



**HERITAGE  
COUNCIL**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## **REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION**

### **11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

#### **PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)**

- 1.4 Appreciating the natural wonders of Australia
- 3.3.2. Fishing and whaling
- 3.23 Catering for tourists
- 5.1 Working in harsh conditions

#### **HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)**

- 106 Workers (incl. Aboriginal, convict)
- 305 Fishing & other maritime industry
- 311 Hospitality industry & tourism
- 503 Natural disasters

#### **11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\***

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*, in association with the hostel and tearoom buildings on the bluff, contributes to the attractive seaside beach environment that is a popular picnic area. (Criterion 1.1)

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* is important for its ability to reveal aesthetic characteristics of the early structures of the place. (Criterion 1.1)

The concrete steps of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*, that lead from the beach to the bluff, have aesthetic value as a rustic and aged element in the natural beach and bush setting. (Criterion 1.3)

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. Parks, *Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

## 11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* was established by a Norwegian based whaling company as part of the expansion of their activities in the southern hemisphere, and operated from 1914 to 1916. The place therefore represents an association with Norway, one of very few countries to continue whaling to the present. (Criterion 2.1)

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* was the first station established in WA in the 20th century and represented an attempt to re-establish the industry on the south coast of the State on a larger scale than had been previously practised. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

The freshwater spring has historical significance with recorded use over more than 200 years, predating European settlement, and including the visits of Captain George Vancouver in 1791, Dumont D'Urville's *Astrolabe* in 1827, American whalers in the 19th century, as a water supply for ships calling into the port at Albany from 1900 to 1912, used by *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* from 1912-16 and the Frenchman Bay hostel and caravan park from the 1930s. (Criterion 2.1)

Frenchman Bay has been a popular seaside holiday resort from as early as the 1890s, enhanced by the construction of the hostel in 1936 and establishment of the caravan park in 1959. (Criterion 2.2)

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* is important for its association with the Norwegian and other Scandinavian whaling men who worked in a harsh, noxious and often dangerous industry in an isolated environment far from their homes. (Criterion 2.3)

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* marked a new era of whaling with technological advancements such as steam-powered ships and machinery and the use of explosive harpoons that increased industry effectiveness and safety. (Criterion 2.4)

## 11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* contributes to a wider understanding of the cultural history of the district and the State and has high importance as a possible teaching and research site. It contains within its boundaries 18 archaeological sites associated with the first Western Australian whaling station to use modern whale catching and processing techniques. In addition, there is high potential for subsurface, minimally disturbed archaeological remains. (Criterion 3.1)

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* was the first permanent European occupation of this part of King George Sound. Its operation had a significant but short economic impact on Western Australia and the Albany area. The potential therefore to yield further information about the region's early European cultural history through the archaeological record is high. (Criterion 3.2)

## 11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* has social significance for its historical associations as an early 20th century whaling station and as a popular site for seaside holidays. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1 RARITY**

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* is rare as a group of archaeological sites at a place where the original purpose is clearly apparent. The station was the first whaling station in Western Australia to use modern whaling catching and processing techniques, and therefore serves as a benchmark site for the later Australian whaling industry. (Criterion 5.1)

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station* is rare as a place in Western Australian settled and operated exclusively by men of non-British descent. (Criterion 5.1)

The place is uncommon for its combination of a popular holiday destination directly adjacent to the whaling industry. (Criterion 5.1)

The archaeological remains of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station* provide a physical reminder of a way of life and an industry no longer practiced. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* is a ruin representative of the former whaling industry in Western Australia. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* archaeological sites are in a disturbed but sound condition. In addition, the sites are presently not under threat and their condition will not alter if land uses remain unchanged. However, the use of some of the remains for picnic seating is severely detrimental to the place, and this practice needs to be discouraged. The historical record shows use of the beach area as a garden, with the eastern section dug for manure, but there is high potential for undisturbed archaeological remains 20cm below the surface over the rest of the site.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* is in poor condition with all elements beyond restoration. The site presents interpretive opportunities, but it has a low degree of integrity. The set of concrete steps has high integrity and continues to function in its original intention.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

There is some evidence of recent unsympathetic changes to the remaining fabric, but generally, *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* displays a high degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman, Historian and Shane Burke, Archaeologist, in October 2006, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* comprises the site and remnants of a bay whaling station established in 1915 by the Norwegian owned Spermacet Whaling Company at Whalers Beach on Frenchman Bay, Albany. On the bluff above the beach are a 1936 former hostel/tearoom and 1960s caravan park, with associated outbuildings.

Frenchman Bay was chosen as the site of the Spermacet Company's operations because of an ample supply of fresh water and shelter from the prevailing weather. However, the limited nature of this shelter is shown by the number of wrecks in Frenchman Bay and the erosion of the beach during heavy storms.

The water supply at Frenchman Bay was first charted by Captain George Vancouver during his exploratory journey along the coast in September 1791. He watered his ships here at a freshwater spring, which is now marked by a memorial erected by the Albany Historical Society. American whalers who operated off the south coast in the 1800s also watered their ships at the spring, and in 1827 Louis de Sainson painted a meeting between local Aboriginal people and the sailors of the *Astrolabe* while the latter collected fresh water at Frenchman Bay. This painting, showing the saddle-backed rock at the tip of Waterbay Point, hangs in the Western Australian Art Gallery.

The site was marked as a watering place in the 1870s, although not officially gazetted as such until 1893, when it became Reserve 2295 as a watering place for travellers and stock.<sup>1</sup>

In 1900, Captain Alex Armstrong and his partner, Waters, leased two acres of the Reserve at a cost of £1 per year for the purpose of providing water for the steamers that called at the Albany port. The water supply at the port at this time was not suitable for the boilers of the steamers, which required water uncontaminated with minerals. The Road Board considered it good sense to make the port more welcoming to all shipping, but it would only provide a lease for twelve months at a time with a six-month cancellation clause so as not to tie up the resource should it need it for its own proposed town water supply scheme.<sup>2</sup>

In 1902, Armstrong complained that the issue of twelve-monthly leases did not give him security of tenure to improve the site, which he needed to do in order to provide a sufficient supply, as some ships were leaving Albany without a full supply of water and this was giving the port a bad name. The terms of the lease do not appear to have been increased, but Armstrong undertook the improvement work anyway. A sketch map drawn by the Albany District Surveyor's Office in February 1912 shows that Armstrong had made an excavation and dammed the spring, and built a 200-foot jetty with pipes from the dam to the head of the jetty

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Land Information (DLI), Reserves Index & Correspondence 29-3-1900, File for Reserve 2295, SROWA, ACC 541 Item 3172/1900.

