



**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)

- 2.5 Promoting settlement on the land through selection and group settlement
- 2.6.2 Displacing Aboriginal people
- 3.2.2 Looking for overland stock routes
- 3.4 Developing sheep and cattle industries
- 3.7.1 Shipping to and from Australian ports
- 3.8 Farming for export under Australian conditions
- 3.15 Struggling with remoteness
- 4.1 Planning urban settlement
- 8.3 Going on holiday

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 105 Exploration and surveying
- 106 Workers
- 109 Environmental change
- 110 Resource exploitation and depletion
- 204 Droving
- 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying
- 602 Early settlers

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The place is significant as a very good example of a stone building in good condition built in the nineteenth century. (Criterion 1.1)

* 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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is important for its aesthetic values in the setting, being on slightly higher ground than the majority of the main township and when it was built, having a view out to the ocean (Criterion 1.3)

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is also important for its location within the township as it holds a central location in the townsite and is a landmark for its continuity of form and function since 1873. (Criterion 1.4)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is important as it is evidence of the role of the homestead and remote settler life in regional areas during the 19th century when the place served as the focal point for all services. *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* was the primary site of administration, accommodation, contact with Aboriginal people, workers and their families and the managers of the pastoral leases. (Criterion 2.1)

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is significant as an illustration of the settlement of the southeast region of the State at a time when most settlers were pushing north. It was the first permanent residence built by white settlers in the Esperance region and demonstrates the type of accommodation used by prominent landowners of the 19th century. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is closely associated with the Dempster family, who made a significant contribution to the development of the Esperance region. The Dempster family owned and lived in the place for over 60 years during which time the town of Esperance was established. (Criterion 2.3)

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is associated with David and Marie Louise Wordsworth who owned the place since 1966 and substantially renovated the structure. They have contributed to the community of Esperance through their works in the arts and politics. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

As *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* has been occupied since the 1870s, it is highly likely that the place contains extensive archaeological deposits which could provide valuable information on isolated frontier life and contrast with later occupancy material. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The place is highly valued by the community in Esperance as it is one of the few remaining structures from the first European settlement of the region. It has been included on the Shire of Esperance Municipal Inventory of heritage places, gazetted in their Town Planning Scheme and is registered by the National Trust (WA). (Criterion 4.1)

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is associated with the Dempster family who made a significant contribution to the establishment of the region. (Criterion 4.1)

The use of the place as holiday accommodation in the 1940s and 1950s is consistent with the role of Esperance as a holiday venue particularly for people from the Goldfields. (Criterion 4.1)

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is the earliest surviving structure in the town of Esperance and consequently its continuity in the landscape contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is rare as an example of the Victorian Regency style applied to a residence constructed between 1870 and 1880. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is a good example of the type of residence built for prominent landowners in regional Western Australia in the nineteenth century. (Criterion 6.1)

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is representative of the way of life and influence that wealthy landowners had in regional areas as a site for community activities. The continuation of that role as a venue for community events is comparable to past activities. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The condition of the present house is generally good. A great deal of work has been carried out to restore and retain the original form of the building by way of re-roofing and installation of new doors and windows since the 1960s when the building was virtually derelict. Floors have been replaced with concrete and not timber.

Work is needed by way of maintenance to eliminate damp that is showing, especially on the south wall master bedroom and the cellar. There appears to be both rising damp and falling damp.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of the place is high as the original intention is intact and visible where altered. The current use is compatible with the original intention as a residence and focus of community activities. The more recent additions are separate from the original building and complement the original structure.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The authenticity of the place is moderate overall, as later additions have resulted in the removal of original materials.

The form of the building, walls and roof structure have high authenticity. The original shingles or galvanised iron on the roof has been replaced with colorbond.

The authenticity of the windows to the verandah is low as these have been replaced although the windows to the north appear to be original and therefore the authenticity is high.

Internally the ceilings would appear to be original in the study, lounge and chapel. In the kitchen, a lower ceiling has been installed, although the original rolled sheet metal ceiling can be seen within the roof space.

The original cellar would have been separate from the main building and it is now encompassed within the main building in the enclosed dining room. This diminishes its authenticity but provides greater protection from the environment.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment compiled by Prue Griffin, Historian and Kris Keen, Architect of KTA Partnership in June 2006; with additions and/or amendments by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance comprises a single storey stone and corrugated iron residence in the Victorian Regency style set on a landscaped block that includes many mature trees. The place was built by James Dempster for his brother Andrew Dempster in 1873.

