

Dry Creek Explosives Magazine Reserve: A heritage study.

A report to the City of Salisbury
PO Box 8
SALISBURY SA 5108

by

Vivienne Wood, B.A., B.Litt.

Archaeological Consultant
21 Liston Street
PARKSIDE SA 5063
Telephone/fax (08) 271 8549

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FIGURE 1: The study region.

FIGURE 2: Map of the study area showing proposed works.

FIGURE 3: Map showing which parts of the Reserve are heritage listed.

PLATE 1: Map of the Explosives Magazine Reserve looking north. Magazine Road is on the right of the photo. Also note the disused telegraph/power line, the drains in the foreground and the magazines and associated earth mounds to the left.

PLATE 2: Explosive Magazine No. 1, looking north along the road constructed for the trucks. Also note the remnant tramline in the foreground.

PLATE 3: Embankment along which the tramline was constructed. Note the remnant tramline in the foreground.

PLATE 3: Remains of wooden bridge to the west of Magazine No. 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the direction of the City of Salisbury, a heritage study has been undertaken of the Explosives Magazine Reserve at Dry Creek (see Figures 1 and 2). This study was carried out in response to the possible development of the site and was to include both Aboriginal and 'European' heritage.

A field survey of the location was carried out on Friday 2 August 1996. The field team comprised the archaeologist, Vincent Branson and Vincent Copley, representatives of the Kurna Aboriginal Community Heritage Association Inc. (KACHA), and Craig Westell. This report presents the findings of the survey as well as providing recommendations regarding possible future developments.

2. CONSULTATION

Prior to the fieldwork, the project was discussed with Paul Dixon, Chairperson of the Kurna Aboriginal Community Heritage Association Inc. Fred Warrior and Phoebe Wanganeen, both members of the Association, were subsequently contacted and arrangements made for two representatives to participate in the survey.

Consultation relating to the European heritage of the location was directed towards the State Heritage Branch of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources and the Australian Heritage Commission.

3. THE STUDY AREA

The Explosives Magazine Reserve, comprising an area measuring 200m by 1km, is located at Dry Creek, approximately 10km north of Adelaide (see Figures 1 and 2). Access to the Reserve is via Cormack Road and Magazine Road. The study area is adjacent to the ICI-Penrice salt crystallization pans.

The Reserve is located at the centre of the Northern Adelaide Plains which is the largest of a series of low lying Tertiary embayments on the eastern shore of the Gulf St. Vincent (Daily *et al.* 1988). It is within the intertidal to supratidal zone of the Port Adelaide estuarine system but is now protected from marine inundation by extensive levees. These levees were constructed by hand in 1894 using the labour of unemployed men (Donovan 1991:16).

Remnants of the original vegetation still exist across the study area and includes a samphire marsh community of *Salicornia australis* and *Arthrocnemum halocnemoides*. A range of introduced grasses and weeds are also present. The vast majority of the reserve has been disturbed through the construction of the explosives magazines and their associated bunkers, which were excavated from areas adjacent to the buildings. These depressions are now filled with water and reeds. In addition, a number of drains have been excavated across the study area (see Plate 1 and Figure 2). There appears to be an unknown quantity of landfill (e.g. bricks, concrete, etc.) in some areas of the reserve.

4. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was undertaken on Friday 2 August 1996. The area was covered by the four field team members walking in transects approximately 5m apart, with the entire area being covered by pedestrian survey. Ground surface visibility was generally low due to dense grass cover, mostly introduced, and samphire. Water proved to be an inhibiting factor as well as the artificial lagoons and drains were full, due to heavy rains, and there was also water lying over the ground generally. Despite this low visibility, there were still a number of areas of where the ground surface was exposed and the transects targeted these.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Aboriginal sites

No Aboriginal archaeological sites were recorded during the survey. A number of Aboriginal archaeological sites have however been recorded immediately to the east of the reserve, some of which have since been destroyed or disturbed through wetland and road construction (the South Road - Salisbury Highway Connector now runs approximately 200m east of the Reserve - see Wood 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1994a, 1994b).

