



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.2.6 Providing health services
- 8.6.7 Running missions to Australia's indigenous people
- 8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 306 Domestic activities
- 404 Community services & utilities
- 408 Institutions (Aboriginal, child migrant, paupers)

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is a good example of an iron-clad residence in a simple vernacular interpretation of the Inter War California Bungalow style. (Criterion 1.1)

The scale of *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* and high standard of construction demonstrates the social standing of the Doctor in the local community. (Criterion 1.1)

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is valued for the pleasing scale and proportion of the building and its construction materials, which are typical of a gold mining town. (Criterion 1.1)

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is a landmark in the residential area of Norseman due to its scale, materials and prominent location. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

From 1978 to the late 1990s, *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* provided community services for the local community, initially for the local indigenous community through its role as Norseman Mission Hostel, and subsequently to the wider community as Department of Community Welfare accommodation. (Criterion 2.1)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.
For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman was constructed in 1939 in the vicinity of the Norseman hospital for the occupation of a local doctor during a period of mining prosperity in the area, and was the residence of successive medical practitioners operating in the town from 1939 into the late 1970s. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman was associated with successive doctors who practised in Norseman, in particular Dr John Downing who had the place constructed in 1939. The place was also associated with Aboriginal youth for a short period from 1978 to the early 1980s in its function as a mission hostel. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is valued by the community for its associations with various medical practitioners in Norseman, and by those people who were housed there during its time as an indigenous youth hostel. (Criterion 2.1)

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman contributes to the local community's sense of place through its contribution to the goldfields town streetscape. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is rare as a substantial example of an iron-clad residence in a simple vernacular interpretation of the Inter War California Bungalow style. (Criterion 6.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is a representative example of the more substantial type of dwelling constructed in the Norseman township in the first half of the 20th century. (Criterion 6.1)

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is a good representative example of a residence that was constructed to provide integral space for a doctor's surgery within the building. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is in good condition despite extensive termite damage in the north extension.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman retains a high degree of integrity. The place has adapted to changing needs with minimal alterations.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

There is considerable evidence of the original fabric of *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* and it retains a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman, Historian, and Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant in September 2004, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman was built for Dr John Downing in 1939 on a site chosen by him for its proximity to the Norseman hospital.

The Dundas goldfield was proclaimed in August 1893, and a townsite, Dundas, was established. The field had almost been abandoned for richer finds in the Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie areas when gold was discovered some fourteen miles to the east in August 1894. The area was named Norseman for prospector Laurie Sinclair's horse of that name, and a township quickly developed beside Lake Cowan. The townsite of Norseman was surveyed in April 1895 and the first Norseman town lots were put up for sale in July of that year. The Norseman Progress League was formed to obtain services for the town, and a resident medical officer, Dr Elphick, was appointed. A tent hospital was opened on the hospital reserve on Douglas Street, at the western end of Talbot Street. The hospital site was probably chosen because of its proximity to Lake Cowan and a supply of condensed water. After a fire in February 1896, the tent hospital was replaced with a building.¹

In January 1896, Norseman was proclaimed a Municipality and Warden Arthur Hicks moved from the townsite of Dundas to Norseman. His residence was built on the Warden's Quarters Reserve 3551, on Mather Street. The Warden's court building was erected in 1897, followed by the police station and post office.² A telegraph line was installed between Esperance and Coolgardie, via Norseman.

The Municipal Council requested the establishment of parklands around the town in 1897, and a series of street blocks on the south and west boundaries was declared parkland Reserve 6107 with a total area of 65 acres. Roads surrounding the reserve were reduced in size by a half chain width.³

Norseman's population reached about 1,600 in 1904 and 3,000 in 1908, the year the Norseman Gold Mines closed. A railway line from Coolgardie to Norseman was opened in August 1909 and later extended to the port at Esperance. In 1911, the Warden's residence was sold for removal.⁴ Gold production fell after World War One, with the town depending on the operation of the Maroroa Mine for its economic survival. In the 1930s, mining activity increased, encouraged by the Commonwealth Government Gold Bounty, and in 1935, Western Mining Corporation took up mining interests in the district and prosperity reinvigorated the town. Public works such as the sealing of roads and footpaths and addition of a new hospital ward were undertaken. Boarding houses opened for single men working in the mines.

