

HERITAGE TRAIL



– AUGUSTA-BUSSELTON –

Retracing the Pioneer Route from Augusta to the Vasse



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Both Busselton and Augusta are located on Bussell Highway (State Route 10), Busselton 274km south of Perth and Augusta a further 91km south.

The **Augusta-Busselton Heritage Trail** is a self guiding walking and/or driving tour which retraces the original route linking the settlements at Augusta and the Vasse in the 1830s.

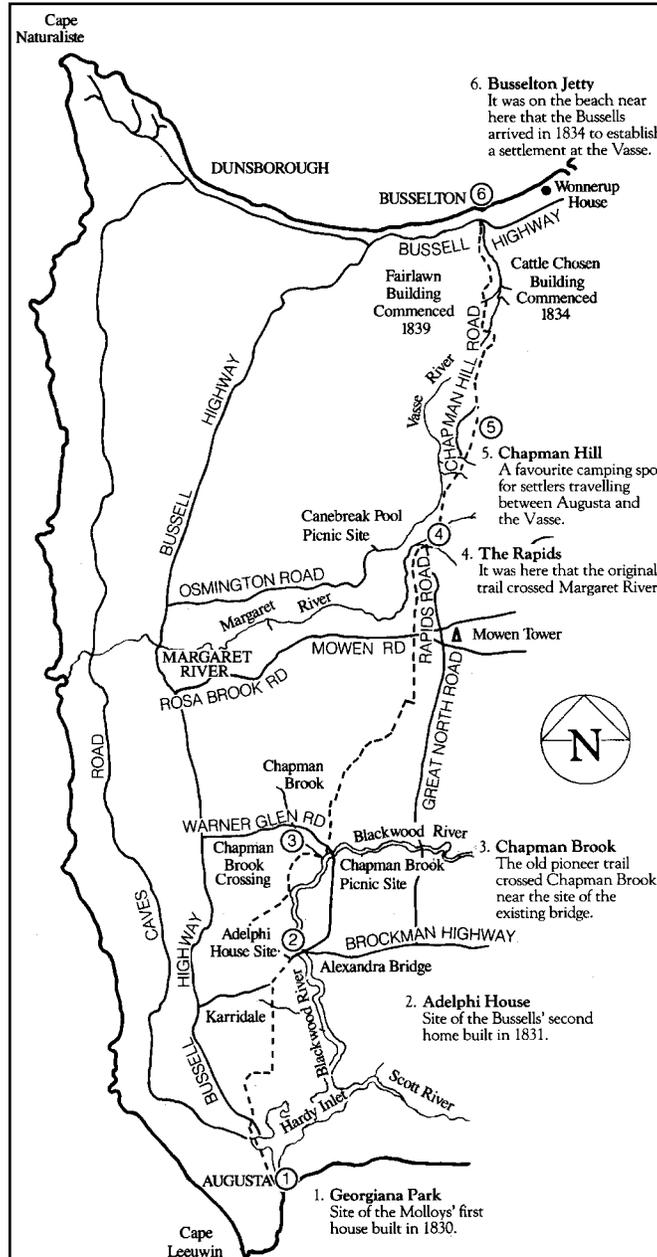
It is approximately 100km in length, may be completed in stages and is ideally suited for backpackers (difficulty rating easy to medium).

Detailed maps based on five walking days are available from the Busselton and Margaret River tourist bureaus and the Augusta Information Centre.

Please Note:

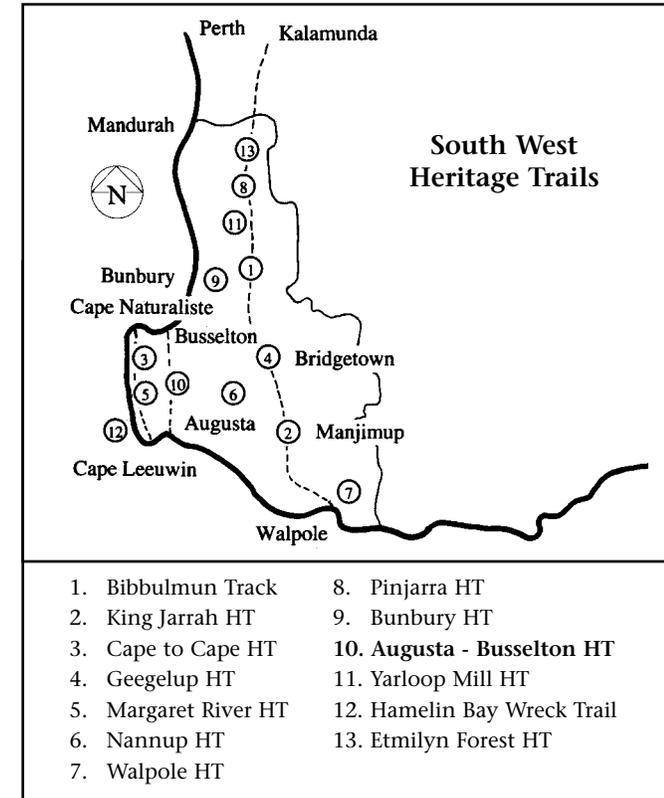
In wet weather, bush tracks are unsuitable for conventional vehicles.