<sup>2</sup> File for Reserve 2295, Item 3172/1900, op cit.

where lighters were loaded with water for transport to the Town Jetty. The improvements had cost between £500 and £600.<sup>3</sup>

The Road Board established its own town water supply in 1912, and Armstrong and Water's lease ended in December that year. The Road Board did not want competing supplies for the port as the provision of water and other facilities for shipping there was a major source of revenue.<sup>4</sup>

American whalers were operating in the Indian Ocean after 1789 and had visited King George Sound before the end of 1828.<sup>5</sup> By 1837, two whaling companies were operating out of Western Australia: the Fremantle Whaling Company (established February 1837) based at Bather's Beach in Fremantle and the Perth Whaling Company on Carnac Island. The first whale was caught by their combined efforts on 10 June 1837:

This day will be memorable in the annals of the Colony for the killing of the first whale. At Perth, great firing was heard in the direction of Fremantle and it was supposed that a ship had arrived, but a messenger came in breathless haste to say that boats had struck a whale and were engaged with it. This was all that was known when I came away but everyone was running about elated with the news; I went to Fremantle on Thursday with the Governor and others, to examine a jetty and proposed tunnel which has been projected to be cut through a hill there giving an easy access from the beach to the main street. The plan is quite practicable and not very expensive for the distance is only eighty yards and the rock is soft limestone.<sup>6</sup>

The tunnel provided direct access to Fremantle for the sale of whale goods to the community. In that first year of operations, whaling generated revenue of £3,000 from 100 tons of oil and 5 tons of whalebone. By comparison, American whalers earned £30,000 that year from the same coastline.<sup>7</sup> Large numbers of American whalers, as well as French, frequently operated close inshore, causing conflicts with local whalers. There were numerous incidents between the various companies. James Stirling was lobbied to ban the foreign vessels.<sup>8</sup>

Despite fluctuations in the price of whaling products, by 1844 they comprised 40% of the State's exports. In 1845 there were approximately 300 American, French, British and Australian whaling ships operating off the south coast with numerous shore stations.<sup>9</sup> 1860 legislation prohibiting unlicensed whalers from operating in WA waters, although this appears to have had little impact. But after the discovery of petroleum oil in Pennsylvania in 1859, whale oil prices crashed. Subsequently, only a few vessels were still operating at the turn of the century.<sup>10</sup>

Around 1911, Norwegian whaling interests were looking to the southern hemisphere for possible whaling grounds due to heavy competition in the whaling

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3 Correspondence & sketch map, 17 February 1912, File for Reserve 2295, Item 3172/1900, op cit.

4 Correspondence 19 March & 2 July 1912, File for Reserve 2295, Item 3172/1900, op cit; DLI File 2268/1914 for Reserve 2295.

5 Nairn, John, *Western Australia's Tempestuous History* (Carlisle, Vic: Hesperion Press, 1986)

6 Moore, George Fletcher, *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia* (1884, facsimile edition 1978, UWA Press)

7 Battye, J.S., *Western Australia: A History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth* (Oxford, 1924)

8 Nairn, *Tempestuous History*

9 [www.whaleworld.org/About\\_Whale\\_World/Whaling\\_History/Whaling\\_in\\_Albury](http://www.whaleworld.org/About_Whale_World/Whaling_History/Whaling_in_Albury), consulted 22 Nov 2006

10 Nairn, *Tempestuous History*

grounds in the northern hemisphere.<sup>11</sup> Western Australia already had a history of whaling, particularly along the south coast, and the State Government saw economic benefit in the development of the whaling industry. On 1 January 1912 it issued seven-year licences to the Cape Leeuwin Whaling Company (renamed the Spermacet Whaling Company in November 1913), the Western Australian Whaling Company (located at Point Cloates in the northwest) and the Fremantle Whaling Company, all of which had been established by the Norwegian firm of Christian Nielsen & Associates. Nielsen was represented in Western Australia by the Norwegian Vice-Consul at Fremantle, August Stang, whose brother Christian was associated with the Nielsen company. To ensure the best benefits for the State, the licences required the construction of shore stations. Whalers operating from factory ships were unable to use the whole carcass and only processed the whale for the oil, whereas a shore station allowed the manufacture of guano (fertiliser), cattle fodder and bonemeal from what remained.<sup>12</sup>

The Cape Leeuwin Whaling Company was licensed to operate along the south coast from Cape Leeuwin to Esperance, where it planned to hunt sperm whales. Sperm whales did not migrate and travelled in a loose and widely spread manner rather than the schools favoured by the humpback whales, which followed a seasonal migratory path along the coast. In the 1912 migratory season (winter), the ships of the Spermacet Co, *Vasco Da Gama*, *Fynd* and *Klem*, assisted the Western Australian Whaling Company in the northwest to hunt humpbacks. On 29 October 1912, the ships arrived at Albany and began hunting sperm whales. The Company took 205 sperm whales during the 1912-13 summer, which were processed on a factory ship. A piece of ambergris was also discovered, worth around £4,000. Ambergris is a solid, opaque, ash-coloured inflammable substance secreted by whales and used in the manufacture of perfumes.<sup>13</sup>

On 22 February 1913, the Norwegian vessel *Prince George* is reported as arriving at Albany with machinery for the whaling company. The Cape Leeuwin Company's ships assisted in the northwest hunt again in the winter of 1913, and in September six vessels arrive in Albany from Point Cloates: the steamers *Fynd*, *Hawk*, *Vasco de Gama*, *Clem* and *Eagle*, and the sailing ship *Commonwealth*.<sup>14</sup> In October, the Company leased an area at Frenchman Bay for its shore station. The area was created as Plantagenet Location 3961 and did not include the site of the dam and lighter jetty, although the Company purchased the jetty from Armstrong & Waters.<sup>15</sup> In November 1913, the Company's name was officially changed to the Spermacet Whaling Company.<sup>16</sup>

The Company hunted sperm whales again during the 1913-14 summer but not as successfully as the previous summer. *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* was built early in 1914 on the leased land at Frenchman Bay, at a cost of £20,000 to

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11 For overview of the establishment and operation of the whaling industry in WA by Norwegian companies see HCWA documentation for P04321 Norwegian Whaling Station (ruin), Point Cloates.

12 Puls, Colin, *Frenchman Bay whaling companies and Western Australian Government, 1911-19*, BA honours thesis, UWA, 1970, pp. 22-29.

13 Puls, Colin, p. 36, 107.

14 List of Norwegian vessels calling at Albany during the year 1913, Norwegian Vice-Consulate Albany, Record Book, 1913-1916, Battye private archives, MN1069, ACC 3314A.

15 Correspondence 17 July 1914 from Norwegian Vice-Consul at Fremantle, August Stang, DLI file 2268/1914 for Reserve 2295.

