HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

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

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 8.1 Organising recreation
- 8.2 Going to the beach

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 405 Sport, recreation and entertainment

11. 1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Cottesloe Beach Pylon contributes to the beach setting by its landmark quality. (Criterion 1.3)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Cottesloe Beach Pylon is associated with the use of Cottesloe Beach as one of the most popular recreation and swimming beaches in Perth and in Western Australia as a whole from the 1880s and 1890s through to the present day (in 2002). (Criterion 2.1)

Cottesloe Beach Pylon formed part of the construction undertaken for a shark proof enclosure at Cottesloe, although this was never completed. This enclosure, together with the jetty (1904/1906; 1935) and the beach pavillion (1935), was part of a scheme developed in the late 1920s and 1930s to ensure the continuing popularity of Cottesloe Beach. (Criterion 2.2)

Cottesloe Beach Pylon has associations with John Godsell Foreman, who, as the Town of Claremont town clerk/engineer, was responsible for the development of the scheme for the shark proof enclosure. His role in the saga of the construction of the enclosure led to the venture becoming locally known as 'Foreman's Folly'. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Cottesloe Beach Pylon has the potential to yield information in regard to the design and construction techniques for shark proof enclosures.

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* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* , Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Cottesloe Beach Pylon is valued by the local community as a reminder of past infrastructure, including the jetty and the original bathing pavillion, located at Cottesloe Beach and for its contribution to the beach as a distinctive landmark and for its use as a diving platform. (Criterion 4.1)

As a well-known icon for visitors to Cottesloe Beach, who travel from across the state and Australia, *Cottesloe Beach Pylon* contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Cottesloe Beach Pylon is the only remaining element of what was to have been a shark proof enclosure off a Western Australian beach. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Cottesloe Beach Pylon is representative of measures taken against shark attack in the metropolitan area in the early twentieth century. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Cottesloe Beach Pylon appears to be in fair to poor condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

As a remnant of attempts to construct a shark proof area, *Cottesloe Beach Pylon* has a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Cottesloe Beach Pylon has a moderate degree of authenticity. The concrete mast section was replaced in 1996 after storm damage washed away the original mast.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Heritage Council staff from data supplied by the Town of Cottesloe.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Cottesloe Beach Pylon is a concrete pylon constructed by the Municipality of Cottesloe in 1936 as the north-west corner support for netting to create a shark proof enclosure, a project that was never completed. The only remaining evidence of this unsuccessful venture, the pylon, is situated in the Indian Ocean about 80 metres offshore from Cottesloe Beach (High Water Mark) in line with John Street.

Cottesloe was named in 1886 and soon became a gathering point for the population of Perth during the warmer months due to its excellent beach situated conveniently close to a railway station. The wealthy purchased land and built imposing residences there, while boarding houses and tearooms catered for the summer visitors. Over the ensuing four decades, it became one of the best known and most popular of Perth's coastal resort towns.

The lavish beach facilities that attracted crowds included a jetty first constructed by Aitken and Law in 1904, then rebuilt in 1906 after storm damage. Extending out in line with Forrest Street, the jetty featured a wide promenade with a rotunda out over the water where a band played on Sundays and various other evenings. The pleasure steamer, *Zephyr*, used to berth at the jetty on its way to Rottnest from Fremantle. North of the jetty and central to the main beach, a magnificent bathing pavillion was constructed in 1929. In the 1930s, tourist posters proclaimed, 'Cottesloe never palls whether you come for a day, a year or a life.'[1]

A tragedy at Cottesloe in 1925, when Simeon Ettleson was attacked and killed by a shark, may have influenced proposals to construct a shark proof enclosure. In January 1933, the Cottesloe Municipal Council received an application from the 'Cottesloe Shark-Proof Swimming Pool Co. Ltd.' for the lease of an area south of the jetty for this purpose. Other metropolitan beaches were vying for patronage and there was recognition amongst councillors that Cottesloe needed to stay competitive and safe to ensure the profitable running of the pavillion. Nevertheless, the council had to reply that it had no authority to grant such a lease.[2] Subsequently, in August 1934, John Foreman, Cottesloe's town clerk/engineer, submitted a special report with four recommendations designed to increase the popularity of Cottesloe Beach. These included repairs and an extension to the jetty, the provision of changing sheds, building a promenade from the main beach to the Eric Street beach, and the construction of a shark proof enclosure.[3]

John Godsell Foreman was to play a prominent part in the saga of the construction of the shark proof enclosure, to the extent that the venture would become known locally as 'Foreman's Folly'. Born in Kalgoorlie in 1904 and educated at Modern School, Foreman spent some years in the RAAF and the RAF before returning to WA in 1927. After experience in both the Fremantle and Perth Roads Boards, he had accepted the position at Cottesloe in January 1932 aged 28, and was probably the youngest town clerk in WA.[4]

The Cottesloe Council accepted Foreman's specifications and estimates, and a loan was raised to allow the works to proceed.[5] Foreman's specifications took into consideration that the shark proof enclosure would have to be of 'sufficient strength in the netting supports to overcome wave action'.[6] The existing jetty was to form the southern boundary of the enclosure with its piles acting as the support for the cables and netting. The cables holding the netting on the west and north sides of the enclosure were to be supported by a number of concrete pylons: one located at the north-western corner 80

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1 Erickson & Taylor with Philip Griffiths 'Town of Cottesloe Municipal Heritage Inventory', Record no. 248.

