



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES- ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

MacPherson Homestead has structural interest with its high walls and steeply pitched roof, bush rafters etc., and together with the associated outbuildings is a good example of a vernacular, Western Australian rural homestead of the 1870s. (Criterion 1.1)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

MacPherson Homestead is significant for its association with the MacPherson family. Its substantial size reflects the economic and social standing of the MacPhersons, one of the early families who settled in the Carnamah district and who played an important role in the development and growth of the surrounding district. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

The *MacPherson Homestead* is highly valued by the community, as a reminder of the early European settlement of the district, as was demonstrated by the community effort to lobby and raise funding for the restoration of the building, that would have otherwise deteriorated beyond repair. (Criterion 4.1)

MacPherson Homestead contributes to the community's sense of place, having been the focus of community activity, in some form or another, since it was built. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

MacPherson Homestead is representative of the type of vernacular farm building often constructed during the early settlement phase of a district, when building materials were difficult to obtain and the future development and growth of the area was tenuous. As such, the Homestead reflects the way of life in the early days of settlement of an area. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Following extensive reconstruction and restoration work over a ten year period, *MacPherson Homestead* is now in a sound condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Although there has been a high degree of reconstruction work carried out, the building retains its original form and the fabric of the building demonstrates a high level of intactness.

MacPherson Homestead has a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Although the nature of the detailing may be authentic, due to the high level of reconstruction work that has been carried out, the materials are not.

MacPherson Homestead has a moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

MacPherson Homestead is a simple, single-storey stone building, constructed circa 1870 as the residence of the MacPherson family. The building is located on the outskirts of Carnamah, (approx. 1km from the town centre) on the Carnamah to Bunjil Road. Carnamah is a small town situated approximately 300 kilometres north of Perth.

John, Donald and Duncan MacPherson and their sister arrived in Western Australia from Inverness, Scotland in the 1830s - 1840s. They contributed to the settlement and development of Toodyay, Victoria Plains and Carnamah. Their sister, Miss MacPherson married Donald Campbell and settled at Koora Kooraby, later known as Walebing.³² Duncan MacPherson, originally settled at Toodyay, but took up some of the first land at the Carnamah Spring in the early 1860s. According to P. R. Heydon, in his book *Westward to the Sea: Reminiscences and History of the Carnamah District 1861-1987*, Lands Department records show that Duncan MacPherson and George Slater took up leases 2038, 2039 and 2040 on 11 September 1861.³³ These leases were abandoned by them and taken up by George Shenton, Junior, however, he abandoned them also and were again taken over by MacPherson and Slater on 18 March 1873.

³² Heydon, P. R., *Westward to the Sea: Reminiscences and History of the Carnamah District 1861 - 1987*, (Carnamah Historical Society, 1988), p. 12.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 12.

It is recorded that Duncan MacPherson had the contract to cart mail from Walebing to Mingenew for the period 1883-1885.³⁴ From 1853, the mail from Perth to Geraldton had been transported by the coastal route via Yanchep, Coqalla, Dandaragan and Irwin. However, by 1877, the route had moved inland and went via Guildford, Gingin, Victoria Plains, Walebing, Berkshire Valley, Coorow, Carnamah, Yandanooka, Irwin, Dongara, Greenough to Geraldton.

The MacPhersons formed part of the line of communication that linked Toodyay to the Greenough area. Duncan's daughters played a role in this, with Elizabeth MacPherson appointed to take charge of the postal facility at Carnamah from June 1874, and her sister taking charge at Arrino. Two months later, Elizabeth went to Greenough and Margaret took charge at the Carnamah Post Office, which was housed in the *MacPherson Homestead*. The facility was upgraded to become a Post and Telegraph Office in 1895 and Miss MacPherson remained Postmistress until her retirement on 4 August 1913.³⁵ The Post Office facilities were then transferred to the Railway Station.

Wayfarers and passing settlers enjoyed the MacPhersons' hospitality on a regular basis until 1894, when the Midland Railway Company ran the first train along the complete length of the track and people followed a different travel route. The railway line played a significant role in the opening up and settlement of the farming land in and around the Carnamah district.

