

'Back to Manga Manda'

On 5 June this year, a moving ceremony was conducted at Phillip Creek Mission (Manga Manda). Members of the Stolen Generation, along with Minister Scrymgour, gathered at the site to unveil a memorial plaque. The plaque was attached to the remains of the kitchen wall, one of the last structures still standing at the site which dates back to the 'Stolen Generation' era.

The Office of Environment and Heritage provided advice and assistance to the Stolen Generation group regarding the memorial, and continue to provide advice regarding the conservation of the site.

The Phillip Creek Mission was established in 1945 as an interim ration depot for Aboriginal people displaced from land following the discovery of gold in the Tennant Creek region in the 1930s. By 1956 the site was abandoned as a new permanent site was established at Warrabri.

In 1946 the Native Affairs Department approved the removal of sixteen part Aboriginal children from Manga Manda to the Retta Dixon Home in Darwin. Of the 16 children only 11 remain alive. The Stolen Generation believe that the unveiling of the plaque and final visit to the site has brought closure to this aspect of their lives.



Members of the 'Stolen Generation' at Phillip Creek on 5 June 2004.



Wreck of the 'Young Australia', Roper River, 1920 (State Library of South Australia).

Hidden talents

Stephen Ashford proudly claims to be a mechanic by training, but has always been interested in the history of the Territory. Stephen now works for the Office of the Environment and Heritage, and has recently become a published author - he has recently completed, as part of his job, a book on the Wreck of the *Young Australian*.

The *Young Australian* is the oldest known shipwreck in the Roper River, and is the only known paddle steamer wreck in the Northern Territory. The new book tells the story of the steam ship, her crew, and the events leading to her grounding in 1872.

The *Young Australian* played a key role in the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line (OTL), helping to supply the OT construction depot on the Roper River. The OTL was a remarkable achievement for its time - it served to end Australia's isolation from the rest of the world and to open up development of the Northern Territory. The *Young Australian* is also directly associated with Charles Todd, the man who deserves more credit than any one individual for completion of the OTL.

Stephen Ashford believes that the wreck of the *Young Australian* is an important reminder of the "passion, vision and hard work of our predecessors." He believes that this new book will help to ensure that their legacy is not forgotten.

It is also important for its later use between 1932 and 1963 as the institution known as the 'Bungalow', which provided education for Aboriginal children of the 'stolen generation'. Well-known Aboriginal activist and former head of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs Charles Perkins was born behind the Telegraph Station in June 1936.

The Reserve has strong historical and social associations with the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line between Darwin and Port Augusta, which ended Australia's isolation from the rest of the world. Constructed during 1871-1872 the Telegraph Station played an important role in the exploration and settlement of Central Australia.

Within the Reserve there are some unique vegetation communities as well as several vulnerable and rare plant species including the MacDonnell Ranges cycad.

Protection for Territory icon

It would not be going too far to say that the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve is a Territory icon. It has now achieved protection under the NT *Heritage Conservation Act*, after being declared a heritage place by Minister Scrymgour on 13 April 2004.

The Reserve is significant at a number of levels. Local Arrernte people have strong spiritual associations with the site, with a number of sacred sites recorded within the Reserve.

The Telegraph Station was also a point of contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans. It is associated with FJ Gillen, who in collaboration with Baldwin Spencer, made important contributions to the discipline of anthropology.

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

HERITAGE NEWS

Office of Environment and Heritage

Heritage Week coming up for Darwin

The National Trust (Northern Territory) will be holding a series of activities to celebrate Heritage Week 2004, to be held in Darwin from 12 to 19 September.

Heritage Week will get off to a flying start with an Open Day at the Myilly Point Heritage Precinct on Sunday 12 September. All four houses and gardens will be open, and Devonshire teas and light lunches will be available in the garden at Burnett House.

Various activities will continue at Myilly Point throughout Heritage Week. On Friday 17 September a sunset cocktail party will be held at Burnett House to announce the winners of the 2004 Heritage Awards.

Other historical attractions and exhibits will also be organised around Darwin to coincide with the week's activities, including a special night of music and maritime memories at the Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Club, and a 'white glove' tour at the State reference library. There will also be special exhibits and tours at a number of other local historical attractions.

For more information, contact Christine Bond, Chair of the Larrakeyah Branch of the National Trust (NT). You can telephone Christine on 041 8833 561 or email her at christinebond@octa4.net.au



Burnett House, Myilly Point, Darwin.



From the Minister:

I have been the Minister for the Environment and Heritage for just over six months now, and I must say I think the Territory's heritage is in good hands.

For its part, the Government is committed to providing a strong framework for heritage management, and is also determined to set a good example when it comes to maintaining heritage places. I was pleased to announce in June this year that the Government has allocated \$1 million per year for the repair and maintenance of government-owned heritage places, starting this financial year. This is a major step forward in heritage management in the Territory, because the Government is the largest single owner of heritage assets in the Territory.

Government also continues to add to the number of places that enjoy legal protection under the *Heritage Conservation Act* as registered heritage places. Since becoming Minister, I have declared the Angurugu Heritage Precinct (on Groote Eylandt) and the Alice Springs Telegraph Station as heritage places.

