be possible to follow closely the pattern of the original posts, inclusive of the 'King' and 'Roe' markings. Increasing the height of the Vlamingh post would still be permissible, as would temporary installation of a commemorative plate during celebrations at the site.

These options should be carefully considered. While none of them is irreversible, considering that the existing memorials have remained in place for 78 years, whichever is installed is likely to remain in position for a considerable time.

Basic conservation principles with regard to the installation of the posts include:

- The existing posts and any rubble or other material should only be removed under the supervision of an archaeologist.
- No permanent fixture such as brackets or other physical device should be installed in the crevice
- The replica posts should as far as possible be based upon the historical and physical evidence available
- The new posts should be placed in the approximate positions of the current posts, although further comparison should be made with the 1908 photographs.



- The replica posts should be fixed in place using stones as for the originals, although unobtrusive wooden wedges may be necessary.
- The replica posts should be allowed to remain in place, both to act as permanent interpretive markers and so that they can weather as would the original monuments.
- The replica plate(s) should be removable for safe keeping, and a mechanism devised to allow them to be re-hung for commemorative occasions. In the mean time it may be possible to store the plates at a regional museum or some other venue
- Care should be taken to ensure that the site is not contaminated with replica nails, paint, or other items resulting from the installation of new posts
- Although the more visually interesting nature of the replicas would render them more susceptible to vandalism or even removal, it should be recalled that they are only replicas. Similarly it is likely that, as when the site was inspected in 1996, visitors may wish to nail their own plates or memorials to the post. While this should not be encouraged, it is in its own way an indication of awareness of the significance of the site and the historical tradition which such memorials represent

## 8.0 CONCLUSIONS

The Inscription Posts Site is one of the most significant heritage places in Australia, holding a place of importance in the maritime history of several nations. In many respects it is the very simplicity of the site that makes it striking. As a result, the future management of the place, and in particular decisions regarding interpretation, must be considered with great care and in an objective way.

This report has set out the historical and physical evidence related to the past use of the site, and for the monuments themselves. This material should provide the basis for future conservation and management, but should also be subject to re-evaluation should new material arise. In particular, several areas require further research. These include:

- Identification and inspection of other contemporary documentary sources such as Dutch, French and English diaries, journals and logs for alternative accounts and descriptions of the site and monuments. Where possible good quality (photographic) copies of the original documents should be, particularly those which include illustrations. In particular, information should be sought on the fates of Hamelin's plate and King's inscription.
- Detailed examination and tests should be carried out on the Hamelin and Vlamingh posts lodged at the W.A. Museum to determine
  - wood types,
  - whether there are any surviving traces of paint on the Hamelin post,
  - whether there is evidence of nail holes in the Vlamingh post (from fixing the plate on to the timber),
  - the type of nails used by King, and whether there are further nail holes from fixing the plate on to the timber,
  - any other information that may be retrievable.
- In the long term archaeological investigations might be carried out at the site and in particular within the crevice to attempt to recover artefacts which may provide further information on the original nature of the posts (including nails, paint flakes and wood, metal or other fragments). Any investigation must be approved by all heritage agencies and site

managers, must not physically alter the fabric of the site, and must have clear aims and methods.

- Inquiries should be made to French museums to be certain that the Hamelin plate is not held in French collections.

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### Abbreviations

AMSA Australian Maritime Safety Authority (Fremantle and Canberra).

