



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*

The place has aesthetic value in its picturesque setting. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Glenbourne Homestead contributes to an understanding of the pattern of European settlement in the South West of the State. The place is associated with the development of the dairying, agricultural and timber industries and, as a wayside inn, provided hospitality to many travelling between the Vasse and Augusta. (Criterion 2.1)

Glenbourne Homestead is associated with its builders and long-term owner-occupiers, the Keenan family who were prominent in the history of the region. (Criterion 2.3)

The place is also associated with the conservation farming movement, which grew out of mid to late-twentieth century environmental concerns. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Glenbourne Homestead has demonstrable potential, through research and teaching use, to yield information about, and promote understanding of, a range of nineteenth century construction techniques. This is specifically due to its semi-demolished state, which allows structural elements and the sequence of construction to be seen. (Criterion 3.1)

Glenbourne Homestead provides tangible evidence of the lives of early settlers in the region, and the ingenuity applied to solving specific problems faced in providing shelter with limited local resources. (Criterion 3.2)

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

* 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.

Glenbourne Homestead is highly valued by the local community for its historic associations with the Keenan family and the development of Margaret River and the South West region. (Criterion 4.1)

The decision of the Margaret River Conservation Farming Club not to complete the demolition of *Glenbourne Homestead* is indicative of the place being valued by the local community for its construction techniques and its association with early settlers. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Glenbourne Homestead is an uncommon example of a late nineteenth century house with later additions, in a semi-demolished state. As such, it demonstrates construction techniques not normally visible in an intact building of its type. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The modest size and simple form of *Glenbourne Homestead* is representative of numerous slab houses built by settlers in many parts of Western Australia and Australia. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Glenbourne Homestead is in poor condition and its consequent exposure to the elements will inevitably cause further deterioration. Serious termite activity and the partial demolition and removal of material have hastened the collapse of the structure.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

As the place is no longer occupied as a family home, the integrity of the *Glenbourne Homestead* is low. However, in its semi-demolished condition, the place has potential to demonstrate the constructional techniques of early settlers in the region.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The authenticity of the place is high, despite its partial demolition.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The supporting evidence has been compiled by the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage, Curtin University. The documentary evidence has been compiled by Jacqui Sherriff, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Dr John Stephens, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Glenbourne Homestead, a small farmhouse situated on the northern bank of Ellens Brook, Margaret River, was built by Stewart and Isabella Keenan in the late 1880s.

In early 1859, Stewart Keenan, a farmer, and Isabella Gamble were married in county Derry, Ireland. In July of that year, they sailed from Plymouth on the *West Australia's* maiden voyage, arriving in Fremantle on 20 October. After a short period in Fremantle, during which time their first child was born, the Keenans sailed to Busselton, arriving in early January 1860.¹

Stewart and Isabella spent the following two years working on dairy farms in the Vasse, firstly for the McCourts and then for the Lockes. In 1862, the Keenans took out a seven year lease on *Reinscourt*, the property of Mrs Vernon Bussell. Under the terms of the lease, the Keenans acquired a portion of the stock.² In the 1860s, the Keenans left *Reinscourt* to lease a dairy cattle property at Cape Naturaliste, which they later named *Glenone* after Stewart's family property in Derry.³ At about the same time, Stewart took out a lease on 3,000 acres at Margaret River in partnership with James Forrest and Thomas Abbey. The property, named *Rosa Glen*, was used as a summer cattle run, and the families drove their stock between Margaret River and their Cape Naturaliste/Vasse properties each year. In the late 1860s, this land was leased by Keenan and Abbey, and later yet the Keenans held the lease alone.⁴

In 1878, Stewart Keenan helped to build Burnside Bridge, the first bridge across the Margaret River.⁵ The bridge was built in response to the number of travellers on the road between the Vasse and Augusta, largely due to the South West's rapidly expanding timber industry. Alfred Bussell (of *Ellensbrook*) soon opened a wayside inn at the bridge, Old Bridge House to provide accommodation and refreshment to travellers.⁶ After Alfred's death in 1882, the Keenans took out the lease on Old Bridge House. In 1884, their inn was described as 'a lodging house that catered for mail, coaches, timber

¹ *South Western News*, 10 October 1955, p. 10; *Busselton Historical Society Newsletter*, June 1982, p. 1.

² *South Western News*, 10 October 1955, p. 10. Included was a young chestnut gelding named Nonsuch who won the Town Plate in Perth in 1864 and became one of the most widely known horses in the colony.

