



**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.

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman, Historian, and Laura Gray, Conservation Consultant, in October 2004, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.3.2. Fishing and whaling
- 5.1 Working in harsh conditions

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 106 Workers (incl. Aboriginal, convict)
- 305 Fishing & other maritime industry

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) forms a picturesque composition on the Ningaloo coast in Norwegian Bay. (Criterion 1.1)

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) has aesthetic value in the combination of rusted and concrete remains of built elements in a natural coastal landscape setting in the remote location of Norwegian Bay. The ruins are a dominant landmark on the site, visible from the ocean and the dune ridge on the mainland. (Criterion 1.3)

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) forms a cohesive cultural environment within the harsh natural land and seascape. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) was established by the Western Australian Whaling Company (a Norwegian based organisation) as part of the

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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

expansion of their activities in the southern hemisphere, and operated intermittently from 1915 to 1957. (Criterion 2.1)

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) was the only successful bay whaling station to operate in Western Australia in the first half of the twentieth century and represented the re-establishment of the industry in the State on a larger scale than previously practised. (Criterion 2.1)

The successful operation of *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)* in the 1950s encouraged the establishment of a number of shore stations around Australia at that time. (Criterion 2.1)

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) is important for its association with Norwegian and other Scandinavian whaling men, who were instrumental in re-establishing shore based whaling in Western Australia, three of whom are buried in the dunes near the place. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) has the potential to yield archaeological information regarding the construction and operation of a bay whaling station in Western Australia in the first half of the twentieth century. (Criterion 3.1)

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) demonstrates forty years of technological development and advancement in the operation of a whale processing station. (Criterion 3.1)

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) is the site of the only bay whaling station to operate successfully and over a long period in Western Australia during the first half of the twentieth century. (Criteria 5.1)

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) provides physical evidence of a way of life and an industry no longer practised. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) demonstrates the processing and habitation functions of early twentieth century shore based whaling activity. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) is in poor condition with all remaining elements rusted and weathered beyond restorative opportunities.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) no longer functions with its original purpose. The original function is highly unlikely to be reinstated. The place has a low degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) shows no evidence of changes to the remaining fabric. The place displays a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) comprises the site and extensive ruins and artefacts of a bay whaling station, guano factory and associated elements established in 1915 by the Norwegian owned Western Australian Whaling Company.

The two basic methods of whaling were pelagic (open sea) and bay, also called shore-based. In pelagic whaling, a large whaling vessel with two or three whaleboats spent considerable time out at sea and the whales caught were processed on board. In bay whaling, a shore station replaced the whaling vessel as the base and processing site. French and American whaling vessels hunted in Western Australia's southern waters from the 1830s and a number of small-scale bay whaling stations were established by colonists around that time, but lack of capital restricted greater development.¹

At the bay stations, the whale blubber was boiled down in a large cauldron, called a trypot, and the oil was skimmed off and placed in barrels. In the 19th century, the oil was largely used for lighting and cooking. Bay whalers hunted the humpback whale for oil and the southern right whale for the flexible whalebone in its mouth, which was used in corsets, umbrellas and hoop skirts. The humpback and right whales were smaller and slower moving than the baleen whales and could successfully be hunted from shore-launched whaleboats with hand harpoons.²

Foreign whaling vessels, which numbered up to 200 a year in the early 1840s, rapidly depleted the whale population along the West Australian coast and from the mid-nineteenth century. As mineral and vegetable oils began to replace whale oil, whaling became less profitable. The last commercial bay whaling in Western Australia was at Albany in 1978.³

In Norway, to offset the decline in profitability, whalers modernised the industry with steam-driven whaling vessels, powerful winches and explosive harpoons mounted on the bow of the boat, and targeted baleen whales. Oil extraction was undertaken by cooking blubber, bone and flesh in large pressure cookers instead of open trypots. Early in the twentieth century, there was a renewed demand for whale oil in the developing chemical and engineering industries. Whaling grounds in the northern hemisphere were crowded with competitors so the expanding Norwegian industry turned to the southern oceans.⁴

¹ Gibbs, Martin, *An Archaeological Conservation and Management Study of 19th Century Shore-Based Whaling Stations in Western Australia*, Perth, National Trust for the Australian Heritage Commission, 1994, p. 5.