Persons using this Heritage Trail do so at their own risk.



The **Augusta - Busselton Heritage Trail** is part of the Heritage Trails Network, a project for community participation originally devised by the Western Australian Heritage Committee (now known as the Heritage Council of Western Australia) in commemoration of the 1988 Bicentenary.

The Heritage Trails Network which was jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments under the Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Commemorative Program was established to provide the Community with a Statewide network of "Heritage Trails" - routes designed to enhance awareness and enjoyment of Western Australia's natural and cultural heritage.





'Hardy's Inlet', Augusta, by Thomas Turner, 1833.

In March 1830 Captain John Molloy and his wife Georgiana, James Turner and his family, and the Bussell brothers - John (aged 26), Charles (19), Vernon (16) and Alfred (14) - arrived in the Swan River Colony aboard the *Warrior*.

The would-be settlers were dismayed to find that although the colony was less than a year old all the best land had been allocated. So, when Governor James Stirling spoke enthusiastically about land around Flinders Bay east of Cape Leeuwin, Molloy was keen to try his luck there and convinced the others to join him.

On April 29th, 1830 the *Emily Taylor*, with Stirling in charge, left Fremantle with some 60 hopeful settlers on board. The boat dropped anchor in Flinders Bay on May 2nd, and the new settlement was named Augusta in honour of Princess Augusta Sophia, the second daughter of King George IV and Queen Charlotte.

Stirling appointed Captain Molloy Resident Magistrate of the small settlement and, after a brief exploration of the Blackwood River, returned to Perth.



Captain John Molloy, (BL 5390B/12).

The Europeans encountered numerous Aborigines in the region, possibly of the 'Koombarup' (Bunbury) tribe, who frequently travelled as far as Augusta on hunting trips. It was the policy of men such as Captain Molloy and John Bussell to establish good relations with the local inhabitants, and after meeting some Aborigines during an expedition to the Vasse in November 1831, Bussell wrote in his journal that:

... because ... a judicious treatment of the Natives at Augusta has procured in them towards the Settlers a peaceful disposition, it will be satisfactory to learn that the population about to flow towards the Vasse has grounds for expecting that friendly reception ...

The policy appeared to work, for although the settlers encroached upon Aboriginal hunting grounds there were few incidents. For the first few years both races co-existed quite peacefully.

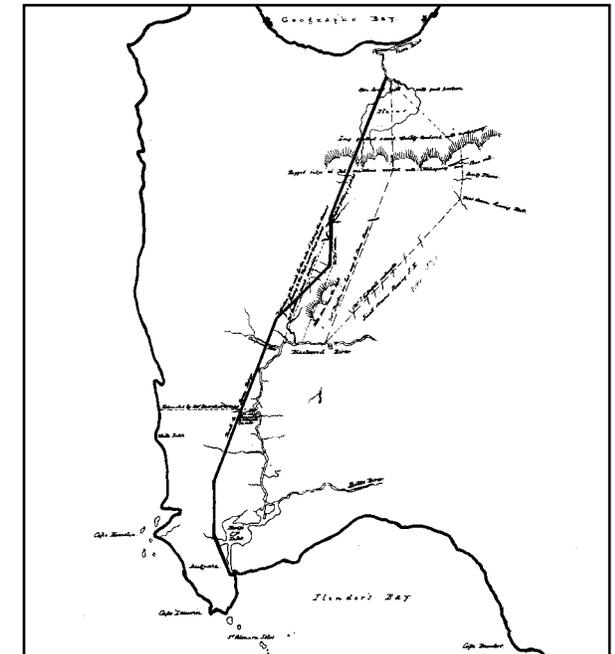
Life was very difficult for the Augusta settlers. They were isolated, food supplies were irregular and shipping was erratic. The priority, therefore, was to become self-sufficient, but although the soil appeared good, clearing the heavily-timbered forests was a huge task. By the end of 1830, however, a small townsite was beginning to evolve, and most homes had flourishing vegetable gardens.

