
NAME: 'Port Willunga Jetty Pylons', PORT WILLUNGA

CURRENT USE: Jetty ruins
FORMER USE: Jetty
DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION: C. 1868 with later alterations

LOCATION: PORT WILLUNGA
LAND DESCRIPTION: Not applicable

OWNER: City of Onkaparinga

RECOMMENDATION: Local Heritage Place



Old Port Willunga Jetty pylons, Port Willunga (GGA, 2022)

NAME: 'Port Willunga Jetty Pylons', PORT WILLUNGA

DESCRIPTION:

Petrified timber posts and stone foundations of c.1868 Port Willunga Jetty embankment and ramp with timber remnants of post-1915 'boardwalk' to original 1868 jetty. Post-1915 boardwalk constructed after destruction of embankment and jetty by a storm. No original fabric of the 1868 jetty survives.

It is recommended that the Port Willunga Jetty pylons, Port Willunga be included on the South Australian Heritage Register as a Local Heritage place.

A delineation of significant historic fabric is provided in the Extent of Listing.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:

The Port Willunga Jetty pylons, Port Willunga, now identified as the timber pylons and stone foundations of the Jetty's c.1868 embankment and post-1915 'boardwalk', are of significance as the surviving remnants of the Port Willunga Jetty, a significant structure for the local district responsible for much of the Southern Vales' agricultural and commercial export traffic in the mid-to-late 19th century. Following the decline of agricultural production in the late 19th century, the Port Willunga Jetty became the centre of the Port Willunga's tourism and recreational fishing industries by the early 1900s. The embankment and 'boardwalk' remnants are now a notable landmark of the Port Willunga landscape and a major tourism drawcard for the district.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (As defined in Section 67(1) of the PDI Act 2016):

- a) it displays historical, economic or social themes that are of importance to the local area; being the remnants of the c.1868 Port Willunga jetty (replacing the 1853-55 jetty to the immediate north) and associated embankment. The Port Willunga Jetty complex facilitated much of the local district's agricultural and slate export from the mid-to-late 19th century, subsequently becoming the drawcard of Port Willunga's burgeoning tourism and recreational fishing industries from the early 1900s onwards. The Port Willunga Jetty pylons remain a notable landmark and a major tourism drawcard for the district.
- b) it represents customs or ways of life that are characteristic of the local area; the c.1868 Port Willunga Jetty embankment remnants representing the district's identity as a major centre for agricultural export in the mid-to-late 19th century, subsequently becoming the centre of Port Willunga's 20th century tourist and recreational fishing industries.
- c) it has played an important role in the lives of local residents; being the surviving remnants of the Port Willunga Jetty complex which facilitated both the large agricultural and commercial export industries of the local district in the mid-to-late 19th century and the subsequent growth of tourism and recreational fishing industries in the 20th century, providing a source of both employment and recreation for local residents since construction in 1868.
- (f) it is a notable landmark for the area; the Port Willunga Jetty embankment remnants being a highly notable landmark and tourism drawcard in the Port Willunga landscape.

RELEVANT HISTORIC THEMES:

Theme 8: Transportation & Human Movement

8.3 Goods movement from the Southern Vales to the Southern Ocean

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The heritage significance of the Port Willunga Jetty pylons, the ruins of the former Port Willunga Jetty were first assessed within the 1985 Heritage Survey of the Fleurieu Peninsula (D. C. Willunga). The jetty ruins were assessed as a component of a larger Port Willunga Jetty complex, identified as including "...the ruins (pylons) of the Port Willunga Jetty, the remains of the cobblestone ramp, which was once the access road to the jetty, and the four dugouts – excavated by hand, and later explosives – which housed local fisherman's vessels." The 1985 Survey identified that the Jetty was initially constructed by 1853, with a subsequent jetty completed by 1868, destroyed in 1915 by heavy seas. The 1985 Survey noted that the beach jetty and entrance was a popular leisure resort by the early 1900s. The 1985 Survey identified the Port Willunga Jetty complex as being of State significance (the assessment pre-dating the Local Heritage criteria of the *Development Act, 1993*), identifying the site's importance for the transportation of rural produce and slate from the Willunga area and its growing significance as a 'pleasure resort' from the late 19th century. The 1985 Survey also identified the site as a current tourist landmark of note and an unusual example of South Australian infrastructure changing the landscape.