² Gibbs, Martin, op cit; *The Australian Encyclopedia*, 4th ed, Sydney, Grolier, 1983, Vol. 11, pp. 7-10.

³ Gibbs, Martin, op cit, pp. 5-8.

⁴ Stanbury, Myra, *Norwegian Bay whaling station: An archaeological report*, WA Museum, Perth, 1985; Puls, Colin, *Norwegian whaling companies and Western Australian Government, 1911-1919*, BA honours thesis, UWA, 1970, pp. 10-33; Colwell, Max, *Whaling around Australia*, Rigby Limited, Adelaide, 1969, pp. 114-118.

In the 1911 report of the WA Department of Aborigines and Fisheries, the Chief Inspector of Fisheries stated:

It is with much pleasure I have to inform you that a revival, in the coastal waters of the state, of the long neglected whale-fishing industry is imminent. Several enquiries have been made on behalf of Norwegian firms as to the possibilities of Western Australian waters as a field of operations.⁵

Seven-year licences, dating from 1 January 1912, were granted to three Norwegian whaling companies to hunt whales along the West Australian Coast. The three companies were owned by one firm, to reduce competition. The Spermacet Whaling Company was licensed for the area from Esperance to Leeuwin, the Fremantle Whaling Company covered Leeuwin to Steep Point, and the Western Australian Whaling Company had the coastline from Steep Point to Cape Lambert, which included Point Cloates. The licences required the companies to establish factories for the treatment of whales with plant and machinery costing no less than £5,000, and to maintain the industry and the plant as a viable concern. The State saw benefits in the deal for additional revenue, employment opportunities and the produce of bone meal and fertiliser (referred to as guano) for the use of farmers. For the North West, it was seen as an opportunity to open up an area of WA that was still underdeveloped.⁶

The Fremantle Whaling Company did not do well in its allotted area and did not establish a shore station. It relinquished its licence in 1916 after whaling for only two seasons. The Spermacet Whaling Company assisted its sister company in the northwest whaling grounds in the 1912 and 1913 seasons before establishing a large shore station at Frenchman's Bay, near Albany, in 1914 at a cost of £20,000. Spermacet hunted the sperm whale, which avoided the coast and travelled alone. The size of the catch made the undertaking economically unfeasible and the Frenchman's Bay station was closed in December 1915.⁷

The Western Australian Whaling Company began operations in 1912 from Shark Bay, in company with the Spermacet Whaling Company, with six steam whalers and two factory ships. The locality proved unsuitable and the operation was moved to Maud's Landing, but the harbourage there was inadequate and there was an insufficient supply of fresh water. At the recommendation of Captain Gustav Bull, an experienced whaler who was in overall charge of the operation of the three companies, the Western Australian Whaling Company moved to Norwegian Bay. The bay provided a good harbour where ships were protected by a coral reef, although in bad weather it was almost impossible for a vessel to get out. There was an ample supply of fresh groundwater and the site was close to both the northern and southern migratory routes of the whales.⁸

Surveys of the bay were undertaken before construction began on the shore station, and during the intervening period the whalers and factory ships

⁵ Dept of Aborigines and Fisheries, *Annual Report*, 1911, p. 8.

⁶ Puls, Colin, pp. 10-33.

⁷ Puls, Colin, *op cit*, pp. 92-93.

⁸ Davies, Will, 'Recent whaling operations on the North West coast', 2 pages from Reports of work done at Point Cloates, 1932-1933, Item 15 of Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, chartered accountants, Records, 1898-1955, Battye private archives, MN 223, ACC 1500A. Davies was liquidator for the North West (Aust) Whaling Co Ltd.

continued to work the area with excellent results. Nine hundred whales were caught in 1913 and 2000 in 1914, yielding 76,300 barrels of oil with a value of £315,000. Full processing of the whale carcass was not possible on the factory ship, and no bone meal or guano was produced during this period.

In 1914, a Legislative Assembly select committee enquiry into the whaling industry was held and there was some concern expressed for the protection of breeding grounds. The committee concluded that there was 'a great future for this industry if carried on under proper conditions and with proper safeguards', but as there was little real information available regarding whale numbers or breeding habits the matter of 'proper conditions and safeguards' was in reality left in the hands of the whaling companies.⁹

In 1915, the Western Australian Whaling Company established its shore station at Norwegian Bay at a cost of about £75,000.¹⁰ Details regarding the site itself have not been located but the land would have been excised from the Ningaloo pastoral station lease.

