



## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES PERMANENT ENTRY 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)

- 2.3 Coming to Australia as a punishment
- 3.3.4 Looking for land with agricultural potential
- 3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries
- 3.8.5 Moving goods and people on land
- 3.8.7 Building and maintaining roads
- 3.11.5 Establishing water supplies
- 4.1.1 Selecting township sites

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

- 107 Settlements
- 203 Road Transport
- 310 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying
- 602 Early settlers

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

The stonework for the granite well has been carefully shaped to support the sides of the circular well and clearly displays the artistic and technical skills of the builder. (Criterion 1.2)

*St Ronan's Well, York* is located in a comparatively dry environment largely composed of small eucalypt tree species and bushes with little associated undergrowth. The construction of the well has created an aesthetically pleasing environment that features larger native tree species together with sedges that line the edge of the pool. The busy hum of insects and birds further enhances the visual aspects of this environment. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

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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Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA, unpublished report, 1997.

For nearly 100 years *St Ronan's Well, York* assisted in the development of the agricultural districts to the east of Perth's coastal plain. It was regularly and heavily used by travellers using the York Road, from the earliest days of settlement until motorised transport reduced the need for regular watering holes as time spent on the road was significantly reduced. (Criterion 2.2)

The arrival of convicts in Western Australia in 1850 finally enabled the colony to implement a public works program that encompassed the construction of roads, bridges and public buildings. Convicts and ticket-of-leave men were responsible for much of the maintenance of the York Road, clearing out the stone well at *St Ronan's Well, York* and they also constructed the smaller brick lined well. (Criterion 2.2)

*St Ronan's Well, York* is associated with the public works program that was implemented and supervised by the Royal Engineers and the Royal Sappers and Miners who were brought out to assist with the Convict Establishment. (Criterion 2.2)

*St Ronan's Well, York* was the temporary location of a road party station during the 1860s. These camps were established to accommodate work parties that were required to spend an extended period of time in a particular area repairing roads or bridges. (Criterion 2.2)

The granite lined well at *St Ronan's Well, York* displays artistic and technical excellence through the carefully shaped granite stones that have been used to line the well. Granite is a hard rock and requires some skill to dress so that the stones fit together neatly. (Criterion 2.4)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

The historical documentation definitely indicates that a road party station was established at *St Ronan's Well, York*, however the exact nature of this station and its longevity are not known. Little is known about these types of camps and the structural remains found near the wells may shed some further light on the occupation at this site and this type of road camp in general. (Criterion 3.2)

### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

Folk-lore plays an important role in any society and *St Ronan's Well, York* has developed its own mythology both in the origins of the name and the usage to which the site has been put to over the years. The people of York and also the wider community value these myths. (Criterion 4.1)

*St Ronan's Well, York* contributes to the people of York's sense of place as it was associated with the town's early growth and the successful development of York as an agricultural district. The place also has connections to the York Hiring Depot through the establishment of a road party station and the convicts and ticket-of-leave men based at the Hiring Depot who would clean out the well. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*St Ronan's Well, York* is understood to be one of the earliest stone wells constructed in Western Australia along a main transport route to provide water for travellers and is also the earliest well sunk along the York Road. (Criterion 5.1)

*St Ronan's Well, York* is an uncommon example of a well, and its associated reserve, that has survived to the present day along a main road that is still easily accessible. (Criterion 5.1)

*St Ronan's Well, York* is a rare example of a convict well associated with an earlier, intact well. (Criterion 5.1)

## **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The stone and brick wells at *St Ronan's Well, York* appear to be representative of their type and demonstrate the skills of the builder in the 1830s and 1860s. They are also representative of the government practice of providing wells for travellers and stock along main transport routes in the twentieth century. (Criterion 6.2)

## **12. 3 CONDITION**

Both of the wells appear to be in good condition although due to the level of the water covering the stone well it is difficult to determine the condition of the stone lining below the upper courses. The brick well displays evidence of water erosion in some areas on the southern side.

The archaeological remains of the roughly rectangular structure on the eastern side of the wells are in poor condition due to weathering and probably vandalism. The remains further to the north of the wells are in poor condition and may in fact represent material that has been shifted from its original location.

## **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The stone and brick wells at *St Ronan's Well, York* have retained a high degree of integrity as their original intent is clear and while it would be unusual for travellers to take advantage of the water supply in the wells today there is no reason (if the water was boiled) why the water could not be used.

The archaeological remains on the eastern side of the wells are moderate to low as it is highly likely that the remains have been heavily disturbed and that the original outline of the structure has become lost due to weathering. The remains to the north of the well have a low level of integrity as they appear to have been removed from their original location.

## **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

The stone and brick wells have retained a high degree of authenticity despite the fact that some conservation works have been carried out on the wells.

As the archaeological remains to the east of the wells have probably been disturbed their level of authenticity has been reduced to moderate. The authenticity of the remains to the north of the wells is low due to disturbance.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Fiona Bush, Historical Archaeologist and Heritage Consultant.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*St Ronan's Well, York* became an established watering place on the road to York as early as 1832, and it appears highly likely that a well was in place at the site by 1832. Wells along the York road were cleaned out regularly and the first direct reference to the one at *St Ronan's Well, York* was made in 1858. The arrival of convicts in Western Australia in 1850 saw them employed on public works projects, such as road and bridge construction and in 1862 a brick well was constructed at St. Ronan's by convicts and the remains of the kiln that was used to bake these bricks may still exist in the area. At present the origins of the sparse remains of a structure to the south-east of the main well remains unclear.

Western Australia, or the Swan River Colony as it was known at the time of settlement, was established as a free British Colony in June 1829. Settlers arrived from the various counties of England, Scotland and Ireland bringing with them goods and indentured servants that would entitle them to grants of land depending on the value of their goods and the number of servants they brought with them. On the flat coastal plain around Fremantle and Perth, land grants were initially concentrated on the Swan and Canning Rivers. However, most of this land was of poor quality and Lieutenant Governor Stirling sent out exploration parties to discover whether better quality land might be found over the Darling Ranges and also to determine the sources of the Swan and Canning Rivers.