BL Batty Library and Public Records Office, Perth

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*Shields, W.P. 11/6/1907*

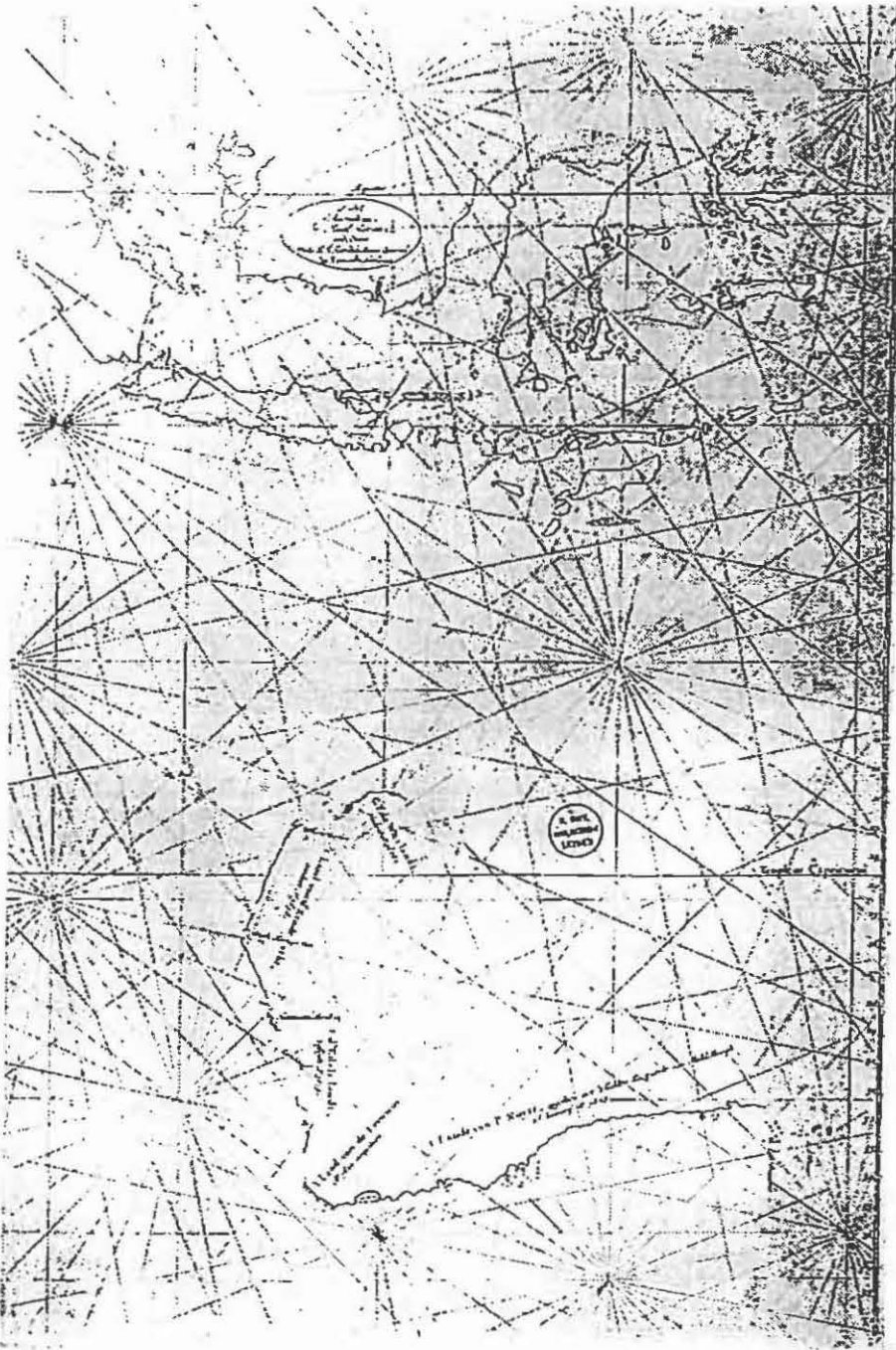
DRAWINGS + PLATES

To be integrated into  
text

(Site Drawings to be prepared)

... which occurred as a result of the new sailing route from the Cape of Good Hope to Java on a southern course through the Indian Ocean. The ship *De Eendracht* commanded by Dirck Hartogsz was the first to arrive on the coast in 1616. He left a commemorative pewter plate behind on *Dirck Hartogsz ree* which was found there eighty years later by Willem de Vlamingh. Lit. Schilder, 1976a, map 30; reproduced in: Heeres, 1899, p. 9

K.Z



62

Hessel Gerritsz (Dutch, 1580/81-1632)  
*Chart of the Malay Archipelago and Australia*  
1628 (first ed. 1618)

