



**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 precinct.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.4 Utilising natural resources
- 5 Working
- 8.3 Going on holiday

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 107 Settlements
- 304 Timber industry
- 309 Technology and technological change
- 311 Hospitality industry and tourism

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The Mill is a substantial built structure with a distinct industrial aesthetic, characterized by long gable roof forms, timber-framed buildings, a network of conveyor systems, and three prominent steel chimneys. (Criterion 1.1)

The Town Site includes a large collection of simple but well-proportioned timber-framed weatherboard and iron buildings including Workers' Cottages, Boarding House, General Store, Butcher's Shop (fmr), Clinic, Club, and Primary School, which combine to produce an attractive and visually cohesive townscape. (Criterion 1.1)

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct forms an aesthetically pleasing cultural environment carefully designed in harmony with the topography of the site, comprising the prominent and distinctive landmark of the Mill, together with the Town Site, set in a picturesque valley, near to the Donnelly River, with a dramatic backdrop of native karri forest. (Criterion 1.3)

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct is a substantial and intact collection of buildings representing a range of aspects of the working life of a timber-milling town, which collectively form a significant intact townscape. (Criterion 1.4)

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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct is representative of a number of settlements established by employers to provide all facilities and services to their employees. Bunning Brothers oversaw most aspects of the lives of their workers and their families to encourage a close knit working group living in close proximity to their place of work. In addition, workers provided for their own social needs through the formation of groups such as the Donnelly Mill Club, one of the first in Western Australia to admit men and women on equal terms. (Criterion 2.1)

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct was developed in partnership with the Government of Western Australia under a joint Commonwealth and State agreement to provide for the expansion of the saw milling industry in the post World War Two period, when timber products were in high demand. (Criterion 2.2)

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct was developed by Bunning Brothers, a family timber-milling firm that had been operating in Western Australia since 1886 and became the largest mill operator in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The Mill demonstrates the application of steam power during an industrial phase immediately prior to the use of electrically driven equipment. The place also demonstrates innovative mechanisms developed to drive the mill equipment from a single power source. This equipment included the mill saws and the powered rollers and winches used to convey the timber through the Mill. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Located in the karri forest, *Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct* provided employment and family homes for a large community for nearly thirty years. Many of these families have remained in the district and retain associations with the place. (Criterion 4.1)

Public opinion in 2003 was strongly in favour of keeping the Mill intact and developing it as a working museum, providing evidence of the place's value to the community. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The largely intact Mill is the only extant example of the technology that utilised steam power in working Western Australia's hardwood forests, and one of only a few intact timber mills to retain an associated workers' village. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct is representative of numerous settlements associated with saw milling throughout Western Australia's forests, where accommodation and facilities for workers were provided alongside the working mill buildings. (Criterion 6.1)

Constructed through a partnership between the State Housing Commission and Bunnings Ltd, the workers' cottages are representative of timber-framed houses built to standard designs in timber milling towns throughout Western Australia in the post World War Two period. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct is generally in good condition.

The Mill structures and equipment are in fair/good condition. It was restored in the 1980s to function as a static museum and is in a condition that would enable further conservation for future use. Certain areas have suffered from poor maintenance and exposure to the elements. The operating floor support structure, which consists of heavy bush timber braced with sawn mill timber, is in reasonable condition, although sections of the floorboards are in need of maintenance. The roof and roof framing is generally in good condition, although most sections of the gutters are missing. Loose roof sheeting has recently been repaired or replaced. There is evidence of structural failure at the western end of the Mill building, where the awnings have collapsed, otherwise the columns and roof timbers are in good condition. Elsewhere, there is warped and loose timber planking and evidence of moisture damage to timber stumps. The chimneystacks are in reasonable condition, although the guy wires are loose and the chimneys are corroded at their bases. The boilers, walkways and steam pipe distribution system are in good condition. The remaining steam engines are in very good condition.

The Town Site buildings are in good condition and have been maintained to consistent standards over time.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct has high integrity.

The Mill is a good example of the industrial technology that prevailed during the earlier days of the timber industry. The Mill was powered by steam and is one of the few remaining mills still standing in almost complete form. Almost all the machinery is still on site and basically intact. Thus it is capable of demonstrating a technological process no longer practiced.

All the buildings in the Town Site have been appropriately adapted to new uses, and many, including the General Store, Workshop, Club and Workers' Cottages, retain their original uses.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct has a high degree of authenticity.

The Mill and its equipment are nearly all as originally built and installed, and repairs and restoration works carried out over the years have not adversely affected the authenticity of the place. Consistent maintenance of the buildings in the Town Site, particularly the Workers' Cottages, has contributed to most of the authentic fabric being retained. The original relationships between the buildings and elements as a whole, including the cadastral layout, roadways, and laneways, also remain largely intact.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Jacqui Sherriff, Historian, and Palassis Architects in May 2004, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee. The evidence has been expanded from that provided in the Permanent Entry for P2966 *Donnelly River Mill*, prepared in 1996.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct is located on the Donnelly River, to the south west of Bridgetown and northwest of Manjimup in the southwest region of Western Australia.

Timber cutting was one of the first industries to be established following the European settlement of the Swan River colony. J H Monger opened a wood yard at Mount Eliza in 1833 and, after samples of Swan River Mahogany (jarrah) were received to great acclaim in London, exportation of timber commenced in 1836.¹ Although individual timber cutters were licensed as early as the 1840s, the Western Australian government did not grant timber concessions until 1871. The annual rentals on the concessions gave the government some cash benefit from the increasing overseas demand for jarrah railway sleepers and paving blocks. The concessions also enabled the government to assert some control over the exploitation and waste of the native forests.² Following the granting of the first three concessions in 1871, the number of timber concessions steadily increased. Largely in response to local demand for timber for mining and railway construction, a number of new millers entered the industry in the 1890s.