During an expedition between July and August 1830, Ensign Robert Dale, of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, travelled over the Darling Range to explore the country to the east of the hills. On his trip he passed through large areas of mahogany forest, crossed several small (and some large) streams, named several prominent hills and also passed through expanses of bush with limited water supplies. The most important find of the whole trip was coming across the Avon River and the plain through which it flowed.<sup>1</sup> On returning to Perth and reporting on his findings, others followed in his footsteps: Lieut. Erskine (also of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment) in September, James Henty (a settler) in October 1830 and finally Lieut. Governor Stirling, accompanied by Dale, towards the end of October 1830.<sup>2</sup> While all of the diary entries mention in passing various geological features, marshy areas, streams, the animals seen (and caught), together with sightings of the local Aborigines, none specifically mention a spring that can be identified as that that feeds *St Ronan's Well, York*. However, it is likely that the spring in question would have been an important place to the Aboriginal people, who considered all water sources to be significant.

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<sup>1</sup> Shoobert, J., (Ed) *Western Australian Exploration, Vol. 1 December 1826 – December 1835. The Letters, Reports and Journals of Exploration and Discovery in Western Australia*, Hesperian Press, 2005, pp 168 – 169.

<sup>2</sup> Shoobert, J. pp. 169 – 179.

On 25 November 1830, Stirling issued a government notice that the land on the Avon River had been thrown open for selection and that a town called 'York' was to be laid out "in a situation near to Mount Bakewell".<sup>3</sup> At around the same time, 1,280 acres of land were set aside at St. Ronan's Well for a future townsite.<sup>4</sup> In September 1831, Stirling requested Dale to escort Mr Bland, who was to be in charge of the Government Stock Station that Stirling wished to establish at York, across 'the hills' using the route that he had used in his earlier explorations of the area. The detailed description of the route to be taken by Dale made no reference to a spring near the new town of York that could be used by the party to refresh both themselves and their stock. Yet Stirling's instructions for Dale were detailed in their consideration of where the party should first ascend the Darling Range and the path to follow to ensure adequate supplies of water for the valuable stock that Bland was transferring to York.<sup>5</sup>

The first reference to *St Ronan's Well, York* appears to be that made by the Government Surveyor, John S. Roe in 1832 on his way out to York to survey the new town. On the 8<sup>th</sup> November, he and his party spent the night at Carter's Halfway House, which had been established about 12 months previously near a good water supply. The following morning the party renewed their trek to York and Roe recorded that just after mid-day they stopped at "a spring of excellent water known by the name of St. Ronan's Well situated in a gentle valley on [the] south side of the road.....turned down to the well & baited."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately he gave no further description of the well.

The origins of the name 'St. Ronan's' are not known however it has been suggested that it may well have come from a novel by Sir Walter Scott. Scott's novel, 'St. Ronan's Well', was published in December 1823. At least one copy of the novel was brought to Western Australia (if not more), as an advertisement was placed in the *Perth Gazette* in June 1833 reporting the loss of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Volume of *St. Ronan's Well* and that a reward of 5 shillings would be offered to the finder.<sup>7</sup> One of the characters in the novel was a Mrs Dod who ran the Cleikum Inn near St Ronan's Well which was a mineral spring. Ian Elliot noted that James Dodds and his wife operated the Cleikum Inn in West Guildford in 1831 and considered that James Dodds may have

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<sup>3</sup> Survey Department Letterbooks, SROWA Cons. 5000 Item 49 No. 93, p.63.

<sup>4</sup> Return of Lands reserved for Public Purposes in Western Australia from the establishment of the Colony in June 1829 to 6 October 1835. Survey Department Letterbooks, SROWA Cons. 5000 Item 49 No. 350, p.226. At this stage the townsite was listed as a 2nd Class Reserve, in comparison with the townsite of York which was listed as a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Reserve. It should be noted that this record was made in 1835 at which time the use of the name 'St Ronan's Well' had become well established for this particular watering place. It is unclear whether the well had been named by this stage as it is not referred to later in a letter from Stirling to Dale when Dale was requested to accompany Bland's party to York in 1831.

<sup>5</sup> Survey Department Letterbooks, SROWA Cons. 5000 Item 49 No. 145, p.97.

<sup>6</sup> Roe's Fieldbook No. 2, SROWA Acc. 1372. Roe's description of the place makes it difficult to determine whether a well had in fact been dug at this stage or whether they were still utilizing a natural pool of water.

<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St.\\_Ronan%27s\\_Well](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Ronan%27s_Well), accessed 27/5/2010; *Perth Gazette* and *Western Australian Journal*, 22 June 1833, p. 1b.

named the well after the one mentioned in Scott's book.<sup>8</sup> Dodds would certainly have been familiar with the York Road as he took up land in the York district in the early 1830s, however at present there is no evidence for this suggestion.<sup>9</sup>

Public references to the government reserve at *St Ronan's Well, York* appeared in the *Perth Gazette* as early as October 1835, when William Samson advertised at auction, land formerly owned by Charles Boyd, which was adjacent to the government reserve at St. Ronan's Well.<sup>10</sup> However, apart from the listing of 1,280 acres for a townsite at St. Ronan's Well in the 1835 Return made by Roe, the government reserve at *St Ronan's Well, York* was not gazetted until the 1890s.

Nothing is known about the actual construction of *St Ronan's Well*, however, the general process of building a well is described in the *Colonists and emigrants handbook of the mechanical arts* as such;

After digging to a depth of around 8 or 9 feet, a winch rope and bucket would be set up to remove the earth from the well, until water started to appear. During this process, a sufficient quantity of flat stones would be lowered into the well by winch in order to build the ring, with the first 5 or 6 courses of stones or bricks laid without mortar. The bottom of the well was then covered with dry rubble, to act as a filter. The circular ring of the well was then drawn in at the top to 2 feet in diameter, with a course of bricks projecting approximately two feet above ground level. Water would then be removed either by bucket or a pump depending on the quantity.<sup>11</sup>

The settlers were quick to take up their grants in the Avon Valley and it was estimated that by 1834 half of the Colony's sheep were pastured in the Avon Valley.<sup>12</sup> During this period Dale's track continued to be used and it was not until 1835 that George Smythe surveyed the route. Smythe altered Dale's original line, shifting the road further to the north at Mahogany Creek, where a good supply of water had been found, and a more permanent bridge was constructed across the Helena Brook.<sup>13</sup> All too soon, the *Perth Gazette* began to report complaints about the state of the road until in May 1838 a group of settlers met at York to pass a number of resolutions concerning the up-keep of the road. They proposed raising £300 through the sale of shares, and the money would be used to maintain the road. Tolls would be levied to provide additional maintenance funds and to reimburse the shareholders.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to 1838, two commissioners controlled the management of the Colony's roads: the Surveyor General and the Advocate General. By June, the Legislative Council had passed an Act that provided for the 'Management of

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<sup>8</sup> Nomenclature Card for St. Ronan's Well, Battye Library (Text written by I. Elliot - information about nomenclature cards obtained from I. Elliot during a phone conversation 15/4/2010).