16 Puls, Colin, op cit, p. 30.

£28,000.<sup>17</sup> The buildings were constructed from imported timber and bricks, but there was some local building material used. A report in the *Albany Advertiser* in February 1914 on the revival of the timber industry stated that a consignment of karri flooring measuring 6" by 1.5" and 6" by 1" had been delivered to Albany from a mill at Denmark to 'the order of the Whaling Co who are using it in their buildings at Frenchman Bay'.<sup>18</sup>

The following gives some idea on the operation and layout of the site:

Frenchman Bay soon changed in appearance. A great wooden platform was built on the beach; it stood on piles and projected over the water as a wide and low pier or wharf. At the seaward extremity this platform sloped down to the water, and extended a little below the surface at low tide, forming a slipway up which whales could be easily hauled. One side at the shore end of this flensing platform, a high two-storey building of wood contained the boilers in which bones and meat could be digested under steam pressure. At the other side another shed contained open boilers for the blubber. There were unglazed windows to the top floor of the big boiler house and up to these openings wooden shores acted as rails on which great metal buckets filled with chunks of whale-meat were hoisted. The contents were tipped through the windows in a manner most convenient for filling the boilers. At the landward end of the flensing platform, and facing the sea, there stood a very well equipped engineer's 'shop'. All sorts of repairs had to be carried out there; but two regular jobs were the fitting of new heads to the explosive harpoons, and making new parts for the engine of a launch which as regularly consumed them. In front of the engineer's 'shop' were steam winches for hauling the heavy whale carcasses up the oily slipway from the sea. As for the rest, there were wooden houses on the bushy slopes above the boiler houses for the shore gangs and for the crews when not on board the 'chasers'. By 1915, £28,000 had been spent on machinery, and much more on coal and stores.<sup>19</sup>

Les Douglas, son of Captain Clem Douglas and from a family of Albany seafarers, described *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* as he remembered it as a lad:

There were a large number of big sheds stretching along the beach front, behind a very long brick retaining wall. A long flight of concrete steps led to the top of the hill. At the time of writing, [1991] the steps are still there. The steps were always there. They would have been built for access when the factory was first built. The path went straight up to the first building on the hill which was the kitchen and mess room for all the workers. It was only about 100 ft from the top of the steps. The men's quarters comprised of 5 huge houses including the kitchen and mess room. The four other buildings were spaced about 20 ft apart, to the right. These were the sleeping quarters and contained many rooms. I remember clearly, each room was painted a different colour. Being young I had never seen so many colours and to this day every time I think of Frenchman's Bay Station I see this rainbow of rooms. All, the buildings were built of Norwegian pine, resting on long spruce pine timbers, supported on brick pillars about 2' off the ground.<sup>20</sup>

There was a small jetty about 200' long with a large 'T' Platform at the end which provided a good working area. There was also a derrick for loading. A light gauge

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17 Puls, Colin, op cit, pp. 37-38, 92-93; *Albany Advertiser*, 5 May 1920, p. 3. Figures vary among sources.

18 *Albany Advertiser*, 25 February 1914, p. 3.

19 Dakin, William J., *Whalemen adventurers: the story of whaling in Australian waters and other southern seas related thereto, from the days of sails to modern times*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1938, p. 186.

20 Marshall, Gordon de L., *Maritime Albany Remembered: Les Douglas et al*, Kalamunda, Tangee Pty Ltd, c.2001, p. 14; photograph on p. 12, numbered 3715B in the Battye Library collection, is purported to be of the Norwegian whaling station but the landscape indicates it depicts the Cheynes Beach station.

railway line ran down to the jetty and connected to all parts of the station. Hand operated trolleys were used.<sup>21</sup>

The ramp on the seaward end of the flensing deck went out into about ten-feet of water. It appeared to have been held in position by eight to ten large wooden crates about eight-foot square filled with pieces of granite. The slats of the crates were spaced about six inches apart, apparently to allow the underwater surge to pass through.<sup>22</sup>

When the station was in operation, the whale chasers towed the whales to *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* where they were treated, but the presence of the factory ship *Rakirua* at various times indicates that some processing was still done on board ship. The oil was stored in large wooden barrels and shipped back to Norway. Other Norwegian ships arrived at Albany occasionally with a load of empty barrels for the station.<sup>23</sup>

On 5 June 1914, a day before the Spermacet fleet left for Point Cloates once again, 19-year-old deckhand Christian Flagstad was killed when a one ton piece of whale flesh fell on him while he was collecting oil from the deck of the factory ship *Rakiura* in Frenchman Bay. The accident occurred as a result of the failure of a spruce pine toggle from which the whale flesh was hanging.<sup>24</sup>

The Public Works Department Water Supply section and August Stang had considerable correspondence over several years regarding the use of the water from Reserve 2295 and how much *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* should pay for it. Stang maintained in July 1914 that they had used very little water from the spring to that time and had water on their own lease close to the surface, which they could tap into. He steadfastly refused to pay any amount the Department claimed as the figure had been arrived at by guesswork and anyway the Company was already paying a licence fee, which should include water. In November 1915, however, he offered to pay £10 for water use for the coming year. An inspection of the site in March 1916 found two wells on the Company's lease supplying most of its water needs.<sup>25</sup>

During the operation of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*, the beach became 'most unpleasant, with a thick coating of oil and large pieces of whale lying around, and a noisome smell'. There were no roads connecting Frenchman Bay to Albany and all supplies had to come in by sea. It must have been a lonely life for the whalers, described for the most part as 'clean young men'.<sup>26</sup> Most of their wages would have gone back to Norway, but the operation of the station and its vessels was a bonus to the local economy, with a reported £80,000 spent on provisions, coal and general supplies in 1915.<sup>27</sup>

Two more deaths occurred at *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*. Chief Engineer Hans P. Kittelsen died at age 40 on 24 November 1915, but no cause of

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21 Marshall, Gordon de L., op cit, p. 14.

22 Marshall, Gordon de L., op cit, p. 14; Garratt, Dena, *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin), Frenchman Bay: maritime site inspection report*, Fremantle, WA Maritime Museum, 1994, p. 6.