Although progress was being made, the Bussells' financial situation was insecure, and John Bussell began searching for a more viable location. In July 1831 the Bussells



An early sketch of Augusta by Thomas Turner showing James Turner's house, 1836.

moved 12 miles (19km) up the Blackwood and established a new property, which they named the **Adelphi**. The land here was more open, easier to fence, accessible by water transport, and game was plentiful. Other settlers soon followed.



From Vasse to Augusta by J. Bussell, probably drawn after Bussell's second excursion to the Vasse in October 1832. Even at this very early date, a proposed road from Augusta to the Vasse is shown.

The Vasse

John Bussell was still not completely satisfied, however, and in November 1831, accompanied by surveyor Robert Edwards, he explored the region north of Adelphi as far as Geographe Bay and the Vasse River.

The region known as the Vasse was named after a French sailor who disappeared there in 1801. Vasse belonged to a French expedition sent out to explore the coast of 'New Holland' (as Western Australia was then known) and collect scientific information about its natural history and inhabitants. Two vessels - *Geographe*, under Commodore Nicholas Baudin, and *Naturaliste*, commanded by Captain Hamelin - were used for this expedition, which named many of the features along the south west coast of Australia.

At the Vasse John Bussell discovered open, grassy country which he described as resembling "an English park, only instead of deer, you will see an abundance of kangaroos". Bussell soon applied for 3,573 acres of land on the east bank of the Vasse River, which was granted in July 1832. That year John Molloy was also granted land, on the river's west bank.

In October 1832 Bussell and Edwards made a second journey to the Vasse to further investigate its potential as a future settlement. A permanent trail between Augusta and the Vasse was becoming established.

At first the Bussells were reluctant to leave the Adelphi, which after all their labours was progressing well. It was not until a fire destroyed their home in November 1833, forcing them to return to Augusta, that they decided to make the move to the Vasse.

In April 1834 the Bussell brothers, accompanied by George Layman and their servants Elijah Dawson and Phoebe Bower, sailed for the Vasse aboard the *Ellen*, commanded by Captain Jacob Toby. There they met two of the Chapman brothers and two soldiers who had travelled overland. Charles Bussell also travelled via the overland route a week later when returning to Augusta to resume his position as Government Storekeeper to which he had been appointed in September 1831.

Since their families remained at Augusta while they established themselves at the Vasse, the overland route was regularly travelled. The Bussells' younger sister, Fanny, wrote to her Uncle John Bussell in England in October 1834 that:

As the Vasse is only 60 miles from Augusta we have frequent visits from different members of our infant colony. A walk of two days and a night in the bush is compensated by a short spell of home society.



'Cattle Chosen', Vasse, by Thomas Turner (1836).

The Vasse gradually became more important than Augusta. The Bussell family joined their brothers in February 1836, and the settlers still left at Augusta eventually followed.

In July 1837 the Vasse settlement was officially gazetted as 'Busselton', though it had been known by this name for some time. Fanny Bussell wrote in September 1835 that:

The town at The Vasse is named Busselton in honour of its first settlers. We should have liked it called Capel, but the name was given at Perth without our knowledge.

By 1840 the track was known as the 'Augusta Road' or the 'Vasse and Augusta Road', and was the subject of frequent correspondence between Captain Molloy and the Colonial Secretary. In February 1841 Molloy wrote that the road "is in such a state that cattle can be conveniently driven thereon, though in some periods after very heavy and continued rains ... great care would be required in passing the Chapman and a small river near the rapids."

John Bussell, who had contributed so significantly to the existence and development of Busselton, had never lost faith in the region's potential, even under the most trying of circumstances. His feelings for the region are perhaps best summed up with his own words:

With regard to The Vasse or Busselton as they have named it, it is a child of my own and perhaps I look upon it with a partial eye. It is I think a rising place.



John Bussell, c. 1850.

In Augusta

Before commencing the walk you may wish to visit several sites of interest in Augusta.

First Landing Site

On the foreshore between Deere and Trigg streets is the site where Augusta's first settlers ferried all their belongings ashore in May 1830.