In 1909, Thomas and William Wheatley purchased a small fruit-case cutting mill on the Donnelly River and enlarged it to cut karri as well as jarrah. Known as Wheatley Mill, it continued to operate as a family business until 1912.³ As reported in 1895 by visiting forest expert, J Ednie Brown, the karri forests around the Donnelly and Warren rivers were exceptionally good.⁴

Brothers Robert and Arthur Bunning entered the Western Australian timber industry in 1886, and established mills throughout the outer metropolitan area and southwest. In the early 1900s, the company established mills, or took over existing mills, in Helena Valley, Jardee, Donnybrook, Collie and Muja. After establishing a new mill at Nyamup in 1940, Bunning Brothers turned its attention to the Manjimup district, firstly taking over an existing mill at Yornup and then drawing up plans for a new mill at the site of the old Wheatley Mill in State Forest No 34. The company decided to call this new mill Donnelly, after the river running through the area.⁵

The post World War Two housing boom placed considerable pressure on the local timber industry and Donnelly River was one of several large mills to open in the late 1940s to early 1950s (at the time Donnelly River Mill opened, it was one

1 H D Evans, *Pioneering in the Karri Country*, pp. 8, 14.

2 J Mills, *The Timber People: a History of Bunnings Ltd*, Perth, 1986, p. 7.

3 Plaque erected by members of the Wheatley family in 2002 near the mill building.

4 Report by J Ednie Brown on South Western Forests, in *West Australian*, 23 July 1895, p. 3. Ednie Brown later became Western Australia's first Conservator of Forests.

5 List of timber mills in G B Hill & Partners, Conservation Plan Donnelly River Mill, prepared for the Heritage Council of Western Australia, March 1994; Mills, op. cit., pp. 147, 154. In March 1948, Bunning Brothers became Bunning Brothers Pty Ltd. The new company incorporated many others, including Donnelly Sawmills Pty Ltd.

of 265 sawmills in Western Australia).⁶ In order to facilitate the expansion of the timber milling industry and to provide work opportunities in the industry, in 1948 the State Housing Commission and Bunning Brothers Pty Ltd entered an agreement to provide workers' housing on the site under the provisions of the 1945 Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Scheme.⁷

Pegging out of the Donnelly River Mill and Town Site commenced on Anzac Day 1948. The southern side of the river was chosen for the Mill and Town Site to protect the town from smoke from the mill stacks.⁸ Typical of the design of many forest settlements, the houses were positioned side by side on a ridge, semi-enclosing a large central parkland area of native forest. According to oral evidence, this provided a safe environment for children to play in the bush near their homes.⁹

The State Housing Commission built 29 houses at Donnelly River during 1950/51.¹⁰ Bunnings later built another nine houses on the site.¹¹ The exact nature of the agreement between the Housing Commission and Bunnings is not known. It is assumed that contractors built the homes for the Housing Commission, perhaps with timber supplied by Bunnings from the site. The houses are all variations of Type 8 houses designed by the State Housing Commission for the Forests Department between the 1930s and 1960s.¹²

Construction of the Mill commenced under the supervision of Henry Martin. The first log was cut at the Mill on 13 September 1950 (apparently Charles Bunning insisted that the Mill had to be cutting by that date). However, it was not ready for production for another six months.¹³ Two steam locomotives drove the Mill and its riverside location was chosen for the availability of water. The Mill, which processed mainly karri, was powered by a single cylinder horizontal steam engine built by Robey's of Lincoln, England, and purchased from Onkaparinga

6 Department, Annual Report for year ended 30 June 1951, p. 2. Others included Northcliffe, Shannon River, Boyup Brook and Greenbushes, Tone River and Nyamup. The latter two were Bunning Brothers' mills.

7 Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, Minister for Tourism, Press Release, 13 April 1981, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO.

8 Mills, op. cit., p. 148.

9 See for example, Forests Department Complex at Northcliffe (Figure 1 in Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Thematic History of Forestry Cottages', prepared for the Department of Housing and Works, on behalf of GEHA and CALM, February 2004, p. 31); Tony Fitzgerald, discussion with Nerida Moredoundt on site, July 2004.

10 State Housing Commission, Annual Report, Statement of Commonwealth/State Rental Homes as at 30 June 1951. The State Housing Commission commenced a substantial building program under the scheme, which aimed to build group houses available for rent, and then for purchase. Although the Commission experienced many difficulties brought about by shortages of materials and labour, by the end of June 1951, over 4,500 homes had been completed. In accordance with the scheme, homes were allocated on a basis of hardship special but deals were also made with important industries associated with the manufacture and production of materials for the building trade. (Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1945, pp. 4-5; State Housing Commission, Annual Report, for year ended 30 June 1951, p. 6; State Housing Commission, Annual Report, for year ended 30 June 1950 and incorporating reports for the years 1947/48 and 1948/49, pp. 6-8.)

11 Although it was intended to excise the Town Site from State forest and freehold Lots 2101-12114, 12174 and 12115-12157, in the name of the State Housing Commission, this was never done. In anticipation of being granted the land, the commission arranged for the houses to be built. No negotiations to freehold ever took place in respect to the lots on which Bunnings built. All remained Crown Land and therefore neither Bunnings nor the commission had any legal right title or claim to the land or the buildings constructed on them when the mill was closed. (Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, Assistant Conveyancer, Crown Law Department, to General Manager, State Housing Commission, 18 August 1981 (citing Lands and Surveys file 5411/50), WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO.)

12 See Heritage and Conservation Professionals, op. cit.

13 J Tillman, *Donnelly: Men and Mill*, the author, Bunbury, 1991, pp. 23-25. The timber from the first log cut at the mill was used as firewood for the boilers.