The Jetty Complex was again assessed in 1997 as part of the 1997 Willunga District Heritage Survey. Also identifying the jetty ruins as a component of a larger complex, the 1997 Survey provided brief historical context, possibly based on the findings of the 1985 Survey, identifying the site as being of Local Heritage significance. The provided Extent of Listing recommended that "All elements of the complex should be retained as long as is practical and possible."

Current research largely supports and contextualises historical findings. Current research has also identified that the surviving pylons at the Port Willunga Jetty site are the remnants of the timber retaining walls of the former embankment that serviced the Port Willunga Jetty prior to 1915 and of a subsequent 'boardwalk' erected after the destruction of the Jetty in 1915. No surviving fabric relating specifically to the Jetty itself appears to survive.

As noted in the 1985 Survey, local Willunga district residents petitioned Parliament for the construction of a jetty or wharf at Port Willunga by 1850 for the purpose of local agricultural and commercial export, as a journalist for the South Australian Register newspaper recorded at the time:

"...there was a meeting of the Port Willunga Wharf Company...they were preparing a Deed of Settlement; also, a Bill to be presented at the coming sitting of the Legislative Council, to authorise the erection of a jetty at the said Port Willunga. It is to be carried out to about 300 feet from high-water mark into the sea, for the purpose of loading and unloading vessels.

There is, it is said, excellent anchorage and good shelter from the S. W. (south-west) by a reef of rocks, the anchorage being open only to the north, from which quarter the sea is by no means heavy. The purport of the Bill is to obtain from the Governor and Council power to collect tolls and dues from all goods shipped or landed...a township had been laid out and a large corn-store partially erected...the jetty is intended to receive a vessel alongside, so that no delay will be experienced in loading." (A Week in the South, South Australian Chronicle, Sat 21 Dec 1850, p.3).

The construction of the Port Willunga jetty was delayed until 1853, following government site inspections and extensive petitioning by local citizens. A subsequent extension to the jetty was tendered by November 1854 and completed by 1855. It would appear that much of the township's early infrastructure was completed around the same time, likely intended to cater to increased traffic and exports facilitated by the new jetty. A published description of the completed jetty was given in the South Australian Register in 1856:

"...this structure consists of a wooden platform, supported upon piles, extending 355 feet from the foot of the sandhills. The work was executed at two different periods; the first portion having been erected under the direction of Mr. Hays in the year 1853, and the extension in 1855, under the immediate superintendence of Mr. Hamilton, Assistant Colonial Architect..."

As the jetty now stands, it is frequently unavailable for loading or discharging boats, even in fine weather, owing to the swell which sets in at that part of the bay and the insufficient depth of water to which the jetty has been carried out...the Commissioners ascertained, from information obtained from residents in the district, that 5,000 or 6,000 tons of flour would be shipped for export from Willunga this year. The saving effected by shipping from the spot, instead of carting the produce to Port Adelaide, is estimated at 35s. per ton, so that in the article of flour alone the saving thus effected during the present year will be little short of £10,000.

In examining the structure of the jetty...the Commissioners found that the first portion of the work is very badly executed...the piles are in many cases undersized, extensively split in the driving, and out of the perpendicular, so that they do not come directly under the beams which they are intended to support, much of the timber and iron-work used in the structure is undersized...in the extension of the jetty, the work has been much better executed." (Willunga Jetty, South Australian Register, Wed 14 May 1856, p.3).

