



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*

Lady Champion Hostel (fmr) is a fine building that displays some elements of the Californian Bungalow style. (Criterion 1.1)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Lady Champion Hostel (fmr) has strong links with the Bush Nursing Society which was developed to serve the needs of World War I veterans, and in particular their wives, in country areas. The Society and the Bush Nursing Trust were directly responsible for the construction of the Hostel as they provided the necessary funds and the administrative structure to ensure the Hostel's ongoing operation. (Criterion 2.1)

Lady Champion Hostel (fmr) is closely associated with the Group Settlement Scheme as it was constructed to serve the needs of the various Groups that were located close to Busselton. The provision of hostels by the Bush Nursing Society allowed pregnant women from these areas to travel to proper medical facilities prior to the onset of labour rather than during, thereby alleviating some of the risks to mother and child. (Criterion 2.1)

The construction of the *Lady Champion Hostel (fmr)*, and other similar hostels, represents the push by the nursing fraternity to provide similar medical facilities for country women during their pregnancies as that enjoyed by their city cousins. Prior to the construction of the hostels, country women were forced to remain at home during childbirth as there were either no hospital facilities nearby or it was not possible to reach a hospital in time. The construction of the hostels provided country women with the option of accessing proper medical facilities where previously none had existed. (Criterion 2.2)

Lady Champion Hostel (fmr) is of historical importance as it represents the contribution made by the British Red Cross to World War I veterans and their dependants who resided in rural Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Lady Campion Hostel (fmr) contributes to the Busselton community's sense of place through its role as a hostel for expectant mothers. By having the use of the type of facility, countrywomen were able to make a choice between coming into town early to await the birth of their child or waiting until the last minute. Once the building was no longer required for this type of accommodation, it continued its role in the health and welfare of the Busselton community when it was briefly occupied by the Infant Health Centre. (Criterion 4.2)

* 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.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

Considering that only five hostels of this type were constructed in Western Australia during the Inter-War years, the *Lady Champion Hostel (fmr)* is thought to be uncommon. Further research should reveal whether this is the only hostel remaining in the State. (Criterion 5.1)

Lady Champion Hostel (fmr) is a reminder of that era when rural women were isolated from adequate medical facilities, particularly during pregnancy, when this isolation could mean the difference between the life or death of either themselves or their new born baby. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Lady Champion Hostel (fmr) represents the isolated and difficult life faced by many of the settlers involved in the Group Settlement Scheme. Because the Government provided only limited medical facilities and services for the Groups, women in particular were at a disadvantage as far as medical treatment went as so many of them were of childbearing age and newly married. The provision of the Hostel at least helped to alleviate some of the isolation that many of these new migrants must have felt. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The building is currently in very good condition and has been well maintained in the past. The use of the metal stirrups to the verandah posts indicates an awareness of the problems caused by seating timber posts directly into concrete.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Although the building has been altered to function as an office, rather than as a hostel, the original layout has not been radically altered. The information supplied by Eileen Dunkley indicates that the verandahs were used as additional space at some time, although how this was arranged is not known. The addition at the rear and the enclosure of the east verandah have not detracted from the building's appearance and, if desired, could be removed at a later date without damaging the original fabric. The building has a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The building has retained a high percentage of its original fabric and fittings. *Lady Champion Hostel (fmr)* is considered to have a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Fiona Bush.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Lady Campion Hostel (fmr) was built by the Bush Nursing Society in 1926 to accommodate expectant mothers. Its location was chosen as it was close to Busselton Hospital. The hospital has since been demolished however, it was formerly situated along Adelaide Street.

In 1920, the British Red Cross made a grant of £150,000 to the Australian Government that was to be divided equally between the States. Its primary purpose was for the establishment of Bush Nursing services in country areas, particularly for the benefit of returned veterans and their dependants. In Western Australia, £10,000 was given to King Edward Memorial Hospital and £15,000 was given to a board of trustees who established the Bush Nursing Trust in 1920.¹

The initial trustees were Messrs Walter Kingsmill (Chairman), H.P. Colebatch, Collier, Alexander Monger and Alfred Carson.² At their second meeting, the Trustees agreed to appoint a committee who would decide how best to proceed with fulfilling the wishes of the British Red Cross. Members of the committee were to be drawn from the Silver Chain Association, the Red Cross and a representative from the Health Department.³ At the meeting of the 17 May 1921, the minutes of the Trust note that the committee had resolved to form the Bush Nursing Society of Western Australia under the auspices of the Silver Chain Nursing League (Inc.) and the Red Cross Society. Members would be drawn from town and country areas and pay an annual subscription. The main objective of the Society was to "organise and carry out nursing and related services in country districts, especially maternity nursing."⁴ In particular, these services were to be delivered to areas where veterans had settled.⁵