Woollen Mills in Lobethal, South Australia, in 1947.¹⁴ Other buildings associated with the Mill included the mill office, workshop and locomotive shed.

In addition to the Mill and workers' cottage, huts were built to provide accommodation for single men. Conditions were primitive, with only a couple of water taps in the yard to share between the residents of the 33 single men's huts. The huts were unlined, with an open fireplace at one end and a small window at the other. (They were later lined with Ceilite). Showers only had cold water, but some improvised by cutting open a 44-gallon drum lengthwise to use as a bath, with water heated over the open fire. The young men ate at the nearby boarding house run by Ted and Doreen Taylor.¹⁵

The Mill was officially opened on 24 April 1951 by Acting Premier, A F Watts MLA, whose ceremonial duties also included operating the machinery to saw a log.¹⁶ The Donnelly Mill Club had been established by this time to provide a 'Club of social, literary and non-political character for the purpose of providing accommodation for the members of the Club and their guests'. Unlike the majority of similar clubs at the time, women had equal membership rights as the men.¹⁷ Mr Justice Jackson, president of the Arbitration Court, opened the club building. Other activities associated with the opening included an overnight train from Perth to Yornup siding to enable people to attend the opening and a picnic lunch near the Mill site.¹⁸

Alf Snell built the shop at Donnelly River Mill in 1952. A large barn-like building, it had a post office at the front and a storeroom at the rear. The Taylors (who had previously been running the boarding house) took over the store, which sold a wide variety of goods from dresses and shoes, to Christmas stockings and toys. The Taylors retained ownership of the shop until 1969. It then had a succession of owners until the Mill closed in 1978.¹⁹

A primary school was built in the centre of the settlement by the Education Department in 1953 to provide for the needs of the mill workers' children. Consisting of two classrooms, staff room, library and office, the school catered for approximately 70 students. Bunnings provided the school with much of its equipment.²⁰

Many migrants came to the mill in the early 1950s. Families were accommodated in temporary houses built on the western side of the Mill known as Martin's Corner. The houses each had three rooms, with a kitchen in the centre with a wood stove. As they were unlined, passers-by could see through cracks in the planks in summer when the timbers shrank. They were later lined and had verandahs added. A timber board washhouse was provided for every two houses and initially no showers or baths were provided, as the houses were on the end of the water main and residents had to wait a long time for water to come through. Eventually a 2,000-gallon tank was installed to service the cottages, but the water situation was never good. Although designed to as temporary accommodation, the houses were used to the 1970s.²¹

14 Mills, op. cit., p. 147.

15 Tillman, op. cit., p. 13. A sign on the front of the boarding houses states that it was built in 1950.

16 Ibid., p. 8.

17 Rules of the Donnelly River Mill Club, Donnelly River, in Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO; Tillman, op. cit., p. 123.

18 Mills, op. cit., pp. 168-69. See Tillman, op. cit., pp. 123-25 for further information on the Club.

19 Tillman, op. cit., pp. 19-20. The Taylors operated stores in other forestry settlements.

20 Mills, op. cit., p. 188; Warren-Blackwood Times, 2 September 1981, p. 3.

21 Tillman, op. cit., p. 31. These houses are no longer extant. It is not known when they were demolished.

Volunteers cleared the sports ground during 1953 and 1954. A judge's box was made by building a corrugated iron roof over a huge tree stump that had been pushed into position. A trotting track was made using a grader. The running rail was made out of sawn timber donated by Bunnings. The 'Mill ladies' painted the fence white. The first major sports day at Donnelly River Mill was held on 20 October 1956. Events included trots, boxing, model aeroplane demonstration, and nail driving and tree felling competitions.²²

Circa 1955, Bunnings constructed a swimming pool near the Wheatley Forest Settlement (the Forest Department settlement on the southern side of the river), which also acted as a reserve water supply.²³

Extensions were made to the Club c. 1958. This involved increasing the size of the lounge room, extending the billiard room to take two tables and installing inside toilets and a storeroom. Septic toilets were installed in the houses c. 1968 (before this, pan toilets were located about 20 yards behind each house). Until the 1970s, the mill manager had the only telephone in the township. Anyone wanting to make a call had to do it from the mill office. Up until c. 1973, the company provided electricity with a steam generator during the day.²⁴

Following an approach from the Western Australian Tree Society in 1958, a giant karri from Donnelly River was transported to Kings Park by Donnelly Mill under the supervision of mill manager, Roy Britten.²⁵

Initially, only men worked the Mill. However, a change in Bunnings' policy meant that women began working at the sorting tables, pulling wood off the tables and planing machines and tailing out behind the flooring machines and moulding tables.²⁶

In the early 1960s, Donnelly River Mill was considered to be one of the most efficient timber mills in Australia. Operated by 120 men, the Mill processed 25,000 super feet of timber per day. It had a large planing section attached to the Mill, where karri and some jarrah were manufactured into a variety of products, including floor and other boards. The Mill also produced over 300,000 fruit cases annually for Western Australia's export apple industry. A pre-cutting section at the Mill serviced the mining industry, where mining sets were cut ready for assembly in underground mines in Kalgoorlie, Mount Magnet and other areas.²⁷

In 1970, Bunnings merged with Hawker Siddeley Company (which had taken over the State Saw Mills in 1961), making it the largest timber producer in the State.²⁸

In early 1977, Bunnings announced that it would close Donnelly River Mill and Tone River Mill in the next two and a half years. At the time, about 120 workers were employed at both mills. The action was taken in accordance with the Forests Department's Working Plan, which provided for a reduction in the total volume of jarrah and karri sawmill logs taken from State forests, with the intention

22 *ibid.*, pp. 53-54. The organising committee went on to become the Donnelly River Progress Association

23 *ibid.*, p. 89.

