



**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.

The wording of this document has been adapted from “McNess Recreation Area, Yanchep National Park: Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan” prepared by Hocking Planning & Architecture, Blackwell & Associates, Lucy Williams, Historian & Heritage Consultant for the Department of Housing and Works on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, July 2003, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.22 Lodging people
- 3.23 Catering for tourists
- 7.7.2 Preparing to face invasion
- 8.1.3 Developing public parks and gardens
- 8.1.4 Enjoying the natural environment

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 311 Hospitality industry and tourism
- 405 Sport, recreation and entertainment
- 501 World wars and other wars
- 506 Tourism
- 605 Famous and infamous people

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

As an ornamental open park set within natural bushland by the shores of a lake, the park recreation area of *Yanchep National Park* has aesthetic characteristics valued by the community as evidenced by its attraction to visitors. (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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Yanchep National Park consists of built structures and a modified landscape, including elements of the soft landscape, which contrasts with the natural setting which surrounds it. (Criterion 1.3)

The structures comprising *Yanchep Inn*, *Gloucester Lodge*, *McNess Hostel*, the *Administration Building* and other built structures together form a significant precinct characterized by a homogeneity of materials and forms established in the 1930s using local materials and motifs of the Inter-War Old English and Inter-War California Bungalow styles. (Criterion 1.4)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Yanchep National Park demonstrates the community's fascination with caves in the nineteenth century which often led to their exploration and opening as tourist sites. (Criterion 2.1)

Yanchep National Park, including its soft landscape features, demonstrates the principles of the Garden City and City Beautiful movements of the 1920s and 1930s and their practice of 'taming' and 'improving' natural bushland rather than conserving the natural significance of the particular environment. (Criterion 2.1)

Yanchep National Park is an example of an inter-war recreation area, including varying levels of accommodation from the tram cottages to the inn, and was a popular honeymoon destination from the 1930s to the 1950s. (Criterion 2.4)

The development of *Yanchep National Park* demonstrates Western Australian Government attempts to provide work during the Depression with assistance from private funds. (Criterion 2.2)

In line with the increasing environmental conservation awareness, the first Ranger Training Course was held at *Yanchep National Park* in June 1969. The park became a training ground for new rangers before they were appointed to other parks around the state. (Criterion 2.2)

Army Bunkers played an important role as a radar station, from October 1943 to August 1945, providing information regarding aircraft movements towards the end of World War Two. (Criterion 2.2)

Yanchep National Park was occupied by the RAAF Radar Squadron during World War II who used *Yanchep Inn* and *Gloucester Lodge* for the No. 4 Convalescent Unit and the No. 4 Medical Rehabilitation Unit. (Criterion 2.2)

Yanchep National Park is associated with Government employee Louis Shapcott and businessman and benefactor Sir Charles McNess, who were instrumental in the development and publicity of the park. (Criterion 2.3)

Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, visited and stayed in *Yanchep National Park* in October 1934. In 1939 *Gloucester Lodge* was named in honour of his visit. (Criterion 2.3)

Yanchep Inn was designed by prominent Perth architect William Bennett, who designed and remodeled many Perth hotels in the Interwar period. (Criterion 2.3)

Sir George Grey was the first recorded European to explore the caves at *Yanchep National Park* in 1838. In 1841 Sir John Septimus Roe and Governor Hutt further explored the area finding at least six caves. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The changing hydrology of the area as a result of European occupation is evidenced in the physical fabric of the caves. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Yanchep National Park is part of the recreational experiences of Western Australians, through both day-tripping and short stay accommodation, and many have a feeling of proprietary interest over the Park, similar to that felt for Kings Park, the Caves at Yallingup and Rottneest. (Criterion 4.1)

Yanchep National Park is valued by the past and present military community and the wider community for its historic and military associations with World War Two. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Yanchep National Park is rare as a cave area developed for tourist purposes in Western Australia and as one of only six main cave areas in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

The *Tram Cottage* of *Yanchep National Park* is a rare remaining example of a tram designed and built in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Yanchep National Park is representative of Inter-War parkland landscapes in Western Australia. (Criterion 6.2)