2 Adamson, Pat 'Cottesloe's Solitary Pylon' in 'The Cottesloe Society Newsletter', Vol. 4, No. 1, March 1995, pp.4 & 5. For example: By the 1910s, the sea baths at Busselton Jetty were reported to be 'secure against the intrusion of sharks and other sea monsters.' (RICH Students, K. Blair, N. Edgecombe, S. Keane, A. Nancarrow, J. Roberts, & L. Waker, 'Busselton Jetty', draft heritage assessment, May 2002, p. 14.)

3 Municipality of Cottesloe, Minutes of Meeting 8 August 1934.

4 *Daily News* 27 January 1934.

5 Municipality of Cottesloe, Minutes of Meeting 8 August 1934; Municipality of Cottesloe, Minutes of Meeting 16 August 1934; Municipality of Cottesloe, Minutes of Meeting, 12 September 1934.

6 Municipality of Cottesloe, Minutes of Meeting 8 August 1934.

yards from the mean high water mark; two midway along the western boundary; and, one midway along the northern boundary.[7]

Each concrete pylon was to be a height of 15 feet from bedrock level, thereby ensuring a height of 8 feet at low tide. The base of the pylon was specified as 8 feet in diameter, moving up to a diameter of 5 feet at the top.[8] Foreman proposed that each of the pylons would have steps and a springboard for the enjoyment of beachgoers, and that floodlights would also be erected to allow night swimming.[9] It was estimated that the total cost of the shark proof enclosure would be £1,600.[10]

At the meeting of the Cottesloe Council on 12 September 1934 it was announced that the loan for the cost of the entire beach improvements had been arranged. It was decided that the tender for the construction of the shark proof enclosure would be offered immediately to allow work to begin should weather permit.[11]

The timber moulds for the concrete towers or pylons are said to have taken approximately one month to build. Each individual mould incorporated steel reinforcement so that when they were placed into position on the seabed the concrete could be poured directly into the mould.[12] Prior to their placement, cofferdams (water tight enclosures of inter-locking sheeting) were to be constructed in the ocean and then dredged of water and sand down to the bedrock level.[13] Work began on the installation of the first cofferdams near the jetty in October 1934. However, as had been foreseen by Council, weather conditions impacted on the work schedule, as did the fragile condition of the jetty itself. Work was suspended on the enclosure project until February 1935, and attention turned to the reconstruction of the jetty, which was later completed in December 1935.[14]

An attempt was made by three Councillors to put a stop to the project altogether, but the motion was defeated 11 votes to 2 at the Council's meeting on 30 January 1935.[15]

On 27 March 1935, the first of the cofferdams for the shark proof enclosure was successfully positioned adjoining the jetty, into a 6 feet deep hole that had been blasted into the bedrock.[16] The concrete was poured into the mould by 10 April, in an operation that took just over 24 hours. The mould was later removed leaving the concrete pylon in place.[17]

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7 Ibid. It was planned cables and nets would be detached during the winter storms, but of a strength to be able to withstand the summer season. (Ibid.)

8 Municipality of Cottesloe, Minutes of Meeting 8 August 1934. For detailed information on the specifications for the construction of the towers (pylons) and netting see Municipality of Cottesloe, proposed Loan No. 13 for £5,250, Specifications for Proposed Works & Estimates of Costs Thereof.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Municipality of Cottesloe, Minutes of Meeting 12 September 1934.

12 'Cottesloe's Solitary Pylon', op. cit., p. 6.

13 Ibid, p. 6.

14 Ibid, pp. 6 – 7; 'Cottesloe Shark Proof Pool' in Municipality of Cottesloe, *Civic Centre News*, 1989, p. 10.

15 'Cottesloe's Solitary Pylon', op. cit., p. 7.

16 *The West Australian*, 2/3/1935, in 'Cottesloe's Solitary Pylon', op. cit., p. 7.

17 'Cottesloe's Solitary Pylon', op. cit., p. 7. It is interesting to note that it was eventually found that this pylon had been erected 20 feet further along the jetty than specified, which, had the enclosure been completed, would have resulted in an odd shape.