The shore station comprised a 200-foot (50.6 metre) jetty, 115 ft x 83 ft two-level flensing deck, digesters, a tramway, guano factory for fertiliser and bone meal production, oil storage tanks, accommodation for the men and the manager, bakery, kitchen and dining rooms, general store and apothecary, and wells with windmills, pumps and pipelines. Jarrah poles for the jetty, and second hand rails and rolling stock for the tramway were obtained locally, but all other machinery was imported.¹¹ The tramway extended along the jetty and was used to move shipments of oil and guano for export and for the delivery of supplies including coal and equipment. The digesters, also referred to as cookers, were located beside the flensing deck. Bones and offal were processed in the guano factory.¹²

Those employed in whaling at the Station included general workers, cooks, waiters, a baker, butcher, carpenter, storekeeper and doctor, and an engineer and foreman who were Norwegian. Skilled Norwegian whalers were employed seasonally and included flensers, oil boilers and harpoon smiths. The whaleboat crews were also Norwegian. Permission had to be obtained from the Secretary of Home and Territories, a Commonwealth department, to bring out skilled Norwegian workers.¹³

During the operations at Norwegian Bay between 1913 and 1915, three men died and were buried in the sand dunes. A concrete cross marking the site is engraved with the words:

⁹ Colwell, Max, op cit, pp. 129-135; *Interim report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly appointed to enquire into the whaling industry*, Perth, Gov. Printer, 1915.

¹⁰ Davies, Will, op cit.

¹¹ Stanbury, Myra, op cit, p. 16 and photos of machinery remains stamped with manufacturer's name; Point Cloates whaling station block plan, 1915, updated 1929, Battye map stack 3/15/11.

¹² Stanbury, Myra, op cit, pp. 16; Point Cloates whaling station block plan, 1915, op cit; Stewart-Dawkins, R., *Point Cloates Whaling Station (WA): Its history 1913-1929: Latest specifications of buildings, plant and machinery*, p. 8, Item 12, Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, op cit.

¹³ Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, op cit, ACC 1497A.

HER UNDER HVILER - AKE RONNGREN, FPODT I SVERIGE DOD 1915 -
INGVALD HALVORSEN, FPODT 1893 I NORGE, DOD 1913 - GH NORDSTROM,
FPODT 1887 CVERIGE, DOD 1914 - HVIL I SREE.¹⁴

Translated, it reads: Here below at rest - Ake Ronngren, born in Sweden, died 1915 - Ingvald Halvorsen, born 1893 in Norway, died 1913 - GH Nordstrom, born 1887 in Sweden, died 1914.¹⁵

Ake Ronngren was a sailor who died of concussion. He was born at Herddings, Sweden and had been in Western Australia for less than a year. Gustaf Helmer Nordstrom died on 18 July 1915, aged 28. He was a Swedish sailor who drowned. Little is known of Norwegian Ingvald Halvorsen, who died at the age of 27, but he almost certainly worked at the whaling station in some capacity.¹⁶

In 1915, 1,500 whales were caught and processed at Norwegian Bay, yielding 30,000 barrels of oil for a return of £150,000. At the outbreak of World War One, the Company had one of its transport ships torpedoed, while the whaling steamers were being acquired for war use. The Company ceased whaling operations at the end of the 1915 season and did not return. The licence to hunt whales along the coast expired in 1919 and the Norwegian Bay Station was offered for sale.¹⁷

In 1921, a group of West Australians formed the North West (Aust) Whaling Company, with Sir Edward Wittenoom as chairman, and were granted a whale fishing licence at a cost of £50 a year.¹⁸ The Company purchased the Norwegian Bay Station and three whale chasers, the steamships *Fynd*, *Fin* and *Frey*. Whaling recommenced at Norwegian Bay in June 1922, but results were poor. The Company had insufficient working capital, only a limited knowledge of whaling and could not attract the services of competent Norwegian gunners. In 1923, two of the whale chasers, *Fynd* and *Fin*, were blown onto Fraser Island during a cyclone and only the *Fynd* was refloated. In 1924, the Company went into liquidation with losses of £24,000. Despite efforts by the liquidator to refloat the Company, the shareholders had lost faith in whaling and new capital was not forthcoming.¹⁹