engraving

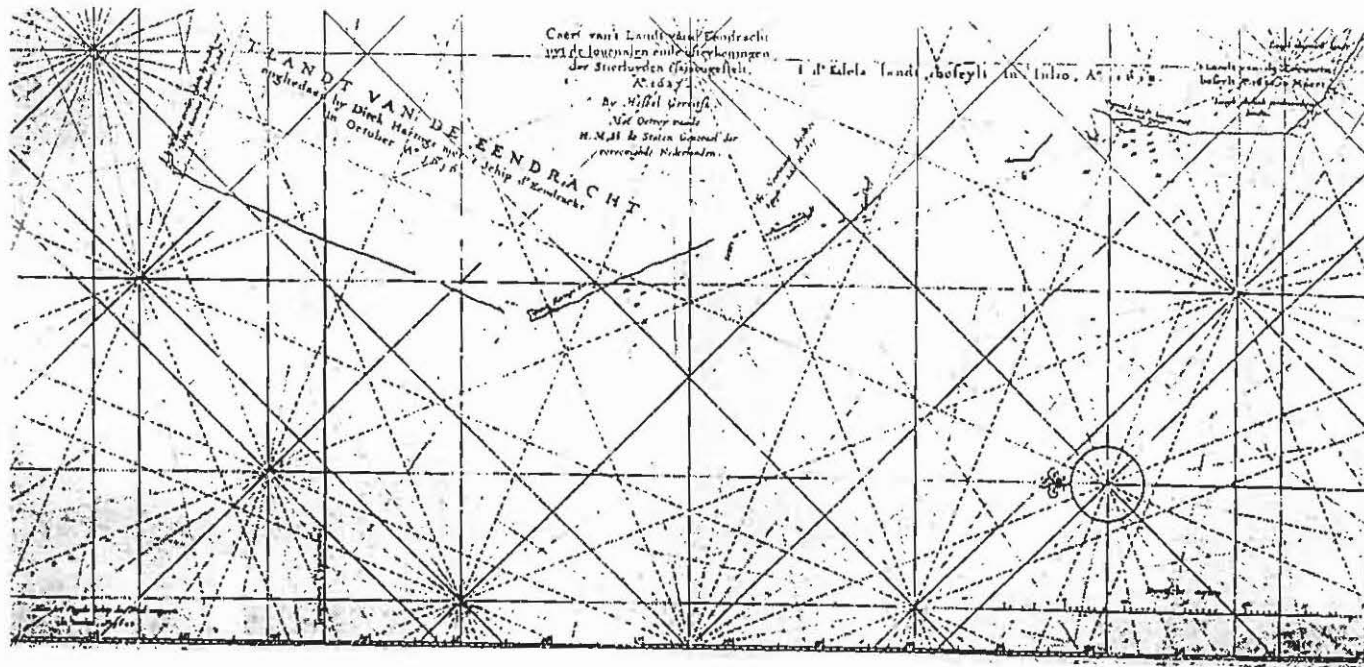
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# THE SOUTHLAND



61

Hessel Gerritsz (Dutch, 1580/81-1632)

*Caert van 't Landt van Eendracht . . .*

1627

engraving on paper

16.1 × 28.5 cm

Res. Doos V Part. 192 no. 175

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The chart shows the Dutch discoveries on the west coast of Australia which occurred as a result of the new sailing route from the Cape of Good Hope to Java on a southern course through the Indian Ocean. The ship *De Eendracht* commanded by Dirck

