

# HERITAGE

S O U T H A U S T R A L I A

Number 16

January 2000

**N E W S L E T T E R**

ISSUES AND INFORMATION ON HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Heritage South Australia  
Government of South Australia





## MINISTER'S UPDATE

### CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Minister's update   | 2  |
| A face lift for Martindale Hall   | 3  |
| Heritage conservation as a way of life  | 5  |
| An oasis in an urban landscape  | 6  |
| The 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival at the Queen's Theatre and the Adelaide Gaol | 8  |
| Hughes and Elder memorials listed   | 10 |
| Book reviews  | 12 |
| Heritage news   | 12 |
| An ugly duckling in South Australian Waters: <i>Eleni K. (1943 - 1966)</i>      | 13 |

Newsletter of Heritage South Australia  
Department for Environment, Heritage  
and Aboriginal Affairs

ISSN 1320-4173

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Welcome to the year 2000! The latter half of 1999 kept the new State Heritage Authority busy discussing, and entering new places in the State Heritage Register.

An amendment to the Heritage Act was passed by Parliament in November 1999, allowing me to delegate the function of commenting on development approvals. Under the *Development Act* 1993 and Regulations, Councils and the Development Assessment Commission are required to refer development applications affecting a State Heritage Place to the Minister for Environment and Heritage for response. The response usually takes the form of a recommendation of action that the planning authority should take.

The amendment to the Heritage Act will reduce paper work, streamline the system and reduce decision times. Applicants for development approval will particularly appreciate this.

The National Heritage Places Strategy, a Commonwealth strategy to establish a meaningful national heritage list, is progressing. The States have now met and are considering the options to establish such a list.

Government owned heritage buildings will continue to be used in the year 2000. The Queen's Theatre will be used in the Adelaide Festival of Arts for several productions. The Adelaide Gaol will also be used as a venue for an interesting production called *The Eye*.

The State Government, through Heritage South Australia, will be the principal sponsor of Brink Production's performances of Heiner Muller's play *Quartet* at the Queen's Theatre during May 2000. *Quartet* is based on the French novel *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, and will be directed by Michael Kantor, who previously directed the 1998 Adelaide Festival production *Natural Life* at the Queen's Theatre.

Heritage SA and the City of Adelaide have produced a new technical publication on *Early Roofing and Roof Materials in South Australia*. This publication provides a fascinating history of early roof types and construction methods in South Australia. It is also a useful and practical guide on how to maintain the historic appearance of a roof, and how to undertake repairs to a roof, which are sympathetic to its age.

Also being published early this year is *Painting of Older Buildings*. Painting is an important component of the overall conservation of older buildings. This publication is the most comprehensive study of the history of painting in South Australia, and provides a professional guide on how to choose the most appropriate colour scheme for an older building, as well as guidelines on the application of paint. This publication also seeks to redress misconceptions as to what heritage colours should be.

The State Government, through Heritage SA, is involved in producing a national publication on twentieth century heritage. This publication will help to challenge existing notions of what heritage is, and helps us to consider what we want to save from the twentieth century.

#### Hon Dorothy Kotz MP

Minister for Environment and Heritage  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

#### Front cover

*The emancipation of women was hastened during World War Two as a result of their involvement in public affairs. Women supplied about one third of the total labour needed to keep industrial production successful. They were crucial to the production of industrial services, and were active in the building of Liberty ships, the subject of our story on page 13.*

*Photograph from 'Australian Women in War'. Curriculum Branch, Educational Media Services, ACT Schools Authority.*



## A FACE LIFT FOR MARTINDALE HALL

Two years ago a stonework conservation program commenced at Martindale Hall, in the Clare Valley. \$1.5 million was spent on the conservation of the façade of the Georgian style mansion to protect its architectural uniqueness, its historical importance, and to enhance its tourism potential.

Much of the conservation work involved the replacement of stonework, deteriorated by rising and falling damp. Conservation also included remedial work to window sashes, screens and shutters, and careful cleaning of the facades. As much as possible of the original stonework and mouldings was saved. Where the stone had decayed an appropriate durable sandstone was sourced, cut and profiled to match the original stones exactly. To achieve this, today's technology and traditional stone masonry skills were used. The result is a tribute to all the tradespeople involved. The late Bernie Koesters, recognised for many fine projects such as the bell tower extension to St Xaviers Cathedral in Adelaide, undertook the stone masonry work.

To celebrate the renewal of Martindale Hall, The Hon Premier, John Olsen, relaunched Martindale Hall on 3 November 1999.

The day was celebrated at Martindale Hall under a white canopy. Local children from Mintaro Primary School sang a welcome song in different languages reflecting our multicultural society. The Cremona String Quartet played Bach's music, while politicians, media and locals mingled. Hosts Carole and Les Rooney completed the day with sumptuous food.

The Premier said, "Today we acknowledge, celebrate and appreciate our history, our origins, our culture, and the splendour and majesty of a past era."

"Martindale Hall, in all its grandeur, has endured the strongest test of all, and that is the test of time, to become not only an icon in the Clare Valley



**Above:** A tour of Martindale Hall

*l to r: Hon Dorothy Kotz, Carole Rooney, Hamish Gosse, Les Rooney, The Premier John Olsen*

**Below:** The Cremona String Quartet



region, but to become a tourism asset of which the entire South Australian community can appreciate and be proud of."

Hon Dorothy Kotz, Minister for Environment and Heritage also joined the Premier on the day. She said, "Tourism and heritage are increasingly becoming important partners.

Martindale Hall is a fine example of the success of such partnerships."

In 1879 English pastoralist, Edmund Bowman, commissioned a palatial solid house to confirm his residency in South Australia. Two years later Martindale Hall was complete with its elaborate Italian Renaissance interior.





**Above:** Martindale Hall

Edmund Bowman was a familiar figure in colonial South Australia, and was part of three generations of successful pastoralists. The site was chosen by the Bowmans in the 1850s for its proximity to water, and its rich grazing land. But as a consequence of drought and over-borrowing the Martindale Hall estate was sold in 1891 to William Tennant Mortlock, who successfully ran the

pastoral property with his family well into the twentieth century. The Mortlock family bequeathed the Hall to the University of Adelaide in 1965, and in 1986 was given to the Government of South Australia by the University.