Yanchep National Park is representative of the development of areas adjacent to caves in the inter-war period to support recreational visitation. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The majority of the structures are in fair to good condition. The landscape is in fair condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of the structures is moderate to high. The integrity of the landscape is moderate to low with weed infestation and changed hydrology affecting some features.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The principal structures are highly authentic to their original development. The landscape is of moderate authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Supporting evidence has been taken from “McNess Recreation Area, Yanchep National Park: Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan” prepared by Hocking Planning & Architecture, Blackwell & Associates, Lucy Williams, Historian & Heritage Consultant for the Department of Housing and Works on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, July 2003.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the documentary evidence, refer to “McNess Recreation Area, Yanchep National Park: Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan” prepared by Hocking Planning & Architecture, Blackwell & Associates, Lucy Williams, Historian & Heritage Consultant for the Department of Housing and Works on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, July 2003, pp10-90.

The following information has been prepared by HCWA staff from information provided by the Department of Conservation and Land Management and the City of Wanneroo.

Yanchep National Park was popular as a honeymoon destination from the 1930s to the 1950s. In 2003, a ‘Honeymooners’ Return’ event organised by the City of Wanneroo identified the earliest known honeymooners to stay at Yanchep as having been there in 1934.¹

Army Bunkers (Radar Installation)

In December 1942, the Air Board granted approval for the establishment of a Radio Installation at Yanchep. The site works and the installation of Radar equipment were completed to operational standard on 27 October 1943.²

The 227 Radar Unit, formed in August 1943, was responsible for the operation of the radar. The Unit was a combination of Royal Australia Airforce (RAAF) and Women’s Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF) personnel. The unit consisted of male technical administrative and operative personnel (including the Commanding Officer) from the RAAF and a female Administrative Officer with assistant, Radar Operators and support staff from the WAAAF. Personnel of the 227 Radar Unit were accommodated at Gloucester Lodge.³

As there were limited facilities in Yanchep, and inadequate transport to Perth, programmes for the general health, physical training and recreation were developed for the unit personnel. Activities included education and fitness programmes, swimming, picture shows, and fortnightly concerts which were held in conjunction with the No. 4 Convalescent Unit based at the Yanchep Inn. The radar unit acquired a piano and, with several good pianists among the staff, musical evenings were popular with both the No. 227 Radar Unit and the Unit based at the Inn.⁴

¹ Letter from City of Wanneroo to HCWA dated 30 August, P file 4151.

² Information provided by CALM to HCWA sourced from the Wanneroo Museum.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

The unit was responsible for radar sighting of all aircraft approaching the area, determining range, height, speed and reporting to the Western Australian Air Defense Headquarters.⁵

Two concrete huts, 40 metres apart, housed the radar equipment. The southern hut contained the Transmitter and the northern hut the Receiver. The electronic equipment for each of these huts was housed inside a metal container measuring 2.5 metres long, 0.5 meters deep and two metres high. The electronic equipment was complex and impressive for its time, especially the Transmitter with its big valve and generation of a very high voltage.⁶

Alongside each concrete hut was a 45 metre wooden tower on four big curved jarrah legs which were set into concrete. The antenna equipment was installed high in the towers and maintenance on it was challenging especially in high winds.⁷

With the exception of shut down times for maintenance, radar surveillance was maintained twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The Radar Operators worked in shifts in the Receiving hut.⁸

The daily unit operational occurrence reports do not record any actual tracking of enemy aircraft although the unit had the distinction of being responsible for the first genuine air raid alarm for the city of Perth. In March 1944, there was a genuine belief that a Japanese Task Force could be heading south toward Perth. Just after midday on 10 March 1944, radar operators observed multiple aircraft blips, some 150 miles to the north of Perth. This was reported to Defence Headquarters. The 10th Light Horse Army Unit, based at Neerabup, was on guard in the area and a squadron of Spitfires had been flown from Darwin to re-enforce the aerial defense of the area. The blips moved steadily south at the right speed and showed all the characteristics of a large group of aircraft. Finally the Defence Authorities decided that they could not wait any longer for positive confirmation of enemy activity and a full scale air raid alarm was sounded throughout the city of Perth. People rushed to their shelters and school children were evacuated to slit trenches in their school grounds. The blips continued until the potential enemy aircraft should have passed overhead, nothing appeared and in due course, the all clear was sounded. Subsequent investigation suggested that it may have been enemy jamming.⁹

After Victory in the Pacific Day, 15th August 1945, a skeleton crew remained at Unit. Remaining officers were ordered to prepare for disbandment. Personnel were progressively ordered out. The Unit was finally disbanded after two years and one month of service.¹⁰

In 1988, the *Army Bunkers* were classified in the Register of the National Estate.¹¹ In 1987, *Army Bunkers* was classified by the National Trust of Australia. In 1994, *Army Bunkers* was included in the City of Wanneroo Municipal Heritage Inventory.

