



**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)

- 3.3.5 Laying out boundaries
- 3.8.5 Moving goods and people on land

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 105 Exploration and surveying
- 203 Road transport
- 602 Early settlers

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Chauncy's Cairn's elevated position above Wariin Brook provides magnificent views across the Wariin Valley and as far as distant Mt. Dale which lies approximately 30 km to the south west. (Criterion 1.1)

Chauncy's Cairn forms a prominent landmark on top of a flat granite outcrop on Ngangaguringguring Hill. This prominence is further enhanced by the place's isolated location. (Criterion 1.3)

Chauncy's Cairn is situated in a dense bush setting similar to its context at the time of construction, which demonstrates the difficulties faced by early surveyors. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Chauncy's Cairn, was constructed in 1846 as part of the colonial government's early public works programme which not only included the development of public buildings but also an adequate road system for the colony. (Criterion 2.2)

Chauncy's Cairn was constructed by Philip Chauncy who served as Assistant Surveyor in Western Australia for twelve years and surveyed many of Western Australia's earliest roads. (Criterion 2.3)

* 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. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Chauncy's Cairn is one of the surviving survey markers that Chauncy used while carrying out his survey for the York Road. While all of his other markers are now lost, this marker, together with more permanent points such as Mt. Dale, ensures that Chauncy's original road line could still be recovered when used in conjunction with his original field books. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Chauncy's Cairn is one of the few visible reminders of this section of the York Road and the pioneering efforts of Philip Chauncy. The importance of the site to the local community and the community at large is revealed by the list of names left at the site. The legacy of these names and dates ensures that Chauncy's work is not forgotten and engenders a sense of place within all who visit the site. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

While stone cairns can be found in isolated parts of Western Australia, *Chauncy's Cairn* appears to be the oldest known road surveying cairn to survive in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

Chauncy's Cairn is the only remaining survey marker used for the York Road. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Chauncy's Cairn is an excellent example of the method of surveying used by early West Australian surveyors and the style of cairn they erected. Rock cairns were easy to erect using material at hand and could be made more readily visible through the addition of a timber post. The erection of these types of cairns was a necessary process for an accurate survey. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The stone cairn and timber post are in good condition. The isolated nature of the location has protected the cairn from bushfires and vandalism.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Chauncy's Cairn has not been altered since it was erected in 1846. The two cross pieces which are shown marked in Chauncy's field book are no longer extant which may have reduced the visibility of the cairn. However, the cairn could still be used as a survey point if required. *Chauncy's Cairn* has a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The cairn has retained all of its original fabric intact. *Chauncy's Cairn* has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

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

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Chauncy's Cairn is a granite cairn built around a timber post. The cairn was erected by Philip Chauncy in 1846 to act as a survey mark for the York Road.

After the foundation of the Swan River colony in June 1829, one of James Stirling's immediate concerns was finding viable agricultural land for the settlers. Stirling's initial reports of the Swan River had encouraged large numbers of settlers to emigrate and land was quickly allocated by the first arrivals and many of Stirling's officials.¹

Early explorers investigated the Helena and Canning Rivers, although the land along the upper reaches of the Helena River was considered too inhospitable by many settlers and the ruggedness of the Darling Range presented a barrier for eastward expansion. Ensign Robert Dale undertook explorations through the range in October and December 1829, but the land discovered was not the longed for pastures that the settlers required.² Undeterred Dale set off again in August 1830. By the 7 August he had reached the summit of Mount Mackie and observed 'comparatively level country to the Eastward, through which observed flowing..... a considerable stream'.³ Exploring the area and nearby Mount Bakewell, Dale found that the land was gently undulating, well watered and eminently suitable for agricultural purposes. Stirling inspected the area himself in October 1830 and named the river the Avon. While there he chose sites for three new towns of which York was to be the principal town.⁴

The first European settlers moved into the York district in September 1831, led by Dale who was also given the task of establishing a new road from Guildford to York.⁵ Dale was advised by Surveyor General Roe to follow a route that ascended the hills approximately half a mile to the north of Greenmount. Once the range had been climbed the route was to follow a generally south-eastward course until York was reached.⁶ Dale's road followed a generally straight course with few deviations and initially served as the major route between Guildford and York.⁷

In October 1831, Thomas Carter and Charles Leroux had approached Stirling with a request to establish a wayside inn halfway between Guildford and York.