The closest of these sites was recorded by Edmonds (1990) during a survey undertaken for the proposed MFP core site (MFP Site 3). It is located immediately east of the roadside fence extending along Magazine Road. The site comprises a scatter of quartz artefacts, including flakes and cores, exposed on a surface of yellowish silt immediately adjacent to a small, ephemeral watercourse over an area 8m x 2m. The other sites recorded in the general area are similar in nature to this site.

Given the close proximity of this site to the present study area, the potential for further cultural material to have occurred was considered to be relatively high. The negative result is however not surprising considering the degree of ground surface disturbance across the study area due to the construction of the explosive magazines.

5.2 European sites

The following summary provides a description of the Explosives Magazine Reserve and is taken from the Salisbury Heritage Survey publication (Donovan 1991:170-172 - see Appendix I for the full report on the magazines). It includes a short history compiled by L.J. Brown, former Magazine Keeper.

By 1900 the explosives trade had grown to such an extent that North Arm magazine could no longer cope, so a reserve magazine was established in Port Gawler Creek ... This was a magazine consisting of four floating hulks ... and other lighters were added to this fleet when large consignments came in from overseas. Explosives were conveyed from Port Gawler to North Arm by ketch as required. This was unsatisfactory, so the Dry Creek Magazine (then known as Yatala Magazine) was built in 1903 on a reserve of 278 acres. It was under the control of the Marine Board and consisted of 10 magazines, each with a capacity of 30 tons.

On December 31st, 1903, all explosives (83.5 tons) were transferred from North Arm and Port Gawler to the new magazines at Dry Creek. Port Gawler Magazine was dispensed with, but North Arm was still used as an unloading point for overseas ships. When unloaded, the explosives were transported by horse and dray to Dry Creek. Due to the change in location of the Magazines, a house was built near the reserve at Dry Creek for the Magazine Keeper, Mr G.A. Halsey, so he could be on call whenever required. This house consisted of four wooden rooms from the Quarantine Station, joined together under a common roof, with lean-to kitchen and back verandah added. ...

A jetty was constructed at Broad Creek, and was first used in January, 1906. A 1.5 mile tramline was constructed from the Magazines to Broad Creek in that same year. Dry Creek now had direct access to the sea, making it unnecessary to unload explosives at North Arm, and this Magazine was then closed.

Lighters were hired from the Harbours Board Dockyard when overseas shipments arrived, but by 1910 the trade had grown to such an extent that it was decided the Magazine should have its own floating plant, and so two 25-ton lighters were built. Two years later, another two lighters, this time 30-tons, were added, and again in 1914 one more 30-ton lighter. They were towed by launches of the S.A. Harbours Board, with up to three in a train, and mainly used in the protected waters of the Port River and North Arm, as they were flat-bottomed and unsuitable for the open sea. ...

[After an incident when fire was discovered on a vessel about to discharge its load of explosives, ships were refused authorisation to proceed up the river to North Arm. A new unloading berth was developed at Snapper Point, though it was 1913 before the proper mooring facilities and mounded area were completed ...].

During the 1914-18 War, the Military used No. 1 and No. 2 Magazines, and had a guard of 30 men there. The next few years saw the explosives trade increase to such an extent that storage capacity was insufficient, and between 1914 and 1919, four 30 tone capacity magazines were constructed.

The Magazines were always built on wooden studs, and from 1917 until today they have been sinking and have had to be lifted up again. In 1919, with extra storage space available, a limit of 25 tons was placed on each magazine. ...

World War 2 began in September, 1939, ... we applied to have a military guard placed at the magazines in the interest of public safety. This was not granted because no military ammunition was stored there. We therefore employed four watchmen of our own from November, 1939 to October, 1945. Each man was sworn in as a special constable, and was armed with a revolver. Our permanent staff were also sworn in as special constables. ...

During 1961, there was a big expansion in industry, and with the shortage of land close to the city, several factories were built near our area. In an effort to protect our proper safety distances, land was purchased in 1961 and 1962 which increased the size of the Reserve. ...

