

# *Streeter's Pearling Jetty*



## **Maritime Heritage Site Inspection Report<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup>Cover Photograph: A view under Streeter's pearling jetty in September 1995

## Background

Streeter's Pearling Jetty appears on early 20th century charts of the inner anchorage to Roebuck Bay and it is generally recognised as one of the historical icons of the Kimberley region of Western Australia, being one of the few remaining tangible reminders of the heyday of the pearling industry out of Broome.

Though still in use until recently, the jetty is dilapidated and in danger of falling into total disrepair. If it is allowed to do so Broome and the State of Western Australia in general will lose one of its last links with the pearling era.

Figure 2:  
Streeter's Jetty at Broome <sup>1</sup>.



The purpose of this brief site inspection report is to produce a non-disturbance preliminary physical assessment of the extent of the remains and to produce a photographic record of the site and its environs. A detailed chronology and historical analysis is not presented, this being considered the domain of the Broome Historical Society.

This report will examine and place Streeter's Jetty in its context *vis a vis* other port-related structures on the Western Australian coast which were the subject of an earlier study commissioned by the Heritage Council of Western Australia (Cumming, Garratt, McCarthy and Wolfe, 1995).

In the course of the 1995 study it became evident that the remains of the humble jetty can represent far more to Australian society than one would imagine.

<sup>1</sup>Photographs by M McCarthy, WA Maritime Museum.



*A jetty is a maritime colonnade - the humble equivalent of Bernini's great St Peter's colonnades...The construction is self-evident, employing a trestle arrangement similar to that used in light railway bridges...The engineering is so direct and explicit that we fail to see that it has a lot more to tell us.*

*The jetty is an illustration of economic externalism -one among many such markers in the Australian economic record. It is a physical reminder of the paramount role of trade in the economy...Their scale and simplicity was a response to limited means...They are a more reliable guide to working Australian than the high-style architecture of the day decked out in its borrowed period finery...Few structures speak so poignantly or with such forceful directness about the outwardness of Australian life.*

*Whilst the jetty is a manifestly utilitarian structure, it clearly signals the main orientation of Australia: the extent of Australia's dependence on outside contacts in the economic sphere; our role in supplying raw materials and a history of involvement in other peoples wars...The jetty, railway, and the roads radiating north and south and inland were a diagram of intermeshing extractive activities, a convergence of economic forces and trade directed away from Australia.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Drew, P., *The coast dwellers: Australians living on the edge*, Penguin, Maryborough, Victoria, 1994, pp. 42-46.

Following the inspection of this and other sites along the coast of Western Australia, in October 1995 the Department of Maritime Archaeology at the Western Australian Maritime Museum presented a study of Port Related Structures on the Coast of Western Australia under the National Estates Grants Program.

Its task was as follows

- 1) To develop an historic framework for port related structures in Western Australia*
- 2) To develop a system for establishing the relative significance of these structures and sites*
- 3) To assess the structures and sites through physical survey with regard to 1. and 2. above*
- 4) Publish results and make nominations to the Register(s) of The National Estate, the Heritage Council of Western Australia and Municipal Heritage Inventories*

Most of the sites identified in that study were jetties or landings and many, given the changes that have occurred in transportation since the 1950s, are now abandoned or serve little purpose other than as platforms for recreational fishing. Appearing today as ruins, or like Streeter's Jetty, as little-used rapidly degrading structures, shadows of their former self, they appear to the uninitiated as mundane, unimpressive, even unsightly remnants of an unsophisticated era.

To many, especially to port authorities, they represent an unnecessary drain on resources and a danger to shipping. Luckily this does not appear to be the case with Streeter's Jetty, though there are indications that civil authorities are concerned at their public liability given that visitors and townsfolk still seek to access it.

As indicated above, most jetties were a part of a complex economic structure which manifested itself with shipping offices, goods-sheds, stock-yards, cranes, rail systems and other port-related infrastructure. Examples are the Deep Water Jetty at Albany, the Durlacher Street Jetty at Geraldton, the Broome sea-Jetty, the Derby Jetty, the Wyndham Jetty (Anthon's Landing). These and others, while once substantial structures, have since been destroyed or demolished (some in recent years). They exist today only as a barely discernible line of former jetty piles on the sea-floor. In some cases even these have been pulled from the seabed.

