



# 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<sup>1</sup>

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* is a good example of a residential building designed in the North-west Regional style to provide shelter in the extreme conditions of the tropical north of Western Australia in the early twentieth century before the development of mechanical air-conditioning. The use of wide verandahs, cross ventilation, mosquito-proofed rooms and shutters to protect against storms were all commonly used techniques that resulted in a particular aesthetic quality that became synonymous with the region. (Criterion 1.1)

The place, with the former woolshed, forms a significant cultural environment in that these structures are the only obvious remnants of the early port related facilities connected with the town section of the Derby Jetty Tramway. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The town lot on which *Wharfinger's House, Derby* stands was the site of the town's first Water Police Station and then, in 1928, became the site of the first residence constructed for a Harbour and Light Department officer in the town. The residence filled a longstanding need by making quarters available for rental and, until 1962, provided a home for the succession of wharfingers responsible for the management of port activities. (Criterion 2.1)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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<sup>1</sup> 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*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989. North-west Regional is not included as a style in Apperly et. al. However, this style of building is distinctive in the Broome region for the extensive use of storm shutters and lattice screens, wide verandahs, prominent hipped roofs, and masonry stumps that separate the building's framing from the ground.

#### 11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* is highly valued by the Derby community, which was responsible for its restoration in 1989. (Criterion 4.1)

The place, together with the Wool Shed, contributes to the community's sense of place by reminding residents and visitors that port activities once took place not only in the area adjacent to the new jetty but also in this part of the town. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* is one of the few remaining traditional style residential buildings in the town and one of the few extant from the 1920s. A comparable structure, Holman House, was located on the hospital site but has been shifted to the Gibb River Road turn-off outside the town. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* is a representative example of a housing type which was developed in the early 1900s and inter-war period as suitable for the tropical conditions of the north of Western Australia. The style featured a core of rooms opening onto wide verandahs with roof ventilation, mosquito-proofed areas and French doors providing cross ventilation to the inner rooms. The verandahs typically had shutters to protect against cyclones. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* is in very good condition. It has been restored and is regularly maintained. Management is through the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley and the Derby Tourist Bureau.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* has medium integrity because, although its original intention as the quarters of the wharfinger is no longer relevant, it is currently used for interpretive purposes and provides historical information relating to its original use. It is also used to provide interpretive material on Derby and the West Kimberley generally. It has the ability to retain values related to this purpose indefinitely.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* has medium authenticity having been restored largely to original detail. Roof sheeting is zincalume rather than the original corrugated galvanised iron and the storm battens have not been reinstated. Part of the verandah has been enclosed to create an artist's studio and this section of the building has been adapted. A number of elements, including shutters, steps, some wall linings, are not original but generally reproduce original detail.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Dr Cathie Clement, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Rosemary Rosario, Architectural Heritage Consultant.

The curtilage should comprise Derby Town Lot 268.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Located on the north-east corner of Loch and Elder Street, at the western extremity of the Derby townsite, *Wharfinger's House, Derby* is reminiscent of the days when the town's jetty was under the control of a Wharfinger. This public servant, appointed by the Chief Harbour Master in Fremantle, was responsible for the jetty (since replaced), Derby Jetty Tramway (no longer extant), Derby Goods Yard (remnant structures, rails and boundary fence extant) and other structures associated with the tramway. The most visible components of the historic port are the Wool Shed and Platform, situated opposite *Wharfinger's House, Derby*, and the Derby Jetty Storage Yard, situated near the new jetty. Remnants of the tramway are visible both near the Woolshed and in the storage yard, which contains a shed and deteriorated items of rolling stock. Remnants of the earlier jetty are visible at low tide.

