



# REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

## 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

The aesthetic values of the place could be said to be partly accidental due to the location of the buildings in a wooded riverine setting. The picturesque qualities of the curtilage are such that almost any building located within these environs would acquire an aesthetic value. (Criterion 1.1)

The vernacular structures have an understated elegance due to their simple Georgian proportions, stone construction, their elegant state of decay, and the setting of the compounds in a partly cleared landscape. The breaking floor itself is quite unusual and has an elegant beauty of its own. (Criterion 1.3)

The various elements of the place combine to form an important cultural landscape with some landmark qualities, although not in the same context as the nearby Warribanno Smelter with its strong vertical focus. It does have landmark significance, although perhaps not in the usual sense, as an important element in the history of lead mining. (Criterion 1.3)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Geraldine Lead Mine* represents part of the early aspirations of the Swan River Colony to develop an export industry that was not solely dependent on agricultural produce. (Criterion 2.1)

*Geraldine Lead Mine* has considerable historic value as it is Western Australia's first lead mine and has strong associations with the State's first lead smelter, the Warribanno Chimney. The discovery of lead in the Murchison River and the subsequent formation of the Geraldine Lead Mine was directly responsible for opening up, at least in good measure, the Murchison and Victoria districts and led to the establishment of Geraldton (Champion Bay), Port Gregory and the Lynton Convict Depot. It was the first commercial mining venture in Western Australia. It also has associations with the convict

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* North Ryde NSW, Angus & Robertson 1989.

period of Western Australian history and convict labour at the mine itself, on associated roads, at Lynton Convict Depot and Port Gregory. (Criterion 2.2)

*Geraldine Lead Mine* has strong associations with historical figures who contributed to the development of the Swan River Colony. These figures included Augustus and Charles Gregory, who explored and surveyed large areas of the state, Lockier Burges, a prominent landowner in the York and Victoria districts, George Shenton and Robert Habgood, well known businessmen in the colony, and Henry Vincent, Superintendent of the Native Prison on Rottnest on two separate occasions. (Criterion 2.3)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

As *Geraldine Lead Mine* was the first lead mining establishment in Western Australia, it has the potential to yield information about early mining practices. (Criterion 3.1)

The majority of the buildings on the site date from the earliest period of occupancy, thus the site is important in its ability to reveal the manner in which the early settlers coped with the isolation and hardship of this region while at the same time revealing the hierarchical systems and life ways of this mining site. (Criterion 3.2)

The structures which belong to the 1960s also have scientific value as they show the great dichotomy between mining practises of the 1850s/60s and those used 100 years later. (Criterion 3.2)

### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Geraldine Lead Mine* is highly valued by the local community of Northampton which is attested through the use of the site as a popular picnic place, the commemorative plaque placed at the site in 1979 and the inclusion of the place on the Shire's Municipal Inventory. (Criterion 4.1)

The local community has long been aware that *Geraldine Lead Mine* is an important component of their local heritage. The discovery of lead in the Murchison River opened up the district to pastoral activity and the discovery of further mineral wealth east of *Geraldine Lead Mine* ultimately led to the foundation of Northampton itself. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

The breaking floor which is located next to the Engine Room compound appears to be unique in the state. (Criterion 5.1)

*Geraldine Lead Mine* has rarity value as it is was the first lead mine in Western Australia and it retains evidence of early mining practises which are no longer used today. It is demonstrated by the structures and those artefacts which were left behind. (Criterion 5.2)

Due to its isolated location and early foundation, *Geraldine Lead Mine* is unlike the early mines established in Northampton that were part of a closer community. The remaining structures are associated with enclosed compounds which may have been constructed for defensive purposes or possibly to do with the presence of convict labour or simply to contain whatever activity was carried out in them. These types of enclosures are not found at other mining sites in the region although they are found associated with those homesteads which were established in the Northampton region during the 1860s, for example Willi Gulli. The latter walls were built to hold stock or to raise gardens. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The *Geraldine Lead Mine* is representative of the early attempts to establish an export industry, in this instance mining, using convict labour to assist in the construction of both roads and buildings, and in an isolated location. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

