



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 exhibits a good example of unsophisticated 'bush' carpentry and exposed framed construction. (Criterion 1.1)

The deliberately planned layout of *Lombadina Mission*, with the buildings set around a village green provides a pleasant setting for the significant structures. (Criterion 1.3)

The place has a landmark quality with its isolated and prominent position at the head of Dampierland. (Criterion 1.3)

The Church, Convent, Presbytery, and Cemetery form a significant precinct indicative of the principle function of a mission. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The place illustrates the pioneering occupation of a previously isolated portion of the State. (Criterion 2.1)

The place is closely associated with the work of foreign missionaries and attempts to induct Aboriginal people into the Christian faith. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is associated with Father Nicholas Emo, the mission founder, Thomas Puertollano, the property owner, and Brother Joseph Tautz, the builder of the Church. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The variety of local construction materials and the resultant building types illustrate the remoteness of the locality and the consequent difficulties. (Criterion 3.2)

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

The place has significant educational associations through the former convent school; and social, cultural, religious and spiritual values to the

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

Catholic Church and the Dampierland community in general. (Criterion 4.1)

The place contributes to the Dampierland Aboriginal communities' sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

The rough framing of the structures at the place illustrate uncommon construction techniques no longer practiced. (Criterion 5.1)

The place illustrates a distinctive way of life that (with the decline of religious orders) is in danger of being lost from the State. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The buildings are representative of the tropical style of design. (Criterion 6.1)

The place demonstrates a way of life, function, design, and usage specific in missions. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The place is in sound condition. The buildings are located in a tropical environment. The Convent and Presbytery are no longer occupied by permanent residents; however, short-term residents continue to use the buildings. Maintenance is undertaken on an ad hoc basis.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The former Convent and Presbytery retain a moderate degree of integrity given that they are still used for residential purposes, albeit for short-term stays only. The Church retains a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The Church has a high degree of authenticity. The Convent and Presbytery have introduced fabric in services and sanitary facilities and therefore are of moderate authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Tanya Suba, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Taylor, Architect.

The curtilage included with the cemetery includes the area of gravesites enclosed by the low perimeter wall and also the 'overflow' of more recent gravesites at the north-east end. The Church, Convent, and Presbytery curtilage is a rectangular area of approximately 100 metres by 40 metres immediately around those three buildings.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Roebuck Bay was named by Philip Parker King in 1821, in honour of William Dampier's earlier visit on board HMS *Roebuck*. Initial settlement of the area occurred in 1864, when the Roebuck Bay Pastoral Association was established by pastoralists eager to develop new grazing land. However by 1867, they had withdrawn their interest from the area following some violent confrontations with Aborigines. The north-west pearling industry commenced in the late 1860s, initially around Cossack and, by the late 1870s, around King Sound, with Roebuck Bay used as a safe anchorage. Following Alexander Forrest's expedition in 1879, vast tracts of the Kimberley district were settled by pastoralists.¹

Broome townsite, gazetted on 21 November 1883, was named in honour of the Governor, Sir Frederick Napier Broome. With pearling being a major industry for Broome, the town soon developed a diverse ethnic character with 'whites', Aborigines, Malays, Chinese, Filipinos and Japanese employed in pearling and support industries. Broome was connected to the outside world firstly by a steamer service from 1884, and then in 1889, with the laying of submarine cable between Broome and Java. A deepwater jetty was built in 1896-7, and by the following year Broome had taken Cossack's place as the principal cargo port in the north-west.²

From the late 1870s Bishop Martin Griver, campaigned for a missionary foundation in the north. On the invitation of Bishop Griver, Father Duncan McNab arrived in Western Australia in 1883 and investigated potential mission sites between the Murchison and De Grey Rivers. The following year, he travelled to Derby, arriving on 1 April, and examined the Kimberley district. Fr McNab found a suitable site on the Dampierland Peninsula and set up a camp at Swan Point, at the northernmost tip of the peninsula. However in 1885, he established a small settlement near Goodenough Bay where he subsequently built a small church and house. Due in part to his declining health, 'Father Mac-a-nab', as he was known by the local Aborigines, left the Kimberley, the small mission church having been burnt down a short time before. Through his contact with

¹ Edwards, H. *Port of Pearls*, Adelaide, Rigby, 1983, pp.1, 20 & 24.

² *ibid*, pp.1-4.

some of the Aboriginal tribes of the peninsula, Fr. McNab made the work of those who followed a little easier.³

Keen to build on the work commenced by Fr. McNab, Bishop Griver's successor, Bishop Matthew Gibney, negotiated for the establishment of an Aboriginal mission which resulted in the arrival of members of the French Trappist Order in 1890. At the urging of Pope Leo XIII, the Trappists had previously established missions in China, North America and New Caledonia. Essentially a contemplative Order, they hoped to attract local postulants and to raise undeveloped communities to a point where the monks could withdraw into their contemplative life. Having selected an area of good natural springs on the western side of Dampierland, the small group of Trappists commenced establishing a mission, the Aborigines Protection Board having approved the grant of a 100,000 acre mission reserve, rent free.⁴

