

# HERITAGE NEWS

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts



## From the Minister:

Welcome to another issue of 'Heritage News', which once again covers a wide range of matters relating to heritage management in the Territory. I think this issue illustrates very clearly how successful heritage management requires a multitude of strategies.

A vital part of heritage management is providing places with legal protection, and you can learn more in this issue about several places that I have recently added to the NT Heritage Register.

However, there is a lot more to heritage management than this. Once places are protected, it is vital to ensure their long-term future. As the Territory's single largest owner of heritage assets, it is important that the Government leads by example in this regard.

It is essential to interpret and promote the Territory's heritage, and sometimes this involves thinking 'outside the square'.

I also think that while the big gestures are important, we need to recognise the value of small treasures from the past. It is through these objects, once handled by people like ourselves many years ago, that we humanise the past.

Finally, government can only do so much. The Government needs to work in partnership with community organisations and advisory bodies that are working to conserve our unique heritage.

I hope you enjoy reading in this issue of 'Heritage News' about how the Government is implementing some of these ideas on the ground.

Marion Scrymgeour

## Heritage Advisory Council Out and About

Members of the Heritage Advisory Council (HAC) met in Darwin recently and took the opportunity to visit a number of sites around Darwin associated with World War Two.

There has been increasing interest in World War Two history in recent years and the Department of Natural Resources Environment and the Arts has been involved in a number of initiatives designed to conserve and interpret sites associated with the War.

The HAC inspected recently completed conservation work carried out on the Quarantine Anti-Aircraft Battery at East Arm. Established in 1941, this site is highly significant for its relative intactness and its unique design. The Battery was used to defend the South West section of Darwin Harbour. At least one enemy bomber was shot down by the Battery during a Japanese raid on 22 February 1942.

The HAC also visited an interpretive display at Charles Darwin National Park, housed in one of twelve 'Armco' shelters dating from World War Two. These shelters were used to store explosives and armaments during the War, and also during the 'Confrontation' period with Indonesia and the Vietnam War. HAC Chairman Bob Alford had a personal connection with the site, having served there with the RAAF in the 1960s.



Interpretive display at Charles Darwin National Park

**If you have any queries about 'Heritage News' please contact Michael Wells of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts on 89244142, email [michael.wells@nt.gov.au](mailto:michael.wells@nt.gov.au)**

## Making a Difference on the Ground

The NT Government continues to lead by example in the conservation of the Territory's heritage, with another one million dollars being spent this year on the repair and maintenance of Government-owned heritage places.

Work has recently been completed to:

- Lyons Cottage, Darwin;
- WWII Explosives Stores, Charles Darwin National Park, Darwin;
- WWII Anti Aircraft Battery, Darwin.
- Adelaide River Railway Station;
- Bonney Well, north of Tennant Creek; and
- Bullita Station Precinct, Timber Creek.

The work at Bullita Station, in Gregory National Park, will give the increasing number of visitors to the Park a renewed appreciation of the early pastoral history of the area.

Conservation work was carried out to the Homestead itself, the meathouse, and the nearby timber stockyards, giving these rather dilapidated structures a new lease on life.

Local Aboriginal people helped with the work to the stockyards. New interpretive signs have been made up and will be installed soon.

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.



Bullita Stockyards

## More Treasure from the Mud



Hollow cannon ball with screw-in plug removed



Wooden spear head

In the last issue of Heritage News, it was reported that several interesting historical items had been pulled from the mud as a result of the dredging work being carried out as part of the Darwin City Waterfront development.

More treasures have now been uncovered, some of them with an element of mystery attached. The most remarkable find is a serrated wooden Aboriginal spear head of an unknown age. Expert advice indicates that the spear is likely to be of relatively recent origin, since it appears to have been made with a metal tool. However it is very similar to spears used by local Aboriginal people before European arrival.

Another remarkable find is two cannon balls, each of them hollow with a removable screw-out plug on one side. This type of cannon ball was filled with explosive and fitted with a fuse, so that it would explode after hitting its target. The balls are believed to date from the 1860s, when Darwin was first settled by Europeans. They are highly unlikely to have been fired in anger, and in fact may have been used as ballast.

Other finds include a pair of brass rowlocks, a pulley, a mystery steel object which may have been a measuring weight, and a steel adze possibly used in the construction of the wharf.

## Unique Church Protected

St. Barbara's Catholic Church in Batchelor, built in 1954, has been declared as a heritage place by Minister Scrymgeour.

The church was built on the site of the former 1940s Royal Australian Air Force Chapel, and was constructed by Irish miners employed at Rum Jungle Uranium Mine by the British firm George Wimpey and Co. Pty. Ltd.