For the last eight years Les and Carole Rooney have leased the building and successfully run accommodation and

tours. For them the conservation work is a stark contrast to its former crumbling exterior, and they are happy that the work has helped to protect such an historically significant place. "Martindale Hall is so popular, and the building is so grand, that we feel privileged to be a part of it."



For more information on Martindale Hall please contact Les and Carole Rooney  
Telephone: 08 8843 9088

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## HERITAGE CONSERVATION AS A WAY OF LIFE

Today we hear much talk of ecologically sustainable development (ESD), but it is easy to assume that this philosophy is only applicable to the natural environment.

However, if you reflect upon the energy and materials used in constructing a building, it is obvious that a great deal of both are consumed. Or in other words, to use the technical jargon, buildings contain a lot of 'embodied energy'.

It follows that conserving and adapting existing buildings rather than replacing them with new ones can make a considerable contribution to ecologically sustainable development. Furthermore, it is an area where all property owners, not just owners of heritage places, can make a contribution.

One of the mindsets required to pursue ESD is one which seeks to 'maximise the use of existing resources,' perhaps an easier phrase to remember and one with broader application. Is a skylight a better solution to an electric light? Can waste water be reused? Can garden watering systems be improved or species requiring less water planted? Any measures which reduce our demands on the environment are a form of heritage conservation in the broadest sense.

For the office worker it may be installing time switches on photocopiers, ensuring that PC monitors are turned off or at least automatically powered down when not in use, and reviewing lighting levels. On the home front it may mean some of the measures mentioned earlier.

Built heritage conservation – the retention, maintenance, adaptation and reuse of buildings – should be seen as a significant initiative on a par with these more commonly cited ways of conserving the world's resources.

Conservation of heritage buildings have, of course, the added benefit of helping to maintain a sense of place and a sense of time. Here are two views almost ninety years apart in time but both pertinent today.

'It has been most truly said... that these old buildings do not belong to us only; that they have belonged to our forefathers and they will belong to our descendants unless we play them false. They are not in any sense our property, to do as we like with them. We are only trustees for those who come after us.'

William Morris in a speech at the Annual Meeting of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, 1889 [Founded 1877]

'...the value of old buildings derives from their capacity to satisfy a deep-seated, if rather mysterious, human need to a sense of historical continuity and identity, a tangible reference to previous experience, a relationship to culture or civilisation that does not exist solely in the present.

Until very recently most Australians could fulfil that need by relating, even if at one remove, to the past of Great Britain, the 'mother country'. For many, perhaps most of us, that option is increasingly less attractive and feasible.

As it becomes accordingly more urgent to assert our cultural autonomy, so the preservation of our native urban architectural heritage is being belatedly but increasingly recognised as a leading national priority. For only so can we hope to create in Australia a truly civilised society, one that values its past as an integral part of its present and future.

W. Prest 'Social and Cultural Aspects of Urban Conservation' in C. Bond & H. Ramsey (eds) *Preserving Historic Adelaide* (Rigby, Adelaide 1978) pp 20-21.

**Brian Samuels**  
Principal Heritage Officer

*The goal of ESD is development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends. There are two main features that distinguish the sustainable approach to development. First, there is the need to consider in an integrated way the wider economic, social and environmental implications of decisions and actions. Second, it is necessary to take a long-term rather than short-term view in regard to these decisions and actions.*

*Draft National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (AGPS, Canberra 1992)*



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## AN OASIS IN AN URBAN LANDSCAPE

Gavin Malone, is an artist who resides at Fairford House, Warriparinga, situated at the bottom of Flagstaff Hill. Within a few hundred metres of the house, on the surrounding major roads, he can get a haircut, have an operation, buy a gun, get arrested, buy fish and chips; Indian, Thai, Italian or McDonalds. He is surrounded by urban development: the Southern Expressway is not far from the door. But at Warriparinga he can step back in time to be surrounded by one of the few pockets of indigenous environments on the Adelaide Plains.

Warriparinga is a place that South Australians may know little of, but holds an enormous amount of history and spirit. It is situated in an area also known as Laffer's Triangle and is a traditional and spiritual site for the Kaurna people. Warriparinga is now part of the Aboriginal conciliation process, and is a Kaurna ceremonial meeting place. A Scar Tree is one of the few remaining left on the Adelaide Plains. Warriparinga also has a long European history of viticulture and horticulture and is the only part of the Sturt River on the Adelaide Plains, which has not been concreted.

*Kaurna traditional lands stretch from Parewarangk (Cape Jervis), in the south to Crystal Brook in the north. The Sturt River or 'Wari-Pari' was a natural transport corridor for Kaurna clans moving between the hills to the coast. It provided an abundant food source from both the river plants and animals in and around the environment. They took fish and yabbies, and hunted other animals such as kangaroos and possums. Kaurna ceremonies were held to celebrate birth, death, trade, song and dance.*<sup>1</sup>

European horticultural activities began in 1839. The land had been purchased for its accessibility to permanent water, major transport routes, deep fertile soils and the fair climate of the foothills. Vineyards were planted as early as 1859. Grapes included Verdelho, Gouais, Black Portugal and Grenache. A meticulous vinegrower