Community-based organisations also continue to play an indispensable role in promoting our heritage. A notable example is Darwin's 'Heritage Week', commencing on 12 September. Heritage week has been organised through the hard work of the National Trust, with support from my Office of Environment and Heritage.

I encourage you to take part in 'Heritage Week', and to reflect on what can be achieved together in the future, as we face the challenges of conserving our heritage here in the Territory.

Marion Scrymgour

If you have any queries about 'Heritage News' please contact Michael Wells at the Office of Environment and Heritage on 8924 4141, email michael.wells@nt.gov.au

Last cyclone wreck discovered

There was much excitement late last year surrounding the discovery of the wreck of the 'Booya' in the northern reaches of Darwin Harbour. The ship had been lost during Cyclone Tracy, its fate unknown for almost 30 years.

That left only one Cyclone Tracy wreck unaccounted for in Darwin Harbour. In May this year, that mystery was solved when divers discovered the wreck of the ferry the 'Darwin Princess'. Incredibly, the wreck of the 'Princess' lies only about a kilometre from the wreck of the 'Booya', leading to some speculation that the fate of the two vessels may have been linked on the night of the Cyclone.

Whatever the truth of this, the 'Darwin Princess' shares many of the same qualities as that of the 'Booya'. It has lain undisturbed on the sea bed for almost 30 years, and a rich marine ecosystem has developed around it. It also has strong symbolic significance as the place where the young skipper of the 'Princess', Raymond Curtain, lost his life.

Minister Scrymgour signed an interim Conservation Order (ICO) over the site on 2 June 2004, and the area around the wreck has been declared a 'prohibited area' by the Harbourmaster. At the time of writing, the Coroner's Office still has control of the site, as investigations continue as to the circumstances surrounding the loss of the ship.



The 'Darwin Princess'. Picture courtesy of the Curtain family.

Digging up the past

John George Knight was a prominent figure in the early years of European Settlement in Darwin. Work is now underway to uncover the remains of a house which he designed and built in the 1880s, known as 'Knight's Folly' or the 'Mud Hut'.

Archaeologist Julie Mastin has been working patiently in recent weeks on the site where the house once stood, on the escarpment below Government House. Her work has been complicated by the fact that another house was built on the site in the late 1930s on top of the remains of Knight's house.

Pictured: 'Knight's Folly' in 1890, with Government House to the right, Tracey Collection, Northern Territory Library.

Progress was slow on the site until the Office of Environment and Heritage stepped in to help, and organised a team from Australian Conservation Volunteers to work on the site for a couple of weeks. There are now high hopes that solid evidence will be uncovered of Knight's building.

Knight was a man of many abilities. He eventually became Government Resident of the Northern Territory, but prior to this enjoyed a reputation as a skilled engineer and architect. He designed a number of prominent and rather grand buildings in Darwin, including Government House, the Administrator's Offices, and the Town Hall. By comparison, the design of the building now being investigated was quite eccentric, perhaps revealing another side of Knight's character.



New lease on life for old Mission Buildings

Exciting things are happening at Angurugu Community on Groote Eylandt. The local community has been working with both the Federal and Territory governments to preserve a number of important historical buildings.

The buildings form a picturesque 'Heritage Precinct', and include a Church, two 'Mission Houses' and an Old School Building. They were built in the 1940s, at a time when the Island was controlled by the Church Missionary Society.

The local community value the 'old mission buildings' and has done its best to make sure they continue to be used and maintained. In recent years, some major renovation work has been undertaken by the local Community as part of their CDEP Program. This work has been carried out with the assistance of the NT Government's Office of Environment and Heritage and the Federal Government.

The work on the Old School Building is of particular note. In mid 2003 this old building was almost derelict, but recent work has seen it transformed. The Community intends to use the newly renovated building as a keeping place and museum.

On 17 March 2004, Minister Scrymgour signed an instrument declaring the Angurugu Heritage Precinct to be a registered heritage place.



Above: The Old School Building May 2003.
Below: The same view, March 2004.



Above: Observation Post at Sandy Creek, Casuarina.

Below: Tennant Creek Telegraph Station.

These places will see major work completed in 2004/05 as part of the Government's new program.



Improving heritage management 'on the ground'

They say "the Territory is different". It is certainly true that there are particular challenges in the Territory regarding the maintenance of historical structures.

Many structures have succumbed over the years to the extremes of the Territory environment. An important role of the Territory Government is to provide legal protection to key historic places that have survived, and ensure that they are properly maintained.

In order to make sure that it leads by example in this regard, the Government announced in June this year that it has committed \$1 million per year to the repair and maintenance of heritage places that are owned by the Government.

Minister Scrymgour said in June that as the single largest owner of heritage assets, it was important that the Government set the standard by keeping them in good shape. The new Repairs and Maintenance Program will remove the somewhat *ad hoc* approach of the past. The initial part of the program will be to undertake 'catch-up' works on heritage places that have been under-maintained.

The Government continues to make available \$200,000 every year to private owners of heritage places, in order to assist with the conservation of those places.