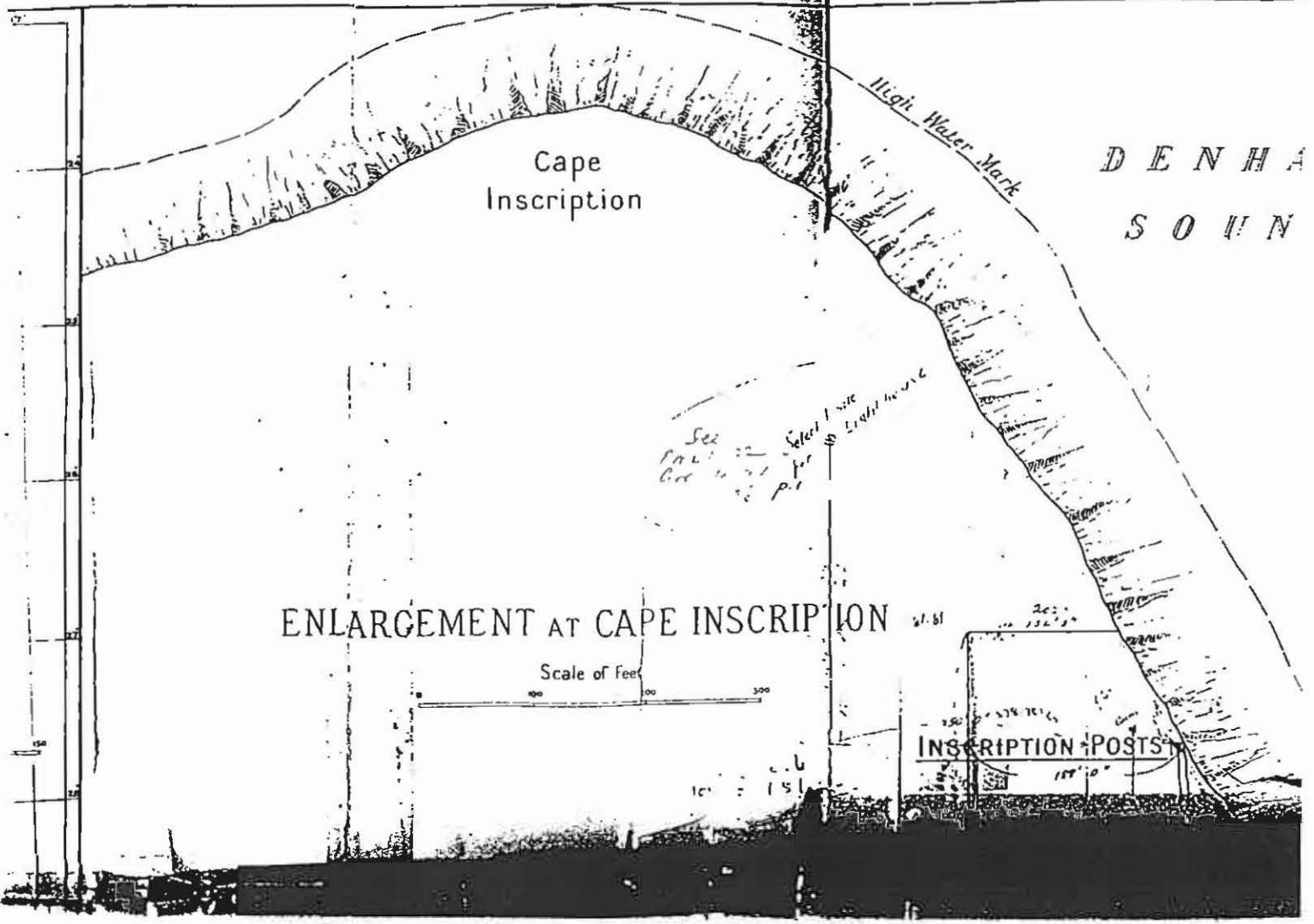


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# DIRK HARTOG'S ISLAND, W.A.

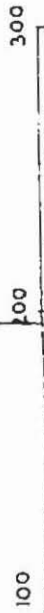
## CAPE INSCRIPTION

Plan showing position of Posts erected  
by Early Explorers 1616-1697.