The establishment of the Esperance region is closely linked to the history of the Dempster family. The Dempster brothers James, Charles, Andrew and William were the first landholders in the region. Prior to the Dempster's taking up pastoral leases in the area the land was unsettled by European occupants. Brief visits by early explorers had recorded its geography. In 1792, the French explorer Bruny D'Entrecasteaux gave the bay the name Esperance after his vessel L'Esperance.¹ In 1802, Matthew Flinders charted the southern coastline and in 1826, the military outpost at King George's Town (Albany) was established. Thereafter the southern coast was the province of sealers and whalers. They used the beaches and islands as locations for rough camps in which they lived and processed their catch. These small outposts were serviced by ships although one businessman from Albany, Thomas Brooker Sherratt, did cart supplies to some of the isolated settlers.²

The land was considered worthless for agriculture following the tragic journey of Edward John Eyre from South Australia in 1842 and confirmed by Surveyor General Roe when he explored the southern hinterland in 1848-49.³ In 1859, settler Albert Hassell of Jerramungup had explored as far east as Esperance but was equally unimpressed with the land for agriculture.⁴

The Dempster brothers however chose land in the region and were eventually successful in establishing good pastoral leases. The Dempsters were sons of James Maclean Dempster who had arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1830. James MacLean Dempster was originally a sea captain but diversified and became a successful pastoralist, land owner and businessman in the Swan River colony.

In 1843, James Dempster leased the farm 'Buckland' in the Avon Valley from his father-in-law and business partner, Charles Pratt, and succeeded in making it a well run and profitable venture.⁵ James and Ann Dempster had eight surviving children; five sons and three daughters.⁶ In the late 1840s with a general downturn in the economy of the young colony James and Ann Dempster left 'Buckland' to settle in Fremantle while James attempted to gain work as a sea captain. An alternative opportunity arose for Dempster and he was able to lease

1 *Faith, Hope and Reality: Esperance 1895-1995* Esperance Shire Council, 1995, p. 403.

2 Voigt, Don *Old Esperance Pictorial History 1894-1947*, Albany WA, 1996, p. 15

3 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 81.

4 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 81.

5 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp 39-41

6 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 28-38

Rottneest Island which combined his seafaring skills with his knowledge of farming. The Dempsters lived at Rottneest Island until 1853 when Charles Pratt died leaving the Dempsters the lifelong lease of 'Buckland'.⁷

The Dempster family returned to 'Buckland' and the elder sons, James and Charles assisted in the running of the farm. The family were leaders in the community and James MacLean Dempster was a significant player in further exploration of the colony. He was a member of the expedition committee which organised for an expedition led by government surveyor, Robert Austin to explore eastwards and north of Northam.⁸

James MacLean Dempster and his sons; James Pratt, Charles (referred to as Edward), Andrew and William were all keen horsemen and 'Buckland' was one of the premier farms for horse breeding in the colony. By the early 1860s James Maclean Dempster decided to assist his sons in establishing their own farms by providing stock for them. However good pasture land was difficult to source although the Dempster boys had made several expeditions into the regions around Northam and Beverley.⁹ Other settlers were focusing on the north west and new government regulations encouraged pastoralists to take up land in the remote parts of the colony.¹⁰

The Dempster brothers decided to search beyond Esperance believing that the area was more advantageous than the north-west because of its closer proximity to Albany (the primary port in the colony) and to Adelaide.¹¹ The brothers secured additional funds of £100 from local businessman Walter Padbury to finance the expedition. A Victorian, G.M. Larnach, also joined the expedition.¹²

In 1863, the party of four consisting of Larnach, Edward and William Dempster and George Maxwell, an experienced bushman, chartered a small vessel, the *Amelia*, to take themselves, their horse and provisions to Point Malcolm east of Esperance. After extensive exploration, the members of the party selected lands in the region. Larnach leased Middle Island east of Esperance Bay which was registered as E1. Andrew Dempster leased 100,000 acres near Esperance Bay, listed as E2; Edward Dempster's lease of 100,000 acres at Stokes Inlet and Lort River was listed as E3. These were all approved in September 1867. The brothers formed the Esperance Bay Pastoral Company as the business entity to operate the leases. Two months later Sir Alexander Cockburn-Campbell¹³ secured 100,000 acres, lease E4, between Point Malcolm and Point Dempster.¹⁴ The delay between the actual year of their visit and the formalisation of the lease could be best explained by the distances involved.

7 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp 55-68.

8 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 70.

9 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 80.