Construction of port-related facilities in Derby dates from early 1884, making the town's jetty tramway the first in the north of Western Australia. The huge tides experienced in King Sound destroyed this tramway and, in late 1885, when Derby was declared a warehousing port, the port facilities consisted of only 'an iron shed on a "spur" of the jetty, 20 feet square'. At this time, steamers landed an average of 40 to 50 tons of goods each month. In 1886, the government organised the construction of a new tramway and a bonded store, and, to ensure proper management of affairs at the port, it appointed a tidewaiter and two water police constables.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the construction of a Water Police Station, the water police operated out of tents at "The Point", i.e. the land at the western end of the townsite as distinct from the eastern end where the government buildings, a hotel and the gaol initially stood in what was referred to as Derby or the town. The Water Police Station, which would have included quarters, stood on Lot 268, where *Wharfinger's House, Derby* now stands. Records of contracts let for the Water Police Station indicate that it was repaired in 1907, altered in 1909 and sold for removal in 1914. The duties of the tidewaiter passed to a landing waiter, who was subsequently also the customs officer, and, in 1904, a contract was let for the construction of Customs Quarters.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> State Records Office of Western Australia, hereafter SROWA, Colonial Secretary's Office, Acc 527, 2427/84, File; *Victorian Express*, 9 May 1885, no pagination; *West Australian*, 5 January 1886, p. 3; *Victorian Express*, 22 May 1886; SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Police Department, Acc 738/1, Occurrence Book, entry dated 7 June 1886; *Victorian Express*, 7 August 1886.

<sup>3</sup> SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Police Department, Acc 738/3, Rough Occurrence Book, 16.1.1887–30.11.1888, entry dated 29 January 1887; Contract and Management Services,

Contractors were initially responsible for the tramway operation and, by 1889, despite ongoing damage to the line, a passenger car ran twice daily between "The Point" and the head of the line, which was situated on Loch Street some distance short of the town. When a steamer was in port, the tram ran out to the jetty and back. By 1892, a goods shed and wool platform were in place; in 1893, the jetty and tramway were upgraded; in 1898/99, a small wool shed was erected; and, in 1901, the government organised the construction of a large Wool Shed on the tramway. By this time, the original government buildings in the town had been replaced by new structures which were positioned much closer to the port. Subsequent work in the Derby Goods Yard in 1910 saw the Wool Shed overhauled and a Platform with end ramps installed to replace the old wool platform.<sup>4</sup> The Wool Shed and the Platform stand opposite *Wharfinger's House, Derby* today.

By 1909, the government had appointed a wharfinger to manage the port operations at Derby. Because no quarters were provided, William Pearsson lodged at the Port hotel. While no attempt has been made to document the activities of this period, it appears that Pearsson's employment had finished by 1917 and that, in 1920, another Wharfinger, Major John Campbell, asked if a house could be provided for him at Derby. No house appeared, and, in 1921, a deputation tackled the Minister for North-West about the lack of accommodation for government officers at northern ports.<sup>5</sup> The Chief Harbour Master favoured his officers being able to rent quarters at the ports and, on 2 September 1921, E Tindale, Principal Assistant to the Engineer-in-Chief at the Department of the North-West, proposed the following solution:

. . . premises should be built for the Wharfinger, on Lot - 268 originally used for Water Police Station, being handy to Goods Shed.

On other papers I have advocated the removal of old Residency to Onslow Square, and setting it up as a Hospital: if this is done, the present Hospital could be shifted to old Water Police site and established as Wharfinger's residence.

In new construction, I strongly advise the adoption of more durable and less costly up-keep structures than wood – preferably brick or concrete.<sup>6</sup>

The proposal to utilise the obsolete hospital was typical of the solutions favoured for northern towns but, in this instance, alternate arrangements

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Contracts Book 1; SROWA, AN 39/1, Department of the North-West, Acc 251, 437/1921, Quarters for Wharfingers etc. in the North, p. 18; SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Police Department, Acc 738/6, Occurrence Book, entry dated 25 November 1889.

<sup>4</sup> *Victorian Express*, 14 August 1886; SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 3573/1903, Annual Report for 1889; Contract and Management Services, Contracts Book 1; *Victorian Express*, 14 April 1888; SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Police Department, Acc 738/21, Letter Book, Item 64/92; Philippa Uhe, Survey of Railway Heritage in Western Australia, Vol. 2, North of the 26th Parallel, a report compiled for the National Trust of Australia (WA), August 1994, no pagination, section headed 'Derby - A History of the Tramway'.

<sup>5</sup> *Western Australia, Legislative Assembly, Electoral Rolls, Kimberley Electoral District, 31 December 1909, and 30th August, 1917 and 31st December, 1920; Boab Babbler*, 3 November [1989], p. [12], citing information supplied by Milton Reynolds (wharfinger at Wyndham) and the Department of Marine and Harbours; SROWA, AN 39/1, Department of the North-West, Acc 251, 437/1921, pp. 1 and 2. It is noted that some confusion exists as to whether the wharfinger who asked for a house was named Campbell, Cambell or Camphle.