# MENT AT CAPE INSCRIPTION

Scale of Feet



INSCRIPTION POSTS

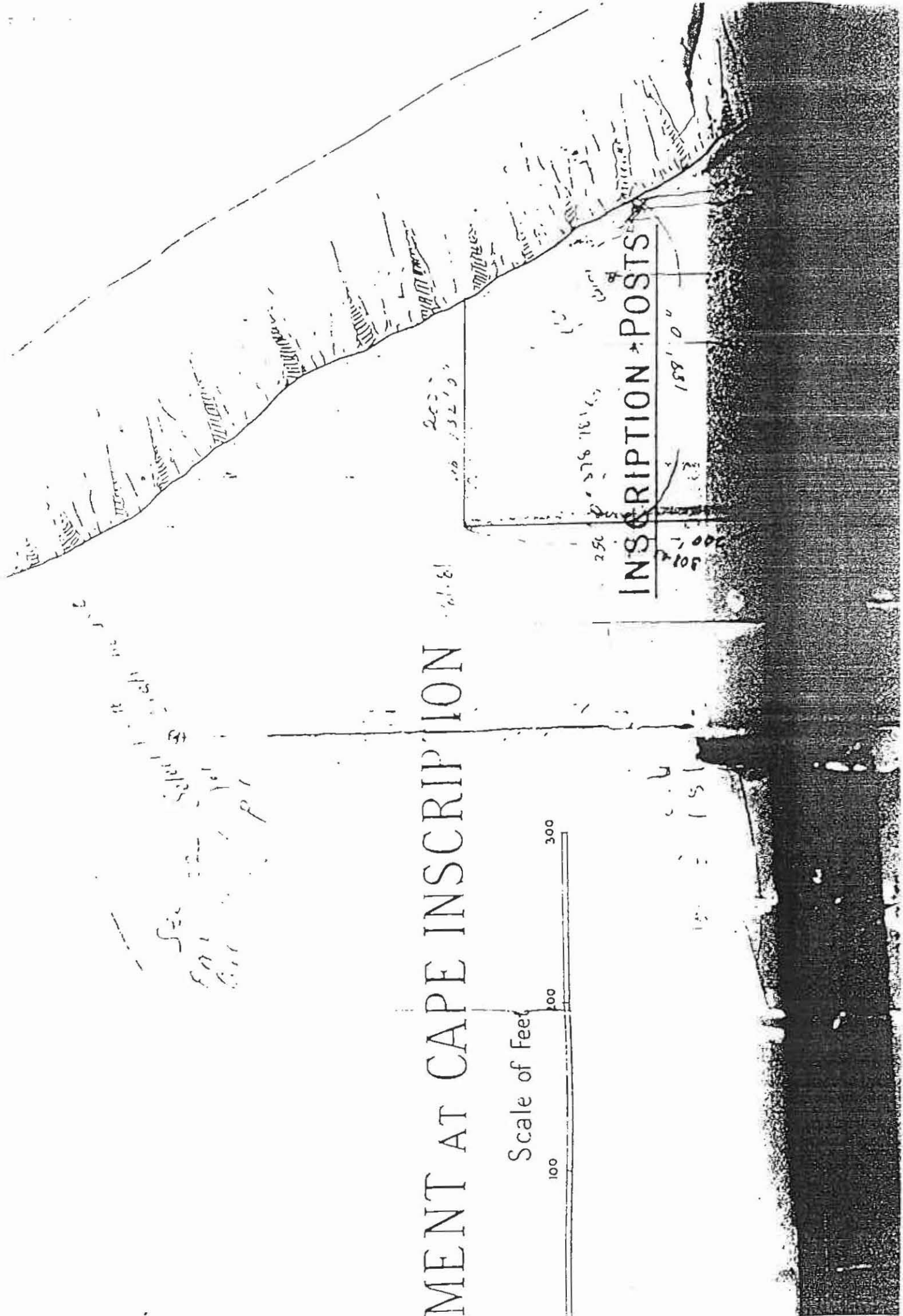
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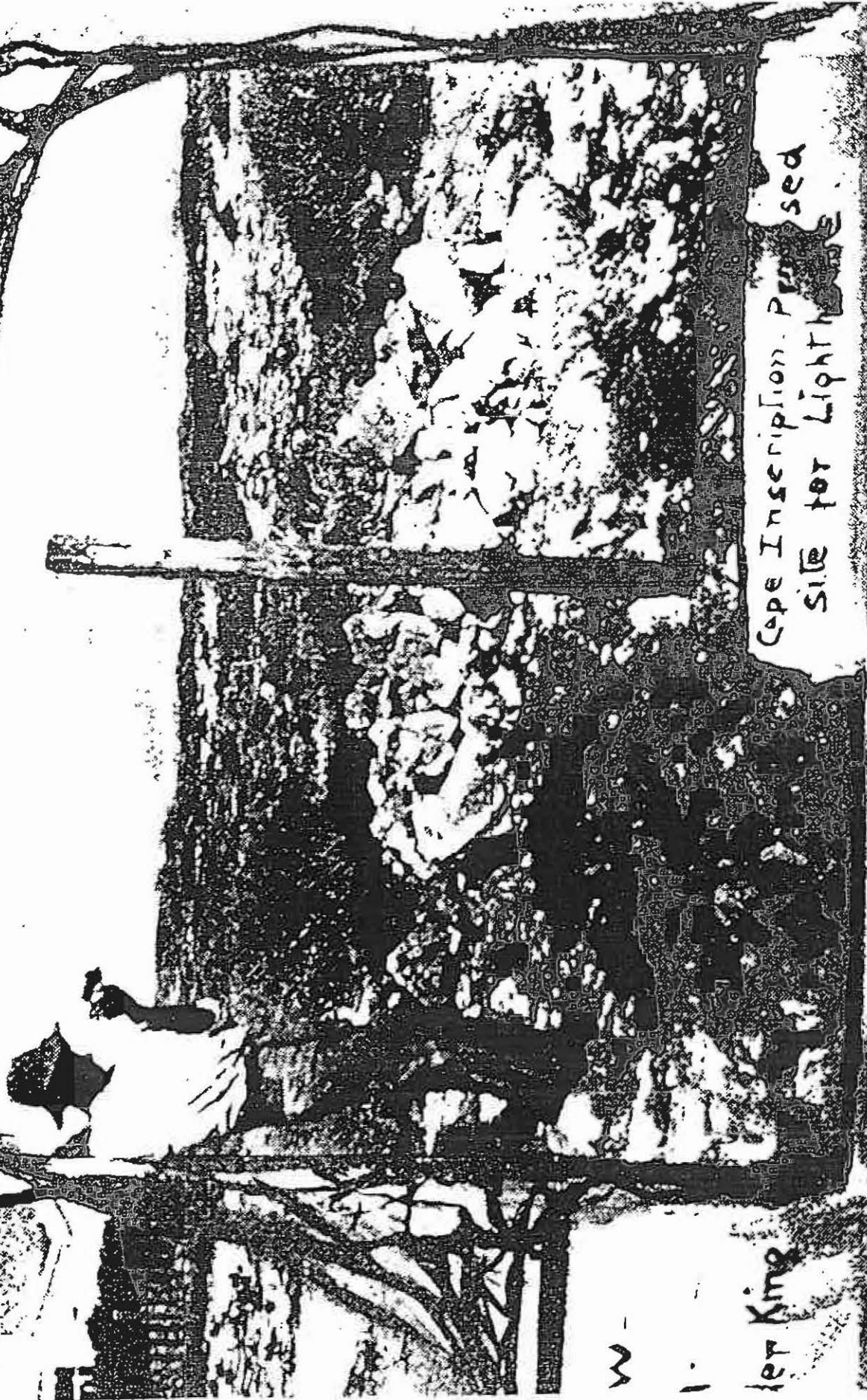
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Sea View West side of  
Island



Cape Inscription. Preserved  
Site for Lighthouse

PLATE 1  
WM  
22/6/07

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let King





On Cape Inscription

PLATE 2.