<sup>9</sup> Carter, J., *Bassendean: a social history 1829 – 1979*, Town of Bassendean, Perth, 1986, p.47.  
<sup>10</sup> *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 10 October 1835, p. 578b.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Scott Burn, *The colonist's and emigrant's handbook of the mechanical arts*, William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh & London, MDCCCLIV, p.109-110.

<sup>12</sup> LePage, J.S.H., *Building a State: the story of the Public Works Department of Western Australia 1829 – 1985*, Water Authority of Western Australia, Leederville, 1986, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Elliot, I., *Mundaring : a history of a shire*, Shire of Mundaring, Mundaring, 1983, p.20.

<sup>14</sup> *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 19 May 1838, p.80.

Roads, Streets and other Internal Communications.’ The Act allowed for the establishment of individual town trusts and elected representatives from these trust would serve on the Central Roads Trust. To be eligible to vote electors had to own land within the township or over 1,000 acres outside the town limits. Following their first meeting in August, the Central Roads Trust divided the colony into four road districts: the Swan River, the Canning, the Murray and Leschenault, the York and the Toodyay districts.<sup>15</sup> The resolutions put forward by York’s residents were not well received by the Central Roads Trust and the resolutions lapsed.<sup>16</sup> These Town Trusts and the Central Roads Trust continued to manage the construction and up-keep of roads until the passing of the *Road Districts Act* in 1871 when road boards were elected to manage the repair and upkeep of roads and bridges within the boundaries of the gazetted Road District.<sup>17</sup>

Assistant Surveyor A. Hillman surveyed the land around *St Ronan’s Well, York* in 1843 and a plan was produced.<sup>18</sup> By this stage the area of land around the well was designated as Avon Lot 44 Public Reserve and comprised only 640 acres. It is not known why Hillman was engaged to survey the area at this time nor when the original 1,280 acres of land that had originally been set aside as a townsite, had been released for selection or why it was decided not to proceed with the establishment of a town here.<sup>19</sup> Avon Loc. 43 (90 acres) was located on the western boundary and was originally granted to William Tanner in the 1830s.<sup>20</sup> The plan showed three lines of York Road that entered the Reserve from the west. The more northerly route was designated ‘Original Road’, to the south of this was a road named ‘Old Road’ and then to the south of that was one simply marked ‘from Guildford’. The ‘Old Road’ had a branch track that veered off to the north-east to skirt around St. Ronan’s Well which was shown as a misshapen oval, before joining up with the line of the Original Road which continued on to the east.

Assistant Surveyor Philip S. Chauncy completed a new survey of the York Road in 1846. Like Hillman, Chauncy’s survey did not specifically show a well at *St Ronan’s Well, York*, but an area of marshy ground with what appeared to be a large number of rocks. The road shown running on the southern side of the Well was labelled ‘From Carters & old road’. The track then headed north where it joined the road to York.<sup>21</sup> Like Smythe’s survey, Chauncy had been charged with finding a more efficient route to Perth and he investigated land to the north and south of the then current road alignment. During his survey he

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15 Bourke, M.J., *On the Swan: a history of the Swan District of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1987, p. 117.

16 *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 6 October 1838, p. 158c.

17 Gregory, J. & Gothard, J. (Eds), *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 2009, p. 540.

18 Public Reserve at St. Ronan’s Well by A. Hillman (2A/40). SROWA Cons. 1569 Item No. Avon 0048, 1 Jan. 1843. Unfortunately Hillman’s fieldbook, that formed the basis for this survey, could not be located.

19 Later reports from the Lands and Survey Department refer to the poor soil around St. Ronana’s Well so it is possible that this might have been the reason that the idea of a town in this location was abandoned.

20 Country Enrolment No. 394. The land was officially transferred to Tanner in Dec. 1843. Although the land would have been granted at an earlier date.

21 Chauncy, P.S., *Fieldbook No. 6*, p.58 SROWA, Cons. 3452.



came across Lake Manaring, which lay further to the north of Smythe's line. The government adopted Chauncy's route in 1847 and plans were produced.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately this route was some way north of the Half-Way House established by Carter, and eventually the Inn closed due to a lack of trade. A new one was established opposite Lake Manaring.<sup>23</sup> Some sections of the new route were not well received by York residents as it crossed several gullies and there were numerous sandy patches. Instead, they favoured a route that had been shown to them by a local aboriginal, colloquially known as King Dick. 'King Dick's Line' passed further to the north of Chauncy's route and the settlers agitated for the adoption of what they considered was a better route.<sup>24</sup> The government remained unmoved so the settlers took matters into their own hands by building their preferred route themselves. They raised £50 and the work was completed in six weeks. As travellers preferred this route, Chauncy's line on the western side of Lake Manaring fell into disuse.<sup>25</sup> It was not until March 1850 that the government formally proclaimed the settlers' route.<sup>26</sup>

Western Australia was originally established as a free colony with minimal financial assistance from the British Government. Initially the difficulties encountered by the settlers led to poor reports on the conditions in the colony and although immigration numbers later increased the total population remained comparatively low. This affected the government's public works program and also meant that there was a shortage of capital and labour. A decision was finally made by the residents to accept a small number of convicts and become a penal colony. The first convicts arrived in Western Australia in June 1850 aboard the *Scindian*.<sup>27</sup>