23 List of Norwegian vessels, op cit; Marshall, Gordon de L., op cit, p. 15.

24 Article from *Albany Advertiser* in the Norwegian Vice-Consulate Albany, Record Book, 1913-16, op cit.

25 Correspondence 17 July 1914 to 14 March 1916, DLI file 2268/1914 for Reserve 2295.

26 Marshall, Gordon de L., op cit, p. 12.

27 Heritage Today, *City of Albany Municipal Inventory*, 2000.



death is recorded, and 44-year-old steward Karl Adoff Nielsen drowned two weeks later on 4 December while swimming at Frenchman Bay.<sup>28</sup>

On 15 December 1915, Stang informed the Government of Spermacet's decision to close down, caused by both a poor whaling season and the impact of World War I. The closure was gazetted on 29 December, but it was 3 March 1919 before Stang signed an indenture legally surrendering the Company's licence. The size of the sperm whale catch had made the undertaking economically unfeasible and the War created suspicions that the whalers were sympathisers of Germany. The boilers and equipment were relocated to the new station established that year at Point Cloates, but the buildings were left behind. During its period of operation from 1912 to December 1916, the Spermacet Company took 1,125 whales, producing 28,675 casks of oil (1.2 million gallons) and 730 tons of fertiliser. The value of the oil would have been £119,475 and the fertiliser £5,840. This return was about 30% of that achieved by the Point Cloates station in the same period.<sup>29</sup>

Two Norwegians remained as caretakers at *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*, brothers Hurbert and Lans Larsen. They built a boat and used it to sail into Albany for their stores. In 1920, there were reports that the Spermacet Company had applied to renew its licence to operate the place, but the application was refused.<sup>30</sup>

In the early 1930s, Point Cloates again began servicing Norwegian whaling ships, but World War II brought rapid closure. Expanded use of factory ships and support chasers also lessened the need for shore-based services. In July 1949, the Nor'-West Whaling Company reopened the station. In September 1950, the Australian Government commenced whaling itself as the Australian Whaling Commission in a station at Babbage Island near Carnarvon. The operation ran until 1955, when the station was sold to Nor'-West Whaling Company, which closed down its Point Cloates station and relocated to the Carnarvon site.<sup>31</sup> The Albany Whaling Company operated at Frenchman's Bay from 1947 until 1950. It took only six humpback whales.

The Cheynes Beach Whaling Station commenced operations at Frenchman's Bay in 1952 until closure in 1978, the last such station to close in Australia. The last whale was taken on 20 November 1978. The operation had struggled commercially for several years because of increased fuel costs and dwindling stocks. Environmental lobbying pressure finally brought an end to a WA industry that had operated for more than 140 years.

In 1921, a big south-easterly gale that lasted many days created havoc along the Albany coastline, tearing up trees, washing away beaches and sinking boats at their moorings. It wrecked a large portion of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*. The jetty was swept away leaving only the end standing. The brick retaining wall collapsed, allowing seas to undermine the foundation of buildings

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28 Norwegian Vice-Consulate Albany, Record Book, 1913-16, op cit.

29 Puls, Colin, op cit, p. 92-95.

30 Marshall, Gordon de L., op cit, p. 15; *Albany Advertiser*, 5 May 1920, p. 3.

31 <http://www.whales.org.au/published/whalemen/forward.html>, consulted 22 November 2006

close to the wall and many fell, including the brick building on the right of the flensing deck.<sup>32</sup>

In May 1923, tenders were called for purchase of what remained.

Tenders for all the buildings as they now stand. Soft wood, hard woods, kitchen ranges, trolleys and light rails at the Frenchman's Bay Whaling Station. Tenders are invited for the lot as it now lies at the station... Walter Wheeldon, Auctioneer and Sworn Valuer.<sup>33</sup>

Members of the Douglas family, namely Clem, his father William and brother Bert successfully tendered to dismantle and salvage *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*. They camped at the site for periods over the ensuing five years while they did the work. Bert Douglas was Captain of the State Steamship *Eucla*, which made several trips into the Bay where its surfboats were used to take off material.

There was a vast quantity of wood around... There were also hundreds of wooden barrels, for whale oil, some in good condition which they were able to sell... The station's jetty was in such a poor state of repair that the Douglasses had to construct a makeshift one of their own to bring the wood off.<sup>34</sup>

A lot of coal and whale manure was salvaged, which was sold in Albany. The whale manure was discovered by accident as it had been covered by sand over the years. Some of the salvaged timbers were used to build a lighter, with a single spruce pole providing a 35-foot mast. In 1998, some of the wood and rails were still in storage at the old Douglas homestead, 'Maitland' on the Upper Kalgan River. The younger family members, including Les Douglas and his cousin Lenny Powell searched for 'lost treasure'; the ambergris that was reputed to have been buried somewhere at the site. It was not found.<sup>35</sup>

Frenchman Bay had been a favoured holiday venue since at least 1896, when the steam launch *Jessie* made several trips, ferrying people for a public picnic. On New Year's Day 1902, Armstrong & Sons ran two launches on excursions to the Bay. The operation of the whaling station curtailed the enjoyment of the place until 1920, when Armstrong & Waters took the Steamship *Awhina* on two round trips on 26 January.<sup>36</sup> Access was only possible by sea, but in the early 1930s, as more people owned motor vehicles, there was considerable local agitation for a road to the Bay. Letters were published in the *Albany Advertiser* and the Tourist and Information Bureau offered funds to build the road on a route they had planned and which the Road Board inspected. The Frenchman Bay Road was completed by December 1934 when it was reported that:

The road terminates a few yards from the flight of steps leading down to the old whaling station and the beach. Water is obtainable a few chain from the steps along the beach.<sup>37</sup>

Mrs D. van Raalte applied to the Road Board for a licence to operate a tea kiosk near the beach during the summer months. It was to be of rustic design, and the licence appears to have been issued because a newspaper report on 7 January states that on New Year's Day there were a considerable numbers of people

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32 Marshall, Gordon de L., op cit, p. 16.

33 *Albany Advertiser*, 12 May 1923, p. 2.

34 Marshall, Gordon de L., p. 12.

35 Marshall, Gordon de L., p. 14-16.

36 *Albany Advertiser*, 15 October 1896 p. 2; 3 January 1902, p. 3 & 21 January 1920, p. 2.

37 *Albany Advertiser*, 6 December 1934.

swimming and fishing, with a number of families having a camping holiday, while 'the convenience of visitors had been further added to by the establishment of a tea kiosk near the beach'.<sup>38</sup>

In February 1935, the *Albany Advertiser's* editorial extolled the virtues of the beauty spot that was Frenchman Bay and which was so popular among holiday makers, but called for the provision of sanitary conveniences as soon as possible, by working bee if necessary.<sup>39</sup> Also at this same time, Reserve 2295 was cancelled and was included with the site of the former *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* in a new reserve, 21337 for the purpose of camping, which was vested in the Albany Road Board.<sup>40</sup> In July 1935, the Board called tenders for the leasing of an area of the Reserve, the tenders to include specifications for improvements to cater to tourists. Included in the lease was the right to draw water from the dam at Vancouver's Spring and to erect a pump and pipes for the purpose.<sup>41</sup> A few months later the purpose of Reserve 21337 was altered to 'Recreation, Health & Pleasure Resort... somewhat similar to Yancheep'.<sup>42</sup>

The first lease was issued to Herbert (Bert) Harding and in November 1936 it was reported that 'an enterprising young man is even now erecting a hostel and tea rooms'. Harding's 'Frenchman's Bay Hostel' offered accommodation for a limited number of guests at moderate tariff, and supplied dainty afternoon teas, cool drinks, ices, lunches, fruit, confectionary and other necessities for the perfect picnic. Fresh running water from the spring and shade from the abundant number of willow-leaved Peppermint Myrtles (*Agonis flexuosa*) in the area added to the appeal of the Bay. By 1938 a tennis court had been laid and a golf course was under construction.<sup>43</sup>

