

Stokes Inlet European History

Historical Background

The European history associated with Stokes Inlet is inextricably linked with the activities of the historical pastoral leases that extended along both sides of the Inlet and Fanny Cove. (NTWA,2000)



Plate 1. Moir Homestead (Hughes, 2006)

In 1848 J .S. Roe lead an expedition with instructions to explore country between Cape Riche and Russel Range to the east of Esperance Bay. It was during this expedition that Roe named the Stokes Inlet, the Lort and Young Rivers along with many other geographical features. (NTWA, 2000) Further exploration activity of the southern coastal lands including the Stokes Inlet area occurred in 1863 after rumour of South Australian pastoralists were seeking land east of King George Sound. (Heritage Council of Western Australia,2001)

C.E. Dempster was the first to select and receive lands at Stokes Inlet. A pastoral lease of 41,000 acres was granted in 1863, however in 1867 the lease was terminated in preference to lands and another pastoral lease at Esperance Bay. (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 2001)

John and Alexander Moir took up pastoral leases of 14,000 in 1873. A lack of fresh water forced the Moir's away from their original settlement location at the lower reaches of the Young River to the site of "*Moir Homestead*" east of the inlet, approximately 2 kilometres from Fanny Cove anchorage and 0.5km inland from Fanny Cove.

The nineteenth century pastoralists used the relatively small freehold homestead location as the hub of their extensive pastoral leases. Security of ownership or

premises was assured and the sites selected were judged to be the best available. The Moir's of Fanny Cove cut the first track to Dundas in 1888 and later sold stores and equipment to miners landed from ships at Fanny Cove or trekking overland from Broomehill. It was also the base of their flour cartage contract to Coolgardie. (SoE,1996)

Of interest also is the East –West Telegraph constructed 1857-1877, the following is an excerpt taken from an account by Mr G.P. Stevens read before the Society October 1933 in relation to the East West Telegraph 1875-1877.

Following an easterly course over 50 miles of indifferent sand plain country, broken only by the Oldfield River, the line crosses the young and Lort Rivers at the head of Stokes Inlet and about three miles north of the homestead of John and Alexander Moir..... Apart from the activities created by the extensive use of their little port, Fanny Cove, these settlers were unaffected by the advent of the telegraph line.

Description / Background

Moir Homestead is set within the 16 hectare Reserve 32601 between Fanny Cove and Stokes Inlet approximately 95 km south west of Esperance and 10 km south of the South Coast Highway within the Shire of Esperance. The Moir Homestead comprises of four buildings and several structures in a state of ruin that were associated with the early settlement and development of the pastoral industry. (NTWA,2000)



Plate 2 Ruins at Moir Homestead (Hughes,2006)

The Moir Homestead Reserve comprises of remnant ruin structures of a homestead (1873/1880), blacksmith workshop (1863), shepherds camp (1863) and woolshed/stables (1880) which has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

- Collectively, the extant limestone ruins provide a visual focus to the cultural landscape of the historic pastoral property on which they are located;
- The place is associated with the development of pastoralism in the south-west region of Western Australia and its location at Fanny Cove near Esperance, was a main entry point for gold prospectors travelling to the Goldfields;
- The homestead ruins is a tangible reminder of a simple structure built c1880s based on Victorian Georgian model adapted to local conditions and built of local materials
- The place is closely associated with its builders in the development of the region
- The place has the potential to yield information on the material; culture and the social and agriculture adaptations of colonists living in an isolated and very remote part of Western Australia
- The place is highly valued by the local community as one of the earliest homesteads in the region.
- The Moir Homestead Reserve also includes several other structures and the grave of John Moir (killed March 1863)
- Two discrete artefact scatters of Aboriginal origin have been identified during the survey of Moir Homestead Ruins.

(Heritage Council of Western Australia, 2001)

Issues

1. ***Is there an inventory of European historic sites around the Inlet? What studies are being undertaken that may provide this information?***

Significance

Moir Homestead also known as Fanny Cove Homestead has been assessed and recorded by the following organisations:

Organisation	Register	Date
National Trust of Australia (WA)	Classified	November 1995
Municipal Inventory	Included	1996
Heritage Council of Western Australia	Register of the National Estate	29 th August 2001

Moir Homestead is significant for its aesthetic, historic, scientific and social values and for its representativeness, at a state level.

A conservation plan for has been prepared for the Moir Homestead by Kelly Aris, Conservation Architect, Jacqui Sherriff Historian and Gaye Norton Historical Archaeologist in April 2000.