The penal system was fully funded by the British government and they expected the Western Australian government to take advantage of the convict labour to assist with its public works program. The penal system was referred to as the Convict Establishment and came under the control of the Comptroller General, Captain E. Henderson a Royal Engineer. The Secretary of State, Earl Grey, considered that an engineer would be the most suitable person to oversee the construction of a prison for the convicts and also the colony's public works program.<sup>28</sup> By the end of January 1852, the 20<sup>th</sup> Company of Sappers and Miners and three Royal Engineers had arrived at

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- 22 Public Reserve at St. Ronan's Well, SROWA, Cons. 3869, Item No. Avon 0048 (downloadable online image).
- 23 For further information on the development of The Traveller's Rest Inn at the Lakes see The Lakes Precinct (Place No. 17037) assessment prepared by F. Bush for the Heritage Council of Western Australia, April 2005.
- 24 Mundaring & Hills Historical Society file: York Road.
- 25 Elliot, I., p. 27.
- 26 Government Gazette 26 March 1850.
- 27 Statham, P. 'Why Convicts I: an economic analysis of colonial attitudes to the introduction of convicts.' Stannage, C. T. (Ed.) *Convictism in Western Australia*. Nedlands, University of Western Australia Dept. of History, 1981.
- 28 Earl Grey to Gov. Fitzgerald, 30.1.1850 in *British Parliamentary Papers: Crime and Punishment – Transportation* Vol. 8, Irish Univ. Press, Shannon, 1970, No. 110, p. 228. Abbreviated to BBP

Fremantle to assist Henderson.<sup>29</sup> Lieut. Wray was in charge of the group and he headed up the public works office established in Fremantle.<sup>30</sup> The company of Sappers and Miners functioned as Instructing Warders at Fremantle Prison and also on the various public works projects. Once a convict had served half his prison term he became eligible for a ticket-of-leave, provided that his conduct record was acceptable. The ticket-of-leave entitled the holder to leave Fremantle Prison to look for work, either for a settler or for himself. To assist the process of getting ticket-of-leave men out into country areas where they could be hired, Henderson organised the construction of Convict Hiring Depots in various locations such as Guildford, York and Albany.<sup>31</sup>

To provide an additional military presence, the British Government also sent out retired soldiers, or pensioners on the convict ships. These men acted as guards on the sea voyage to Western Australia and free passage was also given to their families as an incentive to settle in the colony. While they served aboard the ships they drew a pay entitlement. As a further incentive these men were also offered grants of land. Pensioner Guard Villages were established at various locations around Fremantle and various country towns to accommodate the Pensioners and their families. They had to build their own homes although ticket-of-leave men often assisted with this work.<sup>32</sup>

The maintenance of the York Road came under the direction of Royal Engineer Lieut. Du Cane who was based at the Guildford Depot. In his half-yearly report to Henderson for the end of June 1854, he proposed the establishment of road stations at various suitable locations to assist in the construction of the roads. He noted that once works had been completed the buildings could be taken over by pensioner guards.<sup>33</sup> The nucleus of the No. 1 York Station was commenced in the first half of 1854, 6.5 miles (c.10 km) from Guildford and a similar station was established 4 miles (6.4 km) from the York Depot at the same time.<sup>34</sup>

In November 1854, Major Bruce, the commander of the Pensioner Guards, wrote to the Colonial Secretary regarding the establishment of a Pensioner Guard Village at *St Ronan's Well, York*. Henderson and Lieut. Du Cane had recommended this location to Bruce and Du Cane had also recommended that a road party station should be established at this location. Du Cane considered that the presence of the road party station would provide a ready

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<sup>29</sup> McNicoll, Ronald, *The Royal Australian Royal Engineers 1835 to 1902: the Colonial Engineers, Corps Committee of the Royal Australian Engineers, Canberra, 1977, p.107.*

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Henderson to Fitzgerald, (Enclosure in letter to Grey from Fitzgerald), 3.1.1852, *British Parliamentary Papers: Crime and Punishment – Transportation Vol. 12, Irish Univ. Press, Shannon, 1970, No. 33, p. 134.*

<sup>31</sup> Gertzel, C., *The convict system in Western Australia 1850 - 1870. Hons. Thesis, Univ. of Western Australia, Perth, 1949. Additional depots were also built in other areas.*

<sup>32</sup> Broomhall, F.H., *The Veterans: a history of the Enrolled Pensioner Force in Western Australia, 1850 – 1880, Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 1989, pp. 2 – 3.*

<sup>33</sup> Du Cane's half yearly reports to Henderson in BBP, Vol. 13, 25.9.1854, p.148.

<sup>34</sup> Du Cane's half yearly reports to Henderson in BBP, Vol. 13, 25.9.1854, p.146. The No. 1 Station is probably the one established on Greenmount Hill, known today as Bilgoman Well while the location of the one near York is not known although Cut Hill lies approximately this distance from York.

market for the Pensioner's produce and ticket-of-leave men would be able to assist the Pensioners in clearing the land.<sup>35</sup> The Colonial Secretary immediately shot off a memo to Roe requesting him to organise a survey for Pensioner Guard allotments and a Road Party Station at *St Ronan's Well, York*.<sup>36</sup>

The Colonial Secretary's anticipation that a village would soon be established at *St Ronan's Well, York* gathered pace and he contacted Bruce with Du Cane's suggestion that Bruce arrange to get bricks made in advance so that when the time came to construct buildings there would be no delay. Permission for the land to be reserved for the Pensioners was also obtained from the Governor. However it all came to an end with a rather pithy memo from the Surveyor General on 23 February 1855 "The land around St. Ronan's Well is already reserved for public use."<sup>37</sup> No further communication on this matter has been found.

The first direct reference to the well at *St Ronan's Well, York* appeared in a memo sent from the Acting Resident Magistrate (Lewis Bayly) at York in April 1858. Bayly wrote seeking retrospective permission to authorize the spending of 5 shillings to pay George Blake to clean out and purify St. Ronan's Well. He explained that he had taken this rather hasty decision as the teams using the roads experienced difficulty in obtaining water along the road at that time of the year.<sup>38</sup>

In May 1859, Bayly forwarded a rather odd request to the Surveyor General from a settler in the York district. The settler (unnamed) wanted to know if there was any land for sale near *St Ronan's Well, York*.<sup>39</sup> Roe passed the letter on to the Colonial Secretary accompanied by a tracing of the reserve. The tracing was very similar to the plan produced by Hillman in 1843 so it is highly likely that the tracing was made from this plan. Roe's covering letter to the Colonial Secretary noted that the reserve had been set aside "for the use of stock and teams frequenting the road, - the quantity of the land being fixed at 640 acres on account of its very poor sandy quality."<sup>40</sup> Despite an extensive search no response to either Roe or Bayly from the Colonial Secretary was found.