Mr. Bert Harding's Frenchman's Bay Hostel, overlooking the Bay, is a splendid place to stay for a Bay holiday, or to have a meal if you prefer comfort to picnic simplicity and sand in the sandwiches. There is a tennis court for those who can't work off all their energy in hikes, bathing and the other pursuits for which the area is noted.<sup>44</sup>

Bert Harding and his wife ran the Hostel for several years, until 1 January 1941, when the lease was transferred to Edgar Stubbs.<sup>45</sup> During the war years, Edgar and Evelyn Stubbs' four young grandchildren lived at the Hostel while their father Ches Stubbs served in the armed forces. Edgar Stubbs had a vegetable garden near the foot of the steps that did very well, probably because the area was well fertilized with whale manure. The hostel had five bedrooms and a communal bathroom. The main clientele during the war years were honeymooners, while defence force personnel posted to the signal station on Stony Hill, a few miles to the west, spent their leave at Frenchman Bay.<sup>46</sup>

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38 *Albany Advertiser*, 7 January 1935, p. 3

39 *Albany Advertiser*, 21 February 1935.

40 DLI Reserves Index, Reserves 2295 & 21337.

41 DLI file, Reserve 21337, SROWA, WAS 211 CONS 1641, Item 2182-1934-01RO, 1934-1981.

42 Correspondence 25 July & 13 October 1935 & map of the reserves and leased area, DLI file, Reserve 21337, Item 2182-1934-01RO, op cit.

43 *Albany Advertiser*, 16 November 1936, holiday issue, p. 17.

44 *Albany Advertiser*, 28 November, 1938, holiday issue, p. 36.

45 DLI file, Reserve 21337, Item 2182-1934-01RO. op cit.

46 Abbott, Pat (nee Stubbs), 'Life at Frenchman Bay in the Forties (The hostel, the whaling station)', In *Southside of Princess Royal Harbour: history and personal reminiscences*, compiled by the South Coast Progress Association (Inc), Albany, South Coast Progress Association, 1988, pp. 109-113.

In 1948, the lease of the Frenchman Bay Hostel was acquired by William, Kenneth and Alick Proudlove of Proudlove's Bus & Taxi Service. They had taken the lease on behalf of a relative, Harold Gibson, who was in England at the time, and on 21 January 1948, the lease was transferred to Gibson who, with his wife, ran the place for the next eighteen years. In 1959, the Gibsons leased a further five acres and established a caravan park.<sup>47</sup> The timber and tile ablution block is likely to have been added at this time to service the caravan sites.

On 1 October 1963, in the presence of 150 people and after much research to establish the location where Captain George Vancouver had watered his ships, *Discovery* and *Chatham* in September 1791, the Albany Historical Society erected a Notch Weir Memorial at the site of the spring at Frenchman Bay. Emu Point was previously thought to be the site of this event when Vancouver had claimed the western half of Australia for Britain.<sup>48</sup>

The Memorial subsequently had to be removed by the Town Council after storm damage. Modern GPS technology later threw doubt on the location of Vancouver's Spring and the Memorial was not replaced immediately. It was later argued that GPS technology should not be applied to the calculations as Vancouver would have been using eighteenth century navigation technology and that had to be used to correctly locate his watering place. The Notch Weir Memorial was replaced at Frenchman Bay in March 2004.<sup>49</sup>

Later lessees of the hostel and caravan park were Mr and Mrs W. Broughall (4 years), Mr and Mrs E. Freeman (5 years) and Mr and Mrs C. Cooper, who took over in December 1972. In 1971, the guesthouse section ceased to operate. Apart from the fact that sufficient trade was generated by the shop and tearoom, the guest facilities were in need of costly modernising.<sup>50</sup>

The lease of the hostel and caravan park site included a clause whereby the Road Board could not allow a competing facility to offer refreshments within one mile of the place. When the Jaycee Community Foundation leased the former Cheynes Beach whaling station they were not able to develop the facilities into a tourist attraction as they were within a mile radius of the Frenchman Bay hostel. To solve this problem it was decided to create a freehold site for the hostel and caravan park and thus release the Shire from the lease and its restrictions. Plantagenet Location 7584 was created with an area of 3.26ha covering the hostel buildings and the caravan park, and the lessees at that time, Peter and Anne Bott, purchased the site, which they then leased out.<sup>51</sup> In the 1990s a prefabricated house was added to the site and the hostel building was no longer occupied as for a residential function.

In 1994, *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station* was included in the Albany Maritime Heritage Survey and in 1995 it was included in the Port-Related Structures

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47 DLI file, Reserve 21337, Item 2182-1934-01RO, op cit; *Albany Advertiser*, 15 December 1972, p. 11.  
48 *Albany Advertiser*, 1 October 1963, p. 1. A weir is a notch of regular form through which water flows, and the term is also applied to the structure containing such a notch.  
49 'Site of notch weir memorial, Vancouver Spring, Frenchman Bay Albany', Albany Historical Society, Inc, *Members' Magazine*, May 1999, pp. 2-10; Plaque attached to the Memorial.  
50 *Albany Advertiser*, 15 December 1972, p. 11.  
51 DLI file, Reserve 21337, SROWA, WAS 211 CONS 6461, Item 2182-1934-02RO, 1981-1989; Certificate of Title, Vol. 1746 Fol. 534, 28 March 1986.

Survey.<sup>52</sup> Vancouver Spring is entered on the City of Albany Municipal Heritage Inventory as an historic site.<sup>53</sup>

Physical evidence indicates that there have been numerous additions to the 1936 hostel building over the years. The timber and tile ablution building shows evidence of having been used for another purpose and relocated to the site. The bunkhouse appears to date from the same period as the hostel. The garage is a typical c.1950s construction. Physical and historical evidence show that none of these buildings are remnants of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*. The tennis court associated with the hostel is now covered by the public car park while it is not known where the golf course was located. The last tenant of the hostel building was undertaking renovations and had replaced the timber floor in the tearoom before his tenancy was terminated.

The beach at Frenchman Bay, as elsewhere, is subject to change due to the action of storms and tides. In 2004, a storm washed away several metres of Whalers Beach, further undermining and moving the brick and concrete remains of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*.<sup>54</sup> This is confirmed by surveys of the site undertaken in the early 1990s, which indicate that more of the remnants were visible at that time.<sup>55</sup>

In 2005, title to the freehold land on the bluff was transferred to Frenchman's Bay Pty Ltd, and the site has been further subdivided into two lots.<sup>56</sup> A development proposal for the site, put forward in 2006, involves the construction of a five-star resort with beach houses, holiday apartments, convention/function centre, shopping and office facilities. The plan proposes to retain the existing concrete steps from *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* and construct two more in similar style.<sup>57</sup>

In 2006, the caravan park and all buildings on the bluff are vacant and the site has been secured by a cyclone wire fence. The Notch Weir Memorial remains in place, and Vancouver's Spring and the dam remain largely intact in the undergrowth. The ruins of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* remain along the beach and the concrete steps continue to provide access between the beach and the bluff.