WM ~~33/6/07~~

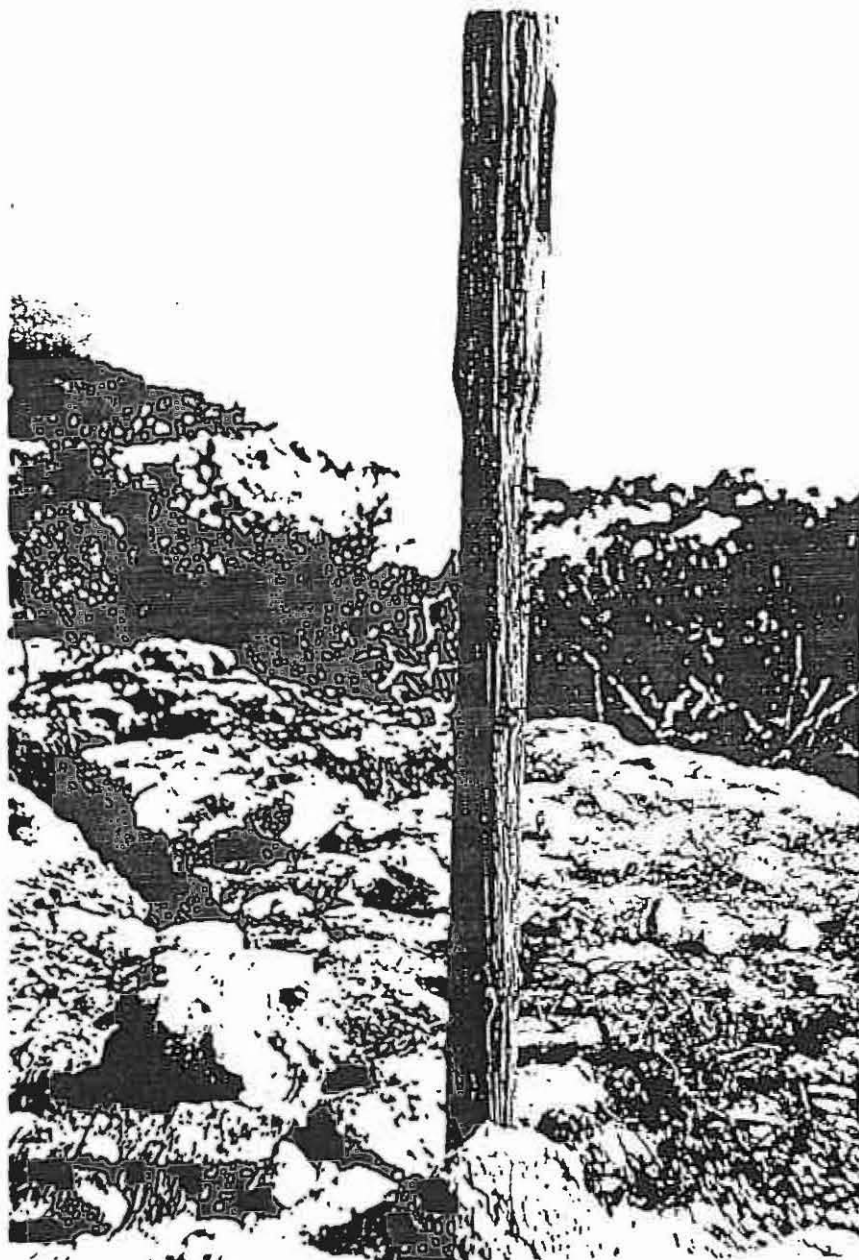
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G. Pitt - Morrison  
(see PLATE 2)

Cape Inscription, Dirk Harlògs Island; showing  
the "Vlaming" posts before removal.  
*Sketched from an illustration in the Western Mail, 1907.*

87047 P



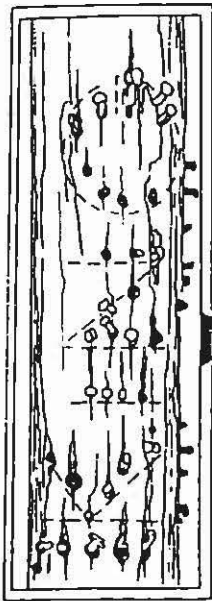
~~PLATE~~ PLATE 3

HARBOUR + LIGHTS

DEPT.