10 Pastoral leases from 20,000 to 100,000 acres rent free for four years could be applied for in the north-west beyond the Murchison River and also in the south for the colony if east of longitude 121°.

11 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 81.

12 Department of Lands and Surveys, Letters forwarded to officials 1862-1877, pp. 461-4, 518, Acc 229, Battye Library as quoted in Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 81. Larnach was recorded by Erickson as representing the interests of six wealthy investors.

13 Sir Alexander Cockburn-Campbell was possibly one of the six wealthy business men noted by Larnach.

14 Description book of pastoral Leases, book 1266, Acc. 660, Battye Library as quoted in Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 82.

The Dempster brothers took stock, mostly sheep but some cattle and horses, overland from Buckland to the Esperance leases in 1864. A number of employees; workmen and shepherds were engaged to accompany the brothers and work the new leases. It was settled that the brothers would share the duties on the Esperance leases so that two would always be present on the new leases. On the first journey to Esperance, James accompanied Edward and Andrew, while William remained behind to assist their father back at 'Buckland'.¹⁵ They took a route through Albany and established the stock successfully at Esperance. In the first year the stock were shorn and the wool (a clip of approximately 15 bales) was collected by ship at Esperance Bay. A small crop of wheat was also grown and harvested.

The Dempster brothers built a rough shack when they first arrived but soon decided on a better location to erect a more permanent structure. The site chosen for the homestead was described by Andrew Dempster in a letter to his sister, Annie Gull in 1865. She in turn described the site for the future homestead to a relative.

They don't like the place where they first settled and built their log house, so are going to build one twenty miles nearer the Sound [King Georges Sound] way. Andrew describes the place where they intend eventually to have their house – it must be a pretty spot at the entrance of Esperance Bay with a beautiful view of the bay which is twenty miles across – a good landing and a capital harbour – the bay seems almost land locked with islands and the sea so quiet that when rough outside they could take a boat about to any part of it. Also enough good land for a garden and field, and plenty [of] good water.¹⁶

Exchanging the duties at Esperance by the brothers enabled them to spend time away from the hard and isolated life on the remote lease. In 1867, whilst away from the lease Andrew Dempster met and married Emily Marsden and brought her back to live at Esperance. In the same year his brother Edward married Mary Taylor and she took up residence at Buckland.¹⁷

Andrew and Emily Dempster lived in a rough wattle and daub cottage at Esperance following Emily's arrival in 1867. In 1868, their first son James MacLean Dempster was born without the assistance of any midwife.¹⁸ The practical problems of living in remote conditions were exacerbated by the disputes with the Aboriginals which had on occasion led to violence on both sides.¹⁹ Andrew took his wife and son to Perth in 1869 partly due to the lack of police protection afforded to the settlers in the remote parts of the colony. Correspondence between Andrew Dempster and the Colonial office resulted in a set of guidelines for the settlers to administer 'kind and firm treatment' to the 'marauders'.²⁰ Andrew returned to Esperance in 1870 with his wife and two sons, his mother-in-law and several workmen. In the same year the rough homestead was visited by surveyors John and Alexander Forrest who were charged by Governor Weld to establish if South Australia could be reached by an overland route. In 1871, Alexander Forrest returned to Esperance as part of his exploration from York to attempt to link up the Eucla pastoral land. These efforts

15 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 83.

16 Letter from Annie Gull to Julia Barker, 22 March 1865 as quoted in Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 83.

17 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 105-107.

18 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 120.

19 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 120.

20 *Inquirer* 8 July 1868 as quoted in Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 121.

to open up the land of the south coast motivated the Dempsters to purchase a vessel, the *Gipsey* to service their leases and those of adjacent landholders.²¹

As the Dempsters flocks increased and other settlers moved into the region the need for more pastoral land and particularly well watered overland routes became more pressing. Andrew Dempster cleared a road to Fraser's Range to the north which secured him a grant of 1000 acres in that district.²²

By 1873, eight shepherds were employed at the Esperance lease, each tending 1200 sheep with the help of Aborigines and their families. In that year the Esperance wool clip topped 100 bales. It was also the year that a substantial homestead was built at Esperance by James Dempster for his brother Andrew. The construction of the homestead, now called *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance*, is described by the Dempsters biographer, Rica Erickson:

A new home had been built at Esperance for his [Andrew Dempster's] family's comfort. This had been done under the supervision of his brother James, who being clever with tools and of an inventive turn of mind, had been nominated by the others to be the architect and builder. Under his direction blocks of limestone were quarried for the thick walls, and shells were burnt for the mortar and plaster. The Dempsters would have recalled their boyhood days at Rottnest when they helped their father build the extensions to the cottage and plastered the walls of the lighthouse.