In 2004, the bunkers and concrete footing for the towers are extant but the towers and the equipment no longer remain.

5 ibid.

6 Information provided by CALM to HCWA sourced from the Wanneroo Museum

7 ibid.

8 ibid.

9 ibid.

10 ibid.

11 HCWA database 23/8/2004

Ghost House Ruin, Chauffeur's Room and Garage

Ghost House Ruin (fmr Shapcott's Cottage), *Chauffeur's Room and Garage* were built c1930s on the northern most banks of Loch McNess. The buildings were constructed by L.E. Shapcott for his use during his regular visits to the park. The cottage was located a considerable distance away from the main recreation zones within the national park.¹²

The buildings were constructed from local limestone and timber from the *Eucla* which was wrecked in the Fremantle harbour. The electrical wiring, timber and plumbing were acquired free of charge or bartered for. Shapcott traded soil, rocks, animals, and birds for whatever materials he required for the construction of facilities within the Yanchep National Park.¹³

In 1978, *Ghost House Ruin, Chauffeur's Room and Garage* was classified in the Register of the National Estate.¹⁴ In 1987, *Ghost House Ruin, Chauffeur's Room and Garage* was classified by the National Trust of Australia. In 1994, *Ghost House Ruin, Chauffeur's Room and Garage* was included in the City of Wanneroo Municipal Heritage Inventory.

Ghost House Ruin, Chauffeur's Room and Garage has deteriorated over time and materials from were taken from these structures for use elsewhere, both legally and by pilfering.¹⁵ In 2005, *Ghost House Ruin, Chauffeur's Room and Garage* are ruins.

Tram Cottage

In 1913, the Western Australian Government Railways built eight 'C' class trams at the railway Workshops in Midland. These were the first trams to be designed and built in Western Australia.¹⁶

In 1933, the eight trams were moved to Boomerang Gorge at *Yanchep National Park* to provide accommodation for sustenance workers carrying out projects within the Park. Harman and Shaw undertook transport of the trams. By the late 1930s, the trams were being used as visitor accommodation.¹⁷

Over the years, most of the trams in *Yanchep National Park* were destroyed by fire.¹⁸ By the late 1970s only two trams remained at Boomerang Gorge. They continued to be used as visitor accommodation. One contained beds, bunks and a small bathroom & toilet, while the other was partitioned into a kitchen, dining room and living room. Cooking was done on a wood-fired Metters stove. The two trams were connected by a wide covered breezeway.¹⁹

In 1989, the Perth Electric Tram Society carried out paint scrapings on the trams and found that under brown paint was a light green colour, a pale colour with a pink tinge (possibly primer or undercoat) and then an Indian Red.²⁰

12 Information sheet provided by CALM in letter to HCWA 16 July 2004

13 *ibid.*

14 HCWA database 23/8/2004

15 Register of National Estate entry for *Ghost House Ruin, Chauffeur's Room and Garage* www.deh.gov.au 23/8/2004

16 Letter from City of Wanneroo to HCWA dated 30 August, P file 4151.

17 *ibid.*

18 *ibid.*

19 Information provided to HCWA by P O'Connor on 1 August 2005 based on personal recollections of holidays in the trams during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

20 Letter from City of Wanneroo to HCWA dated 30 August, P file 4151.

In early 1990 the last two trams were moved from Boomerang Gorge, one to Whiteman Park and the other adjacent to Gloucester Lodge. This Tram (No. 57) was described as having a stove, chimney and aluminum framed windows. In May that year it was reported to the Gloucester Lodge Museum Management Committee that the roof bearers of the tram were in poor condition. In April 1991 a quote to re-roof the tram was accepted by the City of Wanneroo and works included stripping the existing roof, repairing the rib structure, and re-roofing with zincalume. Stonework was relocated from the old site in Boomerang Gorge and was reused around the base of the tram.²¹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the physical evidence, refer to “McNess Recreation Area, Yanchep National Park: Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan” prepared by Hocking Planning & Architecture, Blackwell & Associates, Lucy Williams, Historian & Heritage Consultant for the Department of Housing and Works on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, July 2003, pp26-90.