The Society appears to have operated separately from the Silver Chain League and the Red Cross as they were directly responsible to the Bush Nursing Trust. The Trust appears to have provided the funds to construct hostels, provided that land was donated for the purpose. The various Bush Society committees that were established in country areas were responsible for furnishing the hostels and the daily running of them. They also provided the necessary funds to pay the matron. The committees raised the monies by charging a small fee for accommodation at the hostel and various fund-raising activities. However, this funding often fell short and in these instances the Trust would pick up the shortfall.⁶

By 1937, five hostels had been constructed: Alfred and Eva Carson Hostel in Denmark, Lady Nova Hostel in Wyalcatchem, Muriel Chase Hostel in

¹ Information supplied by Eileen Dunkley, courtesy of the Busselton Historical Society.

² Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Trust 1920-1947, 14/10/1920.

³ *ibid.*, 25/11/1920.

⁴ *ibid.*, 17/5/1921.

⁵ *ibid.*, 17/5/1921.

⁶ *ibid.*

Kunuoppin and a hostel at Northcliffe. The Society also assisted other farming communities with buildings, such as an annexe at Mukinbuddin, and nursing assistance.⁷ However, their main assistance appears to have been in the operation of hostels which could accommodate pregnant mothers just prior to their baby's delivery. Matrons were employed at the various hostels to assist the women during their last stages of pregnancy and ensure that the women were well enough to return home.⁸ The Society apparently had a good reputation for providing immediate assistance wherever or whenever it was required. Gabby notes that during an emergency situation at one of the Northcliffe Group Settlements, the local medical officer received immediate assistance from the Society, in the form of a nursing sister, whereas the Medical Department had told him to send a detailed report first before anything further could be done!⁹

In February 1944 it was proposed by members of the Trust that the Trust amalgamate with the Silver Chain Association to become the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Service.¹⁰ The Silver Chain Association had been formed in 1905 to help care for the sick and the aged.¹¹ There is no further reference to the amalgamation in the minute book, however, the minutes continue until 9 September 1947. In the meeting of 2 August 1944 the Bush Nursing Trust is described as "defunct".¹² It can only be assumed that the Bush Nursing Society came under the umbrella of the Silver Chain Association, however the Trust itself continued to function up until 1947.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which babies were still delivered at home and the number born in a hospital during the Inter-War years. By providing the hostels, the Trust hoped that it would become more practicable for mothers to come in early and await the birth of their babies in comfort, rather than experiencing a long drive along bush tracks or a difficult birth with possibly only the assistance of a neighbour.¹³ This service went a long way in reducing the mortality rate of mother and infant.

The Society formed committees in many country towns, particularly in areas where Group Settlements were established. Group Settlement was a scheme devised by Sir James Mitchell who became Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Land and Immigration in 1919. Mitchell considered that the agricultural sector was grossly under-manned and needed an infusion of new blood. He saw the State's south west as an ideal location for dairy farms and in 1921 he initiated the Group Settlement Scheme. In 1923, by virtue of an agreement between the British, Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments, the State agreed to settle approximately 75,000 British migrants over a three year period in the State's south west. Specially selected migrants would be allocated farms which had been

⁷ *ibid.*, 26/4/1937.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Gabbedy, J.P., *Group Settlement. Part 1, Its Origins: Politics and Administration*, UWA Press, Perth, 1988, p. 28.

¹⁰ Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Trust 1920-1947, 17/2/1944.

¹¹ LISWA Catalogue entry.

¹² Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Trust 1920-1947, 17/2/1944.

¹³ Gabbedy, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

established in the area. The migrants were placed into groups of about 20 or more people and each group had to clear, or partially clear 25 acres on each farm. These farms were established in isolated areas and often the migrants only access to nearby townships was by horse and dray.¹⁴ Twenty-one Groups were established in the Busselton area¹⁵

In September 1923, the Society received a request from Group Settlement No. 48 for a maternity hospital in Busselton which would serve the various Groups in the area. The Society wrote back informing them that the construction of a hospital was not within the scope of the Trust.¹⁶ Nearly a year later, Busselton's medical officer, Dr. Atkinson, wrote requesting assistance in providing a rest home for expectant mothers in Busselton. Block 45, which was close to Busselton Hospital, was granted by the Government for the purposes of building a hostel for expectant mothers.¹⁷ Mr. W.G. Pickering was requested to prepare plans for a building which was to cost no more than £1,200.¹⁸ By February, Pickering had submitted the plans and called for tenders.¹⁹ The tenders were received in March, however, the lowest tender price was above that set by the Society, due to the high cost of bricks. Pickering was granted an extra £100 and agreed to go back to the lowest tenderer.²⁰

The building was completed by September 1926 and it was decided to name the hostel after the Governor's wife, Lady Campion. The opening was set for the 23 October 1926.²¹ Lady Campion was unable to attend so the building was opened by Premier Collier.