1907.





Drawing of Hamelin's post (length 9 feet 8 inches) showing Lieutenant P. P. King's name in nails (with a traced outline by the author), the date of his visit and Roe's name, near the fid-hole. This post is in the possession of the Western Australian Museum.

record of their visit, as well as the more ancient one of the Dutch navigators; for they were very conspicuously placed and appeared to be in good preservation. The following morning we landed at the Cape, but found to our great mortification that they had been removed; the only vestige that remained was the nails by which they had been secured. One of the posts appeared to have been broken down; the other was still erect and seemed to have been either the heel of a ship's royal mast or part of a studding sail boom; upon one side of it a flag had been fastened by nails. A careful search was made all round, but as no signs of the Dutch plate or of the more recent French inscription were seen, it was conjectured that they had been removed by the natives; but since our return to England I have learnt that they are preserved in the Museum of the Institute of Paris, where they had been deposited by M. de Freycinet, upon his return from his late voyage round the world. After this disappointment we returned to the sea beach."

King also left his mark at Shark's Bay for he wrote his name "King" and the date "1822" in nails, hammered into the heel-end of the Frenchman's post, that same post that had once held the object of his search, Vlamingh's plate.<sup>21</sup> John Septimus Roe, later to become the first Surveyor General for Western Australia, was with King on this occasion and using a knife he cut his name in the post, near the fid-hole.<sup>22</sup>

The brig "Bathurst" weighed anchor and stood out to sea concluding the Australian phase of the story.

In Europe the plate was so safely stored away in the Museum of the Institute in Paris, that it could not be found. With the result that the leading nineteenth century scholars and writers in the field of Australian maritime discovery, such as R. H. Major, George Collingridge and Professor Heeres were unable to examine the important relic. At best they could only reproduce the etching of the plate which de Freycinet had published in his atlas—the only one of the above mentioned scholars to do this was Professor Heeres. Meanwhile in 1895 George Collingridge, while accepting the Vlamingh plate as genuine, cast doubts on the existence of the earlier Dirk Hartog plate for this had also been mislaid. He suggested that Willem de Vlamingh had, in 1697 faked the Dirk Hartog inscription on his own plate to substantiate Dutch claims to New Holland,<sup>23</sup> a theory which sparked off a controversy among scholars not finally resolved until 1906 when the Dirk Hartog plate was found in the Rijksmuseum.

# HAMELIN'S PLATE



HAMELIN  
JOURNAL  
(NOT ORIGINAL?)

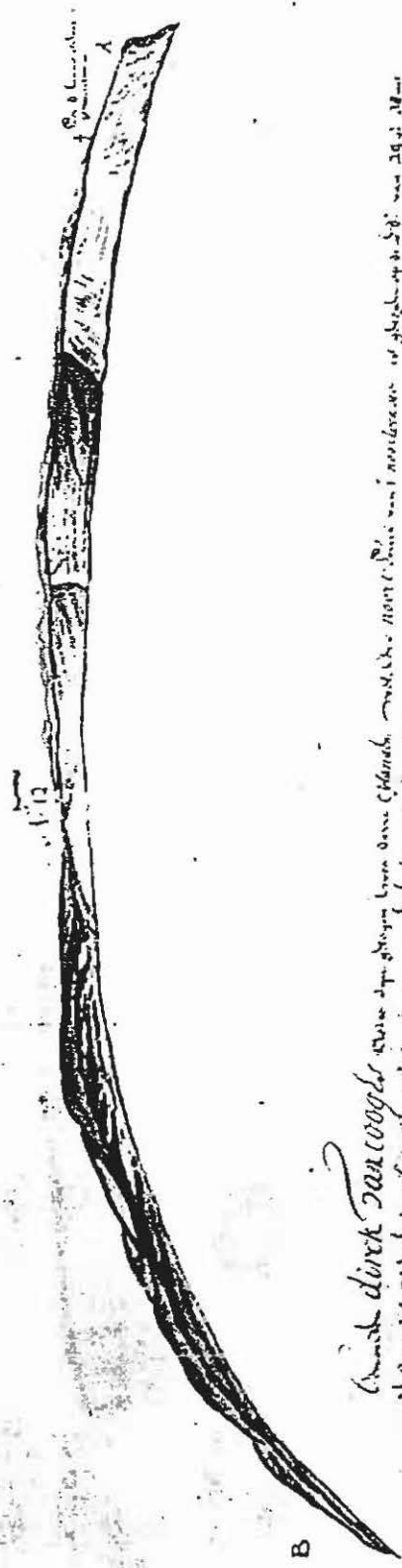


HALLS  
(1974)

*C. Hall*  
HAMELIN'S PLATE. The memorial, in translation, reads:  
"The French Republic  
Expedition of discovery  
under the orders of  
Captain  
Baudin  
The Corvette, the Naturaliste  
Captain Hamelin  
27 Thermidor (Revolutionary Calendar)  
16 July 1801."