³ Stewart Keenan purchased half of this property (5,000 acres) from John Chapman in April 1874. Lands Index SDUR/C6/777.

⁴ Cresswell, Gail, *The Light of Leeuwin: The Augusta-Margaret River Shire History*, Augusta-Margaret River Shire History Group, Margaret River, c. 1989, p. 80.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ After M C Davies established his timber mill at Karridale, traffic through the area increased and the need for local produce to cater for the travellers grew. Other mills were established in the area and the timber industry was soon in full production. By the late 1880s, timber was second only to wool in terms of exports from the colony. For further information on timber and dairying industries in the region, see Cresswell, *op. cit.*

workers and visitors'.⁷ Eliza, the Keenans' eldest daughter, ran the inn until the lease was terminated in the late 1880s.⁸ The remainder of the family remained at *Glenone* and in 1885, the last of Stewart and Isabella's nine children was born.

Circa 1888, the Keenans purchased *Glenbourne*, a 200 acre property near Ellensbrook (Sussex Location 673).⁹ Several factors influenced the Keenans' choice of location, including access to the growing Karridale and Margaret River communities, which provided immediate markets for their dairy, orchard and garden produce. *Glenbourne's* position on the Busselton-Karridale Road beside Ellens Brook, with a nearby fresh water spring, also provided an excellent location for the establishment of their own wayside inn. Furthermore, *Glenbourne's* situation in relation to the other two Keenan properties, *Glenone* and *Rosa Glen*, meant that the new property could be used as a base for family members travelling between the two.¹⁰

In 1888/9, the Keenans built *Glenbourne Homestead*, with the help of Eliza's new husband, James Armstrong.¹¹ Armstrong cut the timber and shingles for the house and helped in its construction. The original building consisted of a large dining room with an open fire, a kitchen with a stone floor and an open fire place, a sitting room and two bedrooms.¹² While the main construction for the walls were slab and lath and plaster, the external walls from the kitchen door around to the south-eastern corner of the house were built of rough stones from the immediate area. Two verandahs ran the length of the house.¹³ There was a slab timber fence around the house, with a well tended garden stretching from the verandah to the gate. The garden had both flower and vegetable beds and fruit trees. Later, Stewart planted an extensive orchard beyond the kitchen. Outside the southern fence was a stone oven. Cattle yards, dairy sheds and calf pens were also built near the house.¹⁴

In response to Stewart Keenan's application for a Wayside House at Margaret River, posted on the door of the Busselton Court House in February 1889, the Busselton correspondent reported in *The West Australian* that:

the wayside house at the Margaret Bridge...would supply a great want. There is already a good deal of traffic to Augusta, and there is no stopping place where

⁷ *The West Australian*, 27 February 1884.

⁸ Transcript of tape made by Margaret Blond, July 1986, HCWA File PD0116; Trevor Tuckfield, 'Early Colonial Inns and Taverns' in *Early Days*, vol. 7, part 3, 1975, p. 67.

⁹ From 1870 to 1886, Stewart Keenan was listed in the *WA Almanack and Directory* as 'farmer, Dunsborough'. In 1888, Stewart Keenan, farmer, and Robert Keenan, jnr, farmer, were listed as residing at Margaret River.

¹⁰ There was an extensive cattle run between the Keenan properties, the northern part of which is now called the Keenan Pine Plantation (est. 1930s).

¹¹ James Armstrong worked at Davies Mill at Karridale and he was so skilful with an adze that it was claimed that you could not see the adze mark in the timbers at *Glenbourne*; Claughton and Burgess, 'Shire of Margaret River Municipal Inventory', Shire of Augusta-Margaret River, January 1995-May 1996, LGA site no. A2799.

¹² Written statement by Ed Keenan, Building Contractor, 6 December 1992, HCWA File PD0116.

¹³ *ibid.* The stone dining room chimney and wall was replaced with a timber-framed, jarrah board and pressed metal clad wall in the 1920s after it cracked and fell away from the house. A metal-lined chimney replaced the stone chimney.