With the building of a large foundry adjacent to our tramline, it became necessary in the interest of safety to change our method of transporting explosives to and from Dry Creek Railway Station. The use of horse-drawn trucks ceased and two Leyland trucks were purchased. A specially constructed magazine was built by our staff on each of these trucks, and they came into use in December, 1964. A metal road was constructed along the front of the magazines for the use of the trucks, and a garage built to house them. As we had no further use for our tramline, it was pulled up and sold during 1966 ... As we had no further use for the horses, they were disposed of on January 14, 1965.

The old storerooms at the office were condemned in 1971, and new storerooms-lunchroom were erected and in use by August, 1972 ...

A small laboratory was erected at the Reserve and finished on July 31st, 1973".

The ten original magazines remain on the Reserve. These are in a row, north to south. Five magazines were located to the west of these although these are no longer present, and the two rows were separated by a 2ft railway line. Plate 2 provides a view of Magazine No. 1 - looking north along the road constructed along the front of the magazines for the use of the trucks (see Appendix I for a description of the architectural details of the magazines). A small section of the original tramline can also be seen in Plates 2 and 3. The former photo shows the tracks present at southern end of the reserve adjacent to magazine no. 1, while the latter photo shows the remains of tracks present at the northern end of the reserve where the line curved towards Broad Creek, where the explosives were unloaded or loaded onto the boats. The remains of a steel barge are still located at the mouth of Broad Creek as are the remains of the wharf and parts of the tram track.

Other features present within the Magazine Reserve relating to its early use are posts associated with a disused telegraph/power line (see Plate 1) and a small wooden bridge, the remains of which measure approximately 1m x 1m (see Plate 4). The latter is located about 50m west of the embankment associated with the magazines (opposite magazine no. 3) and may have been associated with the period when horse-drawn carts were used. Its location may indicate the channel of a previous ephemeral watercourse.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the survey the following recommendations are made.

- Although no Aboriginal sites were found within the study area, it must be pointed out that all Aboriginal archaeological sites, objects and remains in South Australia are protected by provisions of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act, 1988*, which makes it an offence to collect, damage or destroy Aboriginal sites, objects or remains without the written authorisation of the Minister for State Aboriginal Affairs. Thus, should development occur within the study area and Aboriginal sites, objects and remains be unearthed, work should stop immediately and contact made with staff at the Department of State Aboriginal Affairs for instructions on how to proceed (telephone 226 8900) (see Appendix II for a letter of endorsement from KACHA Inc.
- The Dry Creek Explosives Magazines and their associated bunds are registered on the State Heritage Register and are therefore protected under the *Heritage Act 1993*, which makes it an offence to damage or destroy relics without the written permission of the Minister for Environment and Resources. However, as the listing does not include some tramline remnants, the wooden bridge noted during the present survey, or the now disused telegraph/power line, it is recommended that the heritage listing be amended to include the entire Magazine Reserve, for the reasons stated above: i.e. they are extremely significant in that they demonstrate important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history as well as being outstanding representatives of particular construction techniques or design characteristics. In addition, their significance is enhanced because of the fact that the magazines are not all that remains of this particular activity and are in fact associated with parts of the tramline as well as the jetty at Broad Creek from whence the explosives were transported which remain intact. It is therefore recommended that no developments of any kind be allowed to proceed within the Explosives Magazine Reserve.

7. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX I:

Entry for the Explosives Magazines at Dry Creek (from Donovan 1991)

CITY of SALISBURY HERITAGE SURVEY

Explosive Magazines

Item No R / 13

Magazine Road, Dry Creek, 5094

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

These are significant items in their own right because of their method of construction and their location relative to one another. They are also particularly important for the manner in which they reflect the government's role in the development of the state, as the custodian of explosives. These represented an important function of the government and are the most extensive complex of early explosive magazines in South Australia.

Significant Interest

- **Historical** This complex of magazines was built in 1903 to replace an earlier government magazine at the North Arm. They were the first repository for explosives imported into South Australia. The magazines continue in use.
- **Architectural** The magazines are of particular significance because of their design and construction and the manner in which they reflect the dangerous nature of the materials to be stored and the measures taken to minimise the risk of accidents.
- **Environmental** The magazines are in an isolated location on the former swamp lands near the North Arm.