In 1925, the Norwegian Bay Station was leased by a new Norwegian company, the Norwegian Bay Whaling Corporation, which was under the management of Captain Gustav Bull. The Norwegian Bay Whaling Corporation operated with four steam whalers, the *Fynd*, *Ingeborg*, *Hauken* and *Havorn*. In the four seasons from 1925 to 1928, 3,443 whales were processed, the catch increasing each year, for a gross return of over half a million pounds. Shareholders of the Norwegian company received their entire investment plus a 150 per cent dividend, while the royalties paid to the North

¹⁴ Coate, Yvonne & Kevin, *More Lonely Graves of Western Australia*, Hesperian Press, Perth, 2000, p. 160.

¹⁵ Coate, Yvonne & Kevin, op cit, p. 160.

¹⁶ Coate, Yvonne & Kevin, op cit, pp. 160, 287 & 338.

¹⁷ Stanbury, Myra, op cit, p. 16.

¹⁸ North West (Aust) Whaling Company Limited, Liquidator's report to shareholders, 9 May 1927, Item 15, Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, op cit.

¹⁹ Davies, Will, op cit; Stanbury, Myra, op cit, pp. 16-17.

West (Aust) Whaling Company under the lease agreement for the Station enabled that company to recover its losses.²⁰

During the period of operation, the Norwegian Bay Whaling Corporation was reported to have spent £20,000 on the Station to maintain it in proper working order and improve the mechanical efficiency for dealing with 1,000 whales a season. Improvements and replacements at this time included the construction of a new manager's house and the addition of 40 covered steam digesters.²¹

In 1928, the West Australian Government introduced a bill to regulate whaling, including imposing a royalty of £1 for each whale taken in West Australian waters and posting Government inspectors on the whaling vessels. The issue was hotly debated as it was feared the bill would drive away the only whaling company operating in the State. The bill was defeated, but in the event, the Norwegians did not operate from Norwegian Bay after 1928. They had developed larger factory ships with slipways in the stern, enabling whales to be pulled aboard for processing and doing away with the dangerous task of flensing a whale while it was tied alongside. They moved their operations to the waters of the Antarctic, where the returns from hunting sperm whales made the West Australian whaling grounds appear insignificant.²²

The Norwegian Bay Whaling Corporation left behind over £8,000 worth of materials and machinery at the Station, to keep the place operational. In 1929, a Sydney company, the Australian Whaling Company Limited was formed to purchase the assets of the North West (Aust) Whaling Company. The new Company was represented by the accounting firm of Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, who had managed the affairs of their predecessor. The Australian Whaling Company Limited hoped to re-establish the whaling industry in the State as soon as the market price for whale oil improved sufficiently to allow a profit to be made.²³ A list of the property at the Norwegian Bay Station at the time of purchase provides details of the establishment at that time.

The buildings comprised the guano shed (100 ft x 66 ft x 20 ft); a workshop for the blacksmith, carpenter and engineer (60 ft x 34 ft); the 6-room hospital and surgery, which had been the original manager's house (40 ft x 25 ft); a 6-room manager's house added in 1925-28; 10-room men's quarters (117 ft x 20 ft); foreman's quarters (50 ft x 28 ft); dining room and kitchen (50 ft x 75 ft); storeroom and bakehouse (40 ft x 35 ft); oil shed (24 ft x 16 ft); and powder house (8 ft square). The 'factory' area, comprising the flensing deck and digesters and was 120 ft x 100 ft x 15 ft. It was described by the Company liquidator as the 'cutting up-boiling down Factory with slips'. The buildings had either iron or timber frames, and were clad either with corrugated iron or, as in the case of the original manager's house, with reinforced lath and plaster.²⁴

²⁰ Stanbury, Myra, op cit, pp. 16-17.

²¹ North West (Aust) Whaling Company liquidator's report to shareholders, 15 November 1928, Item 43, Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, op cit.

²² Colwell, Max, op cit, pp. 138-140.

²³ Davies, Will, op cit.