<sup>6</sup> SROWA, AN 39/1, Department of the North-West, Acc 251, 437/1921, p. 18. Tindale later became Engineer in Chief of the Public Works Department.

were made. By November 1921, Tindale had discovered that a new wharfinger, William Frederick Charles, had been unable to rent quarters and, consequently, had 'negotiated and succeeded in purchasing suitable premises for his use'. This situation, Tindale wrote, made the need to construct wharfinger's quarters at Derby 'not nearly so acute as at other centres'.<sup>7</sup>

The shortage of accommodation was felt not only by the wharfinger but also by the horses used at the port. Early in 1922, Acting Wharfinger Hannah advised the Chief Harbour Master that, because no new stables had been provided since the old ones had blown down some two years earlier, he had been obliged to keep and feed the horses in the goods shed. Torrential rain had fallen; the yard was flooded; the lean-to under which the horses normally sheltered was liable to collapse; and, according to Hannah, the harness and chaff house were 'in the same condition – white ant eaten – and will fall to pieces any time'. Arrangements were made for Foreman Mudge to provide suitable shelter and yards and repair the feed house. The expenditure of £33 8s 11d was debited to Derby Tramway Maintenance. At the same time, the sum necessary to provide the wharfinger with quarters was provided on the draft Estimates.<sup>8</sup>

In 1923, Hannah and Mudge had a serious disagreement over Mudge (who worked for the Department of the North West) using the Jetty horses and trucks (which belonged to the Harbour and Light Department). The animosity between two officers prevented them working together effectively—an essential requirement at the port—and the two departments considered bringing in an outsider who was capable of doing both jobs. The possibility of obtaining a cottage from another site to provide quarters for the wharfinger was also mentioned at this time. No change seems to have eventuated, however, and it appears that Hannah continued to do the wharfinger's work.<sup>9</sup>

By June 1927, the idea of transporting a building from another site had been scrapped and £1500 was available to build quarters for the wharfinger. The Public Works Department prepared drawings and called for tenders. The quarters were completed by 1 July 1928 and Wharfinger Macguire apparently moved into the house, renting it for 5/- per week. His salary was £7 10s per week, and he occupied the quarters until he resigned in March 1930. The next wharfinger, J. Healey, was single and did not want to rent the quarters. He had been shed clerk at the port in Broome and now, as well as looking after the Derby jetty and tramway, he also periodically attended to an A.G.A. Flashing Light that had been installed on Point Torment to assist vessels that were making the port at night.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31; *Boab Babbler*, 3 November [1989], p. [12]; *Western Australia, Legislative Assembly, Electoral Roll, Kimberley Electoral District, 30th June, 1921 and 30th June, 1922.*

<sup>8</sup> SROWA, AN 39/1, Department of the North-West, Acc 251, 224/1922, Wharfingers Quarters Derby – Stabling, pp. 1, 3, 4 and 5; SROWA, AN 39/1, Department of the North West, Acc 251, 687/1922, Derby: provision of a lockup, near Post Office, p. [2].

<sup>9</sup> SROWA, AN 39/1, Department of the North-West, Acc 251, 459/1923, Derby: Proposed Combined Appointment of Foreman and Wharfinger, pp. 1–8; *Boab Babbler*, 3 November [1989], p. [12].

<sup>10</sup> SROWA, AN 16/5, Harbour & Light Department, WAA 11, Acc 1066, 1095/1928, North West Ports: Visits of Inspection by Under Secretary & Hon. Minister – Notes req'd thereon,

From 1930 until 1962, when new quarters were constructed for the Derby wharfinger on Lot 502 Loch Street, a succession of people associated with the port lived in *Wharfinger's House, Derby*. From April 1930 to October 1934, PWD Foreman and Wharfinger H Walshe was in residence. He managed the jetty, tramway, shed and administrative matters as well as being Inspector under the Hospital Fund Act, 1930, and, when required, carrying out Forestry Department work. Healy, who had been wharfinger before Walshe, now worked as the Harbour and Light Department clerk, attending to clerical work and delivery of cargo and relieving when the Wharfinger was on leave. Other Derby wharfingers who have been identified are Tudor Owen (from 14 July 1935), Pat Macguire (from 1938), Monty Fidler (from June 1943), and Alec Naughton (from 1 January 1948 to 7 January 1962).<sup>11</sup> In Wharfinger Fidler's time, an Aboriginal couple lived in a small building (no longer extant) behind the residence. The woman cleaned for the Fidlers and her husband worked elsewhere. During that period, *Wharfinger's House, Derby* was painted a "brick" red colour and had vegetable gardens flourishing in the rear part of the grounds.<sup>12</sup>