RECOMMENDATION

The complex of magazines should be included on the Register of State Heritage Items. -

We also recommend that the item should be included on the Register of the National Estate.

Explosive Magazines

Heritage Theme Economic development
Sub-Theme Explosives

ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT INTEREST

HISTORICAL

Architect Government Architect.

Date 1903

Original owner South Australian Government

Original Use Storage of explosives

The first government magazine at Dry Creek was built on stilts at the North Arm. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century these became inadequate for the amount of explosives being imported into the colony.

The later complex at Dry Creek was built in 1903 on a reserve of 287 acres and consisted of ten magazines each with a capacity of 30 tons. Vessels were unloaded at the North Arm and the explosives delivered by horse and cart to the magazines. A jetty was built at Broad Creek in 1906 and one and a half miles of tramline built to the magazines for the transport of explosives.

Currently there are a number of magazines running in a north-south direction, there are the original ten magazines in a row on the east and five magazines on the west. The two rows were separated by a 2ft railway line which ran between the two rows of magazines

A tramway ran from the Dry Creek railway station to the magazines.

The Chemistry department assumed control of the magazines in 1937.

L.J. Brown, Magazine Keeper, who was associated with the complex for sixty-two years compiled a short history of the complex in 1976, shortly before his retirement.

By 1900 the explosives trade had grown to such an extent that North Arm magazine could no longer cope, so a reserve magazine was established in Port Gawler Creek, with J.A. Brown, (my father), in charge. This was a magazine consisting of four floating hulks (No 1 Hulk, Albury, Wodonga and Kennedy), and other lighters were added to this fleet when large consignments came in from overseas. Explosives were conveyed from Port Gawler to North Arm by ketch as required. This was unsatisfactory, so the Dry Creek Magazine (then known as Yatala Magazine) was built in 1903 on a reserve of 278 acres. It was under the control of the Marine Board and consisted of 10 magazines, each with a capacity of 30 tons.

On December 31st, 1903, all explosives (83 1/2 tons) were transferred from North Arm and Port Gawler to the new magazines at Dry Creek. Port Gawler Magazine was dispensed with, but North Arm was still used as an unloading point for overseas ships. When unloaded, the explosives were transported by horse and dray to Dry Creek. Due to the change in location of the Magazines, a house was built near the reserve at Dry Creek for the Magazine Keeper, Mr G.A. Halsey, so he could be on call whenever required. This house consisted of four wooden rooms from the Quarantine Station, joined together under a common roof, with lean-to kitchen and back verandah added. Mr Halsey moved to Dry Creek on April 25th, 1904, and the Assistant Magazine Keeper, F. Reynolds, occupied the house at North Arm.

A jetty was constructed at Broad Creek, and was first used in January, 1906. A 1 1/2-mile tramline was constructed from the Magazines to Broad Creek in that same year. Dry Creek now had direct access to the sea, making it unnecessary to unload explosives at North Arm, and this Magazine was then closed.

Lighters were hired from the Harbours Board Dockyard when overseas shipments arrived, but by 1910 the trade had grown to such an extent that it was decided the Magazine should have its own floating plant, and so two 25-ton lighters were built. Two years later, another two lighters, this time 30-tons, were added, and again in 1914 one more 30-ton lighter. They were towed by launches of the S.A. Harbours Board, with up to three in a train, and mainly used in the protected waters of the Port River and North Arm, as they were flat-bottomed and unsuitable for the open sea. . . .

[After an incident when fire was discovered on a vessel about to discharge its load of explosives, ships were refused authorisation to proceed up the river to North Arm. A new unloading berth was developed at Snapper Point, though it was 1913 before the proper mooring facilities and mounded area were completed. Loads in excess of 300 tons were required to unload at the 'Outer Ground' - six miles north of Outer Harbor.]

During the 1914-18 War, the Military used No. 1 and No. 2 Magazines, and had a guard of 30 men there. The next few years saw the explosives trade increase to such an extent that storage capacity was insufficient, and between 1915 and 1919, four 30-ton capacity magazines were constructed.