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* comprises objects of brick, stone and unreinforced concrete at Whalers Beach in Frenchman Bay on the south side of Waterbay Point, located on reserve land. On the bluff above the beach is a former caravan park with associated outbuildings on freehold land. The site is situated on the northern edge of Torndirrup National Park, approximately 22 kilometres from Albany off Frenchman Bay Road, which ends in a bituminised car park adjacent to the entrance to the former caravan park site. A 1980s cement

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<sup>52</sup> Wolfe, Adam, *The Albany Maritime Heritage Survey, 1627-1994*, December 1994, pp. 144-45; Cumming, D.A., et al, *Port related structures on the coast of Western Australia*, Fremantle, WA Maritime Museum, 1995.

<sup>53</sup> Heritage Today, *City of Albany Municipal Inventory*, 2000; HCWA database.

<sup>54</sup> Information provided on site by Ian Wilson, president of the South Coast Progress Association.

<sup>55</sup> Garratt, Dena, op cit; Wolfe, Adam, op cit, pp. 144-145.

<sup>56</sup> Certificates of Title, Vol. 1883 Fols. 426 & 427 for Lots 1 & 2 on Diagram 77269.

<sup>57</sup> Dykstra Planning, *Development application: Proposed five star resort, Frenchman Bay, Albany*, May 2006.

toilet block is located at the north end of the car park, and a road runs from the west corner down to Whalers Beach, about 17 metres below, where there is a parking area and picnic facilities with rotundas, barbeques and seating, and the remnant fabric of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*.

The buildings associated with the former caravan park consist of the 1936 weatherboard and iron hostel building that has had numerous additions; a rectangular weatherboard and tile ablution building, likely relocated to the site c.1959; a rectangular weatherboard and iron bunkhouse of similar age to the hostel; a c.1950s timber-framed asbestos clad double garage with timber lean-to; and a 1990s pre-fabricated timber and iron residence. The buildings are located in a group at the eastern end of the site near the entrance from the car park, with rough concrete slabs marking the caravan sites to the west along the top of the bluff. The site has been landscaped. There is a levelled and grassed outdoor area associated with the tearoom of the former hostel overlooking the Bay. It is enclosed with a brick and pipe fence on the north and east sides. Other landscaping includes low stone retaining walls, bitumen and gravel roadways and parking areas, native bush and some exotic plantings, the main feature of which is a mature date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) adjacent to the hostel.

Further west along the beach is a stone memorial marking the location of Vancouver's Spring, which has been dammed.

#### Ablution building

The ablution building was considered a possible remnant of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*. It functioned as an ablution block with toilet and shower facilities for patrons of the caravan park west of the hostel. The building abuts the west wall of the hostel. It is single-storey and rectangular measuring 14.1m by 3.3m, with the longest margin on 65° magnetic. The foundations are cement with laterite inclusions, while the walls are 165mm and 170 mm (6½" and 7") wide weatherboards attached with bullet head wire nails to a timber cross frame. Some of the weatherboards are hand cut, but most are machine sawn. All timber framing is machine sawn. Samples of timber from the weatherboard and frame were examined with a microscope that showed the timber's cellular structure to be of the *Eucalyptus* genus, most likely jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*).

The roof comprises unbranded cement Marseille style tiles attached to jarrah battens nailed to jarrah rafters. The roof timbers do not contain old nail holes suggestive of roof alteration, but blanked off windows in the north and east walls (the later against the west wall of the tearoom) suggest the structure had a different purpose in the past.

There is no archaeological evidence supporting the claim that the ablution building is contemporary with *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*. The materials used are local (jarrah), and these are cut to Imperial measurements used in Australia from first settlement to 1972. The historical record states that the station's accommodation and kitchen facilities were of Norwegian pine, with bearers supported by brick stumps, but the survey encountered none of these features and the building had a concrete foundation.

The concrete in the foundation contained a small amount of laterite aggregate. Many of the beach-based sites also contained concrete, but none had laterite as an aggregate inclusion indicating that the ablution building and beach sites are not contemporary. In addition, the roof frame of the ablution building carries

cement tiles that came into vogue shortly after World War II. The roof's rafters and battens show no evidence for alterations such as old nails, nail holes or timber stains suggesting that the building's present roof is original comprising materials forty year's older than the whaling station's period of use.

Blacked off windows suggest a different original function for the building.

#### Whalers Beach archaeological sites

The purpose of this section is to describe the material remains of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* in detail to determine the past function of the place and evaluate preservation. Some of the archaeological remains – in the form of granite and brick piers – have been used to provide seating in an area near the western boundary of the site. This practice needs to be discouraged.

The archaeological record is spread over a 150 metre line parallel with the beach. The survey comprised visually analysing, measuring and photographing the components comprising the place.

Site 1 is a raised plinth of brick and mortar stucco. It measures 762mm by 647mm, with the longest measurement on 65° magnetic. Four heavy corroded studs protrude from the top. A recessed trapezoid shape on the top of the plinth suggests that a structure with this shape rested on it at some stage.

Site 2 is a high-density (25 to 50 artefacts per square metre) artefact scatter of coal, clinker and iron fragments eroding from a 2m by 2m cup-shaped depression facing the beach. One piece of clear glass was also present. The artefacts are eroding from a lighter coloured, sandy matrix that sits on a natural unit of black, peaty soil.

Site 3 comprises a low-density (0.5 to 10 artefacts per square metre) scatter of metal and small whalebone fragments in a 1.5m by 2m wide clearing. A Peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) in the middle of this clearing has grown over time and brought the artefacts to the surface.

Site 4 comprises a medium density (11 to 49 artefacts per square metre) scatter of metal, small whalebone and coal fragments in a 2m by 2.5m wide clearing. Similar to Site 3, a Peppermint tree's growth has brought the artefacts to the surface.

Site 5 comprises a low-density scatter of metal fragments and one piece of melted glass in a 2.5m by 3m wide clearing. Similar to Sites 3 and 4, a Peppermint tree has brought the artefacts to the surface.

Site 6 is a high-density 1.5m by 3m wide scatter with large (12.5mm to 25mm) pieces of coal, clinker and coke. The coal is similar to eastern Australian Newcastle coal and is not from Collie Western Australia. The artefact scatter's density is high around the trunk of a peppermint tree, the growth of which has brought the material to the surface.