A section of parkland Reserve 6107, bounded by Simon, Douglas and Talbot streets was excised for a recreation reserve in 1935. In July 1939, Dr John Downing wrote to his local Member of Parliament, Emil Nulsen, requesting the granting of a block of land near the hospital. He was asking for a site on the corner of Simon and Talbot streets, either on the southwest or northwest corner

¹ Petersen, E. E. D. *Our First Ten Years: Norseman 1894-1904*, [E. E. D. Petersen, Perth, 1994], pp. 5-7.

² Petersen, E. E. D. *op cit*.

³ Correspondence 18 August 1897 & 10 September 1898, DPI file, 07625-1897-01RO, Reserve 6107.

⁴ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 9 June 1911, p. 1907. The Warden's Quarters Reserve is currently the Main Roads Dept depot.

of the intersection, where he could build a residence. The location was one block distance from the Norseman hospital. As the land on the southwest corner had been reserved for the recreation reserve, the Lands Department agreed to the excision of a half acre lot from the opposite corner, on parkland Reserve 6107.⁵

Survey of the Lot 834 was carried out in September 1939 and Dr Downing wasted no time in building his residence, being in occupation before purchase was finalised.⁶ Correspondence in the relevant Lands Department file states:

Norseman Lot 834 (occupied by Dr. Downing) is to be submitted to auction at 2.30 pm on 3rd February at the Court House Norseman.

Dr Downing advised re sale.⁷

The auction was advertised in the Government Gazette, with the note 'subject to payment for improvements', these presumably being the new residence which Downing had built.⁸ At the auction, Downing purchased Lot 834 at the upset price of £20.⁹ The Dundas Road Board had not been consulted and did not know of the excision from the reserve until well after the event. A complaint was made to the Lands Department requesting that in future they be consulted. The Lands Department replied that:

This was a special matter, and it was thought necessary to deal with it urgently...

In regard to the preservation of Park Land Reserves referred to by you, the Department, as well as your Board, is desirous of retaining well wooded reserves as a protection for the town against wind and dust.¹⁰

In 1939, Dr Downing was holding surgery consultations at the Norseman hospital, his hours being 11-12 am and 7-8 pm.¹¹ The layout of the rooms at the Talbot Street entrance of *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* indicates that they were designed for use as consultation rooms. The U-shape layout facilitated cooling in the hot summer months as most of the dwelling was only one room wide. The place does not appear to have been designed with a family in mind.¹²

Dr John Downing was described as 'a big rough man with a kind heart as big as a football, who would treat sick or hurt animals, as well as his many patients'.¹³ His bedside manner was considered unconventional.

Once a patient had obviously recovered, he rarely entered the ward. His after-care visits consisted of a daily stroll around the wide verandahs [of the hospital] in the company of the Matron. He was usually dressed in an old military overcoat, topped with a wide brimmed hat. His near standard greeting, as he paused at each door, was "How are you today, good?" Barely waiting for a reply, he moved on to give the next patient this unconventional treatment.¹⁴

5 Correspondence, 1939, DPI file, 2428/35.

6 No details relating to the construction were located in local newspaper sources of the period.

7 Correspondence 5 & 23 January 1940, DPI file, 2428/35.

8 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1939, p. 2026.

9 Correspondence 3 February 1940, DPI file, 2428/35; Certificate of Title, Vol. 1070 Fol. 524, 7 May 1940.

10 Correspondence 1 March 1940 & 1 May 1940, DPI file, 2428/35.

11 Information on Dr Downing's stationery letterhead, 1939.

12 Physical evidence & floor plan.

13 O'Brien, Tom, *A Westralian Gold Rush: Memories of Norseman, 1936-1951*, Thomas Neil O'Brien, Bunbury, 1981, p. 106.

14 O'Brien, Tom, op cit, p. 106.

In 1949, title to *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* was transferred to Dr David Kirkman and his wife.¹⁵ In the early 1960s, Dr Alan and Mrs Eunice Riseborough occupied the place.¹⁶ They had initially requested a grant of land directly opposite on the corner of the recreation reserve, for construction of a residence and surgery, but were refused by the Lands Department as there were other lots available for purchase in the town.¹⁷ They subsequently occupied *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* and acquired the title in September 1969.¹⁸

The playground equipment and other additions to the place appear to date from around the 1960s. A separate surgery building, since removed, is reported to have existed on the street corner of the site.¹⁹ The additions and construction of a separate surgery building would have facilitated the use of the place as a family residence.²⁰