The Magazines were always built on wooden studs, and from 1917 until today have been sinking and have had to be lifted up again. In 1919, with extra storage space available, a limit of 25 tons was placed on each magazine.

During 1904, 6,000 trees (mostly Tamarisk) were planted for windbreaks and beautification on the Reserve and at the magazine Keeper's cottage. A further 1,000 were planted in 1908, and in about 1910 it was decided to sink artesian bores to water them. . . .

World War 2 began in September, 1939, and brought about many changes in the carriage of explosives. Prior to this, most explosives came by ship from the U.K., but in the early 40's this practice was discontinued. Nobel's Factory at Deer Park, Victoria, had expanded to such an extent that they were quite capable of supplying the needs of the country. Shipping from Victoria continued until November, 1946, when the S.S. 'Noora' was the last vessel to arrive. It was decided to change to rail transport and this method has continued ever since.

When war broke out, we applied to have a military guard placed at the magazines in the interest of public safety. This was not granted because no military ammunition was stored there. We therefore employed four watchmen of our own from November, 1939 to October, 1945. Each man was sworn in as a special constable, and was armed with a revolver. Our permanent staff were also sworn in as special constables. . . .

I have mentioned that the Magazine Keeper's cottage at Dry Creek was built in 1904. The Magazine Keeper at this time was Mr G.A. Halsey, who held the position from 1895 to 1932. During 1912 the Premier of the day, the Hon. John Verran, made an inspection of the magazine area, and when he saw the cottage, he classed it as unfit for habitation, . . . A new brick house was therefore constructed opposite the old one, and Mr. Halsey moved in on May 14th, 1913. The old house was not condemned however, and three weeks later my father

(J.A. Brown) moved in and lived there until 1938 - 25 years in all. I occupied the same cottage after my father, until 1956 (18 years), and Mr F.M. Bushell occupied it until 1971 (15 years), when it was condemned, and replaced by a new asbestos cottage. . . .

During 1961, there was a big expansion in industry, and with the shortage of land close to the city, several factories were built near our area. In an effort to protect our proper safety distances, land was purchased in 1961 and 1962 which increased the size of the Reserve. . . .

With the building of a large foundry adjacent to our tramline, it became necessary in the interest of safety to change our method of transporting explosives to and from Dry Creek Railway Station. The use of horse-drawn trucks ceased and two Leyland trucks were purchased. A specially constructed magazine was built by our staff on each of these trucks, and they came into use in December, 1964. A metal road was constructed along the front of the magazines for the use of the trucks, and a garage built to house them. As we had no further use for our tramline, it was pulled up and sold during 1966. . . . As we had no further use for the horses, they were disposed of on January 14th, 1965.

The old storerooms at the office were condemned in 1971, and new storerooms-lunchroom were erected and in use by August, 1972. . . .

A small laboratory was erected at the Reserve and finished on July 31st, 1973.

15/5/76

L.J. Brown
Magazine Keeper

ARCHITECTURAL

Size Ten single storey buildings in a row
Wall Materials Painted corrugated galvanised iron
Roof Form Hipped with large roof vent
Roof Material Painted corrugated galvanised iron
Other features Each magazine is surrounded by an earth mound

The site consists of several small buildings and sheds with a few trees, and ten identical storage buildings in one long row. Each shed is surrounded on three sides by earth mounds. In recent times rough concrete ends have been built at the ends of each U-shaped mound. On the fourth side (the entrance side) there is an access roadway for trucks delivering and taking explosives, bounded by a fourth continuous mound the full length of the ten magazines. The mounds are solidly packed earth, but are beginning to be washed away. They are probably lower now than they were when first constructed, and the magazine keeper doubts their effectiveness.

The Buildings

All of the storage buildings are basically the same, being simply rectangular in plan form with a small enclosed porch to the entrance. They are timber-framed, formerly on timber piers, but now supported on cement block piers with concrete bases. The walls and roof are of corrugated iron with many coats of paint. Although recently painted the walls show new rusting. It is becoming obvious that expert advice needs to be sought before the next painting job. The hipped roofs are constructed with wide overhangs (approx 1200mm) supported on timber brackets, and with cast iron (approx 35mm diameter) which tie the edges of the overhangs down to avoid being lifted off in high winds. The roof has a large ridge vent with glass louvres. There are no windows, only the ridge vented skylights.