24 *ibid.*, pp. 124, 34-35.

25 *ibid.*, p. 79. See Tillman for a full account of selecting the tree and transporting it to Perth.

26 Mills, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-7.

27 *South Western Times*, 16 August 1962, p. 21.

28 Hill & Partners, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

that hardwood cutting be reduced to a sustainable level. The Company guaranteed employment for all employees.²⁹

Donnelly River Mill closed on 30 June 1978. The occasion was marked by a function attended by about 300 past and present employees and guests. Some of the older workers chose to retire, while others were transferred to employment at other Company locations.³⁰

While it had been common practice to relocate machinery and buildings when saw mills closed, the steam engines at Donnelly River were not required elsewhere. Due to technological changes in the industry and the availability of State Energy Commission electricity supply at mill sites, the equipment was redundant. The Mill was left largely intact.³¹

In January 1981, the Department of Tourism advertised for development of the town as a tourist complex. At the time, the site comprised 27 houses (another ten were occupied permanently), a boarding house, a store, a primary school, a community clubhouse and timber mill.³² Bunnings offered to restore the Mill and make the equipment available as a tourist attraction, subject to negotiation with the developer.³³ Later that year, the Premier's Department announced that the site would be leased to a Western Australian company, Briefcase Holdings. The company would buy the existing houses and mechanical plant for \$100,000, provide \$70,000 to upgrade the town's reticulation system, renovate and furnish the houses and establish a caravan park.³⁴

At this time, Bunnings owned houses numbered 35 to 38, number 31 had been destroyed by fire and number 34 (former teacher's house) was owned by the Government Employees Housing Authority. Numbers 2 to 29 inclusive were available for lease. Of these, numbers 6, 12, 15, 17, 22 and 24 to 27 were occupied. All houses consisted of lounge, kitchen, bathroom, water closet, laundry and two bedrooms. Most houses also had one to three sleepouts and a front verandah.³⁵

In December 1981, the developer received permission from the Department of Tourism to remove the timber picket fencing from the house lots, which they perceived to be a fire hazard, as well as a considerable number of outbuildings. Pictorial evidence shows that the majority of houses had timber picket fences of

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- 29 Forests Department, Annual Report 1977/78, p. 11; Managing Director's Review of Operations, in Bunning Timber Holdings Ltd, 26th Annual Report, 1976/77, p. 25; *West Australian*, 17 February 1977, p. 21.
- 30 Managing Director's Review of Operations, in Bunning Timber Holdings Ltd, 27th Annual Report, 1977/78, p. 12. Tone River Mill closed on 31 December 1978. At this time, there were approximately 140 registered mills in Western Australia, of which Bunnings operated eight.
- 31 Hill & Partners, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
- 32 *Weekend Australian*, 10-11 January 1981, in Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO; *West Australian*, 19 January 1981.
- 33 *West Australian*, 19 January 1981.
- 34 Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, Premiers Department, Press Release, 6 July 1981, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO. The land (Reserve 37707, Tourism and Recreation) was not formally vested in the Minister for Tourism until 6 April 1982.
- 35 Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, correspondence from Department of Health and Medical Services to Director, Department of Tourism, 17 July 1981, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO. When the lease was finally signed, Bunnings retained ownership of House Number 33 ('Staff Cottage', manager's residence) and House 1 ('The White House'; Bunnings family cottage).

various style around the side and front boundaries of the house lots.³⁶ By this time, the site was being promoted and used as an educational campsite.³⁷

Contractual arrangements were almost complete by January 1983. Bunnings had been paid an ex gratia payment of \$54,000 for most of the buildings.³⁸ State Housing Commission had raised an invoice for \$35,000 representing the purchase of their buildings in the town, and the Department of Tourism had provided \$30,000 to assist with Mill restoration to the stage of a static display.³⁹ Bunnings had also agreed to provide \$25,000 to restore the Mill to 'a reasonable state of repair'.⁴⁰ The 50-year lease with Briefcase Holdings was not formally signed until 26 June 1984.

Nevertheless, Briefcase Holdings had taken over the site and was promoting it as the Donnelly River Holiday Village. In its third newsletter, the operator advised that the old butchers shop had been converted to a restaurant, 600 rainbow trout fingerlings had been introduced to the two waterways near the village, 13 houses were now in use and John McSharer, a woodturner, was working in the mill office building as the complex's first resident craftsman.⁴¹

Following completion of restoration works to the Mill building in 1983, Bunnings offered to sell the Department of Tourism the sawmill and contents (with the exception of the steam engine in the Mill building and the planing shed which was to have been dismantled and removed by Bunnings) for \$1.00.⁴²

By mid 1984, the Forests Department had a short term lease on the school buildings, which were used by school groups visiting or staying at the village.⁴³

Restoration work on the Mill to turn it into a museum commenced in mid-1985. The site operated as a static museum with guided tours until c. 2000.⁴⁴ The mill office was a restaurant until approximately 1995.⁴⁵

Elizabeth and Graeme Wearne purchased the locomotive shed from Briefcase Holdings in 1990 and a sublease was granted to them by the then Minister for Tourism on 8 August 1991. After approval and registration of plans by the Shire of Nannup, the Locomotive Shed and the surrounding area was extensively

36 Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, correspondence from Department of Tourism to Briefcase Holdings, 10 December 1981, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO. (See photographs in this SRO file for examples of fencing.)

37 *Warren-Blackwood Times*, 2 December 1981; Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, promotional flyer dated 1 February 1982, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO.