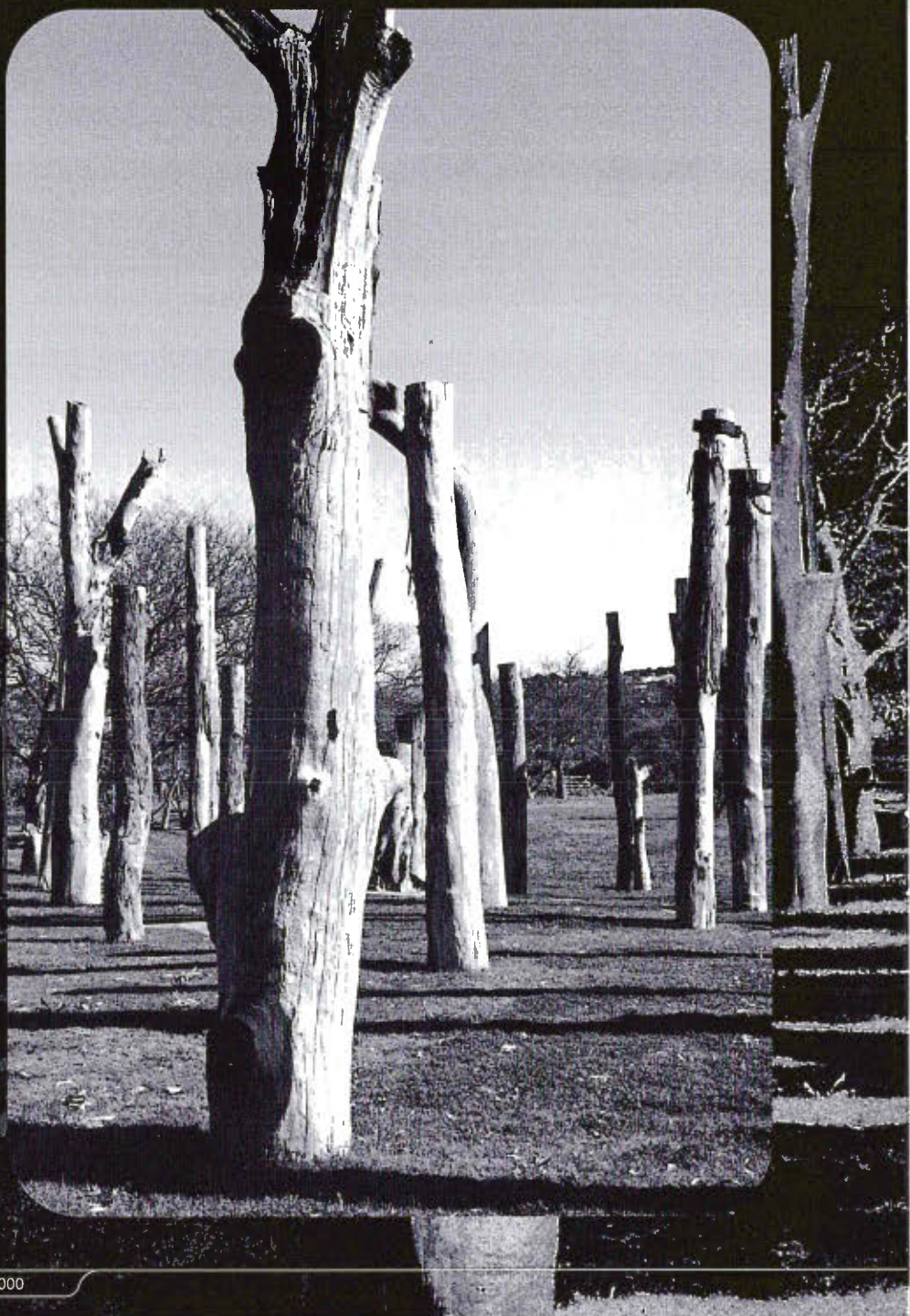
William Henry Trimmer, who first leased the land in 1843 and later bought it, did not allow his vines to bear until five years old. Orchards were also planted, and the surviving orchards are an important remnant of a successful industry in the Sturt River/Marion region.

A single room cottage was built in the 1850s by Trimmer and purchased by Henry Laffer in 1876. This cottage, called, Fairford House, was extended into a bungalow during the 1920s. A

coach house was built in the 1860s as a winemaking storage facility. During WWII Italian prisoners of war worked as grape pickers and slept in the loft of this coach house. A European cottage garden survives from the 1870s including prunus, Jacaranda, Wisteria and Olea.

Only eight kilometres from the city of Adelaide, Warriparinga holds a rich, and

**Below:** *The Tjilbruke Gateway, Tjilbruke Narna arra Ngat pandi artwork*





increasingly rare, view of South Australia's history. The area, owned by the City of Marion, is being managed in partnership with some dedicated individuals and groups including: Warriparinga Interpretive Centre Management Committee, KACHA (Kurna Aboriginal Community Heritage Association), Flinders University, Marion Historical Society, and the Friends of Warriparinga. The groups have many plans for the area. Projects and improvements already achieved include:

first stages of restoring the river to a healthy state, by removing exotic plants, revegetation and managing stormwater; a wetland developed by the Patawalonga Catchment Water Management Board and assistance from Planning SA.

As a significant contribution to the conciliation process, and to recognise indigenous people's history and beliefs, the Tjilbruke Gateway, Tjilbruke Narna arra Ngat pandi, artwork was commissioned.

Adelaide artists Margaret Worth, Sherry Rankine and Gavin Malone undertook the artwork. This project symbolically interprets the multiple layers of the story of Tjilbruke. The basic form of the work, a forest of tree trunks, brings a spiritual presence and totemic power to the land at Warriparinga. The trunks speak of the clearing of the land in colonial times for agriculture and horticulture, and for the new Expressway in present times. This work has contributed to the Kurna people's efforts to protect and maintain the site as an important place to celebrate the Dreaming. As a gesture of belief in the future, seedling Karra (River Red Gum) propagated from local trees have been planted as part of the artwork.

The future of this project and place will be enhanced by further developing cultural sensitivity and understanding between all who have an interest in the project. Federation funding has recently been granted for a Kurna Living Cultural Centre and further interpretation of European settlement is planned.