Esperance homestead, built on the site of Andrew's choice, with its white walls set on the slope rising from the beach, commanded enchanting views of the Bay and its magnificent expanse of bright water dotted with islands. On the west it was protected from the cold winter winds by Dempster Head, and from it could be seen far to the east the blue lines of a bold headland known as Frenchman's Cap. The surrounding bush was bright with wildflowers and alive with birds. There by the blue and green waters of Esperance Bay Andrew and his wife were to spend most of their lives together.²³

As it eventuated Andrew and Emily did not live at the homestead for long. They left in 1875 to live on a new property near Toodyay, Vine Cottage.²⁴ The manager of the Esperance lease was a trusted workman Benjamin Hannett. Hannett had worked for the Dempsters for many years at Buckland and at Esperance and he established his family at Esperance.²⁵ Hannett received £60 per annum for his role as manager and in addition he received 2% of the net profits of the station.²⁶ Although Hannett was managing the leases, the Dempster brothers still visited the leases and stayed for long periods to oversee the property.²⁷ Edward Dempster took Andrews place at Esperance in 1875 and lived at *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance*.²⁸

Edward's arrival coincided with a significant event in the development of the town of Esperance. The telegraph line was under construction from Albany and would make a dramatic change to the isolated life of the remote settlers. The first official telegram in 1876 was from Edward Dempster to his sister Annie Gull in

21 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 124.

22 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 129-130.

23 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 130-131.

24 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 140-141 and 152.

25 It is probable that the Hannetts did not live in the homestead as the brothers still made regular trips to the leases and needed accommodation once there.

26 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 151.

27 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 153-155.

28 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 155.

Guildford.²⁹ In the same year, the Dempsters built a large stone woolstore and shed near the beach, for shearing as well as the storage of wool bales, skins, supplies for the homestead and goods available for sale to travelling workers.³⁰

Andrew and Emily Dempster did return to Esperance in 1878 with their seven children, three more were to be born at Esperance.³¹ The demands of the large family meant that additions were made to *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance*. The physical evidence indicates that these additions were to double the size of the existing building. In addition a big chaff shed was built and more outbuildings on the site. A stonemason also worked at erecting a solid stone sea wall.³² The Esperance leases were generally profitable through the 1880s although this was mostly a difficult time in the economy of the colony.

In 1884, a crisis struck Esperance when an epidemic of measles turned *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* into a hospital in order to cope with the numbers of sick shepherds and Aborigines. Rica Erickson described the situation as drawn from the Esperance Station Daybooks:

Nine of the white workmen were so ill that two others were assigned to look after them. Andrew set up six big tents and used forty wool bales to make shelters for the seventy three Aborigines who needed attention. Many of them [Aborigines] died because they crept away to cool themselves in the ocean and then caught chills. Andrew was allowed to claim expenses from the government and estimated the cost of tents, wool bales, medicines, firewood and attention at £269. The personal effort in nursing was beyond price, as he and Emily worked night and day tending the sick.³³

At some of the other Dempster farms the economic situation was not so successful and the disparity in shared profits led to animosity between the brothers.³⁴ Andrew also wanted to move back to his new farm named Muresk. Conflict over the future management of the Esperance leases meant Andrew stayed on until 1889. The death of his wife Emily in 1888 may have been a persuading factor in his leaving Esperance where extended family members could assist with the children, the youngest of whom was eight. Andrew's oldest sons, James MacLean and William Edward stayed on at Esperance as managers until a new manager could be engaged.³⁵ In 1890, Henry Bostock was engaged as manager of Esperance and he moved to *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* with his wife Emma and their small baby. Emma Bostock wrote to her parents shortly after her arrival about her circumstances in the new homestead.

Mrs Doust [the housekeeper] is a very kind thoughtful woman; she had the house whitewashed from beginning to end inside and out and all the doors painted fresh blue and stone colour and ceiling also and everything beautifully clean. ... the house has plenty of chairs and tables and that is all, but it looks quite different already ... I have had the carpenter the last two days, he has put a nice mantelshelf in our room

29 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 157.

30 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 153. The woolstore has since been demolished. Its exact location is not known at this stage.

31 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p 186. Also the online pioneer's index from the Attorney Generals Department of Western Australia. www.justice.wa.gov.au

32 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p 187.

33 Information from Esperance Station Day books, Book III, October November 1884, as sourced from Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p 197.