Site 7 is a high-density 1m by 2m wide scatter with large (12.5mm to 25mm) pieces of coal and clinker, similar to that at Site 6. A peppermint tree has again brought the material to the surface.

Site 8 is a fragmented section of collapsed brick wall or brick flooring. It has 17 courses with lime-based mortar used for cement. The machine pressed, unbranded bricks average 224mm long, 62mm deep and 110mm wide. The

feature is angular but 1.3 by 2 metres at its widest points. Tree growth has raised the southern end. Also associated with the site are fragmented clinker and one piece of creamware ceramic.

Site 9 is a circular, ground level feature with a 4m diameter. It contains brick (averaging 224mm long, 62mm deep and 110mm wide), hewn metamorphosed granitic stone and un-reinforced mortar sections. The mortar sections suggest that a round object, like a tank, sat on the feature. In the centre is a 915mm by 915mm square cement boss. Four heavily corroded studs protrude from the top of the boss, and a 390mm by 390mm square recess in the boss suggests a support function for this component. The boss is set at 65° and 155° magnetic. (Refer photo Site 9 & 10)

Site 10 is similar to site 9 but has a 4.4 m diameter. The boss and square recess is 915mm by 915mm and 390mm by 390mm respectively. Nearby but associated with this site were large (12.5mm to 25.4mm) coal fragments. (Refer photo Site 9 & 10)

Site 11 is a high-density 1.5m by 3m wide scatter with large (12.5mm to 25mm) pieces of coal, clinker, coke and corroded ferrous metal fragments. The coal is similar to eastern Australian Newcastle coal and is not from Collie.


Site 12 comprises a rectangular raised 1110 mm by 640 mm concrete and brick plinth with a flat 580mm by 640mm concrete section 100mm to the south. Four recesses for studs are in the corners of the raised section.

Site 13 is a 2870mm by 690mm concrete feature. It comprises two raised sections measuring 2870mm by 300mm and 2870mm by 190mm respectively, separated by a lowered area measuring 2870mm by 200mm.

Site 14 is a raised pad with 19.6m by 8m dimensions. A 0.5m high retaining wall of hewn metamorphosed granitic stone brick forms the pad's north face and sections of the east face. A 4m by 3m area in the pad's north-east corner contains a heavy density scatter of coal and clinker fragments but, the whole pad area contains light and medium density artefact scatters of mostly coal and clinker fragments. The feature's long axis is at 64.5° magnetic.

Site 15 is complex of five ground level brick and mortar features in a 3.5m by 3m area. Two of the features contain heavily corroded studs suggesting a support function.

Site 16 is a flight of 62 concrete steps from the top of the bluff to bottom. The steps are 1m wide. The feature's alignment is 146° magnetic.

Site 17 is a 15m by 25m area comprising brick and stone. The brick component consists of high-fired machine pressed red brick (averaging 224mm long, 62mm deep and 110mm wide) used in pier construction between 1.5m and 1.9m in length. No piers are in situ, with all collapsed. Three pier shapes exist: 'L' shaped measuring 800mm on the long arm and 400mm on the short;  shaped, and square measuring 370mm by 370mm. (Refer photos Site 17[1] & Site 17[2])

The metamorphosed granitic stone component of Site 17 consists of large angular blocks. Some blocks have flat faces on which brick has been mortared, while others have been split to form 1.8m by 0.3m long blocks placed end-on-end on the seaward side of the site.



Site 18 comprises four rectangular structures. The construction of two of these structures is the same, measuring 2270mm by 1740mm by 640mm, and consisting of brick outside sections and a stone and mortar centre. The outside brick sections have three, 1-inch diameter steel studs with eight threads to an inch protruding from them. The west face of the west feature has unpointed mortar, suggesting that the bricks were laid against an already existing wall or other feature that inhibited the pointing of the mortar. Between these two features is a square structure of granite and brick rubble held together with mortar. Distinct formwork patterning of either timber or corrugated iron is visible in the four sides of the structure and eight highly corroded steel studs protrude from the top surface. These three structures are tilted seaward about 10 degrees.

The last feature of Site 18 is a brick and mortar structure at ground level. The partial covering with sand dunes inhibited the taking of accurate measurements or determining the extent of the structure.

This archaeological record reflects only a small percentage of the physical remains of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* when operating in the 1910s. However, despite cultural and natural disturbance, function can be determined for much of the archaeological remains. Site 17 is the slipway and flensing deck. Descriptions of the structure when it was in use suggest that many of the brick pier components were buried in sand, much of which was washed away with the 1921 storm.<sup>58</sup> The brick piers were cemented to metamorphosed granitic stone that formed the foundations of the slipway and flensing deck. The 1921 storm also exposed these.

Despite damage inflicted by natural causes and the apparent disorder of the site, the slipway and flensing deck's artefacts retain structural integrity to approximate deck dimensions and possibly what the structure looked like when in use. The piers' stone foundations have moved little (with two possibly in situ), suggesting that the slipway and flensing deck was supported by four lines of piers running at right angles from the beach. Stone appears to have been used as a retaining wall or minor breakwater on the east face of the slipway and flensing deck. The centre piers supporting the slipway and flensing deck were square or rectangular, but the 'L' and ■ shaped piers are in an approximate line 13 metres from the edge of the present car park. This line of irregular shaped piers suggests the edge of some part of the slipway and flensing deck, whether the extent of the beach before the 1921 storm or the location of the brick retaining wall mentioned in historical documents.<sup>59</sup> The site's archaeological remains suggest eight metres for the deck's approximate width.

The condition of sites 2 and 18 also indicate disturbance by storm surge and wind. Evidence preserved on the four brick and stone features indicate they were originally enclosed in a structure, while their 10 degree angle seaward indicates foundation undercutting. There is evidence suggesting that the four features have resided and slumped forward by as much as one metre. The shape of three of the four brick and stone features and the steel stud fittings attached suggest their use to support machinery, most likely a steam engine. Douglas' sketch of the station's layout shows a double-storey brick building west of the slipway and

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<sup>58</sup> Garrett, Dena, *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin), Frenchman Bay. Maritime Heritage Site Inspection Report*. Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum, number 82, 1994; Marshall, Gordon, *Maritime Albany Remembered Les Douglas et al.* 2001, p.16.

<sup>59</sup> Marshall, Gordon, op cit.

flensing deck, but it is unclear if this structure housed the components of Site 18.<sup>60</sup> There are no other brick remains near Site 18 indicative of a collapsed brick structure, and this supports Dakin's claim that the structure was of timber, rather than brick.<sup>61</sup> The exposure of Site 2 is also due to natural disturbance.

Sites 9 and 10 are most likely foundations for digesters or cookers, and not tanks as previously suggested. These cylindrical steel objects that sometimes operated under steam pressure contained agitators that mixed the fluid containing whale meat and blubber allowing rapid processing. The concrete and steel bosses in the centre of the structures held the agitators' shafts.