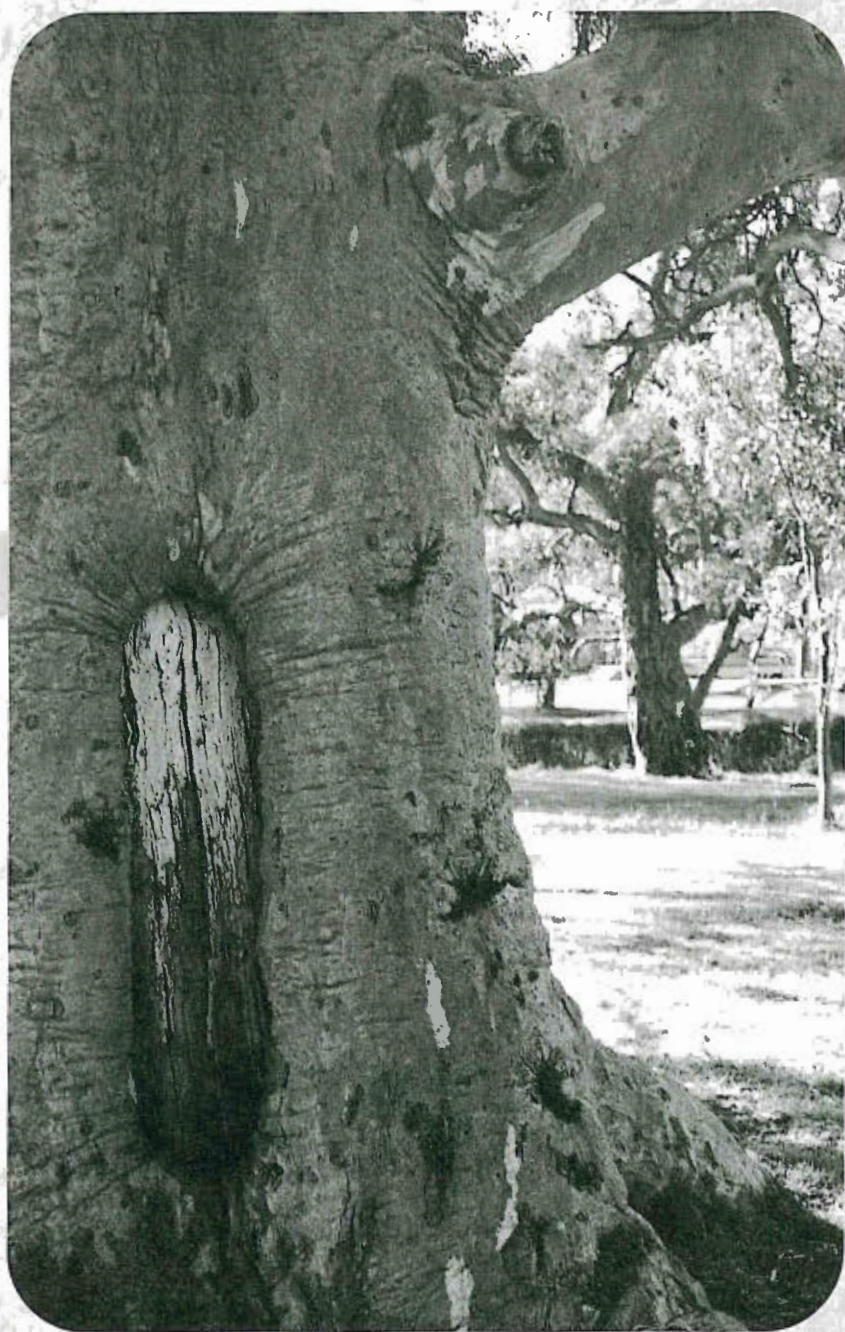
The City of Marion and KACHA are close to signing an agreement that will document their closer relationship, and ensure that Warriparinga is managed to the benefit of both parties.

This site bears witness to the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people, and their relationship with the land. Relationships that will continue to evolve. Warriparinga gives us a glimpse of Aboriginal and European history, and holds hope for the future through the conciliation process: it is a place worthy of protection.

**Left:** Warriparinga Scar Tree

**Sources:**

<sup>1</sup> Warriparinga Information Kit,  
City of Marion  
Heritage SA Files  
Gavin Malone





## THE 2000 TELSTRA ADELAIDE FESTIVAL AT THE

**Heritage South Australia manages two heritage buildings which are venues for the 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival – the Queen's Theatre in central Adelaide and the Adelaide Gaol in the north-west Parklands.**

The Queen's Theatre, built in 1839, is the oldest purpose-built theatre on mainland Australia, whilst the Adelaide Gaol, opened in 1841 to house debtors and felons. The Adelaide Festival have chosen the Queen's Theatre and the Adelaide Gaol to present three pieces of contemporary theatre that are challenging, thought provoking and entertaining.

The 1996 Adelaide Festival re-opened the Queen's Theatre as a performance venue in March 1996 with the OzOpera production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. The Theatre ceased to be used for performances over 130 years ago, following the opening of Theatre Royal in Hindley Street on 20 April 1868. OzOpera, part of Opera Australia, was launched at the Queen's Theatre during the 1996 Adelaide Festival. It is a touring ensemble delivering operatic performances to all corners of Australia, in particular to audiences removed from the grand stages of capital city theatres.

The Adelaide Festival hired the Queen's Theatre in 1998 for the State Theatre South Australia production of *Natural Life*. Devised and directed by Michael Kantor, *Natural Life*, was based on Marcus Clarke's famous novel *For the Term of his Natural Life*. Infused with 19th century melodrama, pantomime and kitsch Australiana, this production took the audience on a kaleidoscopic journey into the prophesy and profanity of our convict past.

The Queen's Theatre will again be a venue for the Adelaide Festival in March 2000. In a program entitled 'Young Drama at the Old Queen's in the Late Night', Robyn Archer, the Artistic Director of the Festival will bring to audiences of Adelaide two exciting productions: *UrlFaust* and *Langs De Grote Weg*.

Benedict Andrews, who previously directed Magpie 2's productions *Future Tense* and *Features of Blown Youth* at the Queen's Theatre in 1997, will present *UrlFaust* from 6 – 11 March 2000. Based on Goethe's *Faust* of 1773-76, *UrlFaust* is a dirty, lo-fi deconstruction, in a place that is both heaven and hell, carnival and wasteland. A group of young Australian performers hallucinate a fractured story about desire, hunger and freedom in a haunted ruined place, inhabited by rock 'n roll suicides, fallen angels and starry-eyed lovers.

The young Dutch theatre company 't Barre Land will offer five performances of Anton Chekov's first play *Langs De Grote Weg*, or *Along the Highway*, at the Queen's Theatre from 14 – 18 March 2000. In this play young men gather at a roadside café, drink too much, interact with a local band, fight and get mixed up with strange women. Full of brash fun and liberal lashings of vodka, this highly energetic and infectious theatre has live musical accompaniment by eleven Romany gypsy musicians who make up the brass ensemble, Fanfare Ciocarlia.