Equally, there are many jetties whose ruins or substantial fragments of their structure still exist. Most of those remaining present no real or imagined threat to those charged with their responsibility or to the community and shipping at large. For this reason or because they lie in sheltered, remote locations, some have escaped complete demolition or have been allowed to degrade from natural forces. Visible remains include jetties at Eucla (begun 1885), Israelite Bay (begun c.1896), Castletown in Esperance Bay (begun c.1896), Hopetoun (begun 1901), Hamelin Bay (begun 1880), Barrack Point in Flinders Bay (begun c.1884), Quindalup, (first begun in the 1870s), Wonnerup/Lockeville (begun 1870), The Long Jetty at Fremantle (begun 1873), Port Denison (begun 1867), Old Onslow (begun 1896), New Onslow (begun 1923), Fortescue Landing (begun 1894), Condon (begun 1898) and Anthon's Landing at Wyndham (begun 1887).

Large jetty structures still remain at Busselton (begun in 1860), Carnarvon (begun in 1896) and Bunbury (begun in 1864). While these are still in use-albeit mainly for recreational purposes, their heritage value is also being recognised and Jetty preservation societies exist in each of these towns.



Some jetties are quite small and in many cases were built to serve only one industry. Streeter's Jetty is one of these specific-purpose structures and it is the only pearling jetty in Western Australia, rendering it, like the Gladstone Landing Jetty a unique relic. The latter structure, at Gladstone Landing in the north-west, is the best preserved of all the 'lightering' jetties (or jetties used to load small vessels for transporting cargoes (usually wool) to ships lying offshore in deeper water). It was begun around 1910. Another, similar, but without the stonework and with little timber remaining, lies at Maud Landing further north (begun 1897). Unlike their larger counterparts, these jetties were often served by a small shed or holding yard at the terminus of a light rail fixed to the deck of the jetty. In the Streeter's case nearby boat yards and elements of the town of Broome itself were inextricably linked with the structure.

A brief description of Streeter's jetty now follows.

Figure 3:

Streeter's Jetty, showing the proximity of the town. The boatsheds are to the right of the photograph



## Technical Data

**Site Name:** Streeter's Jetty

File Name.	File No
Port Related Structures	2/93
Broome Area Wrecks	3/79

**Date of Inspection:** 29/9/1995 at low water spring tides and at high water

**Personnel:** M McCarthy

**Approximate Location** In the mangroves opposite Chinatown, Broome.

**GPS.** N/A

**Chart No:** BA 858      **Lat:** 17 57'12" S.      **Long:** 122° 14' 36" E.

**Sailing Directions:** Approach from China Town by land or via Roebuck Bay into Dampier Creek.

**Site Photographs:**  
 Black & White: N/A  
 Colour: Streeter's Jetty (Colour prints).  
 Transit Photos : N/A  
 Video: N/A

**Site Conditions on inspection** (Spring tides)

Sea and Swell: The seabed surrounding the Jetty was initially dry. Later the area was inundated. Seas and swell in the latter instance were nil.

Surge: Nil

Visibility: Excellent. The remains were dry. When the tide is in visibility will vary from nil to a metre or so depending on the tidal state

Current: Nil

Sea-bed coverage e.g. weed, sand : Sand and mud.

