

# Basic Detail Report

---



**00054519**

**Title**

The flensing deck at the Albany Whaling Station

**Date**

1977

**Primary Maker**

Jon Lewis

**Medium**

Digital image files

**Name**

Digital image

**History**

Following the announcement by the United States Government that they intended to trial nuclear weapons in a series of underground test on the island of Amchitka in Alaska, in the late 1960s a series of anti-nuclear demonstrations were organised by a loose knit federation of environmental and religious groups called The Don't Make a Wave Committee. Over the next few years the committee, notable Jim and Marie Bohlen, Ben and Dorothy Melcalfe, Robert and Bobbi Hunter, Irving and Dorothy Stowe, developed a form of passive resistance which they termed 'bearing witness' and from the Stowe's house established an international environmental organisation which today has global significance, the Greenpeace Foundation, in 1972. When the Amchitka nuclear tests and resulting protests were over the Greenpeace Foundation moved their anti-nuclear focus to the French atmospheric nuclear weapons testing at the Moruroa Atoll in French Polynesia, and following the death of Irving Stowe in 1975, broadened their operations to include anti-whaling operations in the Pacific as well as campaigns against toxic waste dumping and commercial seal hunting. Inspired by the Foundations success against both the American and French Governments by the mid-1970s independent groups using the name Greenpeace started springing up around the globe and by 1977 they were 15 to 20 Greenpeace groups worldwide who adhered to a series of ecological policies called the Greenpeace Declaration of Interdependence. One such group morphed from The Whale and Dolphin Coalition, which was formed in Sydney by Australian photographer Jonny Lewis and French businessman Jean-Paul Fortom-Gouin in 1974. Led by Lewis and Fortom-Gouin Greenpeace's first direct action in Australia opened on the 28 August 1977 at Albany, Western Australia and targeted Australia's last whaling station at Cheynes Beach. The Cheynes Beach Whaling Station, formed by the Westerberg and Birss families, salmon fishers from Albany in Western Australia, Fred Edmunds, an ex-Point Cloates, (Western Australia) whaler and Syd Reilly from Perth in 1952 operated a small fleet of whale chasers which harpooned both Humpback and sperm whales off the southern coast of Western Australia before towing them back to the shore-based whaling station near Albany for processing. From late August to late

September 1977 Lewis, Fortom-Gouin and their Greenpeace supporters used Zodiac inflatable boats to place themselves between the whale chasers operated by the whaling station and the migrating whales, preventing some of the whales from being killed. The movie footage and still photographs of the blockade and protest went round the globe and subsequently due to national and international pressure in November 1978, after taking over 15000 whales, operations at Cheynes Beach Whaling Station ceased. These photographs record the anti-whaling protests that took place in Albany, Western Australia in 1977. The Cheynes Bay Whaling Station in Albany was the last whaling station still operating in Australian waters. Jonny Lewis is a professional photographer who took numerous photographs during the campaign to end whaling in Australia. He was a key participant and one of the co-founders of Greenpeace Australia. He doesn't see these photographs as part of his artistic work, rather documentary photography recording significant events in Australian conservation, whaling and maritime history.