The site is commemorated by a plaque at the foot of Loch Street.

Turner Park

Albany Terrace

James Turner's original Augusta grant occupies most of the Turner Park Caravan Park. In Albany Terrace, adjacent to the caravan park, Turner's old cellar, built in 1830, can be seen. This cellar, which is signposted, marks the site of his first home.



Turner's residence at Augusta, by Thomas Turner (1837), (BL 563B).

Turner's family moved to a property near the Adelphi in 1832 and he remained there until 1850. James' eldest son, Thomas, was an artist who painted a number of pictures illustrate the early settlements of Augusta and the Vasse. Thomas was also the first European to explore the upper reaches of the Blackwood River, during an expedition to locate its source in September 1834.

Pioneers' Memorial

Osnaburg Street, opposite the war memorial

In another corner of the Turner grant is the old cemetery, where the Pioneers' Memorial was erected in 1932.

1. Georgiana Park

Corner of Turner Street and Albany Terrace

This park is named after Captain John Molloy's wife, Georgiana, and is the site of the Molloy's' first home in Augusta. Between the park and Turner's cellar was the Bussells' first house, Datchet.

Georgiana was eight months pregnant with her first child when she arrived on the beach at Augusta in 1830. A daughter born 22 days later was named Elizabeth Mary, but tragically, she died when only 9 days old.



Georgiana Molloy.

2. Adelphi

Alexandra Bridge camping and picnic area, off Warner Glen Road

Adelphi was the site of the Bussells' home, which they built in 1831 after moving from Augusta. The Bussells were classically educated and chose the name because it is Greek for 'the brothers'. Adelphi consisted of several buildings constructed of wattle and daub and was located on a small peninsula so that less fencing was required to contain their cattle.

The land at Adelphi was more suitable for farming and the other settlers soon realised the sense of the Bussells'

decision. George, Henry and James Chapman, John Herring, George Layman and John Cook were among those that settled in the vicinity. Nevertheless, conditions were still not ideal and after a fire destroyed the home in November 1833, John Bussell resolved that the family should move to the Vasse.

Again, the other settlers quickly realised the advantages of a further move and joined the Bussells in settling at the Vasse. James Turner was one of the few to remain behind and did not leave his estate until 1850.

3. Chapman Brook

Warner Glen Road Barbeques, tables and a boat ramp available.

The original trail crossed the Chapman Brook over a ford at or near this site. The brook was named after three brothers, George, Henry and James Chapman, who held 3,000 acres of land along the southern edges of the brook. The property extended to the west bank of the Blackwood River.

George Chapman had arrived in Augusta on the *Emily Taylor* with the other first settlers in May 1830, and was joined by his brothers in early 1831. The Chapmans joined the Bussells in establishing properties at the Vasse in April 1834.

The brook is navigable up to the home site.



A painting of the Bussell family before leaving England, c.1828. From left to right: Lenox, Mary, Fanny, Charles, William, Mrs Bussell, John, Bessie, Alfred, Vernon (BL 536B).

4. The Rapids

Great North Road

This scenic picnic spot was a popular resting place for early settlers travelling between Augusta and the Vasse. Bessie Bussell, one of the younger Bussells, wrote in November 1835:

About three in the afternoon we reached the Rapids, it was still very warm, I went to the waterside, took my basket, soap, towel etc to 'arranger un peu, dressed my hair; the stream, however, was too rapid to allow of my admiring my reflection. So I returned to them ail in propria persona. I suppose, however, they were all captivated with my appearance, for they all followed my example, and I can assure you we all looked quite the thing when we assembled round the fire to sip our coffee.

Soon after the Rapids, Bessie's party encountered a swampy region:

In a few minutes we came to a place where I was quite surprised at having to dismount; it appeared a mere nothing. Dawson carried me. I was hoping I was not very heavy, indeed nearly imagining I was Ariel, when Dawson suddenly sank up to the middle in black mud. He called out to someone to take me off him. I was first handed to Alfred and then to Vernon, all of them sinking deeper and deeper under my weight.

5. Chapman Hill

Chapman Hill Road

Situated 17km south of Busselton, Chapman Hill was a favourite final camping site for trail users before moving out next morning to the various settlements in the area. From Chapman Hill travellers could view the lights of the Cattle Chosen homestead and on clear days look out over Geographe Bay. Like Chapman Brook, it was named after the Chapman brothers.