38 Letter from T & S FitzGerald to Nichola Murray providing information regarding Donnelly River Mill and Townsite Precinct, 07/12/04, HCWA P 8198. Bunnings retained ownership of cottage 33 until 1997 when Ray Moss, the previous owner of the Holiday Village, purchased it from Bunnings for \$4000.00. The Bunnings family retained ownership of cottage 1, which they still own in 2004

39 Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – Projects Museums & Historical, briefing note to the Hon Minister for Tourism, 21 January 1983, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 032, SRO.

40 Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – preservation, correspondence from Department of Tourism to Bunnings Donnelly Pty Ltd, 9 December 1981, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 657, SRO.

41 Donnelly River Holiday Village Newsletter, No 3, January 1982, in Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – Projects Museums & Historical, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 032, SRO.

42 Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – Projects Museums & Historical, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 229, SRO. Correspondence on this file does not indicate if the offer was taken up and the money paid.

43 Department of Tourism, Donnelly River Mill Settlement – Projects Museums & Historical, Correspondence from Donnelly River Educamps and Tours to Minister for Education, c September 1984, WAS 243, Cons 3641, Item 229, SRO. The school had closed since 1981.

44 Tony Fitzgerald, conversation with Nerida Moredoundt on site, July 2004.

45 Email from Naomi Lawrence to Claire McManus providing information from Tony Fitzgerald, 12/10/2004, HCWA P file 8198.

renovated and landscaped by the Wearnes. It opened as a guest lodge in 1993.⁴⁶

Following the completion of a conservation plan for the Mill buildings in 1994, Heritage Council of Western Australia entered the Mill buildings in the Register of Heritage Places on an interim basis on 22 September 1995. The entry was made permanent on 9 February 1996.

In 1997, Tony and Sally Fitzgerald bought the lease on the town site. At this time, all of the mill workers' cottages were still used as holiday accommodation, the store still operated and the club was a dining hall for school study groups. The loco shed had been converted to a two-storey lodge.⁴⁷

The Bibbulmun Track (a walking track from Kalamunda to Albany that opened in 1979) passes through the Town Site of Wheatley (Donnelly River Village). Accommodation for walkers is provided in the old primary school building and adjacent hut.⁴⁸

In late 2003, the local community supported a plan to turn the Old Donnelly River Mill into a working museum. The option was chosen at a public meeting ahead of several others (including demolition). In mid-2004, the Donnelly River Steering Committee is still considering the community's views.⁴⁹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct is located on the south side of a picturesque valley formed by the Donnelly River, in a small township gazetted as Wheatley, located southwest of Bridgetown and northwest of Manjimup in the southwest region of Western Australia.

Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct is sited near to Donnelly River, surrounded by karri (*Eucalyptus diversicolor*) forest (State Forest No. 34) and is accessed from both the north and the south by Sears Road. The buildings partially enclose a loosely triangular area of native bush parkland, with the Mill at the northern edge of the triangle and the Town Site making up the remainder. Donnelly River runs along the northern border of the study area, approximately 200 metres to the north of the Mill.

The Donnelly River Mill was established in 1950 and comprises the Mill, Boilers, Sawdust Bin, Winches, Chimney Stacks, Sorting Shed, Pre-cut Building, Kilns, Fire Hole and connecting conveyors, and mill equipment. Also associated with the Mill, but located outside the Mill site, are the Mill Office, Workshop and Ramp, Locomotive Shed and Oil Shed.

The Town Site was built to the south of the Mill and comprises the Workers' Cottages, Boarding House, former Single Men's Huts, Donnelly River General Store, Donnelly Mill Club, Donnelly River Primary School, The Hut (clinic), former Butcher's Shop, the Sportsground, Playground and Water Tanks. The Workers' Cottages are positioned side by side in a V-shaped arrangement on the ridge of the valley, semi-enclosing a large central parkland area of native forest. The community playground and the primary school are located at the southern extent of the parkland, while the Donnelly River General Store, The Hut (clinic), and the

46 Letter from Ellie and Graeme Wearne to Heritage Council dated 24 November 2004, File P8198

47 Sue Lillingstone (comp), 'Donnelly River Cook Book: a celebration of cooking on a Metters Improved No 2 Stove', Donnelly, c. 1998; *Sunday Times*, 28 December 1997, p. 9.

48 Annie Keating (ed), *A Guide to the Bibbulmun Track: northern half*, second edition, Department of Conservation and Land Management, Perth, 2002, pp. 29, 274.

49 *Manjimup-Bridgetown Times*, 10 December 2003, p. 1.

former Butcher's Shop are located at the northeast end, near the entry to the town. The Locomotive Shed and the Boarding House are located on the north and south sides of Andrew Road, the approach road. The Donnelly Mill Club and its associated tennis courts are located to the south of the Boarding House, and the Sportsground is located further south again. The site of the former Single Men's Huts is located directly east of the Club, near the water tanks and remains of the communal shower block. The site of the Temporary Housing (known as Martin's Corner) is located on the western side of the Mill but is no longer extant. A lone timber cottage is located on the west side of Sears Road, just south of the bridge. The town Swimming Pool and Water Supply are located on the east side of Sears Road, north of the bridge.

Donnelly River Mill (1950/51)

The basic structure of the Mill is the mill floor, which supports the operating equipment above the floor, and also the counter shafts, pulleys and belts under the floor. The Mill is almost completely intact, the dominant features being its three large chimney stacks, and the main mill structure, under which all the mill working areas are located, including saws, benches, steam engines, boilers and winches.

The mill structure is all of timber construction. The support columns are of round bush timber, while the roof timbers, trusses and beams were constructed from sawn timber. The roof is made of two pitched segments joining at a central box gutter sheeted with standard corrugated roofing material. There are further structures at the east end of the building supporting the roof over the kiln boilers and also nearby workshop areas. The sorting shed is located to the west of the mill structure and covers the moving cables at bench level. A series of timber conveyors used for the collection of saw dust from the bench saws are also still intact, together with the conveyor system feeding the sawdust to the kiln boilers and the inclined conveyor system for transporting waste material to the burning area. The chimneystacks are located at the eastern end of the building and are 20 metres in height, of steel construction with anchored guy ropes for stability.

