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WILLIAM PONTON 1836-1909



WILLIAM PONTON(Senior) was born at Alton Priors, Wiltshire, England in August 1836. His father, a rural worker, and the family were not very well off. In 1854, however, having saved up their pennies, William and his older brother Stephen boarded a ship and came to Western Australia. They found work as teamsters or farm hands between Albany and York, where Stephen married.

They later made a home at Silver Grass Flat (now Ballochmyle) near Tenterden. A daughter and son were born to Stephen and his wife, but when the little girl was four and the son two, the young mother died. Stephen and William brought up the children until they were of boarding school age.

The two brothers, accompanied by John Sharp, then moved their sheep and cattle overland along the coast to Point Malcolm. Later, in August 1879, during horseback trips from there, they discovered the big red granite rocks of Balladonia. Here they founded the station where the descendents of Stephen Ponton still live.

Stephen Ponton died in June 1901. In 1904, William, sorely missing the brother he had always lived with, sold his share of Balladonia to his nephew, William Ponton Junior, and partner John Sharp. He then went south to Cape Arid and carved out a new home at Gabtoobitch behind North

Hill. John Baesjou, his nephew by marriage, went with him and later founded Hill Springs on the south side of North Hill.

William Ponton was a happy, friendly old chap, popular with old and young alike. He was full of energy and often said that for all the years he lived in Australia the sunrise had never found him in bed. William never married. He died at his niece's home at Hill Springs on June 8, 1909, 'still in harness'.

Acknowledgement

The Department of Conservation and Land Management wishes to record its sincere appreciation to Mrs. A. E. Crocker for permission to reproduce her paintings in this brochure and for her delightful accompanying text.

SAD LOSS

Mrs Crocker died in Norseman Hospital on November 14, 1989, just four days short of her 87th birthday. Amy's death is a very sad loss to all who care for and relate to nature, but her memory will live on through her paintings and other historical reminiscences.



S.S. Ferret, Cape Arid 1909



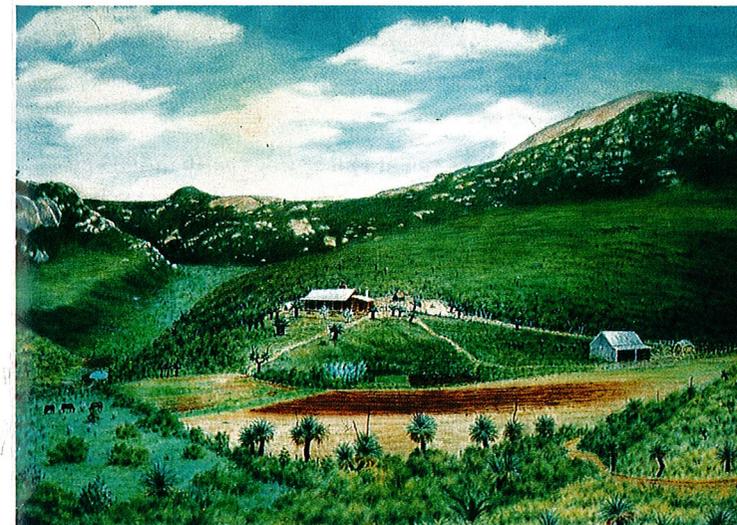
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CAPE ARID NATIONAL PARK



