



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

The site is an expansive idyllic river meadow of the Preston River flood plain and the building stands within its setting as a major picturesque element. (Criterion 1.1)

The sheltering form of cottage, verandah and skillioned and hipped ends, built from local natural materials is a creative achievement of some merit. (Criterion 1.2)

The setting is within a scenic riverine precinct of meadows and regularly spaced historic homesteads of the lower Preston River and *Picton Inn* is one such homestead essential to perception of the existence of the precinct. (Criteria 1.3, 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The site selection and building are important evidence of the Preston River settlement of the 1840s initiated by and following on the failure of the Western Australian Land Company's settlement scheme of 1841-43 at Australind, and important evidence of the subsequent growth phase of Bunbury and its region. (Criteria 2.1, 2.2)

The site has close associations with several of the historic personages who played roles in the story of the Preston River settlement and Bunbury including Archdeacon Rev. John Ramsden Wollaston, Henry Sillifant, whaler, James Thompson Lawrence, shoemaker, Harriett Lawrence nee Moore, and the families of State Premiers Sir Newton Moore and Sir James Mitchell. (Criterion 2.3)

Picton Inn is a creative and technical achievement of considerable merit and great interest as a vernacular technique imported from Britain, possibly by John Moore from Kent. (Criterion 2.4)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The timber framed, split slab lined, clay-daub faced construction of the house is of great technological interest apart from the historical information it conveys. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The precinct of which the building and site are essential and inter-related parts is a very important site for its presently recognised status as a regional geographic feature and scenic pathway and for its potential to be recognised as a regional cultural heritage and recreational precinct (for all cultural environments; built and culturally modified, natural and Aboriginal), all of which have characteristics that have the propensity to engender community cohesiveness and sense of place. (Criteria 4.1, 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The survival of such uncommon construction techniques is very limited and *Picton Inn* is a well preserved and cared for member of an endangered class of structures. (Criterion 5.1)

The building is one of a scarce number of extant examples of a distinctive class of places; the small nineteenth century wayside inn. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Picton Inn is representative of a characteristic class of structures in Australia; ie. early settlement with improvised construction from locally found material, commonly by artisans adept in the vernacular crafts of their localities of origin. (Criterion 6.1)

Picton Inn is representative of facilities available to the nineteenth century traveller through lightly settled regions. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Picton Inn is in fair to good condition. Much of the fabric has been dislodged or subject to weathering and decay, but nonetheless, it is in a stable and reparable state using the necessary degree of expertise. The current management is of a responsible curatorship and a professional conservation plan has been prepared, such that the place is currently in a holding position pending further conservation.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Picton Inn retains an exceptionally high degree of integrity for such a structure, albeit unused and unlikely (because of a degree of fragility of the mud fabric and lack of modern amenities) to sustain a revival of residential occupation. There is a substantial opportunity to restore and stabilise the place. The construction technique is such as to be relatively readily restored and reconstructed, subject to a detailed technical analysis and application of advanced but simple and effective technology, to the levelling of the structural frame and conservation of the materials. The timeframe for such conservation works is relatively urgent but not critically so.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Picton Inn retains a high degree of authenticity. The fabric is apparently substantially of the original building phase except for minor reinforcement, late paperings and paint coatings.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence and record of physical evidence has been compiled by Ian Molyneux, Architect. A Conservation Plan by architect John Pidgeon has been provided by the owners and relied upon in this compilation.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Picton Inn is a small artisan's vernacular residence of circa 1850 used in association with servicing the needs of travellers using the Preston River ford, and thereby becoming known as an inn.

The site is part of Rev. Wollaston's historic farm which he held from 1842-50. The ford was known from Lt. Henry Bunbury's original explorations of the area, and is marked by the "inn" despite relocation upstream of the crossing by later bridges.

The place is within a wider precinct of the lower Preston River settlements.

The documentary evidence of the development of Leschenault Location 26, Stirling's vast South Bunbury-Picton estate, as the contextual locality for the place, is summarised by Molyneux in a paper 'The Lower Preston River Settlement' and difficulties with dating nineteenth century buildings from documentary evidence is discussed in another paper; 'Note on Dating of Land Transfers and Buildings in Western Australia from circa 1829 to circa 1900'.¹

"The Lower Preston River Settlement" interprets and incorporates the documentary evidence gathered by Pidgeon, provides a history and interpretation of the place and makes the case for the definition of a riverine heritage precinct on the Preston.²

Picton Inn is dated as circa 1850 and no other significant phases are identified. Apart from the owner James Thompson Lawrence, it is surmised that the origins of the building technique and some assistance for Lawrence the shoemaker with the construction would have been forthcoming from his father-in-law John Moore, a builder and a man clever with clay and straw as recorded by Wollaston, and skill with timber and clay construction is appropriate to Moore's Kentish origins.

On that analysis the building could therefore be classed as an imported Kentish vernacular, and potential for further analysis of such origins makes for considerable scientific value for this case.

John Moore, the liquor licence holder from 1897 to circa 1900, and Charles Lewellen Morgan were members of the families that produced two of the three Western Australian Premiers who came from Bunbury, Sir Newton Moore and Sir James Mitchell.

In 1996, *Picton Inn* is unoccupied.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

¹ Both documents are attached to the assessment for *King's Cottage* (0339).

² Refer to pages 21-24.

Picton Inn is a simple vernacular building, set on the northern bank of the Preston River. The site is open and largely covered with lawns with a number of trees. To the north and west of the site are open fields. To the south of the site the lawn gives way to uncultivated river-flat land running down to the tree-lined banks of the Preston River.

The architectural style is a vernacular one of improvisation utilising natural materials of clay and split and sawn timber, taken from the immediate locality.³

The walls are constructed by standing posts, housed and tenoned, between timber ground and top platesposts, with mid-rails housed and tenoned into the posts. This framing is lined internally with slabs of timber housed onto the plates. Externally, battens have been nailed onto the slabs to form a key for a clay and straw mix which has then been plastered onto the slabs and smoothed flush with the outer face of the posts, forming fully filled panels between the posts. Paint coatings are presumed to have replaced an earlier sacrificial protective coating of lime wash.

Internally, the slabs and joints between plastered flush with another layer of clay daub which has been variously whitewashed, lined with hessian and papered.

Picton Inn is a skilled and uncommon variation of other local techniques of whitewashed clay daub on timber battens nailed to the exterior of slab walls and of sawn weatherboard-cladding over wattle and daub fill between closely spaced sawn studwork.

13. 3 REFERENCES

Molyneux, I., 'The Lower Preston River Settlement: Chronology of European Exploration and Settlement of the Lower Preston River at Bunbury', (unpublished paper, 1996).

Pidgeon, J., 'Conservation and Management Plan for The Old Inn at Picton Western Australia', (prepared for CSBP and Farmers Ltd, Perth, March 1990).

³ The physical evidence is still as recorded by Pidgeon in his Conservation Plan.