All of the structures on the site are ruins. They have been left vacant and untended for a long time and are subject to the elements and some casual vandalism. At present there is no management structure in place to assist in the conservation of the place. It is recommended that a conservation management plan should be implemented to assist in the conservation of the place.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

Although the place is now in a ruinous condition it would still be possible to understand the original intention of the buildings which make up the complex if further study was undertaken.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

The remaining structures on the site have retained a high degree of authenticity due to the isolation of the place, notwithstanding their deterioration.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The supporting evidence was compiled by Fiona Bush, archaeologist and Philip Griffiths of Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, with some of the research material supplied by Martin Gibbs, archaeologist.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The place is composed of a number of structures, some of which are not fully documented at present. To date, structures identified on the site include: the Engine House (c.1851), Mine Manager's House (c.1851), Ore breaking floor (c.1851), Cemetery (c.1854), Mine Shafts (1849), and the Ore processing site (c.1960s).

By the mid-1840s, the Swan River Colony had survived the various near-disastrous economic problems which had beset it since its foundation in 1829, emerging as a small but viable pastoral and agricultural settlement. However, there was an eagerness amongst the colonists and administration to find exportable resources which would generate revenue and secure the future of the economy. In particular, and despite several early disappointments, hopes were still held for the discovery of minerals and especially gold.

In 1846, Augustus Gregory, then a member of the Colonial Government's Survey Department, had discovered brown coal along the Irwin River in the previously unexplored mid-west region of Western Australia. In 1848, Gregory, together with his brother Charles and a group of settlers including pastoralist Lockier Burges, made a second expedition northward, discovering galena (lead sulphide) in the bed of the Murchison River, as well as viable pastoral land along the Bowes River<sup>1</sup>. Almost immediately after the announcement was made in the Swan River Colony, Governor Fitzgerald decided to travel to the Murchison to confirm the mineral discovery.

When Governor Fitzgerald returned to Perth, the area of the Murchison where the galena had been discovered was declared 'Mineral Lands' and offered for sale. After several months during which the land failed to sell, probably because of the great distances involved and the unproven nature of the lode, an auction was held<sup>2</sup> and 640 acres acquired by the newly founded Geraldine Mining Company, the first of several companies to bear the name.<sup>3</sup> Named in honour of the Governor (and supporter) Charles Fitzgerald<sup>4</sup>, the company had a capital of £640 in 32 shares of £20 each. The major investors included leading Western Australian capitalists such as Patrick Marmion, William Pearse, David Scott and Henry Vincent, with Robert Habgood, George Shenton and Anthony Lefroy as trustees, and Lockier Burges as superintendent.

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<sup>1</sup> Bain, M.A. *Ancient Landmarks* UWA Press, 1975, p34.

<sup>2</sup> *Government Gazette* 20 March 1849, Notice of Public Auction with 640 acres offered at the upset price of £1 per acre.

<sup>3</sup> Bain, M.A., p.34.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly, G. J. 'The History of Mining in the Geraldton District' in *Early Days: Journal and Proceedings of the Western Australian Historical Society*, 1962, Vol.8, part 1, p.78.

As the mine site was far removed from the relative safety of Perth, the government initially provided the enterprise with a detachment of 25 soldiers and a promise to establish a boat harbour (Champion Bay) to facilitate the shipment of the ore. Under the direction of Lockier Burges, operations commenced at the mine in December 1849 and the first shipment of 5 tons of ore was brought back to Champion Bay on the 22 December.<sup>5</sup>

The creation of Western Australia's first mining company led directly to the establishment the settlement at Champion Bay (later named Geraldton), Port Gregory and the opening of the Victoria and Murchison pastoral districts to new settlers. At the time of the discovery, the Swan River Colony's economic status was marginal and the colonial administrators were keen to find further arable land together with some evidence of mineral wealth. *Geraldine Lead Mine* was the first mine worked in what later became known as the Northampton Mineral field.