Sometime late in the 1920s, more space was required and cubicles that opened off the bedrooms were constructed on the verandahs.²² The material used in the construction of these cubicles is not known as no physical evidence remains of these cubicles.

Mothers were encouraged to arrive at the Hostel at least two weeks before their baby was expected. It is not known what they did to fill in their spare time, however they were able to bring young children from home if there was no one else to care for them. A matron was employed full-time to look after the women and she would often walk them over to the hospital once labour started.²³

The first proposal to close the Hostel came in 1937, as the building was only being used occasionally. This falling off in occupancy appears to have been due to two factors: the construction of a hospital and hostel at Margaret River and improvements in transportation. The Trustees resolved to investigate the legal ramifications of disposing of the

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 567 - 570.

¹⁶ Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Society, 1921 - 1944, 17/9/1923.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 26/6/25.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 7/1/1926.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 3/2/1926.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 23/3/1926.

²¹ *ibid.*, 23/9/1926.

²² Information supplied by Eileen Dunkley, courtesy of the Busselton Historical Society.

²³ Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Trust, 1920 - 1947; Information supplied by Eileen Dunkley, courtesy of the Busselton Historical Society.

property.²⁴ No further action was taken as the situation improved when a new matron was appointed and the hostel became particularly busy. The Busselton Committee was also permitted to take in boarders during slack periods and from 1937 onwards, holiday guests appear to have made up the bulk of the people using the Hostel. Once war was declared in 1939, Busselton's sandy beaches made it a popular summer resort area for servicemen. The hostel became particularly busy accommodating not only pregnant mothers but guests as well.²⁵

In 1945, although additions and alterations had been made to the hostel it was noted in the minutes that it was doubtful that the hostel would be required for much longer.²⁶ The facilities at Margaret River were closer to many Group Settlements than Busselton and mothers tended to go there, rather than trek into Busselton. By March 1947, only 14 guests had stayed in the hostel over the preceding twelve months and it was decided to sell the hostel and land.²⁷

Lady Campion Hostel (fmr) was valued at £1,230 and sold to the Busselton Infant Health Centre in 1947.²⁸

The property was later sold by the Infant Health Centre in 1954 when they moved to new premises in Peel Terrace.²⁹ There are a number of gaps in the history of the building, such as what structural changes (if any), were made during the occupancy of the Infant Health Centre and what the building was used for after the Infant Health Centre moved out in 1954.³⁰ There are no building records held by the Shire of Busselton as alterations and additions to a building did not require the owner to supply plans or obtain a building licence. It is considered that the building was used for office accommodation from the 1980's onwards. Alterations and additions were made to the building sometime during this time.³¹ These changes entailed enclosing the eastern verandah and adding an extension to the rear of the building. In 1998, the building is currently occupied by an accounting firm.

The fate of the other four hostels is not fully known. The Northcliffe Hostel had become redundant by 1937 and the building had been removed.³² The Alfred and Eva Carson hostel at Denmark was briefly used by the Narrogin Agricultural College before being sold to the Infant Health Centre at Denmark.³³ It is not known what has happened to the Lady Nova and Muriel Chase Hostels.

²⁴ Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Trust, 1920 - 1947, 26/4/1937.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*, 8/6/1945.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 9/9/1947.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 9/9/1947.

²⁹ Information supplied by Eileen Dunkley, courtesy of the Busselton Historical Society.

³⁰ ~~Both the Health Department and Busselton's Infant Health Centre were contacted to determine if they had any information on this building. Neither of these organisations has information relating to this building.~~

³¹ Information supplied by the Shire of Busselton.

³² Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Trust, 1920 - 1947, 26/4/1937.