34 For a detailed summary of the financial situation experienced by the Dempster Brothers see Rica Erickson, *The Dempsters*, pp186-207.

35 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p 242.

and some pegs, there are a few nails in the wall but yards over my head. ... It is a pretty view from the verandah. I will try to get Mr Piesse to photograph it soon.³⁶

A photograph of *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* in 1894 shows the exterior of the place during the time Harry and Emma Bostock were living there. The walls are whitewashed and the verandah shows evidence of being well used. The landscape is sandy with horses close to the house and the gardens appear to be sparsely planted.³⁷

In the 1890s, Esperance experienced expansion as gold had been discovered to the north at Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and Dundas. Prospectors travelled through the town and many services sprang up to accommodate them. The town of Esperance was gazetted in 1893. In 1895, a jetty was built in Esperance to service the increased volume of traffic of travellers and supplies.

The Dempster brothers decided to capitalise on this increased demand for land in the town and subdivided portions of their land in the town. William Dempster had died in 1892 so it was the remaining three brothers who organised the subdivisions of the land between The Esplanade to the east, Corry Street to the west, Hardy Street to the south and to the north the approximate junction of what is today Norfolk Lane.³⁸ The names chosen for this subdivision; Emily, Jane, Hardy, Taylor, William and of course Dempster reflect the Dempster family members and friends.³⁹ A plan of this subdivision was used in a publication 'Handbook to the new El Dorado' dated 1895. In this document Esperance is referred to as the Esperance Bay Company's town.⁴⁰ The dominance of the Dempster family in the town gave the impression the town was the property of the family. As an indication of their dominance of the town in 1895, the Post Office Directories for 1895 record only six entries for Esperance, three have their origins with the Dempsters; Henry Bostock, Dempster Bros, and the Esperance Bay Pastoral Company. The remaining entries are the hotel and store, a commissioning agent and a business Sharkey and Le Page. It is apparent that other people were resident in the town but the significance of the Dempsters to the town is clear.⁴¹

In 1898, Henry Bostock left Esperance and *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* to take up his own farm in Beverley. Andrew's son Willie became manager and on his arrival in the town he noted the increased size of the town. Shearing near the homestead was no longer practiced, as it was no longer possible to bring sheep through the town. An alternate galvanised iron shearing shed was built some distance from the town.⁴²

The future of Esperance seemed positive in the early 1890s but several factors led to a decline in the region. The creation of the deep water port in Fremantle in 1897 led to a relegation of Albany as a port and consequently Esperance. The construction of a railway line between Northam and Southern Cross instead of between Esperance and Coolgardie also led development away from the region.

36 Emma Bostock to her parents 9 Sept 1890, as quoted in Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, pp. 254-255.

37 Battye Library 3721B/2 Dempster Homestead.

38 Current street names have been used.

39 Plan 919, approved 27/11/1894, Department of Land Information. Certificate of Title, Vol 261/87 12 December 1894

40 CN 150/8/11 Esperance Bay Co's townsite.

41 Wises' Post Office Directories 1895, Battye Library.

42 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p 260.

For the Dempsters the decline of Esperance was a result of farming practices as well as changing legislation. As Willie noted in his letters, the fundamental reason for the decline of Esperance Bay station lay in its pastoral management. Overgrazing had depleted the native pastures before the rabbits came to complete the destruction of the herbage. In addition, the government had cancelled pastoral leases of the best of the land in order to open up areas for farmers. Open range shepherding was no longer possible and it was no longer possible for the Dempsters to claim over a million and a half acres of pastoral land at Esperance and Fraser Range.⁴³ In 1907, Edward Dempster died and shortly afterwards the partnership of the Dempster brothers was dissolved. Edward's son Charles Edward (CE) Dempster took over the management of Esperance Bay which was valued at £21,000.⁴⁴

In the period between 1900 and 1930, the area known as the mallee around the present day Salmon Gums was settled with mixed success.⁴⁵ In 1910, 45,000 acres of land was surveyed as conditional purchase leasehold blocks within 10 to 25 miles of Esperance. In 1917, a Royal Commission was held into the farming of the mallee and Esperance lands. It was headed by CE Dempster and recommended the construction of a railway, no experimental work to be undertaken on the farming lands and the financial support of the settlers with costs extended over forty years.⁴⁶