The introduction of convicts to Western Australia was initially promoted as a means of providing a cheap workforce for the colonists and as a way of achieving the creation of various public works, in particular the formation of roads and bridges along which supplies and produce could be carried. The Geraldine Mining Company took advantage of the potential of the situation, with the first Ticket-of-Leave men being employed at the mine in 1851. By the time of Governor Fitzgerald's visit in April 1852 there were twenty-five convicts at the mine site.<sup>6</sup> In the same year Gregory noted that these men were accommodated in a long shed, and that in general their behaviour at the site was satisfactory.

Fitzgerald was obviously impressed by this apparently successful use of convict labour in private enterprise, and advocated the opening of a convict hiring depot for 50 Ticket-of-Leave men at either Champion Bay or Port Gregory to assist with opening up the district, despite the relatively high cost of such an establishment.<sup>7</sup> Initially the English authorities in the form of Colonial Secretary J. S. Pakington, resisted the formation of a new depot, suggesting that control should be maintained from Fremantle.<sup>8</sup> However, lobbying must have taken place over the next few months and Earl Grey's earlier comments on the deployment of convict labour, together with Governor Fitzgerald's pledge to open the Victoria District (which then encompassed the study area) for mining and pasture, must have been influential in obtaining the consent of the Colonial Office. Earl Grey's letter had also suggested the deployment of convicts and the establishment of a townsite near safe anchorage.<sup>9</sup>

Lockier Burges, who was unhappy with the location of the mine shaft in the river bed, left as mine manager in 1850 and was replaced by Captain James. It was soon realised that it would be more efficient to transport smelted lead for shipment and in 1851, Francis Pearson, an experienced smelter from

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<sup>5</sup> Bain, M. A. p.38.

<sup>6</sup> Bain, M. A.; British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 12, 1 May 1852, p.182.

<sup>7</sup> British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 12, 1 May 1852, p.186.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, Vol. 12, 21 September 1852, p.259.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, Vol. 10, 19 July 1856, p.422.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne, arrived from England with his family. He immediately set about constructing a temporary trial smelter at *Geraldine Lead Mine*.<sup>10</sup>

Despite progress at the mine, the potential of the new mineral field appears to have been overshadowed by public interest in the potential for opening the mid-west region to pastoral lease and agricultural settlement.

The first hydrographic survey of the port at Port Gregory was by Helpman in 1849. It is unclear when Port Gregory became established as the port for the *Geraldine Lead Mine*. Port Gregory was difficult to enter but offered a natural harbour once the outer reefs were passed. It is unlikely that much in the way of facilities were established in this early period, but rather it offered safe anchorage. The *Leander* is recorded as disembarking Pensioner Guards and convicts there in 1853. The establishment of a port at this location meant that equipment and lead had only to be carted for 50 km over indifferent terrain, rather than the arduous trek to Geraldton. By 1853, the harbour appears to have become recognised as a Port as the Colonial Office permitted the construction of a Convict Hiring Depot which was located within the newly gazetted town of Lynton.<sup>11</sup> Convicts were employed at the mine, in the construction of a road from the port to the mine site and smelter and also in the construction of their own accommodation and facilities at Lynton.

In 1853, yet another mine manager was appointed, Martin Hoskin. He complained that the mine was not as productive as it might have been due to years of mis-management and inadequate equipment.<sup>12</sup> Over the years the Blue Books record the amount of lead extracted from the mine which appears to have been quite productive, although due to the unusual location of the mine in the bed of the Murchison River, operations were often interrupted when the river flooded.

Progress over the following years can be traced through the annual Blue Book reports, which indicate a fluctuating production between 1853 and 1860, varying from 55 to 134 tons per annum.

The prospectus prepared in the second half of 1856 provides a clear summary of the plant, finances and situation of the mine, smelter and associated properties.