**Chemical Measurements :** N/A

Temperature

Salinity

pH

Dissolved O2

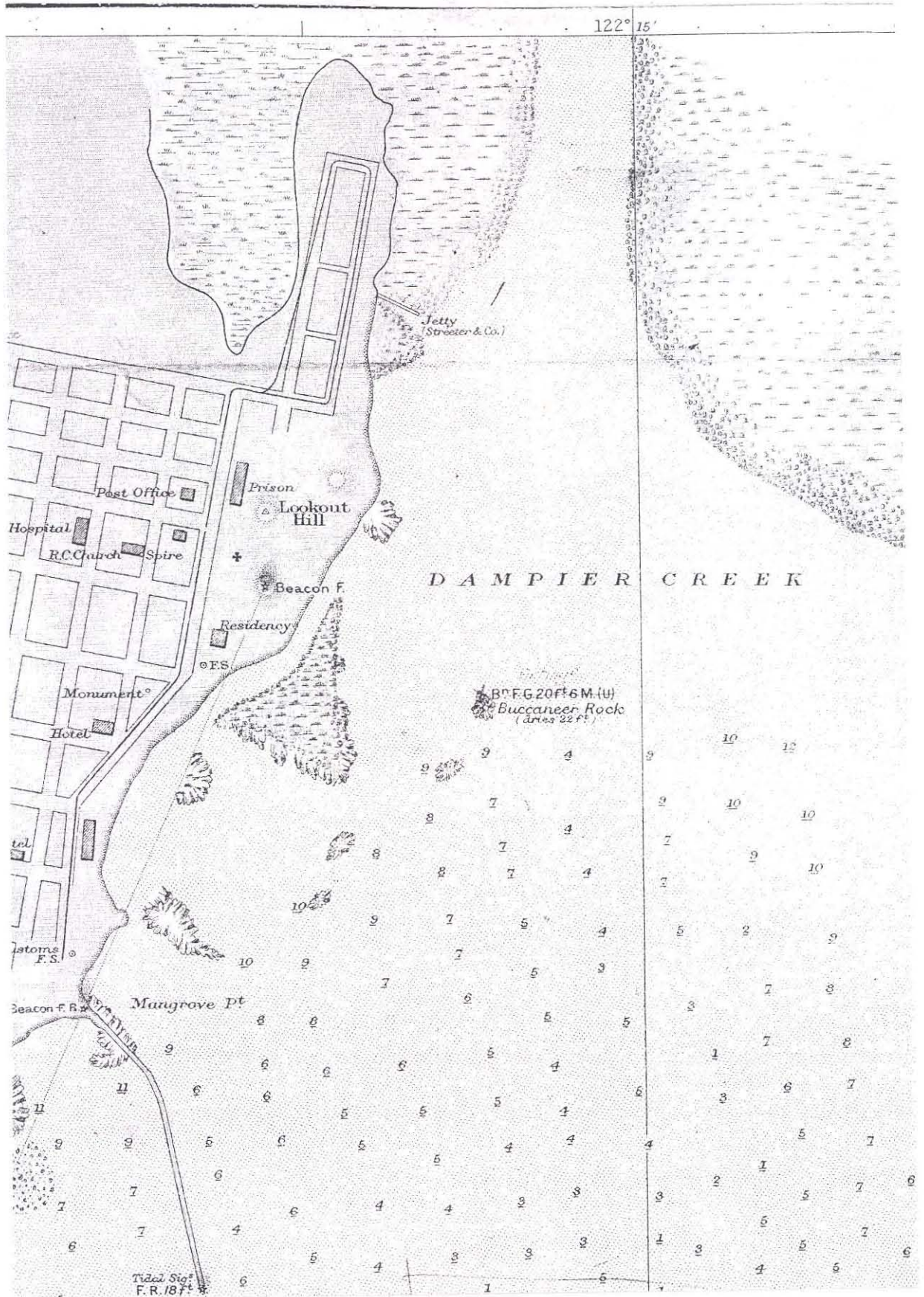
Corrosion Potentials (Reading and location)



## Chart Excerpt

Figure 4 Chart Excerpt Roebuck Bay Inner Anchorage, (1922. Last rev. 1937).  
BA 858 (In feet)

Note the location of Streeter's Jetty in Dampier Creek, the town adjacent and the former jetty at Mangrove Point.





### Description of Site (including Seabed Topography and form at Site)

The jetty is 6' wide by 220 feet long (c. 1.8m X 67m). It stands 8 feet (2.4m) off the sea floor at the seaward end and 5 feet (1.5m) at the land end. Mangroves grow close to the jetty on the southern side, while along its northern side the shallow channel cut through the vegetation to allow vessels to moor alongside is still clearly visible. At low water these vessels (mainly pearling luggers) rest in a slight depression in the seabed that serves to keep the hulls nearly upright and to prevent them falling onto their sides.