The Cottesloe Council was informed that the cost of completion of this pylon had been twice that of the estimation, being £260. This meant that the total cost of the enclosure would be much higher than had been anticipated, but that some of additional funding needed would be found from the surplus associated with the work to the jetty.[18]

Following completion of the first pylon, it was proposed that work being immediately on the northern pylon. Initial plans were deferred however due to bad weather.[19]

In August 1935, Foreman put forward plans for a variation to the specifications of the enclosure's construction. He recommended that, in the place of the concrete pylons planned at midway points along the western boundary, an African hard wood called 'turpentine' could be used to construct three dolphins as cable supports. (Foreman had been advised by the Queensland Forestry Department that the timber would be immune from termite attacks.)[20] Given that the use of timber would expedite the timeframe for the project, the Council agreed to the variation.[21]

Weather continued to cause delays up to December 1935. In the intervening period, the two shore anchors for the cables were installed at the John Street and Forrest Street ramps. By January 1936, the first timber pile had been put into position and a working platform was extended to the site of the northern pylon.[22]

Although it was stated that the second concrete pylon (*Cottesloe Beach Pylon*) would be completed in two weeks, work progressed steadily during the months of February and March. Construction of *Cottesloe Beach Pylon* was finished by 1 April 1936.[23] At its base in the bedrock, the pylon was said to have been approximately 12 foot 6 inches in diameter and estimated to weigh 60 tons. The cofferdam and mould were left in place until the end of April to allow the proper curing of the concrete. By this time, the third timber pile had been erected and all that was required to finish the project was the installation of the cables and netting.[24]

However, the Cottesloe Beach shark proof enclosure was never completed. On the night of 29 May 1936 a storm caused substantial damaged to the built structures. The first pylon was dislodged and had to be removed by Council, and the timber piles were swept away by heavy seas. Foreman suggested that the matter of the enclosure's reconstruction be deferred until it was determined what affect the winter storms would have on the remaining pylon.[25]

Foreman sought advice from consultant Mr. H. Bennett, a retired engineer of the Harbours and Rivers Branch of the Public Works Department, with regard to the project. In his report of 1937, Bennett recommended three different schemes for the enclosure's reconstruction and, further to this, believed that the remaining pylon would be dislodged sooner or later.[26]

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18 Ibid, p. 7.

19 Ibid, pp. 7 – 8.

20 Ibid, p. 8. A dolphin is the name of a pile used to moor boats.

21 Ibid, p. 8.

22 Ibid, p. 8.

23 Ibid, pp. 8 – 9.

24 Ibid, p. 9.

25 Ibid, p. 9.

26 Ibid, pp. 9 – 10.

The Council's decision on the matter of the shark proof enclosure was deferred in January and February 1937, before being referred to the Beach and Works Committee for its consideration. However, there is no evidence to indicate that the matter was ever dealt with again and it appears to have disappeared into obscurity.[27]

Cottesloe Beach was considered to be the most popular beach in Western Australia in the first half of the twentieth century: 'the mini Brighton of the West'.[28] The jetty (1904/1906; 1935) and the pavillion (1929) were an integral part of life at the beach during this period, not only for beachgoers but they, together with the Cottesloe foreshore strip, were part of the nightlife for local residents of the western suburbs.[29] Although the jetty and the pavillion as well as other entertainment venues along the foreshore fell into disuse and disrepair from the 1950s to the 1970s, Cottesloe Beach continued to be one of Perth's and the State's most popular swimming areas. As a feature of the beach, *Cottesloe Beach Pylon* became a popular diving platform for beachgoers.[30]

A severe storm on the night of 7 June 1995 broke off the top section of the northern pylon. A new spire was fitted to *Cottesloe Beach Pylon* on 10 December 1996.[31]

Diving from *Cottesloe Beach Pylon* is now illegal, as the Town of Cottesloe was unable to secure public liability insurance for any injury sustained by this activity. A stainless steel cone has been attached to the spire to prevent access to the peak and to prevent the addition of car tyres as elevated diving platforms. Council has also removed protruding metal lugs, which provided an anchor point for climbing ropes, and staff regularly remove new ropes as they appear.[32]

In 2002, *Cottesloe Beach Pylon* is a distinctive landmark on Cottesloe Beach and is used by swimmers as a diving platform.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Cottesloe Beach Pylon is a concrete pylon constructed in 1936 as the north-west corner support for shark proof netting, a project that was never completed. The only remaining evidence of the project, the pylon, is situated in the Indian Ocean about 80 metres offshore from Cottesloe Beach (High Water Mark) in line with John Street.

The pylon takes the form of a 2.5 metre (8 ft) diameter concrete base with an estimated weight of some 63 tonnes, keyed into the bedrock. Where it protrudes from the ocean the base is stepped down to about 2 metres diameter and rises approximately 2 metres above mean sea level. This base supports a concrete mast about 3 metres in height, the latter a recent replacement after storms in June 1995 washed away the original.