At the Gum Forest, about 3 miles W. S. from this mine, the Company purchased a block of land - 20 acres - on which they have erected a roasting and two large smelting furnaces, with a large chimney 105 feet above the works, together with good dwelling houses for workmen, &c. Nearly all of the lead risen from the mine for the last three years has been smelted here, it being the most convenient spot for wood, and in the high road leading from the mine to Port Gregory.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Considine & Griffiths 'Warribanno Lead Smelter Complex' for Northampton Historical Society Inc., Perth, 1995, p.5.

<sup>11</sup> Considine & Griffiths 'Lynton Heritage Conservation Plan' for Northampton Historical Society Inc., Perth, 1996, p.5.

<sup>12</sup> Lowth, S. 'A History of the Geraldine Lead Mine' Australian Studies III - Geography, Research Assignment, unpublished manuscript (Appendix).

<sup>13</sup> Anon 1856:3.

Although there is information about the lead yields from *Geraldine Lead Mine*, there is little documentary evidence relating to the actual structures built on the site or the numbers of men employed there or their living conditions. However, the number of convicts and ticket-of-leave men employed on the site is recorded. The mining company managed to obtain 60 men from Cornwall and the North Country who were experienced miners.<sup>14</sup>

In 1856, *Geraldine Lead Mine* was offered for sale and the prospectus that was prepared for this sale offers tantalising information about the site.

Pumps and machinery are put up, but a small engine will be necessary, in order to do away with the costly horse-power at present employed..... Good cottages, stores, smithy, and all necessary buildings connected with the mine, are erected.....The above is about 30 miles direct from Port Gregory, the port of shipment.<sup>15</sup>

Work continued at *Geraldine Lead Mine* between 1856 and 1859, with efforts being made to improve the road from Port Gregory. In 1859, efforts were made to expedite the transfer of ore between the mine and Port Gregory with the purchase of a traction steam engine. The engine was brought to the colony aboard the *Dazzler* and was off loaded at Port Gregory in June 1859.<sup>16</sup> According to historical documentation, the vehicle was not a success, becoming bogged in the sandhills behind the port, where it was abandoned as useless.<sup>17</sup> However, it has been suggested that the traction engine eventually arrived or was brought to the mine where its wheels were removed and it was used as a power source.<sup>18</sup> Further research may reveal more information about the fate of the traction steam engine.

Between 1860 and 1863, the Blue Books list *Geraldine Lead Mine* as 'not working'.<sup>19</sup> Under the ownership of Robert Habgood, mining recommenced in 1864/65 and in 1866 Habgood brought out Cornishman Samuel Mitchell, an experienced mine manager. This was *Geraldine Lead Mine's* most productive phase which lasted until 1878, when Habgood died, leaving the estate entailed. *Geraldine Lead Mine* did not open again until 1917.

After the closure of *Geraldine Lead Mine*, Samuel Mitchell jnr. (eldest son of Samuel Mitchell), leased the property for pastoral purposes. The property was known as Coolally and the Mine Manager's House was used as the station homestead. In 1979, a cairn was erected in the courtyard of the old house by the C.W.A. to commemorate the pioneers of the district.<sup>20</sup>

During World War One, the world price of lead rose leading to a wholesale re-opening of many lead mines in the Northampton Mineral Field. During 1917 - 1918 the *Geraldine* was briefly worked by Harry Gallagher, and during the 1960s the Mine was purchased by Joe Plaistow; however, the shafts were not extensively worked. During this brief period of occupancy, a lead ore

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<sup>14</sup>     ibid.

<sup>15</sup>     ibid.

<sup>16</sup>     *Perth Gazette* 1 July 1859.

<sup>17</sup>     Kelly, G. J. A 'History of Mining in the Geraldton District' in *Early Days* Vol. 6, Pt 1, 1962, p.82.

<sup>18</sup>     Clydesdale, J. 'Fuel tank clue to Australia's first roadtrain' in *Sunday Times* 13 September, 1995, p.48.