Figure 5: A view of the northern side of the jetty at low water spring tide.



The jetty has been constructed of natural wooden piles of varying thickness most around c. 8-10 inch diameter with dressed timber half caps, deck stringers, deck planking and kerbing. The piles are supported diagonally with braces of natural timbers c. 3-4" diameter locked with an iron bolt through a dressed timber block. All fastenings below the deck are of iron screw bolts, with washers, tightened with a nut at both ends. The remains of ladders (allowing movement from the seabed up onto the deck) formerly with wooden rungs are visible. The deck supports a 2' iron rail with a manually propelled 4 wheel trolley. The rail ends 29 feet short of the seaward end of the jetty and on the landward side it proceeds past the neck of the jetty to a point 76 feet away and possibly beyond. Bollards are visible on the seaward end. A solitary pile lies in the mangroves south of the jetty. Its purpose is unknown.



Figure 5-9 Views of the jetty.

The deck and its support structure of deck stringers and half caps, the light rail on the deck, the ladder, the rail and trolley, a bollard, natural piles and braces.

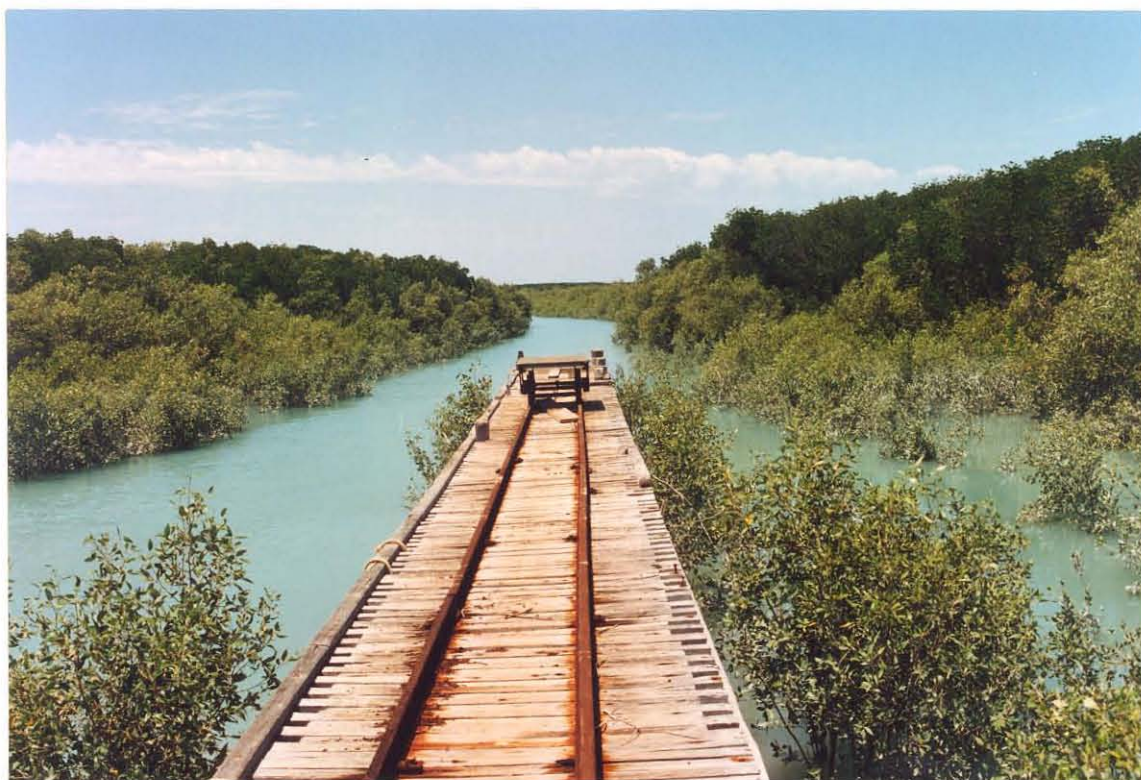


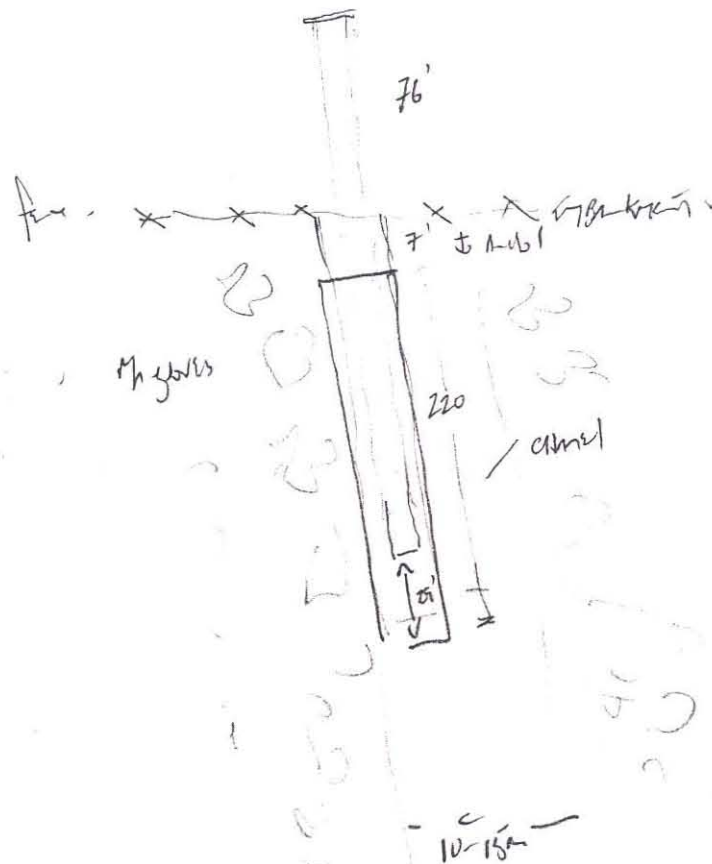








Figure 10: Sketch Plan of Site



**Site Condition and Integrity:**

The jetty has only recently become disused and though deck planks have sprung and all the fastenings are heavily corroded, it is still in a retrievable and potentially useable condition. The light rail on the deck is heavily corroded and the trolley is intact and in a strong condition<sup>3</sup>.

**Management considerations:**

(i) Natural Forces As can be seen from the illustration below, the jetty is protected on all sides by the vegetation and foliage of a very thick mangrove swamp which rises well above the structure itself. Revegetation of those mangrove plants usually kept low by the action of the boats mooring alongside the jetty is evident. As a result of this natural 'cushion', the usual deleterious effect of 'wind and wave' exacerbated by the occasional storm and/or cyclone common on these shores is minimised.