¹ Appleyard, R.T. & Manford, T., *The Beginning, European discovery and early settlement of Swan River Western Australia*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1980, pp 140 – 145; Elliot, I., *Mundaring a history of the Shire*, Shire of Mundaring, 1983, pp 3 – 6.

² Elliot, pp 8 – 10.

³ Elliot, p. 10 from J. Cross, *Journals of Several Expeditions made in Western Australia during the years 1829, 1830, 1831 and 1832*, J. Cross, London, 1833, p. 52.

⁴ Elliot, p. 11.

⁵ op cit.

⁶ Elliot, p. 15 from Sur. Gen to Ensign Rober Dale, 5/9/1831, Letterbook 1829 – 1850, WAA Acc. No. 525, p. 97 and 98, SRO.

⁷ Elliot, p. 18.

Although the pair named their property 'Morrow Farm', the place became known as 'Halfway House'.⁸

The road to York was improved in 1835 by George Smythe and it was during this new survey that permanent water was found where a small tributary creek met Mahogany Creek. Smythe re-routed the York track to the north to take advantage of the water supply and at some stage a well was dug to provide a permanent water source.⁹

As traffic between Guildford and York increased during the 1830s, relations between the Aborigines and the white settlers deteriorated. Travellers along the York road came increasingly under attack by Aborigines and the settlers often retaliated, usually with inappropriate force and to innocent victims.¹⁰ A military barracks was established at Mahogany Creek in 1839 with six soldiers stationed there to escort travellers on the York Road.¹¹ By 1840, relations between the two groups had reached an uneasy truce and the soldiers were withdrawn.¹² Edward Byfield leased the building from the owners William and Robert Habgood and opened a wayside inn in 1844. He named the inn the 'Prince of Wales.'¹³

During the early years of the colony the development of a proper road system was beyond the capabilities of the government. In 1834, St. George's Terrace was the only clay sealed road and by 1835 it had only extended as far as Mount Eliza. In May 1837 the government authorised improvements to the Perth to Fremantle Road. An Act 'to provide for the Management of Roads, Streets and other Internal Communications within the Settlement of Western Australia' was passed in June 1838. In essence the act meant that the management of roads and bridges outside the limits of a town was under the control of a Trust of local Justices of the Peace and land owners and this same system applied to towns.¹⁴ By March 1840, the government had carried out improvements to several country roads.¹⁵

The maintenance of the York Road was often a topic of popular debate. At one stage York residents assisted the government by voluntarily subscribing £100 to match government funds in the repair of the road. A description of the road in December 1839 stated that improvements had been made and that 'a carriage may now be driven from Guildford to York with the greatest ease.'¹⁶

In 1846, the government decided that the York Road needed to be accurately surveyed and appointed Philip La Mothe Snell Chauncy, the Assistant Surveyor, to carry out the task.¹⁷ Chauncy had originally migrated to South

8 Elliot, pp 18 – 19.

9 Elliot, p. 147.

10 Elliot, p. 21.

11 Blackburn, G., *Conquest and Settlement, the 21st Regiment (Royal North British Fusiliers) in Western Australia 1833 - 1840.*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1999, p. 97.

12 *Inquirer* 29 September 1841.

13 *Government Gazette* 1845; *Inquirer* 4 September 1844.

14 Le Page, 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. 35.

15 Le Page, p. 39.

16 *Perth Gazette* 19 May 1838; *Ibid* 7 December 1839.

17 Elliot, p. 25.

Australia, arriving at Glenelg in October 1839. There he met and married Charlotte Kemmis. They sailed for Fremantle in April 1841 and Chauncy was appointed Assistant Surveyor. He and his wife moved to Guildford to live and became acquainted with the Rev. William Mitchell's family.¹⁸

Chauncy began his survey of the York Road on 10 March 1846. At the end of the first field book he records a number of local aboriginal names and their meanings.¹⁹

Chauncy made some alterations to Smythe's road, particularly on the ascent near Greenmount, making the grades easier. Near Sawyers Valley, he diverted further to the north to avoid a fairly steep hill and to find more level ground. This route led to the discovery of a new spring (Chauncy's Spring) and Manaring Lake (The Lakes). His road followed approximately the same route as the current Great Eastern Highway although it passed to the south of Manaring Lake and Ngangaguringguring Hill before rejoining Smythe's route to the east of the Halfway House.²⁰ Chauncy made a detailed plan of the layout of the buildings and yards at Halfway House, before proceeding eastward.²¹