<sup>19</sup>     Considine & Griffiths 'Warribanno Lead Smelter Complex; Conservation Plan'

<sup>20</sup>     Lowrie, J. Notes for C.W.A. Radio Sessions on 6GE, 1979, unpublished.

processing site was constructed on the eastern side of the Murchison River. *Geraldine Lead Mine* has effectively lain idle since this time.

During the early occupancy of the place, a cemetery was established which contains four headstones dating from 1854 to 1870.<sup>21</sup>

### 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The oldest structures on the site are located on slightly elevated ground on the western side of the Murchison River. These comprise the Engine House and associated compound, ore breaking floor, Mine Manager's House and compound and the cemetery. The 1960s ore processing site is located on rising ground on the eastern side of the river. At the time of the site assessment visit, the Murchison River was flowing making it impossible to locate any of the mine shafts. The river is lined with York Gums, casuarina trees and other natural vegetation which, together with the ruined buildings on the western side of the river, provides a particularly picturesque setting. The structures on the eastern side of the river are located in a cleared area with some re-growth of natural vegetation, surrounded by mullock heaps.

The Engine House is constructed from random rubble laterite stone walling held together with mud mortar. The courses are flush jointed and marked out in courses. Evidence remains on the wall surfaces that the exterior was limewashed, while the interior walls were covered with a coating of clay before being finished with a final application of lime plaster. The southern wall is the most intact wall and is punctuated with two window openings either side of a centrally located door. Timber lintels are still insitu. A large portion of the eastern wall remains and is punctuated with one window opening. There is no evidence of flooring material or roofing members, although there is evidence of two raised sections of flooring or engine mountings at the eastern end of the building. North of the building, are the remains of stone walls which appear to have formed an enclosed compound (with the Engine House forming the southern boundary), together with small rooms opening into the compound. These rooms are located along the northern and eastern walls of the compound. It is not known if the compound had a dirt floor or was flagged with stones. The area is currently overgrown with grasses. During the current survey no artifactual scatters were noted, although the remains of a boiler were found abandoned in the compound. No determination was made as to whether this was part of the steam traction engine mentioned in the documentary evidence.

On the southern side of the Engine House is the ore breaking floor. This area has been carefully levelled and laid with stones. Portions of the floor have fallen away on the western and southern sides. Foundations were also noted for other buildings/structures located between the knapping floor and the Engine House, on the southern edge of the floor and also on the western side of the floor.

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<sup>21</sup>       ibid.

The Mine Manager's House is located north of the Engine House and is constructed in a similar fashion, laterite stone walls with finished joints, and lime applied to the exterior and interior wall surfaces. The walls are in a more ruinous condition than those of the Engine House. This building also has a large compound enclosed by a stone wall. Like the Engine House compound, small rooms appear to have been constructed within the compound corners. A stone cairn, erected by the CWA in 1979, is located in the middle of the compound.

The cemetery is located slightly to the north of the Mine Manager's House. The historical record indicates that other buildings, dating from the original workings (1851), were located on the eastern side of the river. Unfortunately, due to the exceptionally inclement weather experienced during the site visit, it was not possible to locate any of these buildings or visit the cemetery.

The ore processing remains on the eastern side of the river date from the 1960's when the mine was briefly re-opened. These remains consist of concrete aprons together with concrete foundations and steel frameworks whose function is currently unknown. Adjacent to the concrete aprons are numerous mullock heaps which appear to be chronologically related to the concrete and steel structures.

### 13.3 REFERENCES

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#### **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further archaeological and architectural research is required to identify and map all possible sites within the place. Until this research is carried out it is not possible to define the minimum curtilage as the full significance of the place and the cultural landscape are not as yet clearly defined. The commissioning of a conservation plan would help establish these boundaries and also lead to a better understanding of the place.

Such a study should integrate the skills of a conservation architect, an archaeologist and a heritage mining specialist. It is not recommended that the buildings be restored, rather they should be stabilised to prevent further deterioration. The site needs to be carefully surveyed to assess the extent of any artifactual scatters. A conservation plan is urgently required for the place and an interpretation plan should also be developed.