²⁴ Stanbury, Myra, op cit, pp. 41-42; Stewart-Dawkins, R., op cit.

The three circular steel oil storage tanks measured 19.5 feet (5.9 metres) in height and 32 feet (9.7 metres) in diameter. They were mounted on foundations of cement-filled wooden barrels and had a capacity of about 100,000 gallons (455 kl) each. The extensive tramway system included turntables, 25 steel tip-wagons and 4 trucks. An overhead lighting system ran on poles from the Station to Point Hunter, 2.5 miles (4 km) to the south to provide lighted beacons for ships entering the Bay at night. Water was provided from wells, with the quality varying according to the depth of water in the well at the time.²⁵

Throughout the 1930s, the Australian Whaling Company Limited attempted to re-start operations at Norwegian Bay. Low oil prices in 1931-32 resulted in reduced whaling operations worldwide. Finding buyers for a sufficient amount of product was an issue as the Depression bit, but there were signs of a revival for the industry in 1932. In that year, the Company obtained the exclusive services of Antarctic explorer Sir Douglas Mawson, as consultant and advisor, to negotiate with overseas markets on their behalf. Assistance was also sought from the Government, but was not forthcoming. Sir Douglas' report the following year was not encouraging, confirming the unsettled state of the markets and the construction in Europe of efficient and economical oil burning whalers and factory ships for pelagic whaling in the Antarctic.²⁶

To keep the Station maintained and in operational condition, the Company employed a caretaker. Maurice MacBolt, former engineer at the Norwegian Bay Station under the North West (Aust) Whaling Company, was appointed. It is not clear when MacBolt took up the position, but files covering correspondence between himself and Will Davies, of accountants Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, date from July 1932. Maurice MacBolt occupied the Station with his wife and for several periods he had an assistant. In 1933, this was a man named Sternberg, and in 1934 it was young Philip Davies, son of Will Davies, who was pleased to find some sort of apprenticeship for his son during the Depression. MacBolt undertook considerable maintenance and repair work during his caretaker period, such as cleaning and painting machinery items, repairing the timbers of the flensing deck and jetty, replacing rusted guy wires, repairing brickwork around the hot air oven, and building a new oil store from discarded roofing iron.²⁷

In December 1937, Maurice MacBolt went into partnership with Frank Lefroy in the purchase of Ningaloo Station, but he continued to take care of the Norwegian Bay Station on a part-time basis. In November 1940, his services were discontinued as the Australian Whaling Company Limited finally conceded they would not be entering into the whaling industry.²⁸

Whaling ceased during the Second World War, and after the war the Norwegians were building factory ships with the latest equipment, able to

²⁵ Stanbury, Myra, op cit, pp. 23 & 26; Stewart-Dawkins, R., op cit.

²⁶ Australian Whaling Company Limited, Report to shareholders, 9 November 1932 & Mawson's report to the Company, 14-17 August 1933, Item 15, Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, op cit; 'Australian Whaling Co. Secretary's explanation', *West Australian*, 15 July 1932.

²⁷ Point Cloates Correspondence 1933-1936, Item 17 & 1936-1939, Item 16, and Reports of work done at Point Cloates, Item 15, Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, op cit.

²⁸ Point Cloates Correspondence 1933-1936, Item 17 & 1936-1939, Item 16, and Reports of work done at Point Cloates, Item 15, Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, op cit; Point Cloates lighthouse, National Archives file, Series PP828/1, 1975/75, 1936-1971.

accommodate 300 men. Whale oil had again become a valuable commodity, and in 1949 both the Commonwealth Government and a private company, Robert Moore and Associates, entered into the whaling industry in Australia.²⁹

The Whaling Industry Act, 1949 created the Australian Whaling Commission to manage the Commonwealth's interests. With the cost of a factory ship being between two and three million pounds, the Commission opted to build a shore station near a whale migratory route. A modern station was established at Babbage Island, Carnarvon in 1950 and experienced Norwegian whalers were employed under contract to train Australian workers.³⁰