After Alec Naughton (Fidler's successor) was transferred to Esperance, the incoming wharfinger occupied the new house further up Loch Street. This left *Wharfinger's House, Derby* available for the accommodation of other departmental employees. Those who lived there at intervals during and from 1962 have been identified as Wolf Wackett (assistant wharfinger), Arnold Van Scheyk (clerk), Brian Williamson (clerk) and Leslie M (Bagsy) Jones (clerk) who was there from 1969 until he died in 1976. From then until 1989, when *Wharfinger's House, Derby* was restored, it remained vacant. The restoration was undertaken at a cost of \$80,000 (comprising \$40,000 from the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley, \$20,000 from the WA Heritage Council, and \$20,000 from the Bicentennial Authority).<sup>13</sup>

Between 1962 (when the new wharfinger's house was built) and 1989 (when *Wharfinger's House, Derby* was restored), the port changed dramatically. Within a couple of years, at a cost of £1,000,000, the new steel-framed, concrete jetty was built; the adjacent Derby Jetty Storage Yard replaced the old Derby Goods Yard; and the old jetty was demolished – leaving only remnants of the piles and the tramway to show how that section of the port had worked in past years. State Shipping Service vessels called at Derby in the 1960s and 1970s but, when the fleet was replaced in 1972, the passenger services to Derby ended. The freight service continued until 1981 and was then withdrawn because shoaling had dramatically reduced the available depth of water in some of the critical areas around the jetty approaches. Two years later the Department of Marine and Harbours closed the port. A period of disuse followed, and it was only in December 1997, after Western Metals Limited developed a

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irregular pagination, see pp. 4 and 5 of 'Notes for the Hon. Minister' and other pages; PWD WA dwg No 24241, dated 3.6.1927, Copy in Derby Public Library Local History Collection; *Government Gazette* (WA), 17 June 1927, p. 1531; *Boab Babbler*, 3 November [1989], p. [12].

<sup>11</sup> SROWA, AN 16/5, Harbour & Light Department, Acc 1066, 1095/1928; *Boab Babbler*, 3 November [1989], p. [12].

<sup>12</sup> Personal Comment, Pat Jordan (nee Fidler) to Cathie Clement, Perth, 11 June 1999.

<sup>13</sup> *Boab Babbler*, 6 October [1989], p. [1], and 3 November [1989], p. [12].

unique barging operation, that the port re-opened. Since then, the goods shed in the obsolete Derby Goods Yard has been demolished so that heavy trucks can drive off Loch Street, without having to make sharp turns, whilst carrying lead and zinc concentrates to the new bulk loading facilities adjacent to the jetty.<sup>14</sup>

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* is now used as a museum. It houses information, art and artefacts related to the history of Derby and its hinterland, with particular emphasis on the port, telecommunications and aviation. Part of the building is used by artists, and the grounds are used occasionally for social functions.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* is located on Derby Town Lot 268 on the north-eastern corner of the Loch and Elder Street intersection at the western end of the town. The site is located opposite the Woolshed and the Ramp, which are remnant structures previously associated with the Derby Jetty Tramway which ran across the mudflats from the town to the jetty on King Sound. These are the physical elements that remain of the area previously under the control of the Wharfinger.

The site of *Wharfinger's House, Derby* comprises the restored residence, an outbuilding providing bathroom and laundry facilities and landscaped areas. *Wharfinger's House, Derby* is located on the southern end of the lot closest to Loch Street. The building is oriented east-west with the main entrance facing west across the mud flats towards the jetty.

The residence is enclosed by a steel star picket and woven wire fence approximately 900mm high with gates to Elder Street and Loch Street. There is vehicular access via a gravel driveway from Loch Street. The area around the residence is landscaped with lawns, small trees and shrubs and a timber log structure has been constructed between the driveway and the gardens. Treated logs have been used extensively to define areas of planting on either side of the gravel driveway and along the western side of the building. Adjacent to the building the ground is built up to raise the driveway approximately 200mm above the ground level beneath the residence.