Several of the stores have remains of a previous security system. This consisted of an infra-red safety light which beamed an infra-red ray across the front of the building to a post with a



45^o angled mirror which reflected the ray to other mirrors at each corner of the building, thus providing a ring around the building. These devices are now in a dilapidated state, many of them missing, and all of the mirrors removed.

The entrance porch has two doors, one at each end. One door is bolted from the inside and can only be opened from the porch. The other door is locked from the outside with two Yale locks - one at the top of the door and the other at the bottom. In the middle there remains the the original door lock, still in use and operated with a huge brass key. The porch is a small rectangular room with the two external doors and two internal doors to the storeroom. There is a small seat, a bucket and a broom, and in one store a collection of rubber overshoes which formerly had to be worn before entering the store. Hanging on the wall of the porch is a copy of the Magazine Rules, now brown with age, reprinted from the Marine and Harbors Act 1888, spelling out the rules of the use of the magazine. The two doors into the store swing into the porch area and one crosses over the other, and are held open with a large cast iron drop pin which is dropped into a hole in the floor.

The interiors of the stores are lined with timber sheets. The ceilings are of the collar-tie form with the large vented ridge skylights with glass and wirenetting. The skylights are lined with small-fluted corrugated iron and timber boarding. The floors are hardwood timber boarding, with large duckboard pallets to support the explosives in cardboard boxes off the floor. Above the timber skirtings are small vents covered with wire netting which vent into ducts in the wall to external vents at the top of the wall immediately under the eaves. The external vents also have wirenetting. At the two doorways into the porch are drop boards (approx 300mm high) which are dropped into place before the doors are closed, thus sealing the gap under the door. The reason given for this was to prevent wind blown sparks from entering the room under the doors. There are no lights or electricity within the buildings, so all light comes from the skylight. Cameras are not permitted into the stores because they contain batteries which can be a danger to some types of detonators. It was reasonably cool inside the store, so the walls must contain some insulation.

Of the ten magazine stores, two are used for storing detonators and seven for storing high explosives..

The integrity of the buildings is very high, and there appears to be very little alteration even down to the continued use of the door locks and drop bolts. The only major change seems to be the replacement of the timber piers with concrete block piers and the removal of the infra-red safety system.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

CIRCUMSTANCES

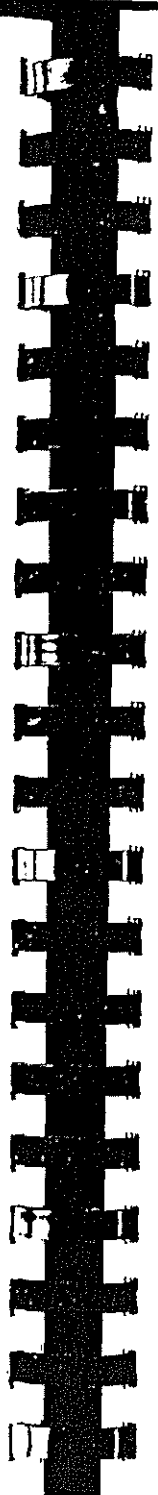
The complex is under the control of the Chief Inspector of Explosives and the South Australian Department of Labour. It continues to be used for the storage of explosives, but this use will be curtailed with the development of the Multi-Function Polis nearby.

INTEGRITY

The integrity of this complex remains high, with the complex and magazines in near original condition. In late 1990 they continue to be used for the purpose for which they were originally built.

ENVIRONMENT / PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The complex is a concentrated one. By design it was built in a remote area and still has little development nearby.



APPENDIX II:

KACHA Inc. letter of endorsement.

KAURNA ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY HERITAGE ASSOC
Inc

PO Box 184
MELROSE PARK SA 5039

Tel (08) 276 1049

14 August 1996


David Rathman
Chief Executive Officer
Department of State Aboriginal Affairs
GPO Box 1563
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Mr Rathman

Dry Creek Explosites Magazine Reserve: a heritage study.