¹⁴ Blond, *op. cit.* The cow sheds and yards were originally built on the southern side of the homestead. After being destroyed by storms c. 1900, they were rebuilt to the north of the house.

travellers can rest for the night and find refreshment for themselves and their horses. Such a house would break the journey into two comfortable days' travelling. I sincerely trust in the interest of those travelling this road, that Mr Keenan, the proprietor of the house, may have his licence granted him.¹⁵

In May of that year, Stewart Keenan formally advertised his intent to open a wayside inn at *Glenbourne*:

I, Stewart Keenan, farmer, married, now residing at the Margaret River...DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE, that it is my intention to apply...for a WAYSIDE HOUSE LICENCE, for the sale of Fermented and Spirituous Liquors, in the house and appurtenances thereto belonging, situated at Ellensbrook, and containing one sitting room, and three bedrooms, exclusive of those required for the use of my family. The house is my own property and has never been licenced.¹⁶

Although there is no notice in the Police Gazette of a licence being granted at this time, several sources state that *Glenbourne* provided ready hospitality for travellers along Old Karridale Road until the new road (Bussell Highway) was built in 1894.¹⁷ This is further supported by the fact that c. 1890, the western verandah was enclosed to form two small rooms, thereby extending the house to accommodate the inn. At about the same time, two rooms were built at the northern end of the house for Jack and Grace Catherall, Stewart's nephew and niece, who assisted in running the property.¹⁸

Aside from operating his cattle properties, Stewart undertook several contracts in the district, both before and after moving to *Glenbourne*. Some were undertaken with his sons, including the clearing land for farming, cutting roads and erecting telegraph lines.¹⁹ The Keenans were also very active in local public affairs. Stewart was one of the first to urge a railway to Margaret River (son Harry worked on its construction) and to agitate for the Cape Naturaliste lighthouse, and was a member of the Margaret River Progress Association for several years.²⁰ Son, Robert John, was also active in community affairs, being a member of the Augusta Districts Roads Board for seven years from 1918.²¹ When Stewart died in November 1921, he was remembered as 'one of the oldest and best-known residents in the district'.²²

Isabella continued to live at *Glenbourne* until her death in 1929. It has been stated that she formed a strong relationship with local Nyungar, Queen Jinny,

¹⁵ *The West Australian*, 27 February 1889, p. 3.

¹⁶ *The West Australian*, 20 May 1889, p. 3.

¹⁷ Including *South Western News*, 23 March 1961, p. 3; Shire of Margaret River Municipal Inventory; Cresswell, op. cit. In 1890, land to the immediate east of Sussex Location 673 (*Glenbourne*) was gazetted as Crown Reserve 1554, as a watering place for travellers and stock. This land was purchased by the Keenans as Sussex Location 886 in 1921, and became part of the *Glenbourne* property. Sussex Location 354 was also purchased by the Keenans in 1905, and forms part of the present *Glenbourne* property.

¹⁸ Keenan, op. cit. This addition consisted of two rooms, each about 8'x10', 8' in height with a gable roof. The walls were jarrah slabs and the roof corrugated iron, and a chimney, lined with stone, stood at the northern end. As this building was on a higher level than the verandah, a slab of granite rock acted as an intermediate step. After Stewart's nephew left, the rooms were used for storage etc. It was demolished in the 1960s.

¹⁹ *South Western News*, 25 November 1921.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *South Western News*, 16 May 1946.

²² *South Western News*, 25 November 1921.

who stayed at *Glenbourne* on a number of occasions.²³ Of their nine children, Robert John and Mary Ellen (a.k.a. Minnie) were the only ones to remain at *Glenbourne*. They inherited the property after Isabella's death.²⁴

Changes were made to *Glenbourne Homestead* over the years. At some stage, the southern end of the verandah was closed in to form a small bedroom for Minnie, with doors leading from the verandah and dining room.²⁵ In the 1920s, the southern wall collapsed, necessitating its rebuilding. At about the same time, a wall was built across the dining room to separate it from the sitting room and a galvanised iron roof was placed over the original shingles. Sometime after Robert John's death in 1946, Minnie had a timber-framed asbestos cement toilet and wash house built adjacent to her room.²⁶ Minnie stayed on at the property until she sold it in 1958, due to her failing health.²⁷

Glenbourne was purchased by John Williams, who owned it for two years before selling it to Robert and Thelma Brooke. The Brookes owned the property for fourteen years, during which time caretaker Albert Atkins occupied *Glenbourne Homestead*. The Margaret River Conservation Farming Club purchased the property in March 1977.²⁸ One of the conditions of sale was that Albert be allowed to live in *Glenbourne Homestead* for as long as he wished.²⁹

The Margaret River Conservation Farming Club, one of several established in the South-west during the 1970s, acquired *Glenbourne* with the object of combining simple farming with recreation and nature conservation.³⁰ The property was purchased with members' joining fees and maintenance costs are covered by a small annual levy paid by members; members hold no shares or financial claim on the property.³¹ The Club has built a large Clubhouse, which extends along a ridge above *Glenbourne Homestead*, and have not used the old farmhouse, aside from the occasional storage of timber.³²

By the early 1990s, *Glenbourne Homestead* had become derelict and certain members of the Club, who feared it could be dangerous to children, decided to commence demolition. Other members opposed this action, but by the time the demolition was halted considerable damage had been done to the fabric.³³ When inspected in September 1997, the house remained fenced-off, unused, and in a semi-collapsed condition.