In December 1969, the Shire of Dundas purchased *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman*, and in 1971 Dr M. J. Freeth occupied the place.²¹ In 1978, the Department of Community Welfare acquired *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* and the site was gazetted Reserve 35764 as Mission Site.²²

In the Norseman area, welfare for Indigenous people had been delivered by the Church of Christ Mission since 1942, under regulation by the Department of Native Affairs. In 1972, this Department was abolished, and its work with children and families passed to the newly formed Department of Community Welfare.²³ The new Department initially had two full-time officers at Kambalda, from where the Norseman area was serviced. *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* is understood to have been acquired for the purpose of a hostel for emergency accommodation for itinerant youth stranded in the Norseman area, and was initially managed by the Church of Christ Mission. It was reported that the sealing of the Eyre Highway had resulted in an increase in the number of young and itinerant people requiring assistance in the area.²⁴

The Norseman Rate Books indicate that *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* served as the Norseman Mission Hostel for only a few years into the early 1980s. The place was then rented out by the Department to people in the general population who required assistance, including a farming family who had lost their farm and a young couple with a baby. In the mid 1990s, the place was rented to a single man.²⁵

In 1995, *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* was entered on the Shire of Dundas Municipal Inventory as the 'First Warden's House and Mining Registrar', with a high level of protection recommended.²⁶

15 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1070 Fol. 524, 23 September 1949.

16 Information from Town of Norseman Rate Books provided by local historian Isabel Storey.

17 DPI file, 07625-1897-01RO, Reserve 6107.

18 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1070 Fol. 524, 8 September 1969.

19 Information provided by Norseman office of Department of Community Development, 31 August 2004; physical evidence.

20 Physical evidence.

21 Information from Town of Norseman Rate Books, op cit.

22 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1070 Fol. 524, 5 September 1978.

23 Prosser, Pamela Glenis, *A History of Norseman and Carnarvon Native Missions*, typescript, 1957; 'A History of the Department for Community Welfare', Dept for Community Welfare, *Annual Report*, 1979, pp. 9-21.

24 Dept for Community Welfare, *Annual Report*, 1978, p. 19.

25 Information from Town of Norseman Rate Books, op cit; Information provided by Norseman office of Department of Community Development, 31 August 2004.

26 Hocking Planning & Architecture, *Shire of Dundas Municipal Inventory*, 1995, entry 'First Warden's House, Mining Registrar'.

In 1996, the Department (then the Department for Community Services), found they had no further need for *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* and wished to dispose of the place. On 20 October 1998 the place was valued but it is understood not to have been put on the market, with the Department deciding to retain the place in case of future need.²⁷ The place also retained its Reserve designation as a mission site.²⁸

In 2004, the Indigenous Affairs Department are interested in making use of *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* as a hostel. Because of the entry of the place on the Shire of Dundas Municipal Inventory, a heritage assessment has been commissioned.

In 2004, *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* remains unoccupied with basic maintenance undertaken as required.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is located on the north side of Talbot Street, on the west corner of Simon Street, in the Norseman townsite. *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* faces due south, with a low colorbond fence along the front boundary, and gates to the access driveway on the west side of the property, and high Supersix fences to the remaining boundaries. It is set back from the boundary on both street frontages, and does not address the Simon Street frontage. There are no plantings of significance on the site. There is a skillion carport and corrugated iron shed along the west side of the site, a Hills hoist in the central back yard, and c.1960s slide, see-saw and swings (playground) in the north east corner of the site. The site is flat. The outbuildings and playground are of little heritage significance.

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman displays characteristics typical of a simple vernacular interpretation of the Inter War California style, being a single storey structure with verandahs and timber verandah posts, and demonstrates a functional response to the climate through the corrugated iron wall cladding and roof. The iron cladding is more typical of buildings constructed in the area in the early twentieth century.

The footprint of *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* is a 'U' shape with an extension across the north side enclosing the central open space and forming a square with a central court flanked on the other three sides by a west wing, east wing and front (south) wing. Verandahs flank the central front gable protruding room, and extend along most of the west and east sides of the place. Verandah extensions have also been added each side of the central extension on the rear (north) elevation.

The residence is planned as a private home with a separately accessible room at the front of the house designed to fulfil the function of doctor's surgery. In the absence of a formal waiting room, and in light of the hot climate in Norseman, patients presumably waited on the verandah before directly accessing the surgery, while the doctor gained access to the surgery from his residence.