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27 Ibid, p. 10.

28 Marchant James, R., *The Heritage of Pines: A History of Cottesloe*, Town of Cottesloe, 1977, p. 24.

29 Erickson & Taylor with Philip Griffiths, Town of Cottesloe Municipal Inventory, 1995, Record No. 248.

30 Marchant James, op. cit., pp. 28 – 29; Information provided by the Town of Cottesloe, in HCWA File: P7984.

31 Information provided by the Town of Cottesloe, in HCWA File: P7984.

32 Malcolm Doig, A/ Chief Executive Officer, Town of Cottesloe, in a letter to HCWA, 15 January 2003, in HCWA File P7984

The structure appears to be in fair condition. However, the condition of the point of attachment to the underlying reef is unknown. Also, the structure is constructed of concrete of uncertain standard, which was mixed on site, and the diameter of the base has been significantly eroded by the sea. Recent examinations have revealed substantial exfoliation of concrete due to corrosion and the failure of the original reinforcement. The extent and adequacy of the steel reinforcement is unknown.[33]

13. 3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Shark proof enclosures were constructed off a number of coastal and swan river jetties in the Perth metropolitan area in the early twentieth century. Others known to have been constructed include shark proof enclosures South Fremantle, Busselton and Fremantle.

The shark proof enclosure in South Fremantle was constructed by 1928 at South Beach. The netting was strung between two jetties and was supported by approximately ten poles upon which a promenade deck was constructed. A diving platform extended from the promenade. The enclosure is believed to have been extant until the 1950s.[34]

A shark proof enclosure was attached to the Busselton Jetty early in the twentieth century. Sea baths were added to the jetty in 1911, which were deemed 'the finest bathing area in the State', as they were 'secure against the intrusion of sharks and other sea monsters'. The length of the baths along the original jetty frontage was 100m with the piling between the two jetties 4m deep and measuring 150m wide. The baths also included a platform (16.6m in length and 4.3m in width) on the jetty that accommodated a number of spacious dressing compartments. It is not known when the sea bath was removed.[35]

Shark-proof Municipal Sea Baths were constructed at Fremantle in the 1890s, between Long Jetty and South Jetty. These were demolished in 1917, and the site is now Fishing Boat Harbour's northern sea wall.[36]

There are heritage listed sea baths in other States, particularly New South Wales, although they appear to be structures more like tidal swimming pools than net-enclosed ocean areas. Shark-proofing was provided by means of timber, metal, or more recently plastic bars and rods. Sea baths of this nature are located at Bondi Beach, Sydney (constructed in the 1920s; Register of National Estate - RNE), Manly Beach, Sydney (date not given; RNE) Middle Brighton Municipal Baths, Vic (1936; RNE), Northbridge Pool, NSW (1924; RNE) and Merthon, Sorrento, Victoria (date not given; RNE).

Eastern Beach Bathing Complex, Geelong (1928-1939; Victorian Heritage Register), includes a bathing complex, constructed to the design of I. McDonald in 1937, featuring a landmark semi-circular shark-proof enclosure and promenade. The promenade is formed by a two level braced pier structure supported on 10in diameter yellow stringy bark piles, with blue gum superstructure, red gum decking, handrails and underneath, a fence of bronze shark proofing bars.

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33 ibid.

34 Conversation with City of Fremantle Local Studies Librarian 20/2/2003

35 HCWA draft assessment for P0423 *Busselton Jetty*, 2002.

36 Cummings D.A., Garrat D., & McCarthy, M., *Port Related Structures in Western Australia: Appendix 2A: Archaeological Excavation Report: Fremantle Long Jetty/*, 1995, p.4.

At Little Sirius Cove Enclosure Remnants, Mosman NSW, (date unknown; RNE) a sweeping sandstone sea wall, which retains the fill material used to form the park, and sandstone steps into the water, are the only remaining elements of a shark-proof enclosure that until the late 1960s retained its 150m of shark-proof netting.

Neilsen Park Pool, Vaucluse, NSW (1930; RNE) is an almost semi-circular crescent shaped shark proof enclosure. Timber and concrete encased timber poles support a braided stainless steel cable from which a shark proof mesh is suspended. Originally, rope netting was kept at surface level by means of glass buoys rather than a cable. The enclosure remains intact.

Parsley Bay Swimming Enclosure, Vaucluse, NSW (1930, 1985, 1995; RNE) uses natural features, with the enclosure formed by the installation of a nylon net mesh stretching from shore to shore, effectively enclosing half of Parsley Bay.[37]

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

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[37] Information from searches of the online Australian Heritage Places Inventory at <http://www.heritage.gov.au/ahpi/index.html>