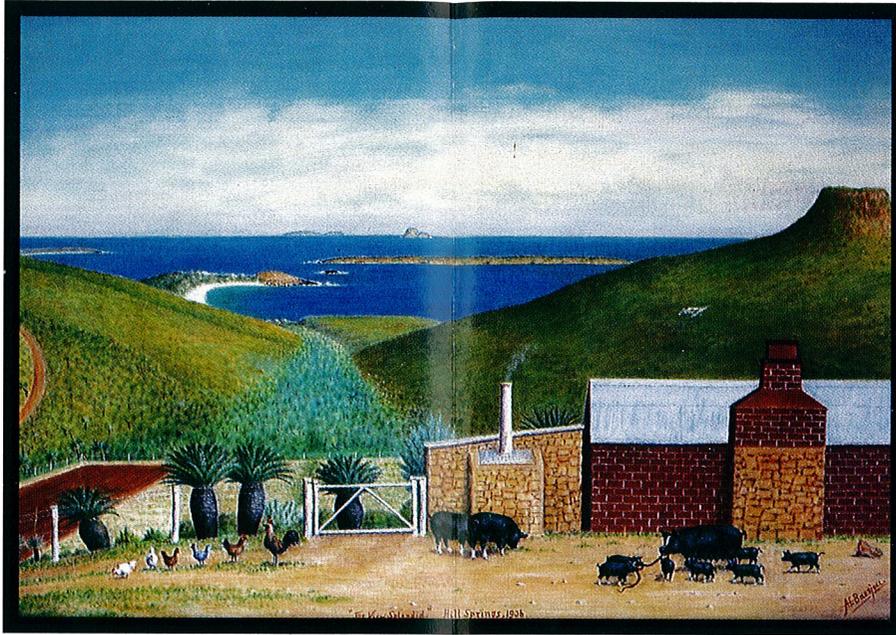
HILL SPRINGS



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND LAND MANAGEMENT

THE STORY OF HILL SPRINGS

By A. E. Crocker



"The View Splendid" (Hill Springs, 1906)

OUR home was begun at Hill Springs early in 1905 by my father, John A. Baesjou. He built the small stone kitchen first in order to have a warm, dry place in which to live while he built the rest of the house of timber and galvanised iron. He painted the outer walls dark red, making his own paint from the red loam of the fields, carefully sifted and mixed with linseed oil. He then made white paint from the white pipe-clay patch high up on the side of the little red hill on the western side of the valley. With this he was able to paint the walls out in a large brick pattern. The house was completed in September 1905 and my mother, sister and myself, aged nearly three, came to live in this lovely valley which my mother named Hill Springs.

"It was a delightful home where we grew our own fruit and vegetables of every kind and for a time we kept our own cows, hens, ducks and pigs. We grew hay for our animals and big round clean potatoes for sale as well as our own use. My father, a little man but full of energy, added new areas

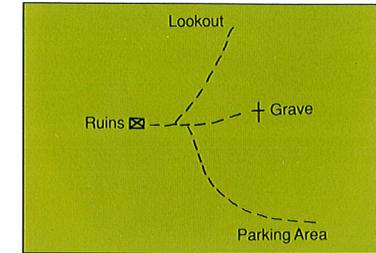
to the fields each year and cut the access track (which is still in use today) out of the eastern hill, using only a pick, shovel and crowbar.

"A favourite pastime at weekends was to walk down to the beach and while my father and sister fished, mother and I wandered along the shore and gathered shells. Sometimes we climbed the hills or gathered wildflowers on the foothills. This was a wonderful place to live and I think it helped me develop my talents as an artist.

"William Ponton, my Great-Uncle, lived on his own farm about 5 kilometres away, on the other side of the rounded North Hill. His property, called 'Gabtoobitch' (meaning water-snake), was larger than ours and he ran sheep and cattle and grew vegetables and hay. Though in his late 60s, he thought nothing of walking over the hills to join us for breakfast at Hill Springs.

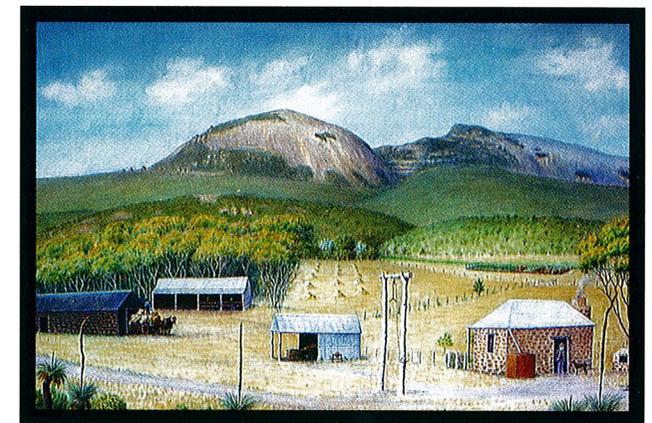
"Our peaceful and happy existence went on until 1909 when Great-Uncle's health began to fail. My parents suggested

that he should see a doctor, but the hardy old chap had no time for such things while there was still much work to do at Gabtoobitch. He became very ill in late May of that year so we brought him over to Hill Springs and my parents nursed him. The S.S. *Ferret* called in at the bay to take him to Esperance but the brave old pioneer was too ill to be moved. He passed away on June 8, 1909, and was buried on the eastern branch of Hill Springs valley.



"We remained in the valley until December 1910, when we left the beautiful little home because it had become too lonely for my father and sister. Mother and I did not mind the loneliness - for us there was always the scenery, the birds, the flowers and the sea.

"In the mid-1920s, a huge bushfire swept through the area and our 'brick' house was burnt to the ground. Only the stone walls on the little kitchen and lower half of the dining room chimney were left standing to mark the spot where a happy and beautiful home once stood - a memory which I shall never forget."



"Gabtoobitch" (November, 1907)