'Cattle Chosen, Vasse, Western Australia' by Thomas Turner (1835).

Cattle Chosen and Fairlawn

Not open to the public

The original trail from Augusta ended on the Vasse at 'Cattle Chosen' and 'Fairlawn', on opposite banks of the river.

When the Bussells and their companions arrived at the Vasse in April 1834, they encountered a group of local Aborigines. Although the Aborigines initially displayed hostility towards the Europeans, handshakes were exchanged and they led the Bussells to a native well.

Relations with the Aborigines were cordial for the first few years, and the Bussells concentrated on establishing a viable property. Undecided as to what to call the property, the issue was solved when they discovered their cow, Yulika, that had been lost at Adelphi grazing here with a young calf. The same day (September 28, 1834) the Bussells' mother visited the Vasse on her way to Augusta. Fanny wrote with some delight about the occasion:

Was it not singular that our long truant Yulika should have walked into their farm at The Vasse on the very day that Mamma paid them her passing visit; It seemed as if she had waited to welcome her liege lady.

Mrs Bussell and her eldest daughter had recently arrived from England and were preparing to settle in at Augusta with Charles, Bessie and Fanny, until they could move to the Vasse.



The Bussell family in the grounds of 'Cattle Chosen', 1867, (BL 6890B).

The Bussells were finally united in February 1836, when the remaining members of the family moved to Cattle Chosen. The women lived in a two-storeyed building made of wattle and daub with a stone chimney. It had a large room downstairs with a clay floor and another room upstairs which had dormitory-type sleeping accommodation.

Alfred, the second youngest son, and his wife Ellen later established the first properties at Margaret River, at Ellensbrook in 1855 and Wallcliffe in 1865.

Bussell's original property at Wallcliffe is featured on the Cape to Cape Heritage Trail, a 120km coastal walktrail from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin through Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.

For those interested in the early development of the Margaret River area the Margaret River Heritage Trails are three walks which explore the early settlement and development of the town amidst its early natural bushland setting

A limestone house, 'Fairlawn', was built on the west bank of the Vasse River by John Molloy when he shifted from Augusta in 1839. Captain Molloy was appointed

Government Resident Magistrate, first at Augusta in 1830 and later at the Vasse.



Fairlawn

Molloy's wife Georgiana was a keen botanist and earned a good reputation in England for her work. She applied her knowledge to Western Australia's flora and was largely responsible for collecting and identifying a diverse variety of native plants in the district. Georgiana also introduced many foreign plants such as yucca lillies and willows which are now common to the area. Unfortunately she did not live long enough to see completion of the house, for building was slow and she died on April 8, 1843 aged thirty-seven years.

6. Busselton Jetty

This jetty is located near the landing site of the 'Ellen', which brought the Bussells, and their fellow pioneering settlers, to the Vasse in 1834.

As early as 1837 there was a harbour light - a thirty foot spar topped with a large barrel containing a lamp - but no jetty. For many years this light was known locally as 'The Tub', until it was replaced in 1873.



Unloading at the jetty before the advent of the railway.

Official sanction for a jetty was given around 1855, but work did not commence until 1864. The first jetty, completed in 1866, was 528 feet long, but over the next ten years drift sand decreased the depth and in 1875 an additional 430 feet were added. Further extensions were made between 1884 and 1911. In 1909 the railway jetty was constructed and the jetty was then believed to be the longest in the Southern Hemisphere, stretching for over a mile into the bay.

Then, as now, holiday makers walked its length. Cyclone Alby in 1978 caused considerable damage and a large section of the jetty was destroyed.

Commercial use has ceased and the jetty is now a tourist attraction - and a boon to amateur fishermen.

Around Busselton

Having now completed the original portion of the trail, you may wish to visit some of the other historic sites around Busselton, including some of the early homesteads and the first Church.

St Mary's Anglican Church

Queen Street, just over the bridge at the entrance to Busselton

For the early settlers at the Vasse, church services were conducted by John Bussell or Captain Molloy in either of their homes. In September 1841 a meeting of residents decided to build a permanent church, to be known as St Mary's.



St Mary's Church, Busselton (BL 3920B/117).