KACHA Inc. have been consulted about the above project by Vivienne Wood and are satisfied that no further action is required should any development be approved. We would like to also state the proponent to be aware that all Aboriginal sites, objects and remains are protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 1988 and if any cultural material is unearthed work should cease and the Committee notified.

Yours sincerely



Paul Dixon
Chairperson

FIGURES

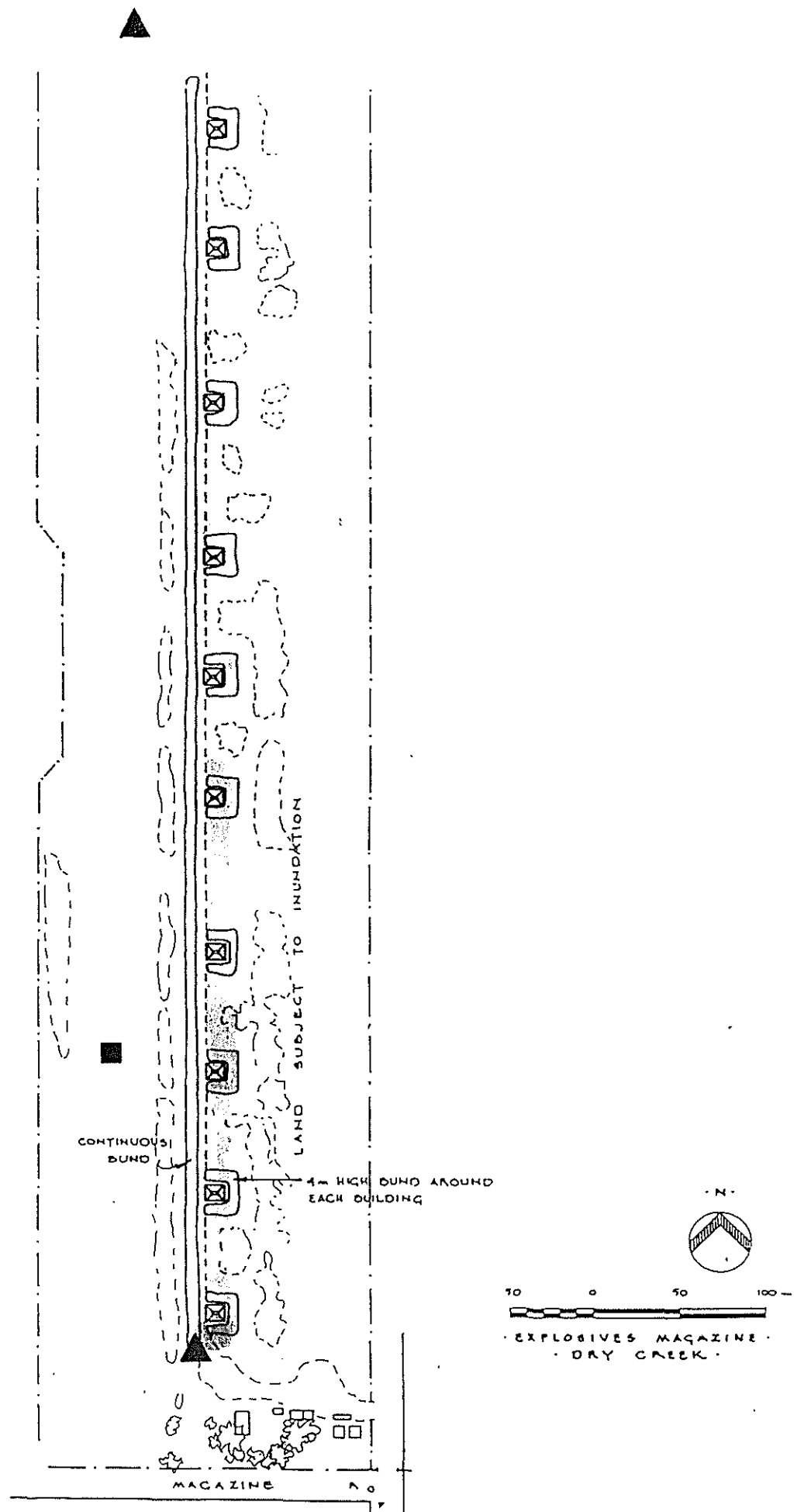


Figure 3: Map showing which parts of the Reserve are heritage listed. Also shown are the locations of the tramline remains (triangles) and the wooden bridge (square).