Although the Esperance pastoral lands were reduced in size, the land within the townsite and the land which contained *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* continued to be owned by the Dempsters until 1938. While the available information is not conclusive, it seems that members of the Dempster family still used *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* as a residence. The Post Office directories record that CE Dempster, sheep farmer, was resident in the town until 1932. After that time the Esperance Bay Pastoral Co still had an entry in the directory. It is likely that the company had a representative living in Esperance using *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* as a residence.⁴⁷

In 1938, the portion of land bound by Emily Street, Corry Street (formerly Jane Street), Hardy Street and Dempster Street was transferred to John Edgar Stevens, a piano tuner who lived in Kalgoorlie.⁴⁸ There is no evidence that John Stevens ever lived at *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* as he is recorded as living in Kalgoorlie until 1949.⁴⁹ It was recorded by a later owner that the place was used as holiday accommodation for miners from the goldfields.⁵⁰ The place was apparently converted into 10 flats through the addition of asbestos cement and corrugated iron rooms. Internally new ceilings were put in to make the place 'cosier' and externally ten kitchens, or basic cooking facilities, were added surrounding the original structure. A wash house and bathroom were added as separate structures on the block.⁵¹

43 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p 265.

44 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p 271.

45 *Faith, Hope and Reality: Esperance 1895-1995* Esperance Shire Council, 1995, p. 12.

46 *Faith, Hope and Reality: Esperance 1895-1995* Esperance Shire Council, 1995, p. 403.

47 Wises' Post Office Directories 1917-1938, Battye Library.

48 Certificate of Title 1062/183, 11 October 1938, Dept of Land Information.

49 Wises' Post Office Directories 1938-1949, Battye Library.

50 Wordsworth, David 'Restoring the Dempster Homestead' in *Faith, Hope and Reality: Esperance 1895-1995* Esperance Shire Council, 1995, p. 319.

51 *The Australian Women's Weekly* 5 Feb 1969, p. 46.

In the 1950s, a cul-de-sac was created into the block in an east west direction from Dempster Road.⁵² South of this road, named Douglas Place, the land was subdivided into smaller lots whilst *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* to the north of Douglas Place, remained on a three acre site. During the 1960s the place was apparently used for storing ships' supplies and the condition of the place deteriorated.⁵³

In 1966, *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* was transferred to David and Marie Louise Wordsworth.⁵⁴ David Wordsworth, his wife and three children had come to Esperance from Tasmania, although Marie Louise was originally from Western Australia. David Wordsworth was a successful farmer looking to establish a new farm in the region. The Wordsworth's had previously restored an old house in Tasmania and were keen to undertake the project of restoring *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* having become interested in the history of the place and the role of the Dempsters at Esperance.⁵⁵

The project took approximately one year to achieve and consisted of stripping away the kitchen additions, the false ceilings and enclosing the cellar within an internal courtyard. A new extension was built which consisted of a garage for three cars and two additional guest rooms with separate bathrooms. This addition was linked to the main house by a covered walkway.⁵⁶ The advice of architect Marshall Clifton was sought in achieving the restoration project.⁵⁷ Local tradesmen with no specialised skills in restoration work were used to undertake the project.

Part of the restoration of *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* included extensive replanting of the gardens. A new gravel driveway was constructed which created the entrance to the place through the courtyard. The original entrance would have been from the verandah facing the harbour.

In 1971, David Wordsworth was elected to State Parliament as the representative for the South Province of the Legislative Council. He gained several Ministerial portfolios during his period of five years in Cabinet of the government of Charles Court. His role in the state government meant many dignitaries stayed in *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* during visits to the region. These included Prince Charles in 1979, Sir John Kerr, Western Australian Governors Trowbridge and Kendrew and Premiers, Sir David Brand, Sir Charles Court and Richard Court.⁵⁸

Marie Louise Wordsworth was very active in the community in Esperance and was fundamental to the establishment of the Esperance Arts Council. As an

52 See the notation on Certificate of Title 1062/183, 11 October 1938, Dept of Land Information.

53 Wordsworth, David 'Restoring the Dempster Homestead' in *Faith, Hope and Reality: Esperance 1895-1995* Esperance Shire Council, 1995, p. 319.

54 Certificate of Title 1310/266, 18 April 1966, Dept of Land Information

55 Wordsworth, David 'Restoring the Dempster Homestead' in *Faith, Hope and Reality: Esperance 1895-1995* Esperance Shire Council, 1995, p. 319.

56 *The Australian Women's Weekly* 5 Feb 1969, p. 46.

57 Information from Marie Louise Wordsworth in conversation with Kris Keen and Prue Griffin, April 2006.

58 Wordsworth, David 'Restoring the Dempster Homestead' in *Faith, Hope and Reality: Esperance 1895-1995* Esperance Shire Council, 1995, pp. 319-320.