Duncan MacPherson was 79 years old when he died at Carnamah in April 1898. His wife had died some ten years earlier and he left a family of five sons and two daughters. Duncan left his land to his son John who later sold the land and moved to Greenough where he was known to have been first a farmer and then an inn keeper. Lachlan also sold his land at Carnamah and moved to Greenough. The last of the land owned by the MacPhersons in Carnamah (consisting of 250 acres, including the homestead) was sold after the daughter Elizabeth died in 1940 as she was the last of that generation. *MacPherson Homestead* continued to be used as a private dwelling; however, it is possible that it may have been left vacant at some stage.

Over the years, *MacPherson Homestead* was allowed to deteriorate, until 1979, when a group of concerned citizens decided that some action needed to be taken to save the building. A committee was formed to raise money for the restoration of *MacPherson Homestead*. In August 1979, events such as the 'Carnamah Highland Games' and a Scottish style cabaret were held to assist the cause. Mr Glen Lane, then owner of the property, generously donated the *MacPherson Homestead* and several hectares of land to the Carnamah Shire Council for the Restoration Society. With this in place, the Society was able to successfully apply for funding under the National Estate Grant Program in 1980/81.³⁶ A further successful application for funding, under the same program, was made in 1985/86, to continue the restoration work.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 182.

³⁶ Further detail of the works carried out under this program are provided in the physical evidence section.

In 1994, with the restoration and reconstruction work complete, *MacPherson Homestead* is used by various community groups as a meeting place, and is also available for hire for private functions.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

MacPherson Homestead is a large, single-storey homestead residence, built circa 1870 as the residence of the MacPherson family.

MacPherson Homestead (building 'A') is of stone construction with thick walls approximately 4.2m (14ft) high. Large carefully selected stones were used on the outside of the walls with smaller ones on the inside which were roughly rendered. The rafters are of bush timber and the roof, now corrugated iron, was originally thatched. The pitch of the roof is such that the guttering is about head height. The building is surrounded by a verandah on three sides. A rough floor plan of the building during the MacPherson era has been provided by local residents.³⁷ It indicates a central passage, dividing the building. The building is two rooms deep. Four large rooms are located at the front of the building, with four smaller rooms to the rear, an additional two on either side, forming part of the verandah. There are two fireplaces, dividing the two large rooms on either side of the passage.

Some years prior to 1982, the Carnamah Historical Society removed the roof sheeting, the timbers were replaced (sawn grade in the ceilings, but with bush timber where it was visible) and the original custom orb sheeting was put back on.

The Carnamah Shire Council (on behalf of the Carnamah Restoration Society) was allocated the sum of \$13,700 for the Conservation of the MacPherson Homestead under the Australian Heritage Commission's National Estate Grant Program in 1980/81. Works carried out included:

- materials to renew verandah floor;
- pipes and fittings to connect water supply;
- restoration of stone masonry;
- electrical installations; and,
- reconstruction of windows, verandahs, plastering.

In 1985/86, a sum of \$7,300 was allocated to the Shire of Carnamah (on behalf of Carnamah Restoration Society) for the conservation of *MacPherson Homestead*, also under the National Estate Grant Program. Substantial conservation works were undertaken on the main homestead. These included:

- replacement of gutters and downpipes;
- replacement of double and single doors to the exterior of the building;
- rehanging and glazing of older doors; painting of doors and windows;
- replacement of two concrete door lintels;

³⁷ Rough floor plan provided by Dawn Chapman of the Carnamah Historical Society and Mrs Coral Pearce, who worked for Donald McPherson circa 1930. (HCWA file P0447, February 1993, pp. 7-8.)

- restoration of stonework to south-west corner of the building;and,
- re-roofing. This work continued up until 1989.

The separate kitchen (building 'B') has partly fallen down (in a ruined state) and the men's quarters (building 'C') is now rubble.

13.3 REFERENCES

Carnamah Restoration Society, 'Final Report: MacPherson Homestead Conservation (funded under the National Estate Program 1985/86)', (for the W.A. Heritage Committee, February 1989).

National Trust Assessment Exposition, May 1983.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet, September 1992.