Viczeeswan  
(1697).

Die Fisch Schwanz  
ist ein Stück von dem Schwanz eines Fisches  
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und die Spitze in eine Nadel  
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ein Stück von dem Schwanz  
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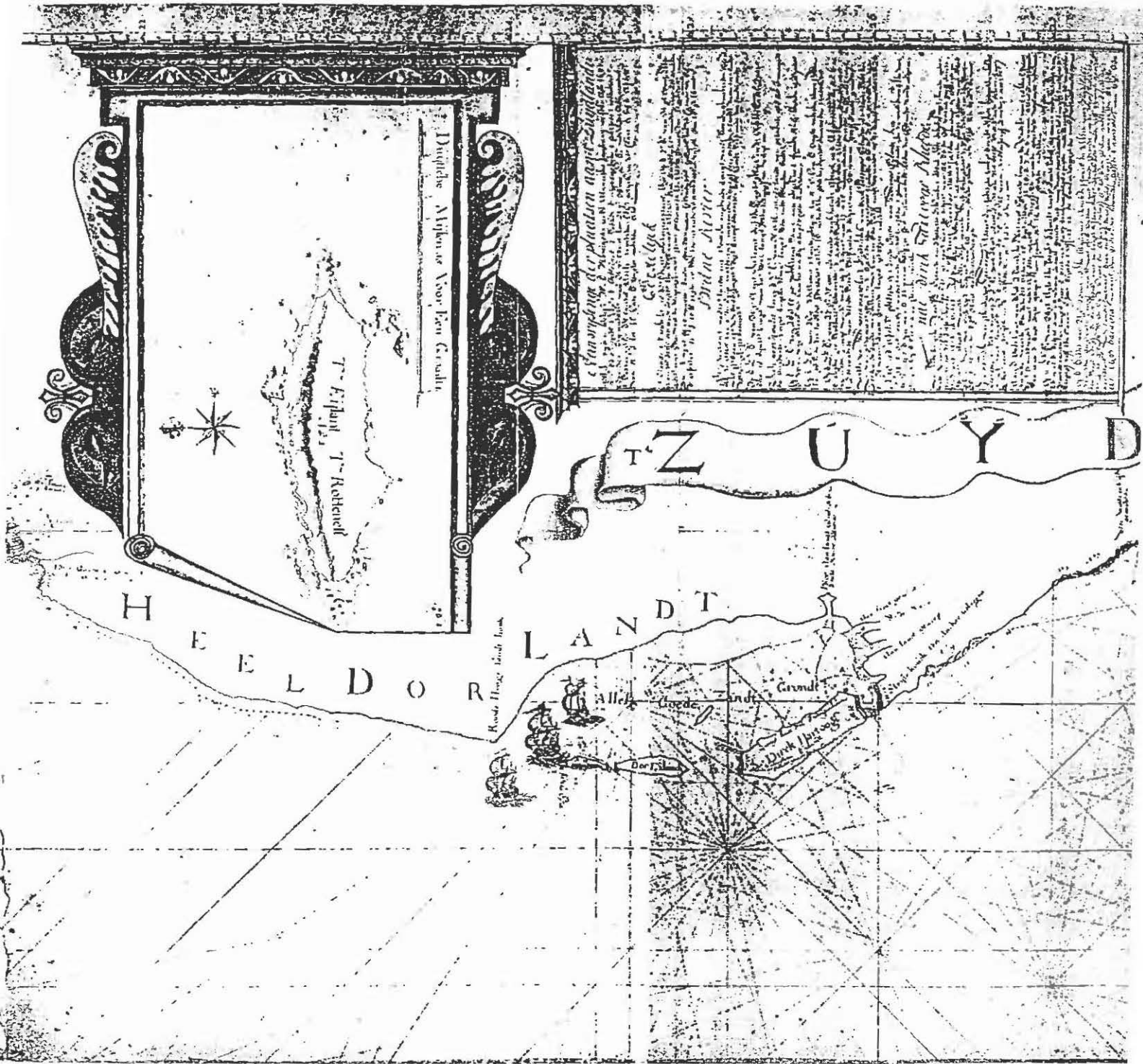


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C



2 Victor Victorsz. MS-kaart van „T'ZU”  
Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den



July 20 - 1952

small logs etc

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July 24 - 1952

Rough black sand with small pieces of wood & some small pieces of

6 inches