**Below: *Langs De Grote Weg* ('t Barre Land, The Netherlands)**

Photograph: Courtesy of 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival







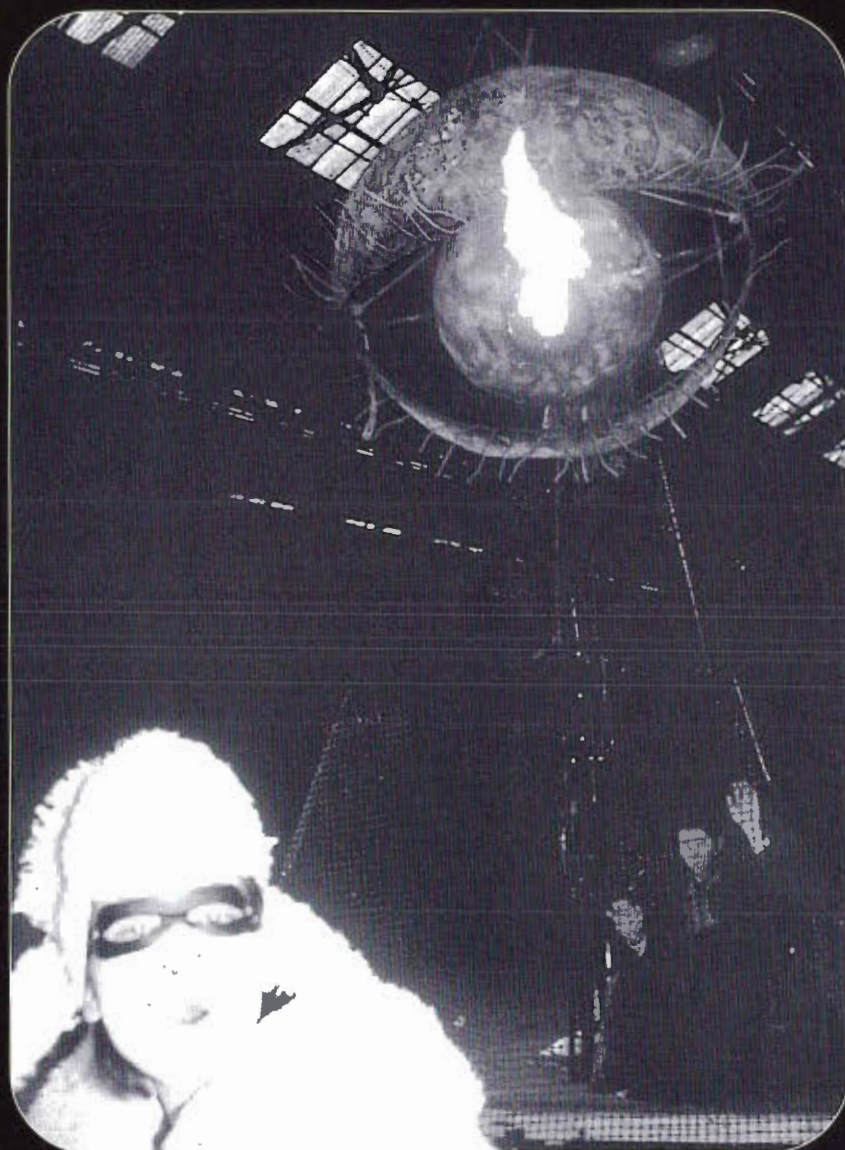
**Above: *Ur/Faust***  
(Director: Benedict Andrews)  
Photograph: Courtesy of 2000 Telstra  
Adelaide Festival

Theatre Kantanka will perform a production entitled *The Eye* from 5 – 8 March 2000 in the grounds of the Adelaide Gaol. Specialising in big outdoor spectacles, Theatre Kantanka from Sydney, will collaborate with French designer Henri Gallot Lavelle to present the story of Odysseus, using the façade of the Gaol's main entrance as its backdrop. Of all the Greek hero's amazing adventures, the one that really captures the imagination is battling the mighty Cyclops, the legendary one-eyed monster. Adults and children alike will see ordinary mortals fight against the huge eye in this production which is at all times fiery, physical and fun.

For further information about the 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival, and in particular ticket and booking details for performances at the Queen's Theatre and the Adelaide Gaol, contact the Festival Information Line on 8216 4444, the Festival Website at [www.adelaidefestival.telstra.com.au](http://www.adelaidefestival.telstra.com.au) or SA BASS on 131 246.

**Right: *The Eye***  
(Theatre Kantanka)

Photograph: Courtesy of 2000  
Telstra Adelaide Festival





## HUGHES AND ELDER MEMORIALS HERITAGE LISTED

The State Heritage Authority confirmed a number of places in the State Heritage Register during 1999. Included are memorials to Sir Walter Watson Hughes and Sir Thomas Elder, both situated at the University of Adelaide.

These larger than life statues are memorials to two of South Australia's great benefactors.

Walter Watson Hughes, born in 1803, made a fortune from his investments in the Wallaroo and Moonta mining companies. He used his earnings to establish extensive pastoral holdings. Making his fortune in South Australia, Hughes also returned a portion of it to the Colony. Hughes was a founder of the University of Adelaide, which opened its doors in the 1870s.

Thomas Elder, born in 1818, made his wealth in the mercantile and commercial world, and was a partner in Elder, Smith & Co., which in its day was one of the largest wool handling companies in the world.

Elder encouraged the expansion of the pastoral frontier, and was the one of the first people to see the value



Left:  
*Thomas Elder memorial*



of camels in the outback. He also promoted exploration for minerals, and financed the successful Wallaroo and Moonta copper mines.

Elder was a great benefactor, leaving bequests for workingmen's homes, the Art Gallery, hospitals and churches. But his greatest generosity was kept for the University of Adelaide. His substantial

contribution to the University of £103,000 was crucial to its continuation. He donated £21,000 alone to set up the School of Music. This School became the Conservatorium of Music in 1897, and was the first of its kind in Australia.

State Heritage Authority Presiding Member Rod Matheson, said; "These two statues are deserving of their place in the State Heritage Register. They are memorials to men who contributed significantly to the economic development of colonial South Australia and to the education of its citizens. The University of Adelaide is one of their great legacies to South Australia."

