



Denison Jetty

Maritime Heritage Site Inspection Report

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Introduction

The purpose of this site inspection was to make a preliminary assessment of the remains of the Denison Jetty and to produce a photographic record of the site

Background

Technical Data

Date of Inspection: 21 July 1995

Approximate Location: The remains of the jetty are located on the shore within the Port Denison Marina at the foot of William Street.

Charts: BA 1033, *Champion Bay to Cape Naturaliste*. 1960, 1 : 625,000. and plan *Approaches to Port Denison*. 1 : 73,500.

PWD 48520 *Port Denison*. 1980, 1 : 25,000. and plan *Port Denison Fishing Boat Harbour*. 1 : 10,000.

Directions: This site is within the Port of Denison on the main beach at the foot of William Street.

Site Conditions and Integrity: Some of the piles and associated timbers of the shore end of the jetty remain on the beach. There are no other parts of the structure as any that were in the way during marina development were removed. A small amount remains of the earthworks for the abutment.

Management Considerations

(1) Natural Forces. The remains are not subject to the action of ocean swells due to their being within the marina. They are, however, subject to tidal movement alternatively covering and uncovering the base of the piles. They are also vulnerable to the wave action caused by the movement of boats in what is a fairly busy fishing boat harbour.

(2) Present and Future Human Forces. Being within the town of Denison and on a well used public beach, the structure is very exposed to deliberate vandalism or unwitting damage.

(3) Projected General Site Stability. Because of the possibility of future expansion and alterations to the marina the jetty structure is vulnerable to damage. Considerable work has also been carried out on the beach facilities by the Town Council and future works could also jeopardise the jetty. In the long term environmental conditions will continue to deteriorate the structure.

Description of Site

The jetty originally extended 270 feet to the west then 409 feet to the north-west according to Irwin District Historical Society records. However other sources put the total length at considerably more than this. The discrepancy is no doubt due to subsequent extensions. What remains are some of the piles and timbers which formed the base of the jetty on the beach.

Site Identification Comments

The jetty was commenced in 1867 projecting westward. In 1868 the direction was altered to the north-west due to the contractor striking very hard rock which prevented pile driving. Various extensions and repairs were carried out over the years. The jetty carried a single 3'6" gauge railway on the first part which branched to a double line where it widened just before it turned to the north-west. The jetty replaced anchoring in the open sea near the mouth of the Irwin River where cargo was moved between vessel and shore by lighter. The jetty was, however, very exposed with no shelter from heavy weather. The *Julia Percy* was badly damaged and sunk while lying alongside during a storm in June 1905. Other vessels have been wrecked or seriously damaged in the area. The unprotected nature of the port and the subsequent loss or damage to shipping caused the insurance companies to refuse to insure vessels calling there. The port declined rapidly after that.

Associated Shipwrecks

Leander

A 173 ton brigantine, the *Leander* struck a reef on 14 November 1853 and lost her rudder and began to take water badly. The Captain made sail and drove the vessel ashore approximately 24 kilometres south of Dongara. This wreck has not been located.

Assessment of Site Significance

(1) Historical. Port Denison Jetty is associated with the history of the Irwin District and the early coastal shipping services to the north of Fremantle. It was linked with the prosperity of the pastoral and agricultural interests of the region including the shipment of cattle by The Cattle Company, a company formed of influential people along the Irwin River.

(2) Technological. There is probably insufficient structure remaining for this site to be of technological significance.

(3) Educational. If properly marked by descriptive and informative signage the site can have considerable educational value.

(4) Cultural. The Denison Jetty was the main link between the Irwin District and the outside world during the time of early European settlement. As such it is of considerable cultural significance.

Recommendations

(1) That the jetty be gazetted as an Historic Site.

(2) Erect signs on the site giving informative material on the history and importance of the jetty.

(3) Consider requesting the Irwin Shire or the school children from the high school to prepare an informative brochure expanding on the information given on the on-site signage.

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