Figure 11: The mangroves protecting the jetty



<sup>3</sup>This was later removed by PaspalyPearls. Pty Ltd (Pers Com)



(ii) Present and future Human forces: The jetty is visible from 'Chinatown' Broome and it is a source of considerable interest to townsfolk and the many visitors to Broome. This interest was especially noticeable in earlier years when luggers were alongside and this interest once manifested itself in the numbers of people seen strolling along it to view the boats, the activity and the structure itself.

Even though visitors are less attracted to the area now that the luggers are infrequently seen alongside, the safety of passers-by is an issue to the statutory authorities and those responsible for the structure given that the deck is beginning to deteriorate.

(iii) Projected General site Stability: The protective vegetation and the fact that the jetty, even in a disused and dilapidated form, poses no threat to navigation serves to ensure that this jetty of all those examined in the State is very well protected from human and natural forces. The only real threat to its existence are the safety concerns noted above.

Figure 12: The deterioration evident at the seaward end of the jetty



## Recommendations

It has long been considered that Streeter's Jetty is of considerable historical and cultural importance. In utilising accepted definitions of cultural significance e.g., 'aesthetic, historic, scientific, or social value for past, present or future generations' (Guidelines to the *Burra Charter*, 1988: 2.1) and in applying the various criteria used to assist in that judgement, it became evident that it and many of the sites above are of regional significance or of importance to at least one section of the local community.