PLATES



Plate 1: Map of the Explosives Magazine Reserve looking north. Magazine Road is on the right of the photo. Also note the disused telegraph/power line, the drains in the foreground and the magazines and associated earth mounds to the left.



Plate 2: Explosive Magazine No 1, looking north along the road constructed for the trucks. Also note the remnant tramline in the foreground.



Plate 3: Embankment along which the tramline was constructed. Note the remnant tramline in the foreground.

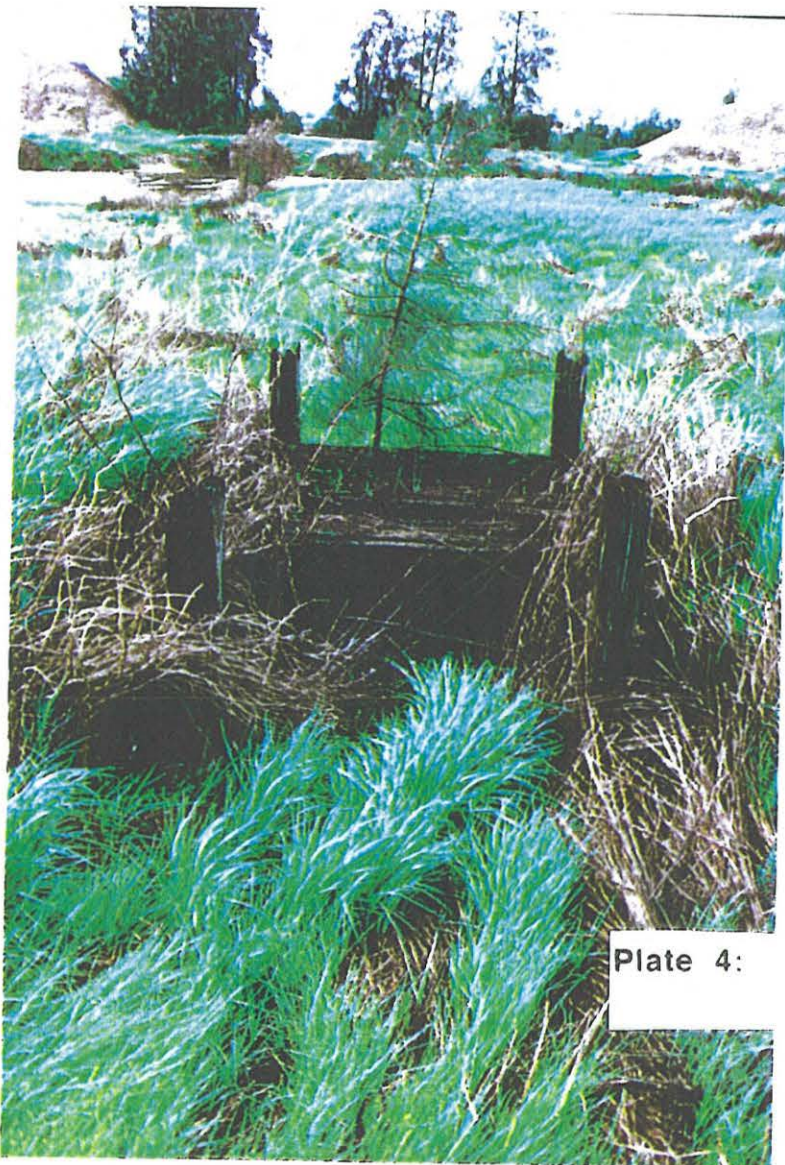


Plate 4: Remains of wooden bridge to the west of Magazine No 3