There is an entry door on the front wall, each side of the central gable feature, and one on the west wall of the gable feature room, as well as French doors opening onto the east verandah. The entry on the west side accesses the west wing that comprises the living room, dining room and kitchen at the rear, with a pantry on the west side. The dining room opens into the central court space. Right of the entry door (east) is a short corridor that access the front room (room

²⁷ DPI file, 3173-1978-01RO for Reserve 35764.

²⁸ DOLA, Reserves index, Reserve 35764.

1) on the right, and another corridor at right angles. The corridor leads to the front door on the south, (that accesses the east wing) and a door into the court space on the north, with a small room (room 2) on the left (west) and room 3 on the right. Room 3 connects to room 4 on the north side, which in turn opens onto the central court, and also a verandah enclosure on the east side in an opening that was originally a pair of French doors. On the north side of the verandah enclosure is the bathroom that connects to a laundry that also connects to room 4 on the south side. Central on the north side, is an extension that is accessed from the kitchen. The extension encloses the central court, and has a door that accesses that space.

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is a single-storey timber framed construction, clad with horizontal sheets of painted corrugated iron. The predominantly hipped corrugated iron roof is steeply pitched with gables at the rear of the east and west wings, break pitch verandahs, and a central front gable feature. The gutters are predominantly c.1950s square profile, although some evidence of the original ogee gutters does remain, and the downpipes are round galvanised. The verandahs around the front and two sides are supported by 0.150 metre milled timber posts. The verandah floors are concrete. The symmetrical front (south) gable is detailed with timbers on flat asbestos infill with a vertical rectangular vent with horizontal louvers. The tall slender chimney is painted face brick. The roof also features an air conditioning unit. The east verandah extensions are clad with asbestos sheeting. The rear verandahs have low pitched hipped roofs and timber posts. The north verandah extension is a timber framed clad with horizontal format steel sheeting and aluminium framed sliding glass windows.

The south-facing (street) frontage is symmetrical about the gable protruding element with return verandahs each side. The windows around the frontage and sides are sets of three double hung sash windows with two vertical panes in the upper sash. The two outside windows of each set of three have timber framed flywire screens fixed on the exterior. The living room chimney on the west verandah, is a flat iron sheeted chimney and fireplace, facilitating a flush fireplace on the interior. The French doors in place on the east wall are panelled below double paned glazing, and each door has a flyscreen.

On the interior, the original 0.125 metre tongue and groove jarrah boards remain intact except for the east verandah enclosure and bathroom and laundry that have been replaced with concrete. The living room, dining room and corridors all feature a horizontal grained plyboard timber dado with splayed dado batten. The original splayed timber skirting boards and architraves remain in place throughout. In the rooms with the dado walling, the skirting boards and doors have a stained timber finish, while doors and timber details in the rest of the house are painted. The walls above the dado are plasterboard. The original three panel interior doors featuring two vertical panels below a single square panel, and complete with original hardware, are still evident throughout. The doors are lined with grained plyboard the same as the dado walls, except in vertical format. The opening at the juncture of the two corridors extends the full wall height, in excess of 3.0 metres. The ceilings are battened asbestos.

The fireplace in living room is flush with the wall and detailed by a row of header bricks with a brick hearth and simple timber mantle. A gas heater has been inserted into the fireplace space. A c.1970s vinyl fold-a-door is in place in the opening between the living and dining room. The kitchen has an original c.1950s fitout, with timber shelving in the pantry. Room 2, room 3 and the laundry all have original built in cupboards to ceiling height. All built ins are c.1950s. The bathroom and laundry extensions have tiled floors over concrete, asbestos, laminated boarding and tiled walls, and asbestos ceilings lined on the rake.

The rear extension has a concrete floor, asbestos lined walls, and low pitched skillion roof with exposed timber rafters. The former kitchen wall has been removed to adjoin the extension and a c.1970s timber breakfast bar and header decoration installed.

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is generally in good condition, although there is visual evidence of extensive termite damage in the roof timbers of the rear extension and in the shelving in the pantry.

Some change has taken place, with the east verandah enclosure, and bathroom and laundry at the northeast rear corner, as well as the north extension off the kitchen. *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* has retained a high degree of integrity.

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is mostly intact and demonstrates a high degree of authenticity.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman was built in 1939 in a simple vernacular interpretation of the Inter War California Bungalow. The corrugated iron cladding is typical of residences constructed in the early twentieth century in the region.