By 1865, local citizens were calling for a new jetty located further south with better anchorage and access points for loading and unloading. A petition was presented to Parliament for the construction of a new jetty and approaches approximately a quarter of a mile south of the previous jetty. By 1867, work on a new jetty was documented as having commenced. It is unclear why a new jetty was constructed though this could possibly relate to storm damage or the documented poor quality of the 1853 jetty. An April 1867 newspaper article reported that at that time "...A few piles are driven, the cutting through the embankment is rapidly progressing, and there is every prospect of both the jetty and approaches being completed within the prescribed time." (Willunga, Adelaide Observer, Sat 27 Apr 1867, p.2). the completed jetty and new embankment and ramp were opened by February 1868.

Following the decline of wheat production in the Southern Vales in the late 19th century, the Port Willunga jetty saw a decline in commercial usage by the turn of the century though the district was becoming an increasingly popular tourist and recreational fishing destination. The deteriorating condition of the jetty was frequently documented in the 1900s, particularly following heavy storms. By early 1915, petitions had again reached Parliament for the reconstruction of the jetty to ensure the survival of the Port Willunga township's growing tourism and recreational fishing activities, now facilitated by the recently completed Adelaide to Willunga railway.

On Saturday 15th May 1915, a huge storm, described as the largest since the 1888 storm responsible for the 'Star of Greece' shipwreck, destroyed most of the Port Willunga Jetty. Photography dating from this event also shows the deterioration of the timber partitions of the adjoining embankment and the extensive erosion of stonework and soil. By 1919 the jetty ruins were described as "crumbling remains." Post-1915 photography indicates that a short portion of the 1868 jetty survived as late as the 1930s though the c.1868 embankment appears to have been levelled after 1915 with the introduction of a minor timber 'boardwalk' from the 1868 ramp to the

jetty remnants. By the late 20th century, only individual timbers and masonry foundations for the embankment survived and comprise the current surviving fabric of the entire 1868 structure.

While very minimal fabric survives from the c.1868 embankment and post-1915 'boardwalk', the embankment foundations and ruins survive as a popular local tourist attraction and remain a notable landmark of the Port Willunga district.

EXTENT OF LISTING:

The form and materials of all surviving petrified timbers and stone foundations of the c.1868 embankment and post-1915 'boardwalk'.

As noted in the 1997 Survey, all surviving elements of the c.1868 embankment and post-1915 'boardwalk' should be retained as long as is practical and possible.

It is recommended that an inspection schedule of should be established to determine current condition and longevity of surviving remnants.

It is recommended that the City of Onkaparinga should instate appropriate signage near the c.1868 embankment and post-1915 'boardwalk' remnants (most likely near the ramp exit to the immediate east) to allow for an informed understanding of the site's history and surviving fabric. Sign installation should not however mar the site's attractive setting.

REFERENCES:

A Week in the South, South Australian Chronicle, Sat 21 Dec 1850, p.3
Tender, Adelaide Times, Wed 25 Oct 1854, p.3.
Willunga Jetty, South Australian Register, Wed 14 May 1856, p.3
Petition Presented, South Australian Weekly Chronicle, Sat 3 Jun 1865, p.6
Port Willunga Jetty, Chronicle, Sat 27 Feb 1915, p.36.
Port Willunga Jetty, Observer, Sat 29 May 1915, p.28.
A Tragic Wreck, The Register, Fri 14 Mar 1919, p.9.

SITE MAPPING:



Site of Port Willunga Jetty pylons, Port Willunga, site shown within red circle (Planning SA SAPPa)



Enhancement of SAPPa satellite mapping of Port Willunga Jetty pylons, showing individual surviving pylons, associated stone foundations etc. (Planning SA SAPPa)

HISTORICAL IMAGES:



C.1910 photograph of ramp approaching Port Willunga Jetty, embankment infrastructure can be seen to the right of image (SLSA, B 13320)



Pre-1915 photograph of Port Willunga Jetty and associated embankment (SLSA, B 7451)



Pre-1915 photograph of north-side of Port Willunga jetty embankment, with timber retaining wall infrastructure and footing, now the remaining fabric of the Port Willunga jetty pylons (SLSA, B 7451).