²³ Shire of Margaret River Municipal Inventory, op. cit. King Bungitch, Jinny's husband, was leader of the Nyungars in the Margaret River-Augusta district.

²⁴ Certificate of Title, vol. 242, folio 3, 1936.

²⁵ Keenan, op. cit.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Minnie died in March 1961. A number of Keenan descendants are still living in the district, as the majority of Stewart and Isabella's children settled locally after marriage.

²⁸ Certificate of Title, Vol 1233, Folio 301. Correspondence from the Margaret River Conservation Farming Club Inc. suggests that the property was purchased in 1974; HCWA File P0116, correspondence dated 9 July 1998.

²⁹ It has not been determined when Albert left *Glenbourne* - he is listed as being the occupant of the house in the 1978 National Trust Assessment Form.

³⁰ Margaret River Conservation Farming Club Newsletter. HCWA File PD0116.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Conversation with member of Margaret River Conservation Farming Club, 9 October 1997. See file note, HCWA File P0116.

³³ *ibid.*

In 1996, *Glenbourne Homestead* was entered in the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River Municipal Inventory, for its historic associations with the Keenan family and the development of Margaret River and the South West region. In early 1998, descendants of Isabella and Stewart Keenan, together with the Augusta-Margaret River Shire Council, are investigating stabilising and possibly reconstructing the homestead in an effort to arrest further deterioration.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Glenbourne Homestead is situated on a grassy rise in established farmland to the north of the Ellens Brook water course. *Glenbourne Homestead* is approached from the west off Caves Road and down a gravel track. For the purposes of this assessment the curtilage includes the fenced area indicated on the plan and the bread oven to the west. The homestead is in a semi-demolished state, with only three of the rooms with any semblance of intactness. For this reason the condition of the various parts of the building are discussed together with the general physical description.

The homestead is located in a fenced area peppered with peach, apple and almond trees and a large mulberry tree. The remains of a concrete path approaches the verandah from the east. Two corrugated iron cement lined water tanks stand on the south-west corner of the house in very poor condition. The corrugated iron has corroded, exposing the concrete lining.

A rough stone oven is located to the south west of the house just outside the existing fence line. This oven consists of uncut local stone piled up and mortared together, with iron bar lintels supporting the fire box roof. The oven is relatively intact but is in danger of severe damage from a tree growing directly against the west face which is gradually dislodging the stone work. Some of the iron lintels to the fire box are in an advanced state of corrosion.

Several materials have been used to clad the exterior walls of the house: timber slab, weatherboard, stone and asbestos cement. Slab wall construction was used on the eastern, northern and western elevations, stone work on a small area of the south western corner, and weatherboard on the southern elevation and an enclosed portion of the verandah. Asbestos cement cladding is confined to wet area additions constructed in the 1950s.

Wall construction is chiefly vertically placed split timber slab. This also determines the oldest part of the structure. The slabs are earth fast and fixed at the top with a dressed timber rail or plate. Dressed corner posts and intermediate studwork (for openings) have also been used. The external face of the slabs has been left undressed and the internal face lined with lath and plaster. Ti-Tree timber laths are rough split in the traditional way, and fixed to the slabs with flat head nails. Plaster appears to have been made from lime and sand and then coated with lime wash. Internal slab walls are lined with lath and plaster on both sides.

To the east, a laundry (room 9) and WC (room 10) in timber framed asbestos cement have been added. This extension is in poor condition with punctured cladding and broken fittings. Also on the eastern elevation is the verandah, which has collapsed at the northern end. The verandah was supported on square dressed posts. Floorboards to the verandah are butt jointed 150mm wide timber and similar to those in the Kitchen (room 1). These are different

to floorboards in the main rooms (4, 5, 6 and 7), which are 170mm wide. It is highly probable that the area occupied by the kitchen and rooms 2 and 3 formed a second verandah at some time which was filled as need arose.³⁴

The front door leading off the verandah to the passage is a rustic ledged door, planted with large chamfered vertical cover battens to butt joints between boards.