Approximately three miles to the east of Halfway House Chauncy came across Ngangaguringguring Hill. He described it as a flat topped granite hill near Warrinup. The hill lay on the northern side of York Road and Chauncy climbed it to get a sighting to Mt Dale which he was using as a survey point. Once on the hill, he chose a flat section of granite onto which he placed a 'heap of stones round a large w. [white] gum post 6ft. high & 6 in. diam.' The small drawing also shows that two cross pieces had also been placed near the top of the post.²² Chauncy recorded the bearing to distant Mt Dale and then continued westward with his survey.

In February 1847, while rechecking the route on his return to Guildford, Chauncy was met by a messenger who told him that his wife had died. He arranged for a month's leave prior to completing the survey. The line of his road was adopted by the government in August 1847 and plans prepared. Map No. 46 of the York Road shows Chauncy's road and the location of Ngangaguringguring Hill, including the notation about the survey cairn.²³

The line that Chauncy's road took was not popular with York residents. They found that it had to cross too many gullies and several very sandy patches.²⁴ Instead, they favoured a route which passed further to the north. This route, known as 'King Dick's line,' had been shown to them by a local aboriginal

18 Chauncy, P.L.S., *Memoirs of Mrs Chauncy, written for the instruction of and comfort of their eight children*, Chauncy, Ballarat, 1873, p. 7.

19 Chauncy's Field Book No. 5 Survey of Guildford to York Road, SRO. The Surveyor General also permitted Chauncy to employ an Aboriginal during this survey to impart local knowledge. Elliot p. 26.

20 Elliot, p. 26; Chauncy's Field Book No. 5.

21 Chauncy, No. 5, p. 67.

22 Chauncy, No. 5., p. 83.

23 Chauncy's Memoirs, op cit; Elliot, p. 26; Map 46 York Road, copy held by Mundaring & Hills Historical Society.

24 Present day Cobb Road closely follows the original line of Chauncy's Road and entails numerous creek crossings and sandy patches.

known as King Dick.²⁵ The route ran on the northern side of Lake Manaring. It was shorter, traversed fewer gullies and there were no sandy patches. The settler's agitation went unheeded by the government and so they took matters into their own hands. In October 1848, a new road was laid out, funded through private subscriptions. It was ready in six weeks and cost only £50.²⁶ Travellers used this route instead of Chauncy's and his original line to the east of the Halfway House fell into disuse. This section of York Road was formally proclaimed an official road in March 1850.²⁷ As the road now passed well to the north of Halfway House it was forced to close due to a lack of trade. A new wayside inn was built on the northern side of Manaring Lake in 1855 and named 'The Traveller's Rest'.²⁸

Chauncy married Susan Mitchell in March 1848 and left Western Australia in 1853 for Victoria where he became a surveyor in Ballarat. He and Susan had nine children, eight of whom survived to adulthood. Susan died in September 1867, leaving Chauncy a widower once more. Chauncy died in April 1880. Although Chauncy lived in Western Australia for only twelve years he carried out numerous surveys in the Swan, Avon and Plantagenet districts.²⁹

Chauncy's survey cairn fell into disuse and was forgotten. It was rediscovered in 1974 by Ian Elliot after he studied Chauncy's field books. Elliot left information at the site (in a glass jar concealed in the cairn), recording the date of his rediscovery and a copy of the relevant page from Chauncy's field book. Since Elliot's rediscovery, the cairn has been visited occasionally by individuals and walking groups who record their visit and leave the information in the glass jar.³⁰

Chauncy's Cairn was placed on the Shire of Mundaring's Municipal Inventory in April 1997.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Chauncy's Cairn is a granite cairn built around a timber post. The cairn was erected by Philip Chauncy in 1846 to act as a survey mark for the York Road.