The Mill retains an almost intact collection of equipment. The equipment in the saw milling area includes the bench rollers, saws, moving feed trolleys and the log-handling winch. The Babcock and Wilcox boilers are located at the east end of the Mill (in Boiler House 1) and are connected to the three main chimneys. These boilers generated steam for the engines, and a third boiler, which generated steam for the kilns, is located in Boiler House 2. Pipes distributing steam from the boilers nearly all remain. The boilers are housed in large brick support structures and are connected by a series of steel walkways and stairs. Three steam engines originally operated at the Mill. The Robey Engine, which provided direct belt power to the mill equipment, remains in position together with the flywheel and rope drive. The Bellis and Morcom, a high-speed steam engine direct coupled to an alternator, generated electric power and remains in position. The other steam engine generating electric power has been removed although the engine block remains, and a diesel engine used to generate power at night has also been removed.

The Mill structures and equipment are generally in fair/good condition, as certain areas have suffered from poor maintenance and exposure to the elements.

Workshop, Locomotive Shed, Mill Office & Oil Shed

A number of buildings are still extant which were originally associated with the functioning of the Mill. The Workshop, the Mill Office and the Oil Shed are located on Andrew Road, to the south of the Mill. The Workshop comprises a

large timber-framed building divided into four structural bays, with round bush timber columns and a trussed gable roof. A lean-to has been constructed on the southwest corner of the structure, and the southern and northern ends of the workshop are partly clad with weatherboard. The Workshop is in good condition and continues to be used for its original purpose.

The Mill Office is located to the east of the Workshop and comprises a timber-framed weatherboard building with a corrugated iron gable roof, and a verandah that extends across the north elevation. The office has timber-framed side-hung casement windows and timber-framed glazed doors. The Mill Office is in good condition and is used for storage. The Oil Shed is attached to the west side of the office and comprises a timber-framed weatherboard building with a corrugated iron gable roof, and a structure which is open on four sides and has a corrugated iron gable roof. The Oil Shed is in good condition and is used for storage and as an undercover drying area.

The Locomotive Shed is located directly east of the Mill and was originally connected by way of a rail line, now only partly intact. The shed is a two-storey timber-framed building clad with fibro and weatherboard and featuring a distinctive gable roof with a rounded roof monitor, clad with corrugated fibrous cement. A two-storey timber-framed verandah has been built across the south elevation of the Loco Shed, which has been converted to a Lodge. The Locomotive Shed is in good condition.

Workers' Cottages (1950/51)

There are currently 37 houses at *Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct*, including the Mill Manager's House at No. 33, the Teacher's House at No. 34, and the 'White House', the Bunnings family cottage at No. 1. Both the State Housing Commission and Bunnings constructed the cottages in 1950/51 and all are variations of the Type 8 houses designed by the State Housing Commission for the Forests Department between the 1930s and 1960s. These houses are typically two-bedrooms with a sleep-out, a living room, a kitchen, a front verandah, and an enclosed rear verandah containing the laundry and bathroom. Each house is timber-framed and clad in either weatherboard or fibro, with corrugated iron hipped roofs, and face-brick chimneys. Windows are typically timber-framed double-hung sashes, although aluminium-framed louvres are often found in the sleepout. External doors are timber-framed lined and ledged doors or glazed doors. The houses are built on stumps to accommodate the changing topography and the majority feature timber screens to the sub-floor space. Each house has a distinctive timber-framed front verandah with square timber posts, timber balustrades, and lined ends. An external timber stair located either centrally or from the side provides access to the verandah.

Internally, the houses have simple rectilinear plans and modest finishes, consistent with their age and original detailing. Walls and ceilings are typically painted fibro with timber cover battens over the joints. In the kitchen, the walls have painted timber lining to dado height. There is painted timber joinery throughout, including picture rails and dado rails in the living rooms. The living rooms have treated timber floors, there is linoleum in the kitchen and bathroom, and carpet in the bedrooms. Fireplaces are located on the outer wall of the living rooms, and also in the kitchens, where the original Metters stoves are still extant. The inbuilt cabinetry in the kitchens and bathrooms is minimal and most appears to date from the 1950s. The enclosed rear verandah typically has painted timber floors and unlined walls with timber-framed louver windows.

The cottages can be roughly divided into two types, Types A and B, although within these types there are also variations. Type A is the most predominant type and applies to No.'s 1, 3, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35 and 36. Type B is somewhat simpler and applies to No.'s 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 24, 26 and 28. (See appendices for typical floor plans). The cottages are generally in good condition and have benefited from an ongoing and uniform maintenance program.

Single Men's Huts (fmr)

The Single Men's Huts were built on the eastern outskirts of the Town Site, to the east of the Boarding House. The huts are no longer extant, however the remains of the original shower block, water heater and water tanks built to service the huts can still be seen.

Boarding House (1950)

The Boarding House is located on the east side of the Town Site and was built in 1950 to provide a communal dining area for the young men living in the Single Men's Huts nearby. As with the Workers' Cottages, the Boarding House is timber-framed and clad with weatherboard and a corrugated iron hipped roof. The building features a verandah that extends across the front elevation and a prominent gable facing north. The verandah has square timber posts, timber balustrades and ornate timber brackets (not original). The gable has timber barge-boards, a timber-framed awning fixed over the window, and is adorned with a finial. A verandah to the rear of the building has been enclosed accommodating a second bathroom, toilet and office. The lean-to section on the northwest corner of the house is also more recent addition, accommodating an ensuite bathroom and walk-in robe. A carport has been added at the rear of the place.