2. What recommendations exist that relate to their protection/enhancement?

Significant investment has been directed toward the development of the Conservation Plan completed in April 2000. The Conservation Plan for the place has been based on:

- Requirements, constraints and opportunities arising out of the significance of the place
- The physical condition of the place
- External requirements – heritage listing and statutory requirement; and,
- Owner and user requirements and resources

The following principles were integral to the conservation policy:

- Future decision relating to the use of any other matter affecting the future of Moir Homestead should be made in accordance with the recommendations of the Conservation Policy; and,
- The conservation of Moir Homestead should be carried out in accordance with the principals outlined in the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS)

(NTWA,2000)

This document provides a guide as to what and how works should be undertaken at the site. A number of projects have occurred at Moir Homestead for the purposes of building stabilisation, weed removal and general site cleanup.

It is Policy recommendation in the Conservation Policy that a review of the Conservation Plan be undertaken five years from the date of completion or if any substantial new body of historical or physical evidence is identified.

3. How is Moir homestead managed at present? What restoration work is planned for the homestead?



Plate 3. Stabilisation, erosion weed control works – Moir Homestead

Reserve 32601 containing Moir Homestead is vested to the National Trust of Australia and the Executive Director Department of Conservation and Land Management. Activity associated with the restoration of buildings or historical artefacts (including identified indigenous sites) must have the approval of the National Trust of Australia, and be undertaken in accordance with the Conservation Plan.

Plate 3 highlights some of the building stabilisation, weed removal and erosion control works that have been undertaken at Moir Homestead.

The Department of Environment and Conservation is actively responsible for actual land management of Reserve 32601. This activity includes weed and erosion control, fire management and Visitor Risk Management. Fundamentally the land management activity within Reserve 32601 is closely linked to the surrounding Stokes National Park.

At the time of preparation of this paper, the Department of Environment and Conservation is preparing an Esperance District Coastal Reserves Management Plan which will provide future direction on the management of these Reserves.

It is pertinent to note that the Shire of Esperance has approached the National Trust of Australia (WA) to enter a joint management agreement for the Moir Homestead. It was resolved at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on Tuesday 27th July 2004 that:

The National Trust be advised that the Council would be prepared to enter into a joint management agreement for Moir Homestead and Israelite Bay Telegraph Station along the lines of the draft management agreement attached as Appendix Kc.

Note: The Department of Environment and Conservation is opposed to any change in tenure vesting.

4. What are the significant cultural sites at the Inlet? Are further surveys required?

No significant European historic sites at Stokes Inlet itself have been found other than Moir Homestead.

5. What needs to be done to better protect or enhance these sites?

The Conservation Plan has outlined an implementation strategy that prioritises Conservation Plan Actions. The conservation plan has identified short and long term actions for the responsible agencies to address.

See recommendations below for future actions that will assist in the preservation of this site.

6. Should interpretation of the cultural values be introduced? In what form?

The state significance of the Moir Homestead warrants a program of interpretation. The program should be designed to ensure that its heritage values are understood and accessible to the public particularly with regard to the original use of the building and the land, (NTWA,2000)

7. *Can fire, Inlet levels or access damage existing cultural sites/values?*

Fire has had a significant impact on the Moir Homestead. In 1993 a lightning strike resulted in a fire sweeping through the Homestead destroying the remaining timbers.

Importantly this has implications on risk associated with both structure and visitor management at the Moir Homestead site. Works activity has been undertaken to remove and limit the fuel loads around the buildings and strengthen the remnant structures.

8. *What recommendations should be included in the management plan to protect and enhance the historical and cultural significance at the Inlet?*

Recommendation: An Interpretation Plan for the Moir Homestead should be prepared by suitably qualified people, and closely linked to any Interpretation Plan prepared for the Stokes National Park by the Department of Environment and Conservation

An additional recommendation that came out of the steering group's discussion on this topic is:

Recommendation: The remaining recommendations from the Moir Homestead Conservation Plan should be implemented

Further reading/references

G.P. Stevens, 1933, East West Telegraph 1875-1877

Heritage Council of Western Australia, 2001, Register of Heritage Places – Assessment Documentation,

National Trust of Australia (WA) (NTWA), 2000, Moir Homestead Conservation Plan

Shire of Esperance (SoE), 1996, Municipal Heritage Inventory Place of Record Form LGA Place No. 35, Shire of Esperance.

Photographs of Moir Homestead have been provided by Mr Ian Hughes, Department of Environment and Conservation.