Meanwhile, Robert Moore and Associates had acquired the Norwegian Bay Station and restored and modernised the equipment. Two ex-navy Fairmile launches were converted for use as whale catchers and renamed *Norwegian Bay* and *Point Cloates*. One hundred and five men were employed, all Australians except for two Norwegian gunners, Captain Larsen and Captain Jenns Anderson. In 1951, Moore and Associates were incorporated into a public company, the Nor-West Whaling Co Pty Ltd, and further additions were made to the plant. Swedish De Laval gluewater separators, driers for the production of whale meal, and new Hartmann and Kvaerner whale cookers were installed. A Cleaver-Brooks distiller unit, the first in Australia, was installed to distil salt or sea water for the boilers. The steam and electricity generating units were updated and workers' quarters and refrigeration facilities improved. Total expenditure on the operation was about £100,000.³¹

Quotas had been introduced by the West Australian government for post-war whaling, and the Norwegian Bay Station had a quota of 600 whales a year. The Nor-West Whaling Company was able to operate profitably within its quota as a result of improved practices and equipment. According to the Company's 1957 *Annual Report*, a larger percentage of oil per whale was being retrieved, more by-products produced, and flensing time for a whale had been reduced from five hours in 1949 to 30 minutes by 1955. In 1953, which was a record year for the Company at Norwegian Bay, 600 whales were processed for 5,100 tons of oil and 1,060 tons of whalemeal, but in most years the catch did not reach quota.³²

Babbage Island had a similar quota to the Norwegian Bay Station and also operated profitably. In the first half of the 1950s, as a result of the profitability of the West Australian stations, new whaling companies established stations at a number of locations around the Australian coast, including the Cheyne Beach whaling station at Frenchman Bay, Albany.³³

In 1955, the whale quota for the Nor-West Company was reduced to 500. In 1956, the Commonwealth decided to sell the Babbage Island station, complete with quota, to finance the development of an Australian fishing industry. The Nor-West Whaling Company purchased the Babbage Island station, which was located about 200 miles south of Norwegian Bay, and in 1957, moved its entire whaling operation to the place. Most of the new

29 Colwell, Max, op cit, pp. 146-147.

30 Colwell, Max, op cit, pp. 152-155.

31 Colwell, Max, op cit, p. 148; Nor-West Whaling Company Ltd, *Annual Report*, 1957, [pp. 3-6].

32 Nor-West Whaling Company Ltd, *Annual Report*, 1957, [pp. 4-6].

33 Colwell, Max, op cit, pp. 152-155.

equipment and machinery at Norwegian Bay was relocated to Babbage Island, but the structures and much of the older equipment were abandoned and quickly fell into disrepair in the harsh environment.³⁴ The machinery at *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)* was stripped of valuable elements, and timber and iron and anything else of use was salvaged by the nearby pastoral stations.³⁵

While bay whaling of humpbacks ended in 1964, it did not signal the end for all shore whaling stations as the Cheynes Beach station continued to operate. The difference here was that the Cheynes Beach company was hunting sperm whales out at sea, but processing them at the shore station. The location of the station on the edge of the southern oceans made this possible. Cheynes Beach whaling station operated until 1978, finally closing due to world wide environmental pressure aimed at stopping the slaughter of whales.³⁶

In 1982, a group of post-graduate maritime archaeology students and members of the Maritime Archaeological Association of WA undertook an archaeological survey of *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)*, providing considerable information on the operation of the place and the equipment and machinery located there.³⁷ The 2004 site inspection for this assessment revealed considerable further deterioration of *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)* since the survey was undertaken. Of particular note, the large oil storage tanks, which were still standing in 1982, have collapsed.³⁸

In 2004, the site of *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)* is included in two parcels of land: Lyndon Location 136, which is part of the Ningaloo Station pastoral lease held by Bettye and Noel Lefroy and Australian Wildlife Conservancy, and Lyndon Location 144, which is a strip of land extending 40 metres above high tide mark along the shoreline and being part of the Ningaloo Marine Park, Reserve 40079, gazetted in 1987.³⁹

In 2004, *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)* continues to occupy the site as a scattered and deteriorating whaling station ruin.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) is located in Norwegian Bay, on the Ningaloo coast of North West Cape, 1200 kilometres north of Perth. It is only accessible by four wheel drive vehicle, off a track 10 kilometres north of Ningaloo Homestead, which is 30 kilometres west along Ningaloo Road from the turnoff on Carnarvon-Exmouth Road, 100 kilometres south of Exmouth. The site is bounded by a dune ridge to the east, and there is a low dune shore ridge along the west coastal side of the site. Sand tracks provide access to the site through the dunes at the south east and skirt the site mostly to the east, sweeping around to the bay across the north of the site.