The Boarding House has a simple rectilinear plan, featuring a large communal dining room which opens onto the front verandah, an expansive L-shaped kitchen, a private dining room, a private lounge, and four bedrooms along the west side of the house. The interior is more generously proportioned and elaborately detailed than the Workers' Cottages, with plastered and painted walls and ceilings, painted timber joinery, treated timber floors, timber-framed side-hung casement windows, panelled timber doors and an impressive fireplace in both the dining room and kitchen. The Boarding House is generally in good condition and is currently used as a residence.

Donnelly River Mill Club (1951; 1958)

The Donnelly River Mill Club is located to the southwest of the Boarding House and comprises a single-storey timber-framed painted weatherboard building with a corrugated iron hipped roof and a verandah overlooking the adjacent tennis courts. The verandah has square timber posts, timber balustrades and a stair that connects to the courts. The building has been built on stumps to accommodate the changing topography of the site and has timber screens to the sub-floor space.

The Club has a roughly L-shaped plan, with an entry porch located on the east elevation that opens into the main foyer and bar. The Billiard Room is located on the south side of the Foyer with the main Lounge to the west. Toilets and a storeroom (added in 1958) are located along the west wall of the Billiard Room. The kitchen and storeroom are located along the north side of the building, adjacent to the verandah. A second storeroom is located off the bar, on the east side of the building where a section of the entry porch has been enclosed. The

Lounge, Billiard Room, Foyer and Bar are generously proportioned and detailed with plastered and painted walls and ceilings, ornate plaster cornices and ceiling features, and treated timber floors. Timber-framed glazed double doors with room names etched into them are a feature of both the Lounge and the Billiard Room. A large face-brick fireplace is located on the west wall of the Lounge, and a raised timber platform is located in the southwest corner of the room. The Club is generally in good condition and has been well maintained.

Donnelly River General Store (1952)

The General Store is located near the entry to the town, where Andrew Road intersects with Carey Road, and comprises a single-storey timber-framed weatherboard building with a corrugated iron gable roof and a timber-framed skillion verandah to the front (east). The building has a simple rectangular plan, with a recessed front entry and a canted bay shop window beneath the front verandah. Timber-framed casement windows are located in the upper sections of the north and south walls, and a timber-framed lined and ledged door to the laundry, located in the rear section of the building, is positioned centrally on the west elevation.

Internally, the Store has a large shop floor area and counter, with an office located in the southeast corner of the building, and a kitchen and store located to the west. The walls and ceilings comprise painted fibro with timber cover battens over the joints and a treated timber floor. The Store continues to be used as a shop/cafe and is in good condition.

The Hut (Clinic)

The Hut is located immediately north of the General Store and comprises a small one-roomed timber-framed weatherboard building with a corrugated iron gable roof and a partly-enclosed skillion verandah on the front (east) elevation. The building was purpose built as the infant health clinic (a nurse regularly visited) and it also doubled as the first aid clinic.⁵⁰ The building was identified as a 'Clinic' in 1974⁵¹. The building has painted or treated external walls, timber-framed louvre windows, aluminium-framed sliding windows and timber-framed lined and ledged doors. Internally, The Hut has painted fibro walls with solid timber panelling to dado height, fibro ceilings with timber cover battens over the joints, and treated timber floors. The building was also used as the Scout hall for the Boy Scout meetings.⁵² The Hut is currently used as a games room and is in good condition.

Butcher's Shop (fmr)

The former Butcher's Shop is located to the southwest of the General Store and comprises a one-roomed timber-framed weatherboard building with a corrugated iron gable roof and a timber-framed skillion verandah to the front (east). A simple canted bay shop window is located alongside the entry door, a timber-framed glazed door that opens into the former shop. The interior has painted fibro walls and ceilings with timber cover battens over the joints, treated timber floors, and timber-framed casement windows. The building is currently used as a communal TV room and is in good condition.

50 Letter from T&S FitzGerald to Nichola Murray, providing information regarding the assessment content, 07/12/04, HCWA P8198

51 *Donnelly Mill, Township and Mill Site Layout*, survey drawing for Bunning Bros. Pty Ltd, AO-10531 dated 19/12/74.

52 Letter from T&S FitzGerald to Nichola Murray, providing information regarding the assessment content, 07/12/04, HCWA P8198

Donnelly River Primary School (1953) and Playground

The Donnelly River Primary School is located in the southernmost section of the central parkland area of the town. The school comprises three main buildings positioned around a bituminised quadrangle, including the main classroom block and two shelter sheds. The classroom block is located on the south side of the quadrangle and comprises a rectangular plan timber-framed building with a simple hipped zincalume roof and a verandah, which runs the length of the north elevation. The classroom block is clad with fibro and weatherboard and features timber-framed double-hung sash windows and timber-framed glazed doors. The verandah is positioned under the main roof and has square timber posts, timber balustrades with a criss-cross pattern, and a timber floor. A row of poplars has been planted to the south of the classroom block, and more deciduous trees are planted to the north and west. The classroom block is in good condition and is currently used for school holiday activities and walkers of the Bibbulmun Track.

Two shelter sheds are located on the west side of the quadrangle and comprise a pair of timber-framed weatherboard buildings with corrugated iron skillion roofs. The shelter sheds are open on one side, facing the quadrangle and contain simple in-built benches along the inside walls. The shelter sheds are in good condition and are currently used by walkers of the Bibbulmun Track.

A pair of toilet blocks is located to the north of the primary school, concealed within the surrounding bushland. The toilets have recently been re-roofed with corrugated iron; the building reframed and has also been painted internally and externally⁵³.