In February 1860, the York Road Party cleaned out St. Ronan's Well. In a memo from Henderson to the officer in charge of this group it was noted that a constable and four prisoners were sent from the York Road Party to clean out the well.<sup>41</sup> If a station had been established at *St Ronan's Well, York* at this stage it seems unlikely that a group from the Road Station would need to have

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<sup>35</sup> Bruce to Col. Sec. 20 Nov. 1854. SROWA Acc 36 Vol. 303 folio 185.

<sup>36</sup> Col. Sec. to Roe 23 Nov. 1854 SROWA Acc. 49 Vol 38 No. 876.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce to Col. Sec. 20 Feb. 1855 with memos added to this letter from the Governor and also from Roe dated 23 Feb. SROWA Acc. 36 Vol. 334 Folio 9920

<sup>38</sup> Acting Resident Magistrate at York to Col. Sec. 12 April 1858 SROWA Acc 36 Vol. 414 Folio 119.

<sup>39</sup> Acting Resident Magistrate at York to Surveyor General 2 May 1859 SROWA Acc 36 Vol. 439 Folio 287.

<sup>40</sup> Roe to Col. Sec. 5 May 1859, SROWA Acc. 36 Vol. 439 Folio 288.

<sup>41</sup> Outward correspondence from the Comptroller General, 23 Feb. 1860, SROWA Cons. 1156 C27 No. 1072.

been specially sent to the well for this purpose. At this stage it is not known where the York Road Party were based.

James Manning, in his capacity as Clerk of Works, did a tour of the Eastern Districts in April 1861 and he reported on a variety of works projects that were being carried out in the district at that time. He noted on his way past *St Ronan's Well, York* that there was only about 4 or 5 inches of water in the well, in a small place in the bottom and recommended that the well should be sunk deeper during dry weather. Capt. E. Grain, who took command of the Royal Engineers office in 1860<sup>42</sup>, noted in the margin of the report that Corporal East needed to organise convict labour to carry out this task.<sup>43</sup>

This work did not apparently take place as Bayly wrote to the Colonial Secretary in May 1862 complaining about the lack of water in *St Ronan's Well, York*. He further reiterated that during the summer months this was an ongoing problem for the teamsters using the road and despite the well being cleared out insufficient water was obtained. By this stage a road party appears to have been established at *St Ronan's Well, York* as Bayly suggested employing the men stationed at the well to dig a new well. Bayly noted that

some of the men I believe have been accustomed to this work in England there are also bricks on the land that would be useful in staying the sides I believe last year the Clerk of the Works selected a spot as likely to find water in.<sup>44</sup>

The letter was forwarded to Capt. Grain for comment and he agreed that the work was necessary and that as far back as February 1860 he had intended a new well to be dug at *St Ronan's Well, York* but in 1860 the Warder at the York Depot had cleaned out the old well instead. He noted that instructions for the construction of a new well would be sent again and Governor Hampton approved the work.<sup>45</sup> No orders or references for the construction of a new well at *St Ronan's Well, York* could be found in either the Colonial Secretary's correspondence or that of the Royal Engineers.

Mrs Millett, the wife of the Church of England pastor appointed to York in 1864, travelled from Perth to York during the summer of 1864. She stopped at *St Ronan's Well, York* and mentioned seeing "an obsolete brick-kiln which stood hard by."<sup>46</sup> As there is no reference to other buildings near the well, it would seem that the road station based near the well in 1862 had probably been one that utilised tents or makeshift huts rather than buildings constructed from more permanent materials.

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<sup>42</sup> The Convict Establishment was re-organised in 1861 when the public works component, or the Royal Engineers' design office, was removed from that of the Convict Establishment. Henderson remained in charge of the Convict Establishment until his departure in 1863. Grain took over the Royal Engineers' Office. (McNichol, pp. 114 – 115).

<sup>43</sup> Manning's Report to Grain 6 April 1861, SROWA Acc. 36 Vol. 475 Folio 83; McNicoll, p. 119.

<sup>44</sup> Resident Magistrate at York to Col. Sec. 3 May 1862 SROWA Acc 36 Vol. 504 Folio 98.

<sup>45</sup> Notes at the bottom of Bayly's letter. Grain's comments dated 6 May (SROWA Acc 36 Vol. 504 Folio 98). Hampton approved the work on the 7 May and sent a reply to Bayly indicating that Capt. Grain had issued orders for a new well to be dug. SROWA Acc 49 Vol. 44 No. 238.

<sup>46</sup> Millett, Mrs Edward, *An Australian Parsonage or, the Settler and the Savage in Western Australia*, facsimile edition UWA Press, Nedlands, 1980, p.48.

The Royal Engineers were recalled in 1861 and, together with the Sappers and Miners had left Western Australia by April 1862. The public works program was taken over by a civilian workforce using convict labour (supervised by warders), on many of the projects. Grain as commander of the Engineers handed over the Royal Engineers' design office to his successor in January 1863.<sup>47</sup>

Two watering troughs were constructed at the York Depot in December 1865 and sent out to *St Ronan's Well, York*. Additional ones were also to be produced for the well at Wootating.<sup>48</sup> However, these troughs which were constructed from planks, had become dried out and useless by the following March. Mr Burgess, honorary secretary to the York Agricultural Society, recommended that new troughs, made from trees about 20 to 30 feet long would probably last longer. His letter was forwarded to Jewell, Clerk of Works who agreed with him and ordered that the work should proceed.<sup>49</sup>