³⁴ Colwell, Max, op cit, pp. 156-162; Nor-West Whaling Company Ltd, *Annual Report*, 1957, [pp. 6, 10-11].

³⁵ Stanbury, Myra, op cit.

³⁶ McIlroy, Jack, *Nineteenth Century Bay Whaling Stations in Western Australia*, J. McIlroy, Perth, 1987, p. 120.

³⁷ Stanbury, Myra, op cit, pp. 9-11.

³⁸ Physical evidence.

³⁹ Land Record, Vol. 3123 Fol. 687 for Reserve 40079; Reserves Index, Reserve 40079 & Country Lease No. 29/1977.

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) comprises a group of rusted and other elements located on the shoreline of Norwegian Bay. The elements include; three oil storage tanks, approximately 15 digesters, 3 discernable boilers, 10 or so square oil cleaning tanks, three winches, jetty shoring and structure, concrete remains of the jetty, retaining wall and slabs, a block mounted engine, pulley car, and various other machinery, equipment and building remnants. A *Zamia* palm is the only remnant planting, and further to the south east, approximately 500 metres, a concrete headstone commemorates the grave sites of three people.

The shoreline of Norwegian Bay is northwest - southeast in alignment. Remnants of *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)* are scattered along the shoreline for approximately 300 metres. The area covered by the remnants on the north east side of the shore dunes corresponds with the shore remains and extends 100 metres or so away from the shore, with the oil storage tanks further to the north east and the individual elements further east (*Zamia* palm) and south east (grave headstone) beyond the main group of remnants.

Starting at the track entry onto the beach, looking south east along the shoreline of the bay, there are a number of remnants on the beach, and in the water, with the shoreline remnant area defined by a low sand dune ridge, approximately 15 metres north east of, and parallel with, the waters edge. Immediately south of the beach access entry point are three rusted digesters, laying on their sides in various depths of sand. The steel riveted sides of the circular digesters are clearly evident. Closer to the shore and south of the three digesters are the remains of the winches at the jetty (per 1915 plan). The rusted winch remains are bolted on their concrete mounting blocks, some of which have been dislodged from their original positions. There are three winch assemblies side-by-side, parallel with the shoreline, and sections of concrete block remains extend along that alignment, predominantly south of the winches. It is likely those remains are remnants of the retaining wall that extended south from the jetty (per 1915 plan).

A further 10.0 metres south of the line of concrete block remains is a 1.0 metre square element constructed of brick perimeter walls, located against the base of the dune. Several metres south of the brick remains are the remnants of steel shoring and angled steel framework that is likely the remains of the jetty.

There are various steel and concrete and some timber elements, associated with the jetty and the flensing deck, evident below the surface of the water beyond the shoreline.

South of the jetty remains is a line of concrete stumps along the base of the dune, and one closer to shore. It is possible the stumps are the remains of the manager's house (per 1915 plan). Parallel with the stumps, on the shoreline is a row of almost buried circular steel drums, which may be the remains of the oil receiving tanks (per 1982 plan). There are no further remains evident on the beach.

Crossing the beach dune at the south point of the beach remnants, and progressing northwards through the site, the first element encountered is the remains of a building, likely to be the north wall of the kitchen and dining room

(per 1915 plan), as there are the rusted fronts of two stoves side by side, but no other discernable identifying elements.

Within the ridge sands is a large machinery element comprising a number of riveted circular plates, and nearby is a rusted square oil receiving tank.

Further north and north east, the remnants of the site are more ad hoc and spread out, with digesters scattered throughout, mostly laying on their sides, although some still vertical. At the south end there are three boilers also lying on their sides. The boilers are riveted steel with conical steel tops. Small oval openings with brick lined interiors evidence the firebox at the base of the boilers (when vertical). A solitary rusted engine remains in situ on a concrete mounting block, amongst other scattered rusted debris. The digesters are circular cylinders with two sections of riveted steel around the height of the girth. The base is slightly convex, as is the top with a central separate raised section. A number of square steel oil clearing tanks remain in an ad hoc group at the north end of the site amidst various unidentified rusted, timber and concrete slab elements. A winch assembly remains in situ on the edge of a large concrete slab, at the north end. The slab also evidences the remains of several block mounts although no equipment remains in those locations.