**Below:**  
*Walter Watson Hughes memorial*



The following places have also been included in the State Heritage Register during 1999.

**ANGASTON**  
Zion Lutheran Church  
(former Union Church)

**BELAIR**  
Retreat House

**CLARE**  
Former Wesleyan  
Methodist Church  
Complex (including  
1857 Chapel, 1866  
Church and 1888 Hall)

**COFFIN BAY**  
Former Coffin Bay  
Whaling Site

**EDITHBURGH**  
Clan Ranald Graves

**GUMERACHA**  
Salem Baptist Church

**HILTON**  
West Torrens  
Council Chambers  
(1935 building only)

**HONITON**  
Dry Stone Walling  
Lake Fowler Salt  
Works Site

**KUITPO FOREST**  
Silvicultural Reserves  
(*P. radiata* 1900,  
*P. canariensis* 1903,  
*E. sideroxylon* 1898  
& 1900)

**LAKE LITRA**  
Border Cairn  
(Todd's Obelisk)

**LIGHT PASS**  
Pastor Rechner's  
Cottage

**MOONTA**  
Bald Hill

**PINE POINT**  
Former Grain Shed  
and associated  
Enclosed Yard and  
Stone Wall

**PORT JULIA**  
Jetty and Shed

**PORT MacDONNELL**  
Cape Banks  
Lighthouse

**PORT VICTORIA**  
Jetty and Shed

**SPRINGFIELD**  
House,  
3 Meadowvale Road

**STANSBURY**  
Lime Kiln

**STENHOUSE BAY**  
Inneston Lake and  
Deep Lake  
Geological Sites,  
Marion Lake  
Geological Site, and  
Stenhouse Bay Jetty  
and Loading Plant  
(including ruins of  
Gypsum and Salt  
storage bins, the  
cutting through  
the cliff and the  
conveyor footings)

**STIRLING**  
Pise Cottage,  
48 Gould Road, Stirling

**VICTOR HARBOR**  
House, ('Adare')

**WILLIAMSTOWN**  
Whispering Wall,  
Barossa Reservoir



## BOOK REVIEWS

### Curiosities of South Australia Curiosities of South Australia 2

R Smith, 1998 & 1999  
Smith Books, Athelstone  
\$9.95 each

These books provide a model for taking South Australian history and heritage to a popular audience. The information is accurate and succinct - typically each topic receives two or three pages and a couple of photos - and a diverse range of places and stories caters for all interests. They are books to be dipped into, although once started it's hard to put them down.

Subjects covered in the first volume include the Walter Burley Griffin-designed incinerators at Thebarton and Brompton, Bob the drivers' dog, Fireman Gardner's Memorial in Elder Park, trees planted by royalty and one of Adelaide's lesser known delights, the squirrel carved on the capital of one of the pillars at the entrance to Pilgrim Church in Flinders Street.

The second volume is equally diverse in its content, ranging over windmills, wells, bridges, Crimean War trophies, Blondin's visit to Adelaide, hop, tobacco and lime kilns and the many memorials to Captain Charles Sturt. My favourite item is in the Jamestown Cemetery. What the author terms 'the ultimate headstone' is the actual quarry stone that killed the two men whose grave it marks.

A mere listing of topics doesn't do the booklets justice. The author clearly knows the State intimately, has an eye for the interesting and significant, and rarely strays into the trivial. If you have struggled to convince friends that South Australia's history is worthy of attention, these books would make ideal presents.

Brian Samuels

## HERITAGE NEWS

### Heritage SA on the Net

After a long delay while the departmental website was revamped, HSA is once again on the net. The direct address is [www.heritage.sa.gov.au](http://www.heritage.sa.gov.au)

The site can also be reached from the homepage of the departmental site [www.environment.sa.gov.au](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au)

### Architectural exhibition

An exhibition of contemporary Australian lightweight houses will be held as part of the 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival. Sixteen innovative Australian designs, from sixteen award winning architects, will be exhibited to advance and challenge our notions of what a typical Australian house could be. The designs represent radically different conceptions of living in Australia today. The exhibition will show how the houses relate to Australian landscape, climate and lifestyle. Architects include Glenn Murcutt, Richard Leplastrier, Max Pritchard and Gabriel Poole.

The designs are as varied as the Australian landscape, with some echoing the simplicity of traditional Aboriginal shelters or the much maligned corrugated iron shed, and others more complex, multi-story creations.

The exhibition will be displayed within a pavilion especially constructed for the Festival, and will be situated on the Festival Theatre Plaza. The exhibition will later tour Australia and Europe.

For more information, contact:  
Linda Moscrop  
Telephone: 8303 5694, or

The Royal Australian Institute of  
Architects (SA Chapter)  
Telephone: 8272 7044

### Revised edition of *Barossa Journeys: into a valley of tradition*

Norris Ioannou's *Barossa Journeys* first published in 1997 will have a revised edition due for release in March 2000. This book explores the cultural landscape of the Barossa, and how social and cultural traditions have impacted on the architecture of the region. The Barossa's old customs and symbols, tales of Prussian refugees, and the entrepreneurship of British and German winery pioneers are all explained in this account of a popular tourist area in South Australia.

### SA Signs Historic Agreement


South Australia's reputation as a leader in assessing heritage places has been recognised with the signing of an agreement between the State Heritage Authority and the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC).

The AHC-SA Heritage Accreditation Agreement eliminates a doubling up of processes that in some cases saw both the state authority and the AHC, assess and register the heritage values of South Australian sites.

In recognising South Australia's assessment methods, the Commonwealth will now publish information on South Australian heritage registered places on the Register of the National Estate Database.

For owners and managers of heritage places, the agreement means heritage assessment processes being applied to their properties will be far more streamlined.





## AN UGLY DUCKLING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN WATERS:

### Eleni K. (1943-1966)

Over 800 shipwrecks are recorded as being lost off the South Australian coast, the majority of which occurred during the nineteenth century. But just as twentieth century building heritage is gaining greater importance as we move to the new millennium, so too is our more recent maritime cultural heritage. Following research and fieldwork related to the West Coast Maritime Heritage Survey, a story has unfolded about a World War II Liberty ship lost off Thevenard, near Ceduna. The *Eleni K* (originally named *Johns Hopkins*) broke its back and sank in 1966 shortly after leaving Thevenard for Port Lincoln with a cargo of wheat destined for overseas ports.