The elevation to the north has been largely destroyed. This includes rooms 7, 6 and 3. On the west elevation, the external wall to room 2 has been replaced with corrugated iron. The original wall construction is unknown – but it may have been timber slab. Random rubble stonework wraps around the kitchen and includes a substantial chimney to the southern end of this room. This stonework is relatively intact. However, mortar is eroding in places and is particularly bad on the southern face.

The elevation to the south is clad with timber weatherboard, which is relatively intact but in a weathered and rotting condition. Different sized and style windows stand either side of the remains of a PGI fire place.³⁵ These windows demonstrate the makeshift nature of early building in remote areas. The chimney portion of the PGI fireplace has disappeared, but the body remains. The PGI fireplace was originally lined with stone, some of which remain.

The roof has collapsed on the southern half and remains in an unstable condition within the rest of the structure. Termites have caused considerable damage to roof timbers which, in a weakened state, have been susceptible to storms. The roofing material is corrugated iron, which has been placed over an earlier roof of timber shingles. The shingles have been split and the battens to which they are nailed have been cut with a circular power saw. In contrast, the rafters and other roofing timbers appear to have been split and finely dressed with an adze or broad axe.

The rooms to the north (3, 6 and 7) are in a poor state and room 5, which was the largest room, is also mostly destroyed. The remains indicate that these rooms had lath and plaster walls, butt jointed timber floors and ceilings of sheet PGI on machine sawn timber joists. The ceilings appear to be a much later addition to the structure. The doors to rooms 7 and 6 are ledged, with vertical cover battens of a similar pattern to the door off the verandah.

Room 2 is poor condition, with all but the west wall standing. The ceiling is PGI on the underside of roof timbers. Although the floor has mostly gone, the remains indicate that it consisted of butt jointed floor boards nailed to timber joists bearing directly on the ground. This appears to be the floor construction followed throughout the rest of the house.

³⁴ This speculation is supported by the documentary evidence and a 1993 plan shows corner posts at the extremities of rooms 6 and 7. There was no corner post at the corner of room 3, leading to the conclusion that it was a later addition. Fisher, J. A. and Tweedie, N. M., 'Glenbourne House Margaret River, Heritage Assessment', 1993. HCWA File PD 0116.

³⁵ PGI is a building abbreviation for Plain Galvanised Iron. This chimney evidently replaced an earlier stone chimney damaged in the 1920s when a large portion of the south wall came away from the rest of the structure. Keenan, op. cit.

The kitchen (room 1), is enclosed with rendered stone to the west and south, and timber slab to the remaining walls. The lath and plaster has been lined with hardboard sheet. The stone fireplace to the south is framed with a rough timber mantelpiece and is set with a Metters Improved Stove No 2. Both the mantle and the stove are in poor condition. The ceiling to this room has remnants of a bituminous lining material, nailed to the joists. This is most likely a type of linoleum.

The lounge (room 4) appears to be the most intact of all the rooms. The ceiling is lined with pressed metal and has been raked on the west and east ends. The purpose of the raking is not clear and it may be purely a decorative device. This form of ceiling does not appear in other early houses, such as *Sandilands* (c1840) near Busselton. The western and eastern walls are lath and plaster on slab, and remaining walls are lined with pressed metal. The northern wall is interesting as it is unlike the others, being timber framed with pressed metal on the lounge (room 4) side and horizontal boarding on the passage side. Doors to the lounge are T&G ledged doors.

Room 8 has been recovered from the original verandah with weatherboard on a timber frame. This room was originally lined with pressed metal, some of which remains.

The overall condition of this building is extremely poor and probably dangerous. Serious termite activity and some, well meaning, removal of material by the owners has hastened the collapse of the structure.

13. 3 REFERENCES

Fisher, J. A. and Tweedie, N. M., 'Glenbourne House Margaret River, Heritage Assessment', 1993. HCWA File PD 0116.

National Trust Assessment Form, 1 May 1978.

Transcript of tape made by Margaret Blond, July 1986, HCWA File PD0116.

Written statement by Ed Keenan, Building Contractor, 6 December 1992, HCWA File PD0116.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

The later history of the place, specifically the conservation farming movement, is worthy of further research.

Glenbourne Homestead warrants and permits further research in terms of nineteenth century construction techniques.