The church is little changed from when it was first constructed, and retains many of its original features. St Barbara's was designed for the local climate at a time when air conditioning was rare. It features wide overhanging eaves, large banks of louvres, and a vented roof. The use of recycled timber and prefabricated steel is unusual.

St Barbara's was named after the patron saint for architects, builders, carpenters, construction workers, explosive workers, geologists and miners, all of whom worked on the Rum Jungle uranium project.

The church continues to be used as a place of worship by people in and around Batchelor.



St Barbara's Church in Batchelor

## Railway Heritage Protected

In December last year Minister Scrymgeour declared the old Railway House at the Stella Maris Hostel in Darwin a heritage place - a step which will hopefully contribute to transforming a building which is a bit of an 'ugly duckling' into a swan.

The building has been modified over the years and is not in good condition, but it is actually very significant. It was originally constructed as a residence for staff of the now defunct North Australia Railway (NAR), in the inter-war period.

It represents a style of building that was built in Darwin by the Commonwealth after it took over the Territory in 1911 - houses

designed for the tropics, with a central 'core' and a verandah all round. Houses of this design are now extremely rare.

The Department of Natural Resources Environment and the Arts is working with the owners to conserve the building. A conservation plan for the building is close to completion, and grant money has been made available this year for the owners to complete urgent conservation works.

It is envisaged that in due course further conservation work will be carried out, and that as a result the significance of this building will be able to be fully appreciated by the public.



The Old Railway House

## 'A Wartime Journey' Launched

The Chief Minister recently launched a new product called 'A Wartime Journey'.

This innovative package combines a book with two audio CDs, and is a comprehensive guide to sites associated with World War Two along the Stuart Highway between Alice Springs and Darwin.

'A Wartime Journey' was developed as a joint effort between NRETA, the NT Tourist Commission, and the NT Archives. It was co-authored by Bob Alford and Howard Pearce, with CD production by Mike Sweet.

The product is aimed primarily at the self-drive market. For people making the journey by car along the Stuart Highway, it is designed to bring alive the war years, when the Stuart Highway was the subject of intense activity.

It is also designed to appeal to anyone interested in the history of the Northern Territory whether they are making the journey along the Stuart Highway or not; for even though the book focuses on World War Two, it is also rich in information about the broader sweep of the history of the Territory.

The audio CDs include music of the times, and personal reminiscences sourced from the NT Archives.



Lt. Clyde Barnett, USAAF, at Strauss Airstrip, 1942

## Flynn's Mantle of Safety



Wimmera Home in the late 1930s

The Reverend John Flynn was famous for saying that he wanted to provide outback Australians with a 'Mantle of Safety'. He worked tirelessly to achieve this through the provision of practical medical care to isolated settlers in the outback, most famously through the founding of the Flying Doctor Service.

Flynn also built a number of hospitals, or 'homes' in isolated areas. Four were built in the Northern Territory. One of these was the Wimmera Home in the Victoria River District, which was built in 1923-24 and operated until 1939.

The dedication of the sisters who worked in Wimmera Home was legendary, and a visit to the Home was valued as much for the social contact it offered than anything else. One man recalled that "after weeks, perhaps months, of squatting on logs with a blackened quartpot of tea and a hunk of overland brownie, the sheer physical satisfaction of sitting in a chair, sipping tea out of dainty china, nibbling at some tasty delicacy, was something to relish. A half an hour's general chat with an intelligent woman - and the AIM had room for no other sort - was the only social interlude a bagman was ever likely to enjoy."

Wimmera Home was recently declared as a heritage place by Minister Scrymgeour.

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## Heritage in 'The Alice'

Some special events are coming up in Alice Springs which are bound to be of interest to anyone interested in the unique heritage of the Town.

The McDouall Stuart branch of the National Trust is organising a range of activities for Heritage Week in Alice Springs, to be held from 23 to 29 April. The theme for this year is 'Outback Innovations'.

There will be re-enactments at the old Alice Springs Telegraph Station, showing what life would have been like at the Station in times past. Visitors will be able to see morse code messages being sent, and see displays of spinning, blacksmithing, sheep shearing and more.

Open days will be held at a number of historic properties, and there will be a nostalgic night at the flicks, with special screenings of old movies at the Pioneer Theatre open air cinema.

Also, on the weekend of 5-7 May, there will be a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the John Flynn Memorial Church, and of the 80th anniversary of Adelaide House. The John Flynn Church was recently declared as a heritage place by Minister Scrymgeour.

For more information about the final program, phone Warwick Marsh of the National Trust on 8952 5950.