Chauncy's Cairn stands in isolated bush in the Mundaring Weir Water Catchment area. Access to the site is along a power line track (which runs off Flynn Road, Chidlow). The cairn is situated approximately 200 metres to the south of this track, on a flat granite ledge which lies at the south western edge of a laterite ridge. The ledge provides panoramic views across Wariin Brook valley and to distant Mt Dale. The surrounding bush is dominated by Wandoo trees (*Eucalyptus wandoo*) with isolated Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and Marri (*Eucalyptus calophylla*) trees together with associated understorey plants such as Australian grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*), Prickly Moses (*Acacia pulchella*), Drummond's wattle (*Acacia drummondii*), Yellow buttercups

²⁵ Mundaring & Hills Historical Society file: York Road.

²⁶ *Perth Gazette* 25 November 1848.

²⁷ *Government Gazette* 26 March 1850.

²⁸ Tuckfield, T., 'The Old York Road', Mundaring & Hills Historical Society, York Road file.

²⁹ Chauncy's memoirs; Erickson, R., *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre 1829 - 1888*, Vol. 1, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1988, p. 515.

³⁰ Information obtained during the site visit to the cairn on 23 September 2003.

(*Hibbertia hypericoides*), *Fuchsia grevillea* (*Grevillea bipinnatifida*) and Coral vine (*Kennedia coccinea*).

The cairn is formed from loose granite rocks that have been roughly placed to form a conical pile approximately 900 mm high. Larger rocks form the base, rising to gradually smaller rocks as the pile reaches the top. Given the nature of the granite rock in the vicinity of the pile, the rocks were gathered from the granite ledge. A round timber post has been inserted vertically into this pile and extends 800 mm above the rock pile. The post has a diameter of approximately 130 mm. The full length of the post is not known.

Concealed within the cairn is a glass jar with a plastic lid. The jar was placed there by Ian Elliot on his rediscovery of the cairn in 1974 and contains two pieces of paper. One of the pages is a photocopy of Chauncy's original field book entry and notes the date of rediscovery by Elliot. Persons visiting the site have recorded their names and date of visit on this page and on the second page which was added once the first page was filled.

The cairn is in good condition and appears to be quite stable. The timber post has weathered and a split extends down from the top for about 200mm. Past bush fire activity is visible on the trees in the surrounding area, however the timber post in the cairn has probably survived due to its isolated position on the granite ledge. The isolated position has also probably protected it from vandalism.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Road surveys have been made throughout Western Australia since first settlement in 1829. Survey markers have included blazes on trees, prominent landforms and commonly, stone cairns. Stone cairns were easy to construct and with the addition of a timber post the mark was easily visible from some distance away. Unfortunately many of the early surveyors cairns have disappeared, not through vandalism, but because modern surveyors dismantled the original survey points to place new metal survey markers on the original point.³¹ Chauncy's survey point has survived not only because it was off the line of the road that he was surveying, but also because this section of the road was later moved further north.

Despite the loss of many survey cairns through modern surveying practises, a number of survey cairns have survived. A line of survey cairns has been preserved in the Avon Valley National Park and forms part of the Avon Valley Survey Heritage Trail. This trail visits the survey cairns built by John Forrest during his 1877 – 78 survey of the Swan and Avon Valleys. The cairns in this area appear to have been used to assist in marking out boundaries, rather than as survey points to mark a road.³²

Other types of cairns also exist. Two original L-shaped stone cairns dating from c1849 are situated at the Warribanno Lead Smelter Complex. These were constructed to mark the boundary of the Gum Forest and the

³¹ Information supplied by Ian Elliot during site visit to cairn on 23 September 2003.

³² Information obtained from a pamphlet produced by CALM for the heritage trail.

Warribanno allotment.³³ Flinder's Cairn at Point Matthew near Cape Leeuwin and the Landing Place Cairn at Augusta. Both cairns have been erected at a later time to record historic events and were not placed by the original explorer or settlers.³⁴

There are no cairns noted as being associated with road surveying in the HCWA database.³⁵

Despite the presence of a number of survey cairns in various parts of Western Australia, Chauncy's survey cairn appears to be the oldest surviving cairn and possibly the only road survey cairn remaining in Western Australia.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

³³ Considine and Griffiths Architects, 'Warribanno Lead Smelter Complex Conservation and Management Plan', prepared for Northampton Historical Society, November 1995, p. 35. The Warribanno Lead Smelter Complex is permanently entered onto the State Register of Heritage Places

³⁴ Information obtained from visits to both these sites in 2000.

³⁵ HCWA Database 12/11/03