

Water - More Precious Than Gold

The fledgling settlement of Dundas faced the same primary problem as many early goldfields towns – the lack of clean water. Late in 1892, not long after Mawson and Kirkpatrick made their strike at the May Bell, the early pioneers sunk Noganyer Soak, about 250 metres south of here. Then, a few months later, they built this, the Dundas Dam.

As with so many other such dams, it relied upon stone walls to harvest rain falling on the rock outcrop. This water was then channelled into the dam below. Many such structures were built in outback WA. Some had catchment walls substantially longer than those to be found here, extending several kilometres around the base of large granite outcrops.

This was just one method of obtaining water in a hot dry environment. The other common means was to utilise condensers to convert the salty water found in the surrounding lakes into potable drinking water. Condensers were basically a means of boiling large quantities of saline water, capturing the steam and condensing it to produce clean water. These operations consumed vast quantities of timber, which explains why so little 'old growth' woodland remains around goldfields towns.

Selling water was often a very good way of making a living. In Norseman in the late 1890s condensed water sold for 25 shillings per hundred gallons – a lot of money in those days. Yet this was considered 'second rate' water by some, who were prepared to pay up to a shilling per gallon for 'fresh' water drawn from rock pools after rain.



In the early years of the goldfields condensers supplied most of the water.
Courtesy Shire of Dundas.

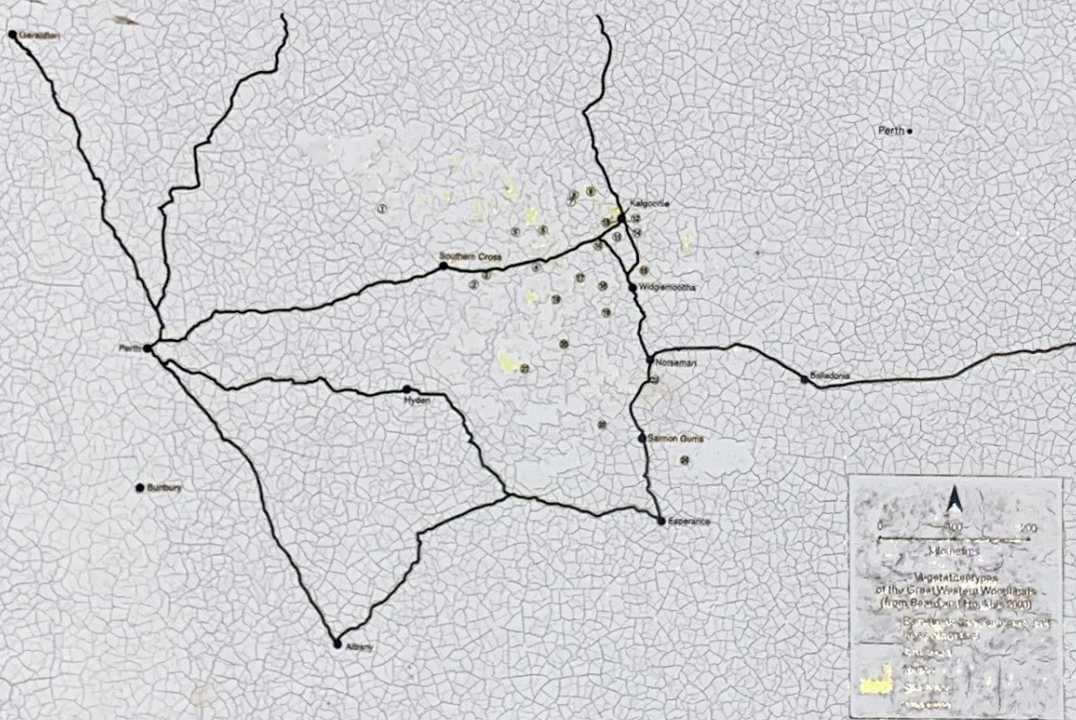


Water – or the absence of it – largely defined the nature of life and death in the goldfields. Today we tend to take it for granted – but walk around this old dam and try to imagine depending on it for your very survival. Imagine no taps or hoses, no daily showers, few opportunities to wash clothes, and always the threat of disease. It was a different life in old Dundas – very different indeed.

Vast areas of woodland were felled to fire condensers of all shapes and sizes.
Courtesy Battye Library.



Welcome to the Great Western Woodlands



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|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| ① Eacchubbing Rock Reserve | ⑤ Wallaroo Rock Conservation Park | ⑩ Lake Douglas | ⑭ Burns Rock |
| ② Mount Palmer | ⑥ Credit Homestead | ⑪ Mount Charlton | ⑮ Victoria Rock |
| ③ Karalae Rock | ⑦ Rowles Lagoon Conservation Park | ⑫ Karriente Bushland Park | ⑯ Thursday Rock |
| ④ Boordil | ⑧ On Bands | ⑬ Kalgoorlie Arboretum | ⑰ Cave Hill |
| ⑤ Jaurdi Homestead | ⑨ Coolgardie Lookout | ⑭ Kambeick Red Hill | ⑱ McDermid Rock |



The Great Western Woodlands is the largest remaining area of intact Mediterranean climate woodland on Earth. Covering almost 16 million hectares (about the size of England), this continuous band of native vegetation is a rich tapestry of woodlands, mallee and shrublands. It extends across an ancient landscape of broad, flat valleys and ridges that connect Australia's south-west corner to its inland deserts.

These woodlands are culturally significant for Aboriginal people who continue to have a strong connection to their country. More than 20% of Australia's native plant species and 20% of Australia's eucalyptus species exist here. These woodlands are also a refuge for many threatened wildlife species found nowhere else on the planet. Please leave this environment as you find it for all to enjoy.

A conservation strategy to better protect and manage the Great Western Woodlands is available at www.dec.wa.gov.au. For further information contact the local Department of Environment and Conservation District Office. Phone: 9083 2100.



FIRE RESTRICTIONS
RESTRICTED PERIODS
1st October - 30th November
1st April - 31st May
PROHIBITED PERIOD
1st December - 31st March