On the northeast side of the access track, separate from the main area of remains, are the three oil storage tanks. Aligned north south, each of the three tanks is mounted on concrete stumps. The riveted plates of steel that comprise the large circular tanks are constructed as for stretcher bond brickwork with each alternate row aligned. The walls of the tanks have collapsed. There are machinery and equipment remnants along the east side of the tanks and at the south of a junction in the access track.

East of the access track, a *Zamia* palm remains as the only obvious introduced planting at the site. On the eastern outskirts of the site various remnants of corrugated iron and other buildings elements, but none are specific enough to identify any sites of buildings. There are also several piles of rubbish and/or bottles.

Approximately 500 metres south east of the site, at the base of the sand dune ridge, is a single grave headstone commemorating three people. The headstone is a simple formed concrete cross with names, dates and details carved into the concrete. Some of the carving is illegible, but three names are located left centre and right of the horizontal element of the cross, and each has a date of death (DOD) and other details that are not entirely legible.

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) is in poor condition with all remaining elements rusted beyond restorative opportunities. The original function is highly unlikely to be reinstated, and although the site presents interpretive opportunities, it has a low degree of integrity. There is no evidence of changes to the remaining fabric. *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)* displays a high degree of authenticity.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The west and south coasts of Western Australia had a number of bay whaling operations in the nineteenth century, only one of which had extensive buildings or other structures. Most utilised natural elements, such as the flat granite shelves at the water's edge that were used as flensing decks at Two

Peoples Bay and Whaling Cove, near Albany. Other nineteenth century whaling station sites located along the State's coastline include: Whalers Bay, Malus Islands (1870s, two double tryworks and possible domestic fireplace); Port Gregory (scatter of bricks, artefacts and worked limestone); *Whaling Station (fmr), Cheyne Beach*, Albany (1846-1869, archaeological site, artefacts and structural remains including whalebone floor, RHP P1796), and Bathers Beach, Fremantle, in front of the tunnel, where excavations have revealed substantial structural material, being the remains of a permanent and elaborate whaling station, which included a two-storey building used by the convict establishment in the early 1850s. The Fremantle whaling station operated from 1837 to 1850.⁴⁰

Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins) and the Norwegian whaling station established at Frenchman's Bay (1914 to 1916) were the only such places in the State in the first half of the twentieth century. At Frenchman's Bay, the footings and part of the support posts of an extensive deck and slipway are located. Much of the machinery and plant from this station was removed and the timbers salvaged at the end of World War One.⁴¹ *Norwegian Bay Whaling Station (ruins)* was the only bay whaling station in the first half of the twentieth century to operate successfully over a long period of time.

The Babbage Island Station (1950 to 1964) and the Cheyne Beach Whaling Station at Albany (1950 to 1978) were the only whaling stations established in the State in the second half of the twentieth century. (Note: this is not the same location as the nineteenth century bay whaling site of *Whaling Station (fmr) Cheyne Beach*.) This station has survived intact and is now a tourist attraction called 'Whaleworld' (RHP, P3644). Babbage Island Station was converted for use as a prawn processing factory when bay whaling ended and it continues in this function.⁴²

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

Puls, Colin, *Norwegian whaling companies and Western Australian Government, 1911-1919*, BA honours thesis, UWA, 1970.

Stanbury, Myra, *Norwegian Bay whaling station: An archaeological report*, WA Museum, Perth, 1985.

Ford, Rhodes, Foulkes & Co, chartered accountants, Records 1898-1955, Battye private archives, MN 223, as referenced.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

⁴⁰ Gibbs, Martin, op cit; McIlroy, Jack, op cit.

⁴¹ Dept of Maritime Archaeology, WA Maritime Museum, *Norwegian Whaling Station Frenchman Bay: Maritime Heritage Site Inspection Report*, 1994.

⁴² HCWA assessment documentation 'Whaling Station, Cheyne Beach', place 1796; Hocking Planning & Architecture, *Shire of Carnarvon Municipal Heritage Inventory*, 1995.