It was also realised that some of these sites, notably the Busselton, Carnarvon, Gladstone and Streeter's Jetties could be considered under the following excerpts from the criteria for the *Register of the National Estate* (Australian Heritage Commission, 1990):

*a) Its importance in the course or pattern of Australia's cultural history... [a place] of importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the State, region or community.*

*c) Its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's...cultural history....[a] place identified as [a] significant type within the discipline and within the context of similar sites.*

*g) Its strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group for cultural reasons... [a] place held in high esteem by the Australian community or a segment of it, that esteem being demonstrated and special.*

It was duly recommended in the October 1995 study that the details of these four sites be forwarded on to the Australian Heritage Commission and that the remaining sites be entered into the Register of Heritage Places, the Heritage Council's data base and to Municipal Registers.

With respect to Streeter's Jetty, the Broome Historical Society were also urged to continue in their existing efforts to see the structure preserved and to have it further nominated to the Register of the National Estate.

Streeter's Jetty is an asset to Broome, Western Australia and to the Nation. In the interests of those charged with public safety, it is considered that a more adequate fence be provided preventing access to the site until alternatives which will allow its preservation are found.



### Historic Jetties on the Western Australian coast

Those port related structures which have been placed in the databases of the Heritage Council of Western Australia as a result of the October 1995 and previous studies are as follows in order from the South Australian border. Where they are the result of previous studies or where they were lodged with the Heritage Council in advance of this final report, their catalogue number is given alongside.

Eucla, Jetty  
 Israelite Bay, Jetty  
 Esperance, Tanker Jetty, Esperance, HCWA 0831; AHC 15132  
 Esperance, (Castletown) Jetty  
 Hopetoun, Jetty, Hopetoun, HCWA 2323  
 Albany, Deep Water Jetty, Albany HCWA 3238 (now demolished)  
 Albany, Town Jetty  
 Albany, Norwegian Whaling Station  
 Albany, Barker Bay Whaling site, HCWA 0025  
 Flinders Bay, Jetty, Flinders Bay, HCWA 0117  
 Hamelin Bay, Jetty  
 Busselton, Jetty, Queen St, HCWA 0423; AHC 09483.  
 Quindalup, Jetty, Yelverton Tramway, Quindalup, HCWA 2951  
 Lockeville/Wonnerup, Jetty, HCWA 2945  
 Bunbury Jetty  
 Fremantle, Long Jetty  
 Dongara/Port Denison, Jetty, Port Denison, HCWA 1241; AHC 09645  
 Dongara/Port Denison, Obelisk, Leander Point, HCWA 1242; AHC 09663  
 Gladstone, Jetty  
 Carnarvon, Jetty, HCWA 0467  
 Maud Landing, Jetty  
 Point Cloates, Whaling Station  
 Onslow, Jetty, goods shed and tanks  
 Old Onslow, Wharf, tramway and Bridge  
 Cossack, Wharf, HCWA 3231; AHC 09663  
 Point Samson, Jetty ruins, yards.  
 Balla Balla, Jetty ruins, tramway  
 Condon, Jetty and goods shed ruins  
Broome, Streeter's Jetty and Town Jetty, AHC 18074

### References

- Drew, P., 1994, *The coast dwellers: Australians living on the edge*, Penguin, Maryborough, Victoria, 1994.
- Cumming, D., Garratt, D., McCarthy, M., & Wolfe, A., 1995, *Port related structures on the coast of Western Australia*. Report, Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum, No. 98.