There are six, single-storey residences or residential-style buildings in the Inter War California Bungalow style on the Heritage Council Database, none of which has iron clad walls: P00292 Uniting Church Broome; P02596 Trayning Police Station and fmr Police Quarters; P08895 Model Timber House, Floreat; P10644 Memorial House, Bruce Rock; P15750 Railway Housing Precinct, Merredin; P15865 Wittenoom Street Railway Houses, Kalgoorlie; P15867 Kalgoorlie Railway Housing Group. Of these, Memorial House, Bruce Rock is associated with the provision of medical facilities and is discussed further below.

There are twenty one notable places in the Heritage Council database that have corrugated iron walls, of which four either are or contain single storey residential dwellings. None are in the Inter War California Bungalow style. Three goldfield buildings that are known to be iron clad are the Conglomerate Pub, Nullagine and the Ironclad Hotel, Marble Bar (currently under consideration for interim registration). The General Store in Marble Bar, also an iron-clad building, was completely destroyed by fire in November 2004. Another North West building of the same construction is the Roebuck Bay Hotel, Broome. Retail premises in the North West, such as the Chinatown stores on Carnarvon Street, are also iron clad. Iron clad residences remain in the Gwalia township, mostly unoccupied and of a much smaller scale than *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman*, most being miner's shacks. Mazza's Store and Patroni's Guest House are more substantial Gwalia structures, but are of no particular style, are unoccupied, in only fair condition and are not single residences.²⁹

There are 12 places on the Register of Heritage Places relating to the provision of housing or quarters for health professionals. Six of these are hospitals or similar complexes: P2049 *Royal Perth Hospital (Kirkman House)*; P2176 *Edward Millen Home*; P2438 *King Edward Memorial Hospital*; P12670 *Lake Grace Hospital*; P3314 *Old Hospital Complex* (Margaret River); P8566 *Wooraloo Sanatorium*. Three registered buildings were converted to provide accommodation for health professionals: P9201 *Success Hill Lodge* was originally a hotel and was converted to form part of a hospital; P2907 *Atwell* was a private residence that was converted for use as nurses quarters; P1555 *Menzies Warden's Quarters* is a converted Federation Bungalow dwelling.

29

Heritage Council database, HCWA assessment documentation for Hotel & Store, Marble Bar (03594) & Gwalia Townsite (01459).

Only three registered places were purpose built to accommodate health professionals. Two of these do not include space for a surgery: P5568 *Godfrey House* was purpose built for the Chief Medical Officer of Princess Margaret Hospital and P2286 *Medical Staff Quarters* (Port Headland) only provides accommodation. P10644 *Memorial House* (Bruce Rock) is most comparable to *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman*. Originally built as a hospital, it is a brick and iron bungalow designed in the Inter-War California Bungalow style, and also appears to have provided accommodation for staff. It differs from *Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman* in its construction materials, and because it was designed as a small regional hospital. It is also distinctive in having been built as a war memorial.

There are 55 other places in the Heritage Council database associated with the provision of housing for health professionals. Only one is recorded as having been constructed with corrugated iron walls: P14001 Granny Gibson's House, Ravensthorpe. This timber-framed house with corrugated iron walls was located behind the old hospital and originally built as the Doctor's House. Some time ago it was dismantled and it is currently in storage pending re-erection as a museum on Council land on the Esplanade.³⁰

Although none is included in the Register of Heritage Places, the practice of locating surgeries as attachments to or as part of a doctors' residences was common, both in the metropolitan area and in country towns. Surgeries were either attached to earlier houses (e.g. Dr Sawell's House (fmr), Boulder) or were planned as part of the house in the first instance (e.g. Doctor's House Yarloop). In each instance, the residence was planned as a family dwelling with a separately accessible room at the front or side of the house designed to fulfil the function of doctor's surgery. The plan generally allows patients access to the surgery directly from the verandah or via a porch, and the doctor direct access from his residence. There are 25 places in the HCWA database that functioned as doctor's residences and/or surgeries, none of which has been recommended for inclusion in the Register of Heritage Places.

Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman is rare as a substantial example of an iron-clad Inter War California Bungalow style residence, and is a good representative example of a purpose built home that provided integral space for a doctor's surgery within the building.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

³⁰ Heritage Council database search 27 September 2004.