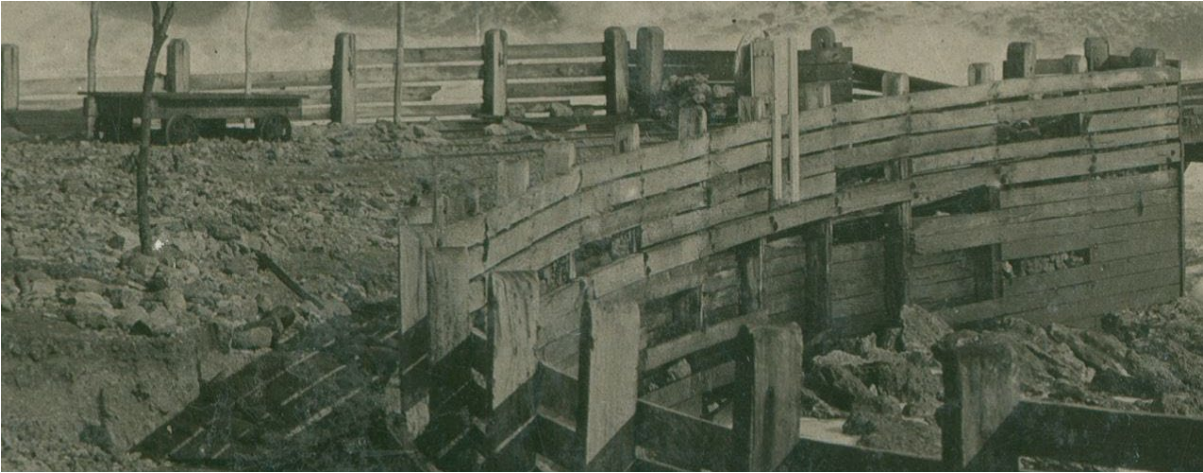
C.1905 photograph of south-side Port Willunga jetty embankment, with timber retaining wall infrastructure and footing, now the remaining fabric of the Port Willunga jetty pylons (SLSA, B 22137).



Pre-1915 photograph of Port Willunga jetty ramp and embankment with timber retaining wall infrastructure and footings, now the remaining fabric of the Port Willunga jetty pylons. Note numerous recreational tents erected on embankment, demonstrating how this site was used by holidaymakers during this period (SLSA, B 25663).



Remains of Port Willunga Jetty and associated embankment after storms in 1915 (SLSA, B 11918).



Remains of Port Willunga Jetty embankment after storms in 1915, damage shows original in-fill construction with timber partitions (SLSA, B 11918).



C.1930 photograph of Port Willunga Jetty ruins (SLSA, B 55417/263)



Port Willunga jetty site in the c.1920s (SLSA description erroneously attributes a date of c.1910), showing reconfigured 'boardwalk' construction to the jetty remnants after the destructive 1915 storms (SLSA, B 16429)

OTHER IMAGES:



Timber remnants and stone foundations of the Port Willunga Jetty embankment and subsequent 'boardwalk', looking west (GGA, 2022)



Timber remnants and stone foundations of the Port Willunga Jetty embankment and subsequent 'boardwalk', looking west. Later vertical timbers are understood to relate to the post-1915 'boardwalk', with deteriorated timbers relating to the c.1868 timber retaining walls of the former jetty embankment (GGA, 2022)



Timber remnants of the c.1868 timber retaining walls of the former jetty embankment, looking south (GGA, 2022)



Timber remnants of the c.1868 timber retaining walls of the former jetty embankment extending east to the c.1868 ramp, looking east (GGA, 2022)