In 1890, the York Road Board wrote to the Lands Department requesting reserves be set aside along the York Road, from Greenmount eastwards, for water purposes. In response to this Reserve No. 2074, which lay 2 miles (3.2 km) to the east of *St Ronan's Well, York* was set aside for this purpose.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly in October 1892, *St Ronan's Well, York* was finally gazetted as a reserve. The gazettal notice stated that Reserve No. 2099, formerly known as Avon Loc. 44 at St. Ronan's Well, comprising 640 acres, was a C Class reserve for use as a public utility.<sup>51</sup>

In 1906, the York Road Board received an application from Mr G. Burrows to purchase Reserve No. 2099 and forwarded the request on to the Lands Department. Burrows had initially requested Reserve No. 2074 but the Board was unwilling to give this land up although they had no difficulty proposing the sale of land in St Ronan's Reserve provided 20 acres (8.09 hectares) were set aside as a water reserve. Memos attached to the file dealing with this matter noted (following a site inspection), that the land around the well was of poor quality and as the Road Board had no objection it was recommended that the reserve be reduced to 50 acres (20.23 hectares). Burrows was given the opportunity to bid for the land at auction.<sup>52</sup> The 1892 gazettal for St. Ronan's Well Reserve was cancelled and the Reserve was issued with a new number (10895) in September 1907. The gazettal carried the details that the land was 50 acres, was a C Class reserve and that it was a Historic site used for camping.<sup>53</sup>

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47 After the departure of the Engineers Grain remained in charge of a civilian office until his departure in 1863. the Royal Engineers' offices became part of the Public Works Department. McNicoll, pp. 114 – 115.

48 Resident Magistrate at York to Col. Sec. 9 Dec. 1865, SROWA Acc 36 Vol. 653 Folio 110. Wootating was also located on the York Road.

49 Burgess to Col. Sec. 7 March 1866, SROWA Acc 36 Vol. 584 Folio 17.

50 St. Ronan's Well SROWA Cons. 4080 Item 1989/3160v1

51 Government Gazette 20 Oct. 1892, p. 869.

52 Reserve near St. Ronan's Well (this file seems to have been confused with Cons. 4080 Item 1989/3160v1 and incorrectly named), SROWA Cons. 1569 Item 1890/2222

53 Government Gazette 13 Sept. 1907, p. 3124.

During the twentieth century the origins of *St Ronan's Well, York* appears to have been lost and 'tales' about the origins of the name and what the site was used for commenced. The first to pass on the 'origins' was a Mrs Pelloe who had apparently spoken to 'an old-timer' who said that Bishop Salvado had given the well its name. She also stated that the ruins of a mud prison and police quarters could still be seen around the vicinity of the well.<sup>54</sup>

A police station was never constructed at *St Ronan's Well, York*.<sup>55</sup> In 1862, following numerous requests from the public, land was set aside for a police station at The Lakes near The Travellers Rest Inn. A station was constructed at this site in 1864 but by 1868 it had deteriorated to such an extent that a new station had to be built in 1869. By December 1878 the police station had closed and was advertised to be let. The station was briefly re-commissioned in 1884 before closing permanently in February 1888.<sup>56</sup>

*St Ronan's Well, York* was classified by the National Trust in April 1980 and was permanently entered on the Register of the National Estate in September 1982. The documentation for the Register listing stated that the "stone work of the larger well is an example of Scottish dry wall construction" and that from

a height the remains of the foundations of five buildings (police quarters and cells) can be discerned and one of these would have been the cell where the bushranger Moondyne Joe was kept overnight when being taken to Perth in 1865.<sup>57</sup>

Aerial photographs were first taken in this area of Western Australia in 1949, however photographs dating from this time were not useable as the scale was too small. A lower run made in 1957 produced images that showed the reserve clearly. No foundations can be seen in these images despite the fact that the vegetation was extremely sparse, providing ideal viewing conditions. A dirt access track leading off the main road to the Wells (and then on to the north) was clearly visible and it was also possible to identify the stone well and its pool amongst a thick group of trees.<sup>58</sup>

*St Ronan's Well, York* was vested with the York Shire Council in 1963 and then with the WA National Parks and Reserves Association (WANPARA) in September 1981.<sup>59</sup> Since taking over the management of *St Ronan's Well, York* this organisation has embarked on a program of revegetation of native species with seed taken from the nearby St. Ronan's Nature Reserve. Much of the work has centred on rehabilitating the flora at the place. In 1987 a fire

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54 Pelloe, T. (Mrs) 'The York Road', in *Western Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, Vol. 1, part VI, 1929, p. 10

55 A search for a station at St. Ronan's Well was made in Pashley, A.R., *Policing Our State, a History of Police Stations and Police Officers in Western Australia 1829 – 1945*, EDUCANT, Cloverdale, 2000 but there was no entry for a station built at this place.

56 The Lakes Precinct (Place No. 17037) assessment prepared by F. Bush for the Heritage Council of Western Australia, April 2005.

57 Documentation for St. Ronans [sic] Well Nature Reserve, Place No. 10032, Register of the National Estate. Downloaded 30 April 2010 from [www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl](http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl). According to folk lore Moondyne Joe stayed (or was present) at numerous places, some of which had not been constructed until after his death. As there was no police station at St. Ronan's Well he did not stay in any of the cells. However it is possible that he might have stopped there for water, a lot of travellers did.

58 Aerial Photograph dated 1957 obtained from Landgate 9 April 2010.

59 Crown Reserves Index No. 10895, Battye Library.

destroyed the majority of the new plantings as well as older, pre-existing plants. A new program of planting commenced with seed collected from a variety of nearby locations, such as surrounding reserves and roadsides.<sup>60</sup>

Between 1980 and 1990 both wells were cleaned out and a portion of the stone well was rebuilt. Conservation work was carried out on the brick well although the documentation does not stipulate specifically what this conservation entailed. Picnic tables were also installed.<sup>61</sup>

The site was visited in 1992 by Jennifer Smith as part of an investigation of historic watering holes commissioned by the National Trust of Australia (WA). Smith identified an area of rubble on the eastern side of the access track into the reserve, the two wells and two areas of rubble containing scattered bricks to the north-west of the wells together with a shaped granite slab just to the south of these two areas.<sup>62</sup>

Interpretive signage was erected in 1997 close to the well and “at the top of the seep”.<sup>63</sup> Bollards were also installed to restrict vehicular access to a specific area near the well and also to prevent vandalism to the wells. A draft management plan was prepared by Penny Hussey in 2005. In conjunction with the Shire of York, WANPARA have developed a nature trail and developed a program of nature conservation.<sup>64</sup>

As part of the Heritage Council of Western Australia’s Conservation Incentive Program 2009/10, the Shire of York received funding to produce a Heritage Assessment of *St Ronan’s Well, York*. In 2010 *St Ronan’s Well, York* functions as a nature reserve that is open to the public.