58 Shire of Esperance correspondence dated 13 November 2006.

adjunct to this work, *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* has been used as the venue for many community events and exhibitions. In 1973, the place was classified by the National Trust and in 1996, it was included in the Shire of Esperance Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places, and in their Town Planning Scheme No 22 gazetted on 27 September 1991⁵⁸.

In June 2006, *Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance* is no longer used by the Wordsworth's as their primary residence. The place is periodically used by family members and is maintained by staff in Esperance and continues to be used for community events.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is a single storey stone building with a corrugated metal roof situated in large block of land facing Dempster Street which is located within the townsite of Esperance. Access to the block is from the east via a driveway from Dempster Street.

Dempster Homestead (fmr), Esperance is set skewed on the block which consists of landscaped gardens and areas of open paddock. The orientation of the building was in order that the front verandah should face the Esperance harbour and a result of the later road layout. There are various large gum trees and conifers growing on the boundary with Dempster Street and within the front paddock area between Dempster Street and the house. This paddock area is at a slightly lower level than the house. The garden to the north of the house is flat for a small portion before it rises up to dunes. The grounds to the west of the workshop are unkempt paddocks. The building retains its dominant position within the block although surrounding development has diminished its prominence in the townsite and there is now no view from the house to the harbour. The block is fenced in rough post and wire farm fencing.

The plan of the building is roughly L shaped. The original building consists of a long narrow building of approximately eight rooms orientated roughly north to south. This section consists of four bedrooms, a chapel, kitchen, dressing room and ensuite and an additional bathroom and laundry. A verandah containing the original entry stretches along the full length of the east side of the building. The verandah would have been the original method of entry to the rooms as no passageway is evident and internal connecting doorways are later additions. It is assumed that the rooms on the west side of this part of the building would also have originally been accessed in this way.

The shorter leg of the 'L' form consists of a lounge room, study and dining room. The dining room contains the original cellar which projects up into the room. The south wall of the dining room is glass and divides the house from a grassed and walled courtyard. To the west end of the house there is an undercover carport which separates the house from more recently built bedrooms with en-suites and workshop.

Entry into the house is gained from under the carport with the walled courtyard giving privacy to the main living area. Large double gates are located into the walled courtyard of the west side of the carport.

The house has been re-roofed with corrugated metal sheeting. It would appear that the pitch is the same as the original roof. There is a box gutter running down the centre of the long axis of the 'L' plan with downpipes at the ends. The northern portion of the house is at right angles to this roof line with a ridge

running from the front of the house towards the rear. The carport has been incorporated under this roof and it continues over the later additions. Roofing over the workshop is a pitched roof clad in corrugated galvanized steel.

The front veranda has been rebuilt, concrete paving has replaced the original material. The form of the veranda is simple post and beam with metal roof lean-to and is likely to have been similar to the original. Steps provide access to the garden from the verandah.

The walls of the house are stone, approximately 500mm thick, rendered and painted. It is expected to be dry stone walling using local materials with external rendering. The walls to the workshop are from the 1960s and are painted brick.

Windows in original sections of the house appear to have been replaced in the 1960s. The front entry door to the east, or facing towards the harbour, has been rebuilt with a pair of French windows, and now enters a bedroom.

Door openings are various sizes. It appears that doors are in original openings and the frames may be original although the doors are generally not, possibly dating from the 1967/8 renovation.

The ceiling in the 'Chapel' is high and follows the form of the external roof. Within the chapel is a chandelier operated by lifting gear located in the roof space. Over the kitchen, the roofing is of a similar height to the chapel but there is a false ceiling. Over the bedrooms and the kitchen parts of the earlier ceiling construction with timber lining can be seen by accessing the roof space. The ceilings in the remaining rooms are low, having been replaced in 1967/8.

The flooring is concrete and carpeted and was laid during the renovation of 1967/8 when it was discovered that all the original floors were in such poor condition they had to be removed. At the same time the house was rewired and modern plumbing fixtures were added to the bathroom, kitchen and laundry.

The kitchen was constructed in 1967/8 but has had a more recent fit out which includes new cupboards fittings and fixtures.

The cellar in the centre of the entry/dining room area is entered down steps. It has a roof over it which is used as a display area. Walls are damp in some areas due to being within the ground.

The workshop and guest bedrooms are accessed from a vehicle access roller door to the south and a connecting door from the carport.

In April 2006, the place is used as a secondary residence by members of the Wordsworth family and guests. The place is used as a venue for community events.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are 13 other places in the Victorian Regency style on the Heritage Council database constructed between 1870 and 1880. Two of these are registered - P01068 *Original Railway Station (1878-93), Geraldton, Marine Terrace, Geraldton* and P02531 *Belvoir Homestead Group (1880-1900), Great Northern Highway, Middle Swan*. *Original Railway Station (1878-93), Geraldton* is not comparable as it is not a homestead. *Belvoir Homestead Group* is comparable as it is a single-storey residence, in a landscaped setting, that has associations with prominent agricultural families, however it differs to *Dempster Homestead (fmr)*

Esperance in its Flemish bond brickwork, and for being in the metropolitan region.

There are a further five places of the same criteria on the Heritage Council assessment program, none of which are comparable as they are not homesteads - P00016 Albany Primary School and Headmaster's Quarters; P01905 Railway Hotel (fmr), Northampton; P08605 Jarrahdale Inn (fmr); P09006 Gwalla Railway Station (fmr) and associated sites; and P16297 St Joseph's Catholic Church Group, Albany.

The only other residences on the Heritage Council database, in the Victorian Regency style and constructed 1870 to 1880 include - P03329 House (c.1870s), 78 Brunswick Road, Port Albany (constructed of painted and rendered brick and local stone, and originally built as a P&O Shipping company house); and P15566 House (c.1880s), 74 Vancouver Street, Albany (which is of rendered and painted brick).

Dempster Homestead (fmr), *Esperance* is rare as an example of the Victorian Regency style applied to a residence constructed between 1870 and 1880.

There are 95 places on the Heritage Council database constructed at least in part in stone, between 1870 and 1880, with a use of single-storey residential or homestead, 17 of which are registered. Of these 17, two are in the Goldfields region - P03540 *Moir Homestead Ruins*, Fanny Bay, *Esperance*; and P04216 *Lynburn Homestead and Shearing Shed (fmr)*, Thomas River, east of *Esperance*. Only a further two places are shown on the database as being constructed in stone, from 1870 to 1880 in the Goldfields region - P02317 Cocanarup Homestead Outbuildings and Springs, Cocanarup Road, Ravensthorpe; and P14008 Carlingup Homestead and Fresh Water Spring, Carlingup.

Dempster Homestead (fmr), *Esperance* is not rare as a single storey residence or homestead constructed in stone in the 1870s, but it is relatively rare for meeting these criteria within the Goldfields region.

Dempster Homestead (fmr), *Esperance* bears resemblance to the Thomson Bay waterfront cottages on Rottnest Island, the last of which were completed circa 1871. Although the pitched roofs are later additions, they share a large amount of wall plan with comparatively small windows.⁵⁹ Other places of direct comparison to *Dempster Homestead (fmr)*, *Esperance* are P4061 *Community Education Centre in Geraldton* formerly Forrest Lodge. This was built in 1874 and has an M shaped hip roof which although is not as pronounced as *Dempster Homestead (fmr)*, *Esperance*, is similar. P1834 *Gallop House* is similar in style and location as it is looking over a body of water.

There are 13 places on the Heritage Council database which have an association with the Dempsters. Of these the most comparable would be those homesteads built at approximately the same time as *Dempster Homestead (fmr)*, *Esperance* which served the same function for the extended Dempster family. These include *Buckland Homestead and Farm buildings* (1843) built between 1836 and 1876 for James MacLean Dempster. Andrew Dempster's last home at Muresk *Dempster Homestead at Muresk* (10913) which was constructed in 1890. *Springfield Estate* (3646) built between 1853 and 1922 for Edward Dempster is also directly comparable.

⁵⁹ Ferguson, R.J. (1986) *Rottnest Island history and architecture*. University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further archaeological investigation is recommended for the grounds and outbuildings. It is known that there were various toilets of timber and asbestos construction in the 1970s. Evidence may be discovered of former outbuildings on the site such as a former laundry or servants quarters. Such evidence would contribute to a greater understanding of the site as an economic and social centre for the Esperance district and regional Western Australia.

Three of the Dempster's shepherds, Munro, Reece and Marchant, are known to be buried in "in a small graveyard near the homestead"⁶⁰ but the exact location of the graveyard is not known at this stage. Given the encroachment of the town of Esperance to the homestead land, it is unlikely that the graveyard would be within the curtilage of Dempster Homestead (fmr) but confirmation should be sought if possible.

⁶⁰ Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 248.