The northern part of the site is enclosed by a 1.7m high cyclone mesh fence. This area comprises grass and trees and contains the bathroom and laundry which is a corrugated Colorbond structure of recent origin. All the landscaping on the site is recent in origin, having been developed in the past ten years.

*Wharfinger's House, Derby* is a single storey building constructed on 250mm diameter concrete stumps with metal caps that raise the floor level of the building approximately 1.1m above ground level. The building is timber framed with external cladding of painted timber weatherboards and flat asbestos cement sheets. The building is rectangular in plan with a

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<sup>14</sup> *West Australian*, 13 October 1964, p. 53; R C McLellan, *A Short History of Derby*, private publication, n.p., n.d., p. 35; Uhe, Survey of Railway Heritage; Bob Baker, *Black Rocks: A New Port for the West Kimberley*, Honours dissertation, Murdoch University, 1991, pp. 54–6 and 69; *Boab Bulletin*, April 1999, p. 5; *West Australian*, 22 December 1997, p. 40.



medium pitched hipped roof (approx. 25°) which is clad with custom orb profile zincalume sheeting which replaces original corrugated galvanised iron sheets. There are three ventilation cowls on the ridge of the roof. The building has no gutters or downpipes.

In plan *Wharfinger's House, Derby* comprises a simple arrangement of three central rooms of equal proportions in the centre of the building with open verandahs around the perimeter. The south-west corner of the building is enclosed to provide a mosquito-proof room. The north-east corner was originally enclosed to provide a kitchen and bathroom. The adjacent part of the northern verandah at the northern end of the building has subsequently been enclosed to create an artist's studio. The original kitchen and bathroom areas are enclosed with painted weatherboard and have small pane casement windows on the western side. The adjacent verandah has been enclosed with flat asbestos cement sheets and has similar timber framed windows and a door on the northern elevation. This area was not able to be accessed. The kitchen but not the bathroom is believed to remain extant. The original fireplace and chimney is no longer extant and there is now no evidence indicative of the presence of tank stands and water tanks originally located at all four corners of the building.

The three access points to the building comprise steel framed steps to the western, eastern and northern sides of the building, all with timber treads. Steps are in the original locations but are not original fabric. The verandah has 130mm wide floorboards. The roof soffit is unlined and the zincalume roof sheeting is visible above the timber roof structure. The roof above the verandah is supported on 100mm x 100mm timber posts with panels of timber lattice to 1.160m above floor level. The verandah has shutters of mini-orb profile zincalume 1.350m deep on the western side. The mosquito room on the south-western corner of the verandah has tongued and grooved vertical boarding to 1.250m above floor level and timber framing with fly-wire to the openings above with shutters to the same detail as the adjacent verandah.

The external walls of the central core rooms are timber framed, with the framing exposed externally, and with 110mm wide tongued and grooved vertical boarding. Each room has a pair of timber framed French doors opening onto the verandah from each side and the end rooms also have doors leading to the ends of the verandah. Generally original brass door handles remain. Internally these rooms have tongued and grooved timber floorboards 110mm wide. Walls and ceilings are also tongued and grooved vertical panelling painted cream. There is a timber framed vent in the centre of each ceiling. One room has a trapdoor in the ceiling. The rooms have electric lights and ceiling fans all of recent origin. Wiring is in exposed conduit surface mounted to the walls.

The central rooms have been set up as a museum and they contain a large collection of movable heritage items. This includes a display of equipment related to aviation in the Kimberley including the flight console from Derby airport used until 1989, a display of Aboriginal art from *Bungarun (Leptosarium), Derby* and a display related to the history of the Derby jetty and tramway. There is also a collection of communications equipment from the Kimberley including a telephone exchange panel from Willare

Bridge and a switchboard from the Spinifex Hotel, Derby from the 1960s. There are various unlabeled items of machinery on the verandah.

The building has been restored in recent years, largely to original detail, and is in very good condition. It has been painted in shades of cream and dark green and is very well presented. The grounds around the building have been landscaped and are well maintained.

### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

No other places similar in style and condition to the *Wharfinger's House, Derby* are extant in the town. Holman House, formerly the doctor's residence and located on the Derby Hospital site, dates from the same period and has some stylistic similarities. This building has been relocated to a site outside the town. The original residential buildings at *Bungarun (Leprosarium), Derby* also have some stylistic similarities with wide verandahs and rooms opening onto them through French doors.

### **13.4 REFERENCES**

No key references.

### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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