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*St Ronan’s Well, York* comprises a granite lined well (c.1832) that has overflowed to form a kidney shaped pool that is lined with native sedges and native eucalypts; an adjacent smaller brick lined well (1862), an area that may possibly be the site of a structure (construction date and purpose unknown) and an area of discreet building rubble that may represent the scattered remains of a brick kiln (1862). The exact date of construction of the stone well is not known although it was definitely in place by 1858. The place was visited on 6 April 2010.

The site lies on the northern side of Great Southern Highway 16 km to the west of York. The surrounding country is pastureland or has been set aside as nature reserve. Access to the reserve is via a dirt track that crosses St. Ronan’s Creek approximately 200 metres from the entrance. The dirt track continues over the creek and winds around slightly to the north-east before terminating in a slightly circular car park ringed with timber bollards. A gap in

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60 Watson, Terri, ‘St Ronan’s Well Reserve Management Plan 2008 – 2013’, unpublished report prepared for the Shire of York, 2008, unpaginated.

61 Watson.

62 Smith, J., ‘Historic Watering Holes – Stage 2 The Old York Road, from Guildford to York, Western Australia’, unpublished report for the National Trust of Australia (WA), Centre for Prehistory, UWA, August 1992, p.52.

63 Watson.

64 Watson.

the bollards on the north-west side provides access to a fire trail that heads off to the northern side of the reserve. The land falls gently to the south towards the creek that lies close to the reserve's southern boundary. Vegetation consists of native species, most of which appear to be acacias together with small eucalypt species none of which appear to be very mature. Some picnic tables were visible in the scrub on the eastern side of the car park.

A slightly raised mound was located on the eastern side of the track, next to the edge of the road just to the south of the car park. The remains suggest a structure that is approximately rectangular, with walls oriented roughly north-south and east-west. A line of hard-packed earth that could be the remains of a rammed earth wall delineates the western wall, closest to the road. The northern wall is mostly composed of small rocks, a mix of granite and diorite. The eastern and southern walls are not particularly clear. A few pieces of soft-fired brick were also found in the general area. As the ground here is quite flat, and the soil comparatively sandy, the presence of the hard dirt, rocks and bricks is quite noticeable as being foreign in the landscape. An acacia bush is growing in the centre of the mound and there is a dead tree at the south-western corner. As the western wall is quite close to the dirt track it is in danger of being damaged by vehicles that stray slightly off the track. No artefacts were found in this general area. The structure lies approximately 20 metres to the south-east of the wells.

The granite lined well lies amongst a clustered grouping of mature eucalypts with an undergrowth of sedges on the western side of the dirt track. A large pool is soon visible on approaching this vegetation and it becomes evident that the vegetation lies around the edges of a pool that is roughly kidney shaped. A couple of the trees that line the edge of the pool have died. The stone well is located at the northern end of the pool and much of it is submerged. The northern end is lined with shaped granite rocks that form the walls of a circular well. The southern portion of the well is visible beneath the water. The well has a diameter of approximately 3.65m and was approximately 1.25m deep. Mature eucalypts around the northern and north-western edges have provided a measure of stability for the edges of the pool in this particular area. Water flows out of the pool at the south western end. The seepage area at this location is fairly marshy and numerous small bushes and trees have taken advantage of the moisture in this area and taken root. The presence of this pool, in this comparatively dry area has created a small oasis that is frequented by several species of birds and numerous insects. The granite stones appear to be in good condition.

The brick lined well is located 7.55 metres to the south-west of the pool. It is approximately 1.35m in diameter and covered with an open welded steel mesh that is welded to a rectangular steel frame. The bricks lining the well are soft-fired and a light buff colour. The water level lies approximately 530mm below the top course of bricks and the depth is estimated at over a metre deep. Five courses of brickwork are visible above the level of the water. The bricks on the southern side of the well have suffered some water erosion.



Smith's report<sup>65</sup> recorded two distinct clusters of brick to the north of the wells, together with a shaped granite slab. A large granite slab was located to the west of the wells, but the location did not seem to conform to that shown in Smith's plan. It is an isolated specimen and does not appear to indicate the presence of a structure in its current location. The two distinct brick clusters were also not found although a small cluster of soft-fired bricks and granite rocks were found to the north of the well. The bricks and rocks were loosely scattered around the base of a dead tree. The manner in which the debris was grouped suggested that someone had collected these materials together in an effort to tidy-up. The bricks were similar to those used in the construction of the brick wall.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Prior to the advent of water tanks and scheme water, wells were an integral component in colonial Western Australia. Public wells were dug at various locations along the main roads for the benefit of travellers and also stock and were heavily used. In 1835, Smythe altered the course of Dale's route to take advantage of a water source at Mahogany Creek. A well was later dug at this site and a reserve set aside for travellers<sup>66</sup> At the meeting held at York in 1838 to discuss improvements to the York Road one of the improvements mentioned included the construction of two additional wells along the road.<sup>67</sup> A public well was provided at The Lakes in 1859.<sup>68</sup>

A well had also been sunk by convicts on the Toodyay Road, half-way up the hill during the first half of 1853.<sup>69</sup>

The importance of wells is often forgotten today and this is reflected in the amount of information that has actually been collected on wells in Western Australia. A search of the Office of Heritage's database revealed a listing for 267 wells. Only three wells are entered on the Register of Heritage Places: *Coffee Pot & Waggrakine Well* (1872), *Railway Cottage Bluff Point (fmr)* & *Two Mile Well* (1886) and *Gnarlbine Soaks* (1896). The first two are associated with other features and only *Gnarlbine Soaks* is associated with providing water to road travellers. The search of the database was narrowed to cover wells constructed between 1830 and 1865 and information for 25 wells was returned. The majority of the wells were constructed between 1846 and the 1860s, *St Ronan's Well, York* was the only 1830s listing. Seven wells were listed as being of stone construction the remainder had no description making it difficult to determine the presence of brick wells in the remaining list. A couple of the wells were listed as being 'convict', but this description was included in the name rather than in the description of the well.