A playground, Belmont Park, is located to the north of the school off Carey Road and comprises a typical range of equipment constructed with timber and tubular steel. A sign indicates that restoration work was carried out to the playground in 1991⁵⁴.

Landscaping

Combined with its native karri (*Eucalyptus diversicolor*) forest setting, *Donnelly River Mill and Townsite* also comprises a number of introduced plant species, mostly located in the immediate vicinity of the former Workers' Cottages and main buildings. The plantings are generally remnants of what were once domestic gardens and comprise a combination of annual flowering plants, shrubs or trees growing informally in large expanses of lawn. Typical flowering plants and shrubs include agapanthus, false cypress, daffodils, oleanders, acacias, bottlebrush, grevilleas and melaleucas. There is a large variety of introduced tree species, including exotics such as Ash, Poplars, Ficus and False Cypress, and introduced natives such as Ti Tree, Norfolk Island Pines, Jarrah and a variety of eucalypts. The plantings are of various levels of authenticity, and only a few appear to be associated with the original establishment of the settlement – the trees (*Populus tremula* sp., *Populus deltoide* sp., *Melaleuca* sp. and *Ficus* sp.) planted around the Donnelly River School, the large pine trees (*Araucaria excelsa*) near Houses 22, 26 and the Workshop, the false Cypress (*Chamaecyparis* sp.) near Houses 14, 26, 37 and the General Store, and the distinctive Ash (*Fraxenus* sp.) which form a backdrop to House 1.

Very little remains of other original landscape features, although there are timber paling fences still extant to the boundaries of Houses 1 and 15, and House 33,

53 Letter from T&S FitzGerald to Nichola Murray, proving information regarding the assessment content, 07/12/04, HCWA P8198

54 Sign reads "Belmont Park – Restoration performed by Belmont Senior High School, 1991"

formerly the Mill Manager's house, features a stone retaining wall along its eastern (front) boundary.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The first steam powered timber mill in Western Australia was established at Quindalup by H Yelverton in the late 1850s. The Mill continued to operate until 1880.⁵⁵ By the late 1800s, steam mills were scattered throughout Western Australia's forests. Donnelly River Mill was developed using steam power, as there was no other alternative due to the remoteness of the location. The engines were driven by water from the nearby river and fed with waste timber and sawdust. Donnelly Mill was the first mill to use sawdust to power its engine.⁵⁶ The authors of the 1994 Conservation Plan for Donnelly River Mill made enquiries within the timber industry and came to the conclusion that there are no other examples of near complete steam timber mill technology in Western Australia.⁵⁷

Western Australia's timber industry was predominantly operated by private companies on Crown Land (although the State Saw Mills was established in 1912 and operated until 1961). Bunnings' mill at Donnelly River was one of a number of large mills established to work new forest areas opened up to timber milling to meet the needs of the post World War Two building boom.⁵⁸

The facilities at Donnelly River Mill provided for workers (including accommodation, store, school, recreational facilities) were typical of those provided in forestry settlements throughout the south west of Western Australia by both private timber companies and the State government. The mill towns were typically located on land close to their concession and in close proximity to the mill, usually extending up the slope from the mill. There were separate areas for single men's huts and boarding houses with bathroom and dining facilities to service these, houses for married workers and those with families, a larger house for the manager and a similar house, maintained by a housekeeper, for visiting staff (in the case of Donnelly River, the Bunning's family cottage). The buildings, including accommodation, were constructed of the locally available timber and iron, and were typically of a simple utilitarian design. Other mill towns located in the South West of Western Australia, and which are similar to Donnelly River include Yarloop (1895 - c.1950), Jarrahdale (1872), Deanmill (1913), and Pemberton (c.1913-20; 1924-26; 1951). Of these, only the mill town at Pemberton is included on the State Register of Heritage Places. Wilga Mill Precinct (1908), which operated until 2002, is a small mill with less associated residential buildings than at Donnelly River. It is currently (April 2005) being considered for entry into the Register. Wilga was established by the Adelaide Timber Company and is unusual in that workers were to provide their own accommodation, as the company did not build workers' housing.

Pemberton Timber Mill Workers' Cottages Precinct comprises a complex of timber weatherboard clad cottages with corrugated iron roofs, and their related outbuildings, built in the Federation and Inter-War Bungalow styles for State Sawmills c. 1913-1920 and c. 1924-26. The precinct also includes bungalows built in the 1950s, the mill manager's house, the teacher's house, the former

55 M R H Southcombe, *Steam in the Forests*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1986, pp.46-47.

56 Email from Naomi Lawrence to Claire McManus providing information from Tony Fitzgerald, 12/10/2004, HCWA P file 8198

57 G B Hill & Partners, *Conservation Plan Donnelly River Mill*, prepared for the Heritage Council of Western Australia, March 1994, p. 37.

58 *ibid.*, p. 36.

dining room, the former boarding house, the church, and the streets, rear lanes, open spaces, gardens and landscaping. The precinct does not include the nearby mill, but is similar to *Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct* in terms of condition, integrity and authenticity. The place is also included in the Shire of Manjimup's Municipal Inventory.

The largely intact Mill is the only extant example of the technology that utilised steam power in working Western Australia's hardwood forests, and one of only a few intact mills to retain an associated workers' village. The workers' cottages are representative of timber-framed houses built to standard designs in timber milling towns throughout Western Australia in the post World War Two period in association with the State Housing Commission. The precinct as a whole is representative of numerous settlements associated with saw milling throughout Western Australia's forests, where accommodation and facilities for workers were provided alongside the working mill buildings.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

G B Hill & Partners, *Conservation Plan Donnelly River Mill*, prepared for the Heritage Council of Western Australia, March 1994.

Permanent Entry for Donnelly River Mill (P2966), prepared in 1996.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