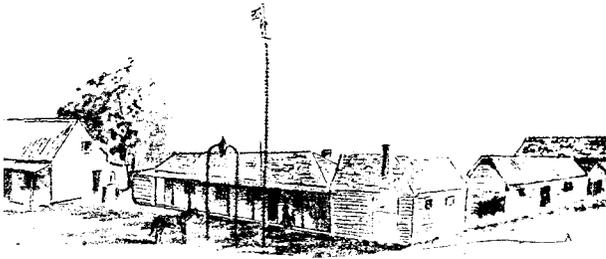
The Reverend John Wollaston and John Bussell designed the church with the assistance of an architect named Forsyth, and local settlers all helped in its construction. Its design was based on that of Winchester College Chapel in England, and the name is associated with St Mary's in Portsea, England, of which John Bussell's father was curator. It is Western Australia's second oldest stone church. Money for the church was raised in England by Capel Carter, a cousin of the Bussells, who took a keen interest in their welfare.

The building of the church became a community effort and the foundation stone was laid on March 4 1844 by Mrs Bussell, mother of the Bussell family. She is buried beneath the church, and under the font lie the graves of Georgiana Molloy and two of her children who died in infancy. The rose window in the church is dedicated to her memory.

The first service in the church was held on April 11, 1845, although the church was not consecrated until 1848 and a permanent clergyman, Rev. John Wright, was not appointed until 1858.

The pioneer cemetery in the grounds of St Mary's contains the graves of many of the Vasse's early settlers, including John Molloy.

Vasse Inn and Ship Tavern



The original Ship Tavern built in 1847 by George Guerrier.

These public houses were both built in the year 1847, the 'Vasse' in Queen Street, and the 'Ship' on the corner of West and Albert streets. West Street was the original thoroughfare from the beach to 'Cattle Chosen' and 'Fairlawn'.

The Ship Hotel stands on the site of the original Ship Tavern. Part of the old building has been retained during recent renovations and can be seen in Albert Street.

Wonnerup House

10km north-east of Busselton off Bussell Highway. Open daily between 12 and 4 pm

The present home, purchased by the National Trust of Australia (W.A.) in 1972 and since restored, was built in 1859 by George Layman Jr for his bride Amelia Curtis. It was constructed on the site of homes built by his father and which were later damaged or destroyed by fire.

George Layman Snr accompanied the Bussells on the *Ellen* when they moved to the Vasse in 1834. Layman and fellow settler John Cook were originally awarded a contract in early 1831 to build the barracks at Augusta. At Vasse he worked for the Bussells and was later the first person to settle at Wonnerup in 1837.



Wonnerup House c.1900, (BL2927 B/4).

Wonnerup is an Aboriginal word meaning 'the place of the Wonna'. The wonna is a digging stick or weapon of Aboriginal women. Apparently a great number of female skulls were found there by settlers and Aboriginal folklore suggests that it was the site of a battle fought between women using wonnas.

The siting of a township at Wonnerup was criticised by Lieutenant Bunbury who wrote that "the Surveyor General, through ignorance of the locality, had placed the town of Wonnerup where mud and water were far more plentiful than dry land." Despite this, six soldiers were placed at Wonnerup in temporary accommodation until a permanent barracks was established some time later. The presence of the military was thought necessary because of recent disturbances between Aborigines and European settlers.

Relations between settlers and Aborigines had deteriorated from about 1837, probably as a result of the Aborigines' growing dismay at how much of their tribal land was being overrun. A number of unfortunate incidents culminated in the death of George Layman who was fatally speared by a local Aborigine named Gaywal in 1841. When Gaywal and his companions fled

into the bush they were pursued by angry settlers who shot and killed five of them. Although Gaywal managed to elude the settlers, a short time later he was hunted down and killed. His three sons, who were present when Layman was speared, were captured at the instigation of Captain Molloy, and transported to the native prison on Rottneest Island.

The memorial gates now at the entrance to the property were erected to George Layman's memory by his grand daughters in 1929.



'Cattle Chosen', 1899, (BL 6880B).

The Augusta-Busselton Heritage Trail was developed by the Busselton Bicentennial Community Committee, which gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following:

- Shire of Busselton
- Shire of Augusta-Margaret River
- Busselton Historical Society
- Augusta-Margaret River Historical Society

Photographs

Pages 2, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18 Courtesy Battye Library

Cover & Pages 1, 2, 5, 11 Courtesy Art Gallery of Western Australia

Pages 13, 14, 16 Courtesy Busselton Historical Society

Page 3 Courtesy Department of Lands Administration

Page 8 Courtesy Mr A.V.R. Bunbury

Further Reading

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