Liberty ships were the greatest single-ship type fleet the world has ever known – being the maritime equivalent of the Model T Ford and the Douglas DC3 plane. They were mass-produced in the United States during the war. In three years from 1941, eighteen shipyards produced 2742 of the vessels. Following a comment on their appearance by President Roosevelt they were nicknamed 'Ugly Ducklings'.

Only two Liberty ships survive afloat, both in the United States: the *Jeremiah O'Brien* is docked in San Francisco as a floating museum, and steamed to Normandy and back in 1994 for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of D-Day; and the *John W. Brown* has been restored as a maritime museum, and is berthed at Baltimore.

#### History of vessel prior to loss

The single screw steamer *Eleni K* was built in March 1943 at Baltimore, USA by Bethlehem Fairfield for the United States War Shipping Administration. It was a Liberty ship design constructed to carry troops and cargo during World War II. Its dimensions were 441.7 feet (134.6m) length, 57.1 feet (17.4m) width, 27.9 feet (8.5m) depth, and 7245 gross tons.

Merchant shipping losses during the early years of the war were severely hampering Britain's war effort, by cutting off supply lines. Over 500 000

tons of Allied shipping was being sunk by German submarines and surface raiders each month in the North Atlantic alone. The Liberty ships were mass-produced to an identical design by the hundreds to replace the losses, and increase the flow of supplies to Britain and Russia.

The first Liberty ships generally took from 4.5 to 6 months to build, but with advances in welding technology, pre-fabrication and production line techniques, the construction time was dramatically reduced. For example the *Robert E. Peary* was completed and ready for launching in just four days and 15 hours. A design fault recognised early in the development of Liberty ships was their tendency to crack, and even break in two, around midships. This caused the loss of a number of vessels as well as many lives, and created a great deal of public mistrust in them. Cracking of steel plates in ships was not new but generally stopped at the riveted joints, whereas in the welded Liberty ships they continued into adjacent plates. Liberty ships were the first type of seagoing vessel to be of totally welded construction instead of riveted joints.

Subsequent investigations found that the fault was due to the 'locked-in' stresses created by the welding of the steel plates, the brittleness of the steel in cold water, and the quality of the steel. The problem was rectified as welding technology improved and through the installation of crack arrester plates around the vessel at deck level.

#### Women in Wartime

Due to the lack of labour with many men enlisting for the armed forces, thousands of women were recruited and trained to work in the shipyards, and made up to 30% of the 700 000 strong workforce. On the subject of women's contribution to the war effort the author J.G. Bunker notes:

*"Rosie the Riveter" became a wartime byword as women moved*

*into the shipyards by the thousands, donning goggles, overalls and welding masks and looking as grimy as any male by the end of the working day. "Rosie" became such a part of the national scene in those years that she was immortalised in a cover painting for The Saturday Evening Post.*

Rear Admiral Emory S. Land, head of the United States Maritime Commission, is further quoted by J.G. Bunker as saying:

*Women make excellent welders. To the women it was like a sewing machine job.*

This period of enormous social change was also witnessed in Australia with women joining various branches of the defence and medical services, moving into all facets of industry, as well as forming the Women's Land Army to maintain pastoral and agricultural production.

#### Naming the *Eleni K*

The Liberty ship *Johns Hopkins* was named after Johns Hopkins, a banker, who gave an endowment to commence Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore USA. The University maintains the Johns Hopkins Press, the oldest university press in the United States. The Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins Medical School also honour his name.

During wartime service the *Johns Hopkins* struck a mine on 2 October 1944 when moving anchorage at Marseilles, France while on a voyage from Marseilles to Oran, and was subsequently towed back to the United States by a naval tug, and repaired. Liberty ships were generally crewed during wartime service by 52 persons, with a gun crew of 29. Immediately following the war most of the Liberty ships were sold into the merchant service of American and foreign countries, generally at 35% of construction cost to help Allies who had suffered heavy shipping losses.



**AN UGLY DUCKLING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN WATERS: Eleni K.(1943-1966)**  
continued .....

The *Johns Hopkins* was sold in 1946 to South American owners and renamed *Thetis*, operating firstly under the Panama flag and in 1950 under the Honduran flag. It was sold again in 1952 and renamed *Santa Elena*, and continued to operate under the Honduran flag. In 1960 it was sold to the Eleni Shipping Company of Greece and renamed *Eleni K*, carrying the Greek flag.

**Historical account of loss**

More than a few Liberty ships sank under dubious circumstances; in times of falling freight rates or when insurance was pushed so unreasonably high as to make it unprofitable to operate with low-paying cargoes. There have been a number of Liberty ships, sunk or stranded, for which insurance firms were reluctant to pay claims.

The *Eleni K* arrived in Thevenard, South Australia in mid 1966 to load bulk wheat for shipment to overseas ports via Western Australia. When the vessel was considered unseaworthy by the South Australian shipping authorities, it was taken to Port Adelaide to

undergo repairs before returning to Thevenard. It appears that the navigation authorities had refused to give the *Eleni K* a certificate of seaworthiness and that the repairs needed would have cost about \$30,000.

The *Eleni K* left Thevenard with 7776 tons of wheat on 29 September 1966 bound for Port Lincoln where a further 2000 tons was to be loaded. The Harbourmaster, Captain Jeffries, was concerned about the way the vessel had been loaded, with wheat only in four of the holds. Holds 1 and 2 in the forward part of the ship held 4374 tons of wheat, and holds 4 and 5 in the after section held 3402 tons, leaving no.3 hold and no.3 deep tank in the centre of the ship empty. Before the *Eleni K* departed, the Harbourmaster obtained the written consent of the master of the vessel that the master accept full responsibility for the manner in which it had been loaded.