### Appendix

Further photographs taken of Streeter's Jetty: September 1995 (M McCarthy)

The seabed alongside  
Under the deck  
The ladder and piles  
Undeck  
The solitary pile to the south  
Braces and fastening block



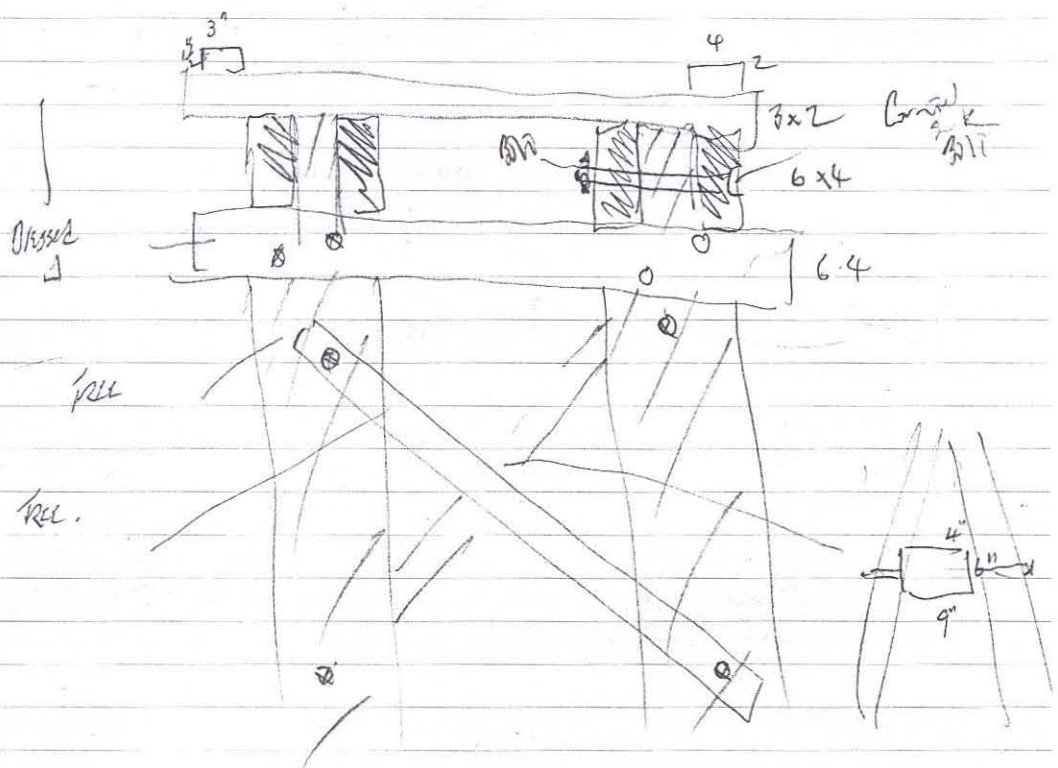
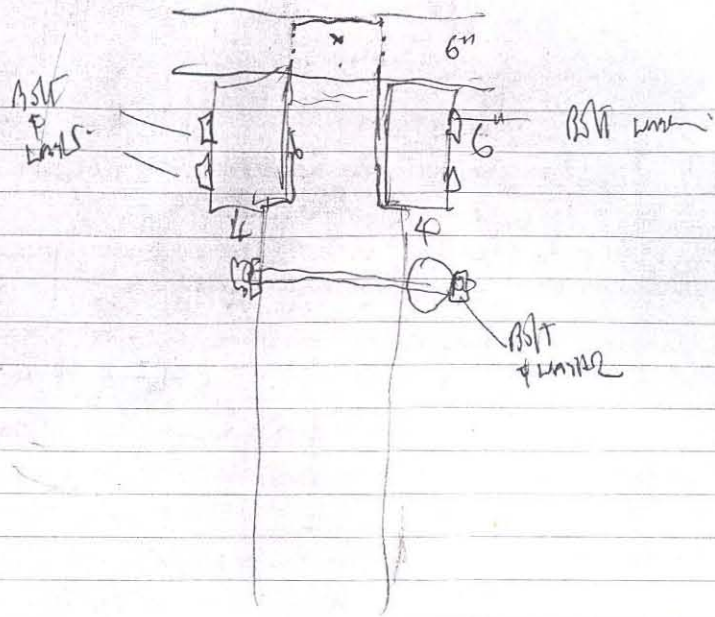














# Appendix

## Working sketches of timber scantlings

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