³³ *ibid.*

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Lady Campion Hostel (fmr) is located in a residential area, close to the main commercial precinct of Busselton. The other buildings in the street are single storey residences. The brick and iron building is single storey with verandahs to the front and sides. Stylistically, it is best defined as Inter-war Californian Bungalow, although it only displays a few elements of this design style. The stretcher bond brickwork has been painted white. Two chimney stacks are visible above the line of the gable roof. The pebble dash stacks are surmounted by a simple brickwork pattern. The building is set back on the block, with a large expanse of lawn at the front and bushes on the eastern property boundary. A low post and chain rail visually separates the building from the footpath. A bitumen drive runs down the western side of the block providing access to a rear parking lot.

The front facade (which faces south) presents with a deep verandah dominated by a prominent gable which is decorated with pebble dash, battens and a central ventilator grill. The timber verandah valance is decorated with open timber fretwork to the two outside bays, while the central bay is stepped. The verandah floor is concrete and the bases of the chamfered timber verandah posts are set in metal stirrups. The side verandah roofs are formed by the broken pitch of the main roof, while the front has a skillion roof.

The front door is centrally placed, with two narrow, fixed windows either side and a set of french doors placed on the far sides of these windows. All of the doors have fanlights. The upper sections of the narrow windows are fitted with air conditioning units. The windows in the hostel are timber framed double-hung sashes, with the upper sash divided into six panes. All of the windows and doors have rendered sills and lintels.

The eastern verandah has been enclosed with hardiflex sheets to the sides and front and brick on the rear wall. The windows in this section are modern, timber construction with sliding timber frames. A new brick addition has also been added to the rear of the building.

The internal plan of the building consists of a central passage with rooms opening off either side of this passage. The front door opens onto the reception area and the central passage. The french doors which open onto the front verandah on the eastern side are evidently no longer used as seating has been placed in front of them. The reception area has a high front desk with an opening onto the east verandah. The internal wall between the reception area and room 7 has been knocked out and the desk inserted in its place. The doors for room 7, which opened onto the passage and the verandah have been removed.

There are four rooms down the western side of the building and three down the eastern side (this includes the reception area). All of the passage doors have ripple glass panels to the upper section of the door and decorative battered architraves. Original door joinery and furniture has been retained. All of the rooms, with the exception of reception, have plaster cornices, skirting boards and the front room on the western side has a picture rail.

Two rooms on the western side (rooms 1 and 3) are fitted with doors that open onto the verandah, while the rooms on the eastern side have had the doors which formerly opened onto the verandah, removed. The exterior door to room 3 is a stable door and this room also features a small sash window to the passage. Room 2 also has an internal doors which provide access to rooms 1 and 3.

Only one fireplace was noted, in room 3, and this had been boarded up. It was not possible to examine room 6, where it is thought the other fireplace was located.

The building has retained many original features, such as the joinery which, stylistically, indicates that the building belongs in the Inter-War period. These details include battered door architraves, basket weave profile ventilators and rectangular metal plates to the oval door handles. All of the light fittings are modern.

A new series of rooms has been added across the rear of the building. A corridor now runs across the rear section providing access to three new offices, the enclosed eastern verandah section and a rear exit on the north west side. The main central passage exits onto this corridor. The eastern enclosed verandah section is one long room lit by sliding timber windows. It is thought these alterations date to the 1980s.

The original layout of the building appears to have been retained and rooms 1 to 7 and the reception area, constitute the original core of the building. Additions have been restricted to the rear of the building where they do not encroach on the front facade and the enclosure of the eastern verandah.

No accurate description of how the Hostel functioned and what the rooms were used for has been found. Room 1 may possibly have been the matron's own private room, as it is close to the front of the building and it also has internal access to rooms 2 and 3. Room 2 may have been the matron's private office, while room 3, which has an exterior stable door and a sash window to the passage, may have been a dispensary.

Room 4 currently functions as the office kitchen. It is the only room that does not have direct access to the verandah. If it is accepted that the public functions of the building were all situated on the western side of the building and the bedrooms were situated on the eastern side, the current enclosed verandah may date from the late 1920s when it was necessary to construct cubicles off the bedrooms. The modifications then to this area have been restricted to removing the cubicles.

It is not known how the building were used by the Baby Health Centre, or whether they made any changes. The current layout of the building has not interfered markedly with the original layout with the exception of the new rooms added at the rear of the building.

The building is in good condition and appears to be regularly maintained.

13.3 REFERENCES

Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Society, 1921 - 1944.

Minute Books of the Bush Nursing Trust, 1920 - 1947.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

Four other hostels were built by the Bush Nursing Trust. The fate of the Northcliffe hostel is known, however it is not known whether the other three buildings are still standing. Further research should be carried out to determine whether these buildings are still standing, and if so, their condition and current use.