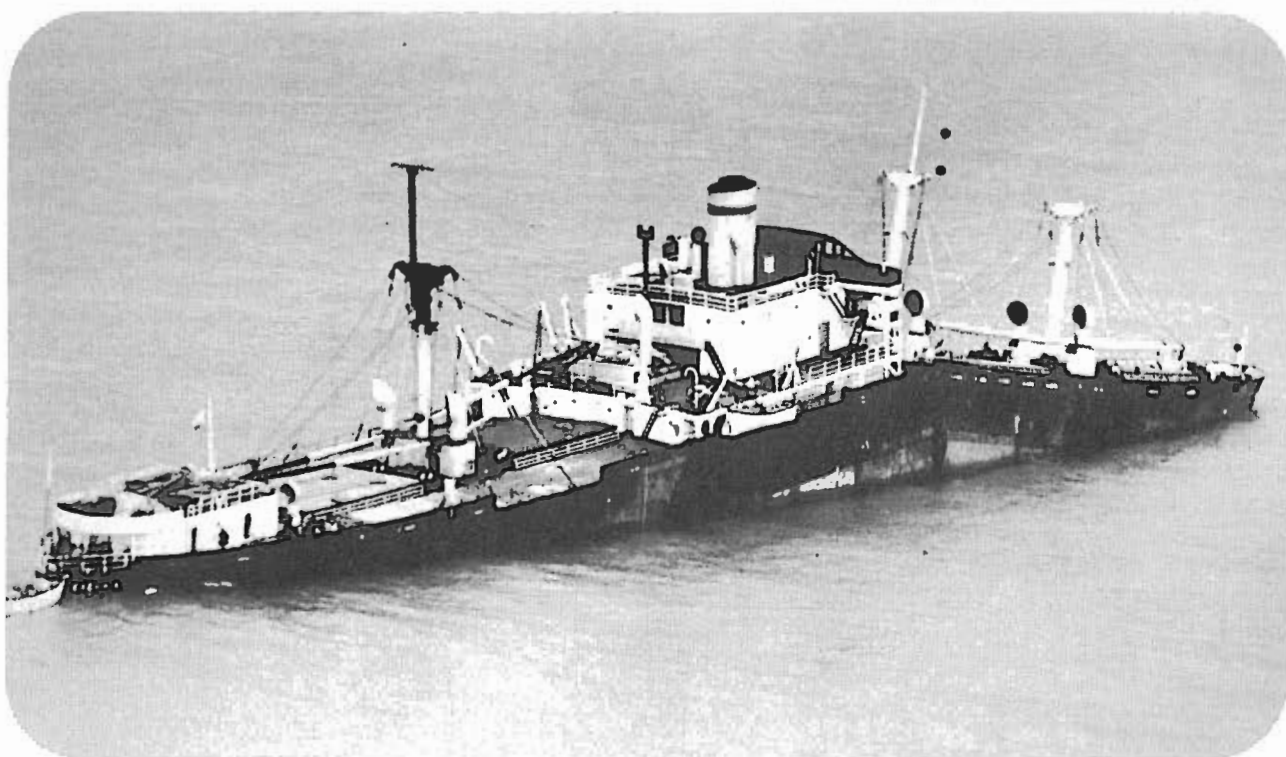
The vessel left Thevenard at 10:20am on 29 September and was about two miles seaward of the Fairway Beacon at 11:40am when the pilot alighted into

the pilot boat to return to Thevenard. Ten minutes later the *Eleni K* broke its back and buckled, or 'hogged', in the area of no.3 hold. The master then signalled on the steam whistle for the pilot to return. The engines were stopped and the vessel was anchored, but it sank soon after. The multinational crew were predominantly Greek and Spanish, with one from Britain and another from Ireland. The wheat aboard the *Eleni K* was valued at \$433,000 and the vessel, which was insured, was valued at about \$300,000.

The German freighter *G.I. Nickelson* salvaged 1770 tons of wheat under difficult weather conditions in mid-October using suction equipment, but further salvage was halted on 25 October.

A decision was made to refloat the *Eleni K* and tow it to a position between Goat and St Peter Islands where it was to be grounded.

**Below:** The *Eleni K* shortly after breaking its back and sinking off Thevenard





The towing operation using the tug *Tusker* took four days and proved very difficult with the towline parting twice. The vessel was finally placed in its present position, in 11 - 13 metres of water, on 17 November 1966. The vessel was flooded in the fore and aft compartments, and awash at the weather deck level at high tide. Due to fears that the vessel would break in two this operation was very complicated. The salvage company employed the 250 ton ketch *Falie*, in the salvage operations.

An inspection of the site carried out on 19 September 1968 revealed that illegal salvage work had been taking place on the wreck. The midships accommodation had been completely gutted by fire, and all paintwork including the funnel had been blackened. The spare propeller had also been blasted off causing considerable damage to the after deck house, and all portholes had been removed.

### The Site Today

The bow is facing northwest and the forward section has shifted about 9 metres to starboard out of alignment with the aft section. The relatively intact vessel, which is sitting upright, broke in two at no.3 hold just forward of the bridge which is attached to the aft section of the site. The top of the bridge is about 2 metres under the surface of the water. The forward section is mostly intact with winches and windlass still sitting on the deck. The engine room can be penetrated, as well as other sections of the site, and the triple expansion steam engine and boilers are still standing in position. Large cylinders containing fire suppressant are lying toppled over in an open compartment on the port side of the engine room. The hull and decks appear to be in a relatively intact state, although there are signs of the hull collapsing and disintegrating due to the corrosion of the steel.

### The Future

As one of the best shipwreck dives in South Australia the *Eleni K* is an important recreational and tourism



**Below:** Principal Maritime Heritage Officer, Bill Jeffery, inspecting the windlass on the foredeck, 1996

asset which will form part of the *West Coast Maritime Heritage Trail*. The extensive remains of the hull provides an impressive sight to any visitor. It also provides a tangible link with World War II and the sweeping technological and social changes brought about as a result of this global conflict. The wreck has suffered in recent decades from damage caused by illegal salvage, as well as corrosion of the hull and fittings. These impacts need to be controlled if the site is to provide continued enjoyment. A case will soon be made to the Commonwealth to declare the site a 'historic shipwreck' under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*, and a program of corrosion monitoring is expected to assist with management recommendations for the future preservation of the site.

**Terry Arnott**  
Maritime Heritage Officer

Derived from a paper presented at the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology conference, *The Pacific Rim – Trade and Migration*, held at Sydney in September 1999.

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