Sites 2 to 7 and 11 are indicators for the nature of the subsurface archaeological remains. All are formed by natural processes: Site 2 by wind and wave action, and Site 3 to 7 and 11 by tree growth bringing material to the surface. These sites were not selected points where artefacts were deposited but instead suggest that the whole area has a subsurface layer of material from the whaling station period. Site 2 suggests that this layer is about 20 cm below the present ground level, with a high potential of containing small artefacts like coal, clinker, whalebone and iron fragments, but also larger structural objects.

Douglas' sketch suggests a barrel storage function for the west section of the site, and the retaining wall and level area of Site 14 suggests it was used for this function.<sup>62</sup> Site 15 nearby probably has a related function, and may be associated with the narrow gauge tramway that took trolleys from the processing area to the barrel shortage site, and finally to the loading jetty. The function of sites 1, 12 and 13 is unclear, while the bricks used for various site features do not appear Western Australian made. Western Australian pressed bricks from this period were frogged and carried a brand name, but none of the bricks on the site have these characteristics. Their origin is unknown.

The steps (site 16) are most likely from the whaling station period, but their location does not positively correlate with the historical record. Douglas places them west of the flensing deck and the structure containing digesters, but the results of the archaeological survey suggest that the deck and digesters are west of the steps.<sup>63</sup> A survey of the slope leading to the former tearooms failed to find any evidence for a previous flight of steps.

#### Vancouver Spring, Dam and Memorial

Vancouver Spring Memorial is located west along the beach, past the picnic facilities. A stone structure about one metre high and wide, it straddles the stream issuing from the spring. The base section is partially covered with sand.

A plaque attached to the horizontal section reads;

This spring was charted by  
Captain George Vancouver  
in September 1791  
It has been used ever since as a source of fresh water by  
explorers and seafarers, local residents and visitors  
16 March 2004 City of Albany

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60 Marshall, Gordon, op cit.

61 Dakin, William, *Whalemen Adventures*, 1938, p.186.

62 Marshall, Gordon, op cit, p. 19

63 Marshall, Gordon, op cit.

The course of the stream over the sand to the sea is clearly discernible. An overflow stream can be seen a little further back to the east. A full inspection of the dam that is built around the spring was attempted through the thick undergrowth, but a swarm of bees had established a hive in the pump house and one sting was sufficient warning to leave promptly. The following is a description of the dam when last inspected by Les Douglas about 1991.

The dam cannot be more than five or so metres above the level of the beach, but the thick undergrowth goes up to the water's edge, in some places overhanging it, with the result that one comes upon the dam suddenly, noticing it only when the ground becomes wet underfoot. The best method of approach appears to be up the creek bed, then veering to the right.

There is a small corrugated iron pumphouse on the left shoreward side, housing an engine... giving the name on the inside wall of Bates & Co. The stream discharges just next to this and again further along the dam... The dam itself is long and narrow... but it is difficult to see its full length owing to the overgrowth.

The stream enters at the north end, and there are two or more wooden barriers across the dam, and a pipe running across it from the pumphouse. The water is clear and fresh looking, and it is possible to see into it for a distance of six or eight feet, except that it is full of freshwater grass. The sides are lined with wood ...[that] looks only forty or so years old, but may be older. The pipes have been replaced... It was not possible to go to the other side of the dam ... owing to the undergrowth.<sup>64</sup>

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* is in poor condition with all elements beyond restorative opportunities. However, the archaeological signature of the place suggests rich subsurface material strata. Presently the subsurface archaeological remains are in a stable environment and unthreatened, but consultation should occur before proposed ground breaking activities are undertaken. The site presents interpretive opportunities, but it has a low degree of integrity. There is some evidence of recent unsympathetic changes to the remaining fabric, but generally, *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* displays a high degree of authenticity.

There was no physical evidence found on the bluff of *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* buildings that had been located in that area.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Western Australia's south coast was the home of many 19th century shore-based whaling stations.<sup>65</sup> Owned mostly by Australian or British companies, the stations had moderate success using aspects of the natural environment like granite shelves as slipways and flensing decks and hills for lookout positions. However, many of the shore-based operations could not compete against the American pelagic whaling. Stations existed at Torbay between 1844 and c.1864, Barker Bay 1849 to c.1873, Two Peoples Bay between 1842 and 1844 and c.1870s, Cheynes Beach 1846 to 1877, Cape Richie 1870 to c.1872, Doubtful Island Bay 1836 to 1838 and 1863 to 1870s, Barrier Anchorage c.1871 and Thomas' Fishery near Cape Arid c.1862.<sup>66</sup>

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64 Marshall, Gordon de L., op cit, p. 17; sketch plan of dam from 'Site of Notch Weir Memorial...', op cit, p. 7.

65 Gibbs, Martin, *The Historical Archaeology of Shore Based Whaling in Western Australia 1836-1879*. PhD thesis, Centre for Archaeology, University of Western Australia, 1995.

66 Gibbs, Martin, op cit; pp. 410-52.

After a lapse of about thirty years, *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* began a new era in Western Australian whaling. It was the first station established in the 20th century, and was dissimilar to the former 19th century stations because of technological advancements like steam-powered ships and station machinery and the use of explosive harpoons that increased industry effectiveness and safety. In addition, the station's operation by men from the efficient Norwegian whaling industry saw the introduction of whaling experience not seen previously.

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* and *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* north of Point Cloates, Ningaloo, were the only two whaling stations operating in Western Australia before 1950. The Spermacet Whaling Company was associated with both stations and the layout of the stations was understandably similar. A photograph of Cheynes Beach station around 1952 shows that little had changed over forty years. Digesters are located at the flensing deck's end and the whale processing area and loading jetty linked by narrow gauge tramway. However, historical and archaeological evidence indicate that *Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* was much smaller than the *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruin)*, potentially containing two digesters compared with possibly 40 at Point Cloates.<sup>67</sup>

#### 13.4 KEY REFERENCES

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#### 13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

*Frenchman Bay Whaling Station (ruin)* was one of only two whaling stations operating in Western Australia in the early 20th century. Its foreign ownership and operation is unusual in Western Australian history. Information about the number of whales caught and the financial turnover is available, but little is known about the Norwegian men who lived at the station. Further research on these men's lives working as whalers, harpoon smiths, cooks, carpenters and other professions is needed to add humanness to presently innate physical remains. In addition, the archaeological survey recorded sites associated only with whale processing, with no personal artefacts like smoking pipes, ceramics or glass found. The place needs further archaeological and historical research on these topics to enable a more complete and rounded picture of operation and life at Frenchman Bay.

Further research is required into the Aboriginal history of the place, both before and after European occupation.

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<sup>67</sup> HCWA assessment documentation, P04231 Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruin).