



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*

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) is a good example of North-West architecture with stone walls, surrounding verandahs, corrugated iron roof and a separate kitchen. The surrounding outbuildings contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the place as a group of related structures. (Criterion 1.1)

The place contributes to the landmark quality of an identifiable homestead in a pastoral station landscape setting. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) is associated with the development of the pastoral industry in the Ashburton region since the 1880s. (Criterion 2.1)

The place was built by the Burt brothers during a period of prosperity when Peedamulla Station was one of the largest pastoral stations in the region. (Criterion 2.2)

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) has close associations with many Aboriginals who worked and lived on the property and the place is important as a contact site. (Criteria 2.2 & 2.3)

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) has close associations with Archibald E. and Edmund A. Burt, grandsons of Chief Justice Sir Archibald Burt, who were early pastoralists in the Ashburton region and important identities who contributed towards the establishment of Onslow town and the development of the Ashburton region. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The group of buildings at *Peedamulla Homestead (ruin)* demonstrate the evolution of human occupation in the remote North-West, in the pastoral industry, since 1885. (Criterion 3.2)

* 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 & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) contributes to the community's sense of place as a former pastoral station homestead that was once a regular stopping place for travellers on the original north-west highway. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The double stone wall construction of the water tank is an uncommon example of its type. (Criterion 5.1)

The place demonstrates a way of life no longer practised at this place. The group of buildings demonstrate changing ways of life associated with settlement in the pastoral industry since 1885. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) represents a good example of a c.1915 homestead in the Ashburton region. (Criterion 6.1)

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) demonstrates a way of life associated with pastoralism and a design response to climatic conditions. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The c.1915 homestead building has been vacant, except for itinerant campers, since 1984 when much of the roof cladding blew off in a cyclone. The exterior walls are in good condition; however, because of exposure to the elements, subsequent vandalism, and destruction of the windows, the place is in a poor condition. The overall structure appears to be sound.

The outbuildings are in a poor to fair condition. The stone tank is in a poor condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The original intent of the place is clear, and it has not been used for any other purpose or substantially altered. However, the absence of much of the roof of the c.1915 homestead building currently renders the place uninhabitable. Restoration is possible, but not probable without a viable long term use for the place. Overall, the place has retained a moderate degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The remaining fabric of the place has a high degree of authenticity. Overall, the level of authenticity is moderate.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been researched and compiled by Laura Gray, heritage consultant, with some primary research by Gillian O'Mara, archival researcher. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) is a group of single-storey stone and iron buildings including a homestead, adjacent kitchen and outbuildings (c.1915), older stone buildings (c.1900) and a water tank (c.1885). The earlier buildings are situated approximately 400 metres north of the 1915 homestead building.

Peedamulla Homestead was originally referred to as 'Peedamullah' until 1928, when the Peedamulla Pastoral Company was formed, and the 'h' was dropped from the end of the name. 'Peedamullah' is a local Aboriginal word said to mean 'plenty water'.¹ *Peedamulla Homestead (ruin)* is situated approximately 50 kilometres south-east of Onslow in the Ashburton region. The homestead is located on a Crown Lease within pastoral lease 394/1213 which is an amalgamation of several former leases.

The explorations of Francis T. Gregory in 1862 led to the opening up of the Ashburton Land District for pastoral leasing under Land Regulations set up in 1864. The earliest leases to be taken up along the Ashburton River were applied for in 1866.²

By the end of 1867, there were 15 free stock runs and 26 rental leases totalling more than 809,000 hectares (2 million acres) in the Ashburton area. Applications then ceased, largely because all the most obviously usable land had been taken up. Free stock runs were granted for four year periods, but no Ashburton leases were renewed in 1871.³ Instead, some 26 new rental leases were taken out over portions of some of the lapsed leases, in all barely a quarter of the land initially leased. Once again, these leases were not renewed but a third wave of lessees began taking up land from 1879.⁴

In 1878, a triangulation survey of the Ashburton Land District was conducted by brothers John and Alexander Forrest and other surveyors. Between 1879 and 1883, over 106 leases were granted in the area to a group of people who subsequently became the developers of the Ashburton pastoral industry. They included the Forrests, the Highams, E. T. Hooley and Mortimer New, the Burts, the Marmions and the Cummings. The station owners selected their own runs.⁵ The Forrest brothers and Septimus Burt took up a large property straddling the Ashburton estuary, known as Minderoo.⁶

David and Matthew Forrest, brothers of John and Alexander, soon left York with two thousand sheep, bound for Minderoo Station in the company of Morrell and Cooke. Morrell and Cook subsequently took up pastoral leases

¹ Montgomery, E. C., 'The History of Peedamulla Station' unpublished, Burnside, 1997.

² Webb, M. & A., *Edge of Empire*, Artlook Books, Perth, 1983, pp.47-49.

³ *ibid*, p.51.

⁴ *ibid*, pp.51-52.

⁵ *ibid*, p.52.

⁶ *ibid*, pp.57-59.

between the Forrest land and the Cane River, on which is now Peedamulla Station.⁷

In 1878, brothers Edmund A. and Archibald E. Burt, grandsons of Sir Archibald Paull Burt, Chief Justice of the Swan River Colony from 1861 to 1879, arrived from the West Indies. They took over the Peedamulla leases in the early 1880s.⁸ The Burts employed Aboriginal labour on the property, the majority of whom were born on or near the Station. The men were employed in fencing, shearing, mustering and boundary riding, while the women worked in and around the homestead. As on all stations in the north, the Aboriginals were contracted under 12 month agreements and were not paid for their labour - instead tea, damper and meat were rationed and clothes and blankets were issued as required.⁹

In 1885, the original townsite of Onslow, initially situated on the banks of the Ashburton River, was gazetted. As a member of the Ashburton Roads Board, and at one time its Chairman, Archibald E. Burt was closely associated with the development of the original townsite.¹⁰

In 1895, Archibald left the property to go into Government service as the Mining Registrar, although he retained his share in the Station. He later had a successful career in law. Edmund continued to live at and manage Peedamulla Station.¹¹

After around 1900, the settlers in the Ashburton region began to improve their life styles and new homesteads were built to replace the original dwellings. Local stone was usually used for construction, with cooking stoves and other 'modern' comforts shipped to the area by steamer and carried out to the stations by wagon.¹²

Edmund Burt married in 1916 and it is probable that the c.1915 homestead was constructed to improve living conditions on the station in anticipation of his marriage.

On 20 March 1918, Archibald and Edmund Burt took over additional leases which were subsequently surrendered under the *Land Act*, for Pastoral Lease 2500/96 containing 257,850 hectares.

From 1920 until his death in 1927, Edmund Burt was Chairman of the Ashburton Roads Board (except for 1924 and 1926), and it was during those years that the new town of Onslow, at Beadon Point, was proposed and subsequently developed. Peedamulla Station was located on the original north-west coastal highway which detoured into the town of Onslow, and travellers frequently stopped at the homestead as they passed through the

⁷ ibid. p.59.

⁸ ibid, p.89.

⁹ Public Records Office, AN 1/1, Acc 495, Box 1, 726/92 - Reports on the Conditions of the Aboriginal Natives, 1892.

¹⁰ Webb, M. & A., op. cit., pp.89-95.

¹¹ Montgomery, E. C. op. cit.

¹² Webb, M. & A., op. cit., p.99.

area.¹³ In more recent years, the highway was re-routed to an alignment which runs seven kilometres to the east of Peedamulla Homestead.

Edmund Burt died following a fall from a window of the Weld Club in Perth in 1927.¹⁴ Peedamulla Station Ltd was incorporated on 19 July 1928, and capitalised to 40,000 shares at £1-0-0 each.¹⁵ On 10 January 1929, the lease was transferred to Peedamulla Station Ltd.¹⁶

On the 7 September 1932, ownership of Peedamulla Station transferred from the Peedamulla Station Ltd to Cornelius McManus and W. Montgomery, although the company was not officially defunct until 1974.¹⁷

In 1934, a severe cyclone inflicted substantial losses at Peedamulla, with 40 windmills destroyed. The years 1935 and 1936 were dry, when sheep numbers fell dramatically. By January 1937, the owners applied for relief from pastoral rents under the legislation passed through Parliament at that time.¹⁸

On 18 May 1937, Alexander Hardie and his family, of Albany, paid £19,522 for the 286,253 hectares which comprised Peedamulla Station.¹⁹ Alexander's son, Byron, managed the station for his father until Byron joined the armed services in 1942. At that time, G. Herbert took over, and later a leased a separate section of Peedamulla Station, forming Cane River Station.

After Alexander Hardie's death in 1954, a number of other Hardie family members gained an interest in the lease, including another son, Peter. Byron continued to run the station. The wool boom of the mid-1950s provided unprecedented profits, and later Peter took over as Manager of the Station.²⁰

On 9 March 1961, the lease was reduced to 156,000 hectares due to a resumption of land for the Onslow Town Water Supply. In 1961 and 1963, severe cyclones damaged the homestead and shearing sheds and a considerable number of sheep were lost. The rebuilding of the shearing shed and restocking the property resulted in heavy bank borrowings. The family interests changed again in 1966 and in 1967, members of the Hardie family took over lease 3114/905, in lieu of a number of outdated leases.²¹

With low wool prices in 1971 and 1972, the Hardies were forced sell the Station. In 1972, the Hardies gave vendor finance to Neville and Moira McDonald who took over the lease for \$ 70,000.²² The McDonalds sold the property less than three years later.

In 1975, Herbert Parker effected the purchase of the Station by the Commonwealth Government for the use of the Aboriginal people of the

¹³ In more recent years, the highway was re-routed to an alignment which runs 7 kilometres to the east of *Peedamulla Homestead*.

¹⁴ Webb, M. & A., op. cit., p.163.

¹⁵ Montgomery, E. C., op. cit.

¹⁶ *Bulletin* 23 March 1982, pp.83, 85.

¹⁷ Montgomery, E. C., op. cit.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ DOLA Land operations summary of leases Peedamulla Station, December 1977; Montgomery, E. C., op. cit.

²¹ DOLA Land operations summary of leases Peedamulla Station, December 1977.

²² Pastoral lease 3114/905.

Onslow region. The station had over 28,000 sheep running at the time. The Noualla Group Incorporated of Onslow took over the lease, and the Jundaru Aboriginal Corporation have been managing the Station since 1981.

In 1981, the managers lived in the homestead. After cyclone *Olivia* unroofed the homestead in 1984, the managers moved into a transportable dwelling, placed in close proximity to the homestead.

In 1997, the homestead is neglected and is vacant much of the time. Transient Aboriginal workers occasionally camp in the homestead. The adjacent kitchen is being used but, like the homestead, does not have a roof.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Peedamulla Homestead (ruin) is a group of single-storey stone and iron buildings including a homestead, adjacent kitchen and outbuildings (c.1915), older stone buildings and a stone water tank, set in a landscape of pastoral grass and trees. The homestead is a single-storey stone building, with adjacent kitchen and outbuildings in close proximity, centrally located within Peedamulla Station which extends to Onslow and the coast. Several hundred metres north of the homestead buildings is a stone building and a circular stone water tank, built 1885, and another stone building of a later period, but also predating the homestead. Within fifty metres of the homestead is a transportable homestead building which was moved to the property in 1984.

The homestead was built c.1915, using local stone with rendered quoins around the door and window openings. The square plan of the place is not strictly typical of North-West vernacular houses, which are usually rectangular, although it does have surrounding verandahs, thick stone walls, corrugated iron roof, and a separate kitchen. The place does not conform to any particular style but does display some characteristics of the Victorian Georgian style.²³

The square plan could be interpreted as two rectangular wings with a connecting central breezeway. All rooms open onto the surrounding concrete verandah, which was, more than likely, originally a timber verandah. The expansive corrugated iron hipped roof has since been destroyed by a cyclone.

Many of the cast iron verandah posts are still in place around the perimeter of the homestead and kitchen. The space between the posts on one corner of the verandah is thatched with local brush, and has some sheets of the roofing iron in place.

The east and west elevations of the homestead are symmetrical with a recessed central entry. The door is flanked by diamond leadlight windows with fanlights above in the same style. The west (front) entry windows are in place but severely damaged, and the east windows are no longer in place. The rendered quoins on the east facade have been painted a vivid blue over the previously unpainted render.

The remains of c.1950s bathroom facilities are in place at the south-western corner of the verandah. At the north-eastern corner are the remains of the

²³ Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989, p. 45.

rendered walls of the office. The northern verandah of the homestead adjoins the southern verandah of the kitchen building.

The windows are double hung timber sash windows, and the doors onto the verandas are French doors with fixed lights above. Each room opens onto the verandah and onto the central breezeway room. The floors throughout are concrete.

The interior of the homestead still shows evidence of elaborate plaster cornices and air vents, although the ceilings are no longer in place. The interior walls are hard plaster with graffiti, weather damage and signs of neglect throughout. A classically detailed archway supported by Corinthian columns leads the lounge room into the breezeway. Each room has a fireplace and mantelpiece still in place.

The kitchen building adjoined by the verandah, is constructed in the same manner as the homestead, with stone walls and rendered quoins. Some of the kitchen roof is still in place. The wood fired stoves remain in place, and the marble bench tops have been removed. The kitchen opens onto the cook's room, and the men's dining room. The wash house is on the kitchen verandah.

On the east side of the kitchen is large corrugated iron water tank at ground level, and small stone outbuildings with corrugated iron roofs.

Adjacent to the homestead buildings, less than 50 metres away on the northern side are several buildings associated with the running of the Station; a Nissan hut houses the generator, and another steel framed and clad shed is a workshop.

Several hundred metres north of the homestead is the water tank and former dwelling built c.1885, and another stone building c.1900. The two rectangular buildings are random stone and mortar structures. The c.1885 building has bush timber lintels and frames in the window and door openings, and the existing gable roof appears not to be an original structure. The western-most building, c.1900, with a low pitched hipped corrugated iron roof is currently used as a mechanical workshop. The building is secured, and top hinge corrugated iron shutters cover the window openings.

The water tank structure is a circular stone construction. The internal stone wall is rendered on the interior. The external wall is faced stonework laid in a regular bonding pattern with no apparent mortar. Much of the external wall is no longer in place, but the internal wall is mostly intact.

The homestead and kitchen buildings are being occupied by itinerent workers who are camping there while working on the station. The earlier former stone dwelling is derelict and empty, and the water tank appears to be unused.

13.3 REFERENCES

Montgomery, E. C., 'The History of Peedamulla Station', unpublished, Burnside, South Australia, 1997.

Webb, M. & A., *Edge of Empire*, Artlook Books, Perth, 1983.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

Aboriginal labour and relations.