The following information has been prepared by HCWA staff from information provided by the Department of Conservation and Land Management in 2004.

Ghost House Ruin, Chauffeur's Room and Garage

Ghost House Ruin, Chaffeur's Room and Garage is located on the northern most banks of the lake now known as Wagardu, which was formerly known as Loch McNess, Lake Yanchep and Mambibby Lake.

The ruins of the Chauffeur's Room are more substantial than the Ghost House Ruin (fmr Shapcott's Cottage). The Chaffeur's Room, 400m to the east of Ghost House Ruin, comprises the remains of the walls of a building with a lean-to garage attached.

Trees planted when the buildings were in use remain. Around the Ghost House Ruin are fig trees, a lemon, flame trees, peppermint trees, a Norfolk Island pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*) and a large fir (*Cupressus sempervirens*).

Both buildings are constructed of local limestone and timber and have cement quoining. A brick fireplace is evident at Ghost House Ruin.

Caves

The limestone caves of *Yanchep National Park* are shallow and feature unusual and spectacular calcite formations. These caves include Crystal, Mambiddy, Yonderup, Rose, and Minnie's Grotto. The caves are formed by slightly acidic water seeping through the limestone roof, dissolving calcium and carrying it as calcite to drip into formations such as stalagmites.

Many insect species are known to inhabit the various caves, along with bats, rats, mice, spiders, snakes and lizards.

Army Bunkers

Army Bunkers is situated at the highest point in the Yanchep area. The two huts are 40 metres apart. The two towers are no longer extant.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

²¹ *ibid.*

For a discussion of the comparative information, refer to “McNess Recreation Area, Yanchep National Park: Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan” prepared by Hocking Planning & Architecture, Blackwell & Associates, Lucy Williams, Historian & Heritage Consultant for the Department of Housing and Works on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, July 2003, pp92-95.

The following information has been prepared by HCWA staff.

In addition to Caves House, Yallingup, which is described in the conservation plan, resorts associated with caves are known to have been established at Burnside and Wallcliffe. Both were on a smaller scale than either Yanchep or Caves House. Burnside is now in ruins. Wallcliffe House was only used as a resort from 1902 to 1910, although associated land was used as a caravan park 1953 to 1987. It is a two-storey Victorian Georgian style residence, with farm outbuildings, on the banks of the Margaret River near Prevelly. Caves House, Yallingup is a larger building than Yanchep Inn. Both places are Interwar Old English buildings set in lawned gardens surrounded by a bush setting.²²

There are six other bunkers in Western Australia according to the Heritage Council Western Australia (HCWA) database²³ and the Royal Australian Artillery Association of Western Australia: RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont, Metropolitan (P16785), Concrete Bunkers, Merredin, Wheatbelt (P13512); Generator Bunker, Yanchep National Park, Wanneroo, Metropolitan (P14278); World War II Airfield and Bunker, Capel, Southwest (P15133); Signal Hill Rottnest Island (P09146); and Leighton barracks, Leighton, Metropolitan (P03247). All were built during World War II and all had different functions. Of these, only P16785 RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont is on the State Register.

The Concrete Bunker in Merredin was built in 1941. It is unascertainable how these bunkers were used - it is presumed for storage or communication. The World War II Airfield and Bunker at Capel, built in 1942 was presumably used as a munitions bunker. The defences at Leighton (1942) and at Signal Hill (construction started in 1936) had bunkers that were used as a storage facility for munitions and the storage of guns.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

“McNess Recreation Area, Yanchep National Park: Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan” prepared by Hocking Planning & Architecture, Blackwell & Associates, Lucy Williams, Historian & Heritage Consultant for the Department of Housing and Works on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, July 2003

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

²² Register Documentation for P00428 Caves House, Yallingup, P00114 *Wallcliffe House & Grounds*, and HCWA database entry for P4936 Burnside, Margaret River.

²³ HCWA database May 2004