Some work has been completed on historic watering holes, however these sites were more specifically set aside for the movement of stock around the state. An early example of such a stock route was the Old North Road, a coastal route that was developed in the 1850s. The Old North Road is no

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<sup>65</sup> Smith, 1992.

<sup>66</sup> Elliot, p. 147

<sup>67</sup> Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal 15 September 1838.

<sup>68</sup> Government Gazette, 10 May 1859, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Du Cane's half yearly report to Henderson, in BBP, Vol. 13, 26.1.1854, p.198.

longer part of a transport route and many of the wells and watering holes established for this route are now in private hands.<sup>70</sup>

During the 1860s, a line of wells was developed in the east of the state in an effort to open up new pastoral country in what became the eastern wheat belt. Early explorers made use of aboriginal watering holes and during the 1860s surveyor Henry Hunt was sent out to do further explorations and locate wells that could be lined to provide water for exploration and pastoralists. Many of Hunt's wells have survived and represent this eastward expansion of settlement in Western Australia.<sup>71</sup>

The lack of information on wells has made it difficult to determine the representativeness of both the stone well and the brick well. Both types of wells were commonly constructed in Western Australia and there are numerous examples of stone and brick wells to be found around the countryside. Neither of the wells appears to display any unusual characteristics and so they are considered to be representative of their type.

In an effort to determine the location of road party stations in the Eastern Districts (as mentioned previously in section 13.1), an extensive study was made of the various documents that comprise the Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, the Comptroller General's correspondence and that of the Lands and Survey Department. In Du Cane's half yearly report for the six months ending 1853 he recorded that due to an increase in the numbers of men working in the road parties and that the nature of the work now required them to work in one place for some time, he had begun erecting houses for them and the officers with them. Stations had been erected on the York Road (see 13.1) and one on Toodyay Road, which was c.6 miles from Guildford. The Toodyay station would hold c.60 men and several mud buildings had been erected. On the same road c.4.5 miles from the Toodyay Depot he had also built a station for c.40 men with buildings of wattle and daub, but they had only been partially finished.<sup>72</sup>

From this it was determined that at least three Stations were established on the York Road, one at Greenmount, one that appears to have been briefly set up at *St Ronan's Well, York* and one near Cut Hill and two stations had been built on the Toodyay Road. The documentation for the Greenmount Depot, the Cut Hill Depot and the ones on Toodyay Road can be found in Du Cane's reports to Henderson, but no descriptions have been found for the one at *St Ronan's Well, York*. The length of time that the Station functioned is also not known.

The remains of the Toodyay Redhill road station and those of the Greenmount Station (near Bilgoman Well, Darlington) are the only ones

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<sup>70</sup> Connor, Mary, and Gibbs, Martin, 'Historic watering holes survey. The Old North Road – Wanneroo to Walkaway coastal stock route Western Australia', unpublished report for the National Trust of Australia (WA), 1994.

<sup>71</sup> Information obtained from several assessments on the Office of Heritage database, for example Gnarlbine Soaks (No. 556) Coolgardie.

<sup>72</sup> Du Cane's half yearly report to Henderson 25 Sept. 1854, BBP, Vol. 13, p. 146.

known to survive today. The Redhill station has been placed on the State Register.<sup>73</sup>

Du Cane's reports also mentioned wells. For the year ending December 1854, a well had been sunk at the Toodyay station. While his report for the first half of 1856 26 July 1856 noted that the watering places at St. Ronan's Well, Chauncey's Spring and The Lakes had been cleaned out and the approaches repaired.<sup>74</sup>

The York Road was one of the most important transport routes in the Colony from 1832 until the Perth - Albany Road was completed with the help of ticket-of-leave and convict labour in the 1850s. Prior to the completion of that road traffic between Albany and Perth went via York where the road then turned south passing through Beverley before turning south-west towards the Beaufort River and then on south to Albany.<sup>75</sup>

Documentary evidence suggests that a road station was set up temporarily at *St Ronan's Well, York* although the details are rather sketchy. Larger road stations were established at other locations along the York and Toodyay roads and these are much better documented.

Numerous wells have been dug along Western Australia's main colonial transport routes and several were dug along the York Road. However, *St Ronan's Well, York* is understood to be the oldest surviving well, that was dug to provide water for travellers on not only the York Road but also the oldest one to survive on a major transport route in Western Australia. Additionally it appears to be an uncommon example of a well and its associated reserve, surviving along a main road that is still easily accessible to modern road transport. It is also a rare example of an earlier stone well associated with a later well constructed by convicts.

#### **13. 4 KEY REFERENCES**

No key references.

#### **13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

To date little work has been done on how the construction and maintenance of roads was organised in Western Australia prior to the advent of the Roads Board Act and in addition the role that the Royal Engineers played in the construction of the state's roads and bridges is also largely unknown. Primary resources in the State Records Office appear to indicate that the much of the documentation that would have passed between the Comptroller General and the rest of his staff has not survived intact, although this will require further investigation. From the number of documents viewed while researching *St. Ronan's Well, York* it soon became apparent that settlers tendered to carry out maintenance work but whether they were then put in charge of the road parties is not known. Research into the location and

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<sup>73</sup> HCWA database, No. 3548 (Toodyay), information on the Greenmount Station obtained from Mundaring & Hills Historical Society files.

<sup>74</sup> Du Cane's half yearly report to Henderson 17 Jan. 1855, BBP, Vol. 1.3, p. 100; Du Cane's half yearly report to Henderson 26 July. 1856, BBP, Vol. 14.1, p.113.

<sup>75</sup> Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal, 23 Nov. 1839, p.187.

number of road stations is also rather indifferent. Further research may reveal the location of the station near Cut Hill.

Because the development of roads has been left largely unstudied the location of wells along the early transport routes is not well known and in general the historical documentation that goes with these early wells is not readily available. Few have been physically recorded. To gain a better appreciation of where *St Ronan's Well, York* sits in the development of road travel in Western Australia more work needs to be done in both areas of study.