Work at the mission, named after nearby Beagle Bay, included the construction of a small church and monastery in 1891. The following year, Bishop Gibney purchased a 100,000 acre property named Lombadina, approximately 50 miles to the north of Beagle Bay Mission, for £500. The property included a 'substantial dwelling' and a 'shearing shed', stock and two schooners.⁵ The latter were of particular importance to the mission because of the extreme difficulties of travel and communication.⁶

At the same time that Lombadina was acquired by Bishop Gibney, a grant of reserve land consisting of 2,002 acres was secured in the vicinity of Disaster Bay on the eastern side of the peninsula where an outpost mission was established by Fr. Jean Marie Janny. These acquisitions trebled both the mission area and its Aboriginal population, in addition to increasing stock numbers.⁷

However, it was not long before the disappointing reality of the Lombadina property struck home, as described by Mary Durack in *The Rock and the Sand*:

The Lombadina property of which the Bishop had been so optimistic had also proved disappointing. The land itself comprised an almost useless expanse of tangled pindan scrub, paperbark swamp and tidal marsh. The homestead and outbuildings were completely derelict and there was little or no stock to be found....Worst of all, the natives one and all, had departed with their former employers to a new base on Pender Bay.⁸

In 1898, Fr. William Bernard Kelly was consecrated as the Bishop of the Diocese of Geraldton and consequently Beagle Bay and *Lombadina Missions* came under his official control. By this time the problems which had been evident at the missions since the outset, were a cause for alarm amongst the Trappist monks and at the headquarters in Sept Fons, France.

³ Durack, M. *The Rock and the Sand* London, Constable, 1969 pp.15-38 & Zucker, M. *From Patrons to Partners: A History of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley 1884-1984* Fremantle, University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, pp.16-22.

⁴ Durack, M., Op. Cit., pp.35-43 & Zucker, M., Op. Cit., pp.24 & 27.

⁵ *West Australian*, 22 May 1891, p.2d.

⁶ *WA Record*, 5 May, 1892, No 605, Vol XVIII.

⁷ Durack, M., Op. Cit., pp.45-51 & Edwards, H., Op. Cit., p.22.

⁸ Durack, M., Op. Cit., pp.53-54.

The lack of financial support, the struggle to secure local postulants, the difficulties in converting the local Aborigines to the Christian faith and the frustrations of unsuccessful cropping activities in the infertile and barren land were all taken into consideration in deciding the fate of the Trappist Mission. However, one of the major factors in the eventual withdrawal of the community in 1900 was the insurmountable conflict between the contemplative vocation of the Trappists and the secular activities required in running a mission.⁹

A Trappist Spanish monk origin, Father Nicholas Emo, who had been in charge of the parish in Broome since 1895, was put in charge of Beagle Bay Mission for the purpose of closing it down. Meanwhile discussions between Bishop Kelly and Father William Whitmee, the Vicar-General of the Pallottine Pious Society of Missions in Rome, resulted in an agreement that the German Pallottines would take over the established mission on the Dampierland Peninsula. In 1901, Father George Walter and four Brothers arrived at Beagle Bay and immediately commenced their work.¹⁰

Following the arrival of the Pallottine brothers at Beagle Bay, Fr. Nicholas returned to Broome to continue his work in the community and in 1905, was released from his vows as a Trappist.¹¹ In 1906, he established a small mission base at Cygnet Bay in King Sound, where he commenced a garden and in September, dedicated a little chapel to 'Our Lady of the Aborigines'. Invited to assist the Benedictines in their efforts to establish an outpost at the Drysdale River, Fr. Nicholas departed his fledgling mission in 1908.¹²

In the meantime, the Pallottines, finding they had neither the means nor the staff to develop *Lombadina Mission*, had sold the title deeds and whatever stock was still running on the property to Thomas Puertollano, a Manilaman who had previously worked with the Trappist monk, Fr. Jean Marie at the Disaster Bay Mission. Puertollano set about building up the herd and establishing a good garden, the produce of which he sold to lugger crews. Puertollano was classified as 'Asiatic' and could not obtain a permit either to employ or exert any authority over the local Aborigines. Added to this was the fact Lombadina was the central camp of the Bardi tribe, and the 100 or so Aborigines who gathered there expected to be kept in food, clothing and blankets from Puertollano's meagre store.¹³

When Fr. Nicholas returned to Broome from the Drysdale River Mission in 1910, Thomas Puertollano suggested that he run Lombadina as an outpost of the Beagle Bay Mission. Subsequently Fr. Nicholas settled at Lombadina, taking charge on 1 January 1911, and set to work to build up the mission. Puertollano offered his three-roomed house to the priest to live in and use as a chapel until a church was built in 1912.¹⁴ Fr. Nicholas' work was greatly assisted by the arrival of three Sisters of St John of God at *Lombadina Mission* in 1913, the Sisters having been at Beagle Bay since

⁹ ibid, pp.65, 73-74 & 86.

¹⁰ ibid, pp.87, 95 & 108-113.

¹¹ Zucker, M., Op. Cit., p.58.

¹² Durack, M., Op. Cit., pp.112, 175-176.

¹³ ibid, p.183.

¹⁴ Durack, M., Op. Cit., pp.184-85 & Zucker, M., Op. Cit., pp.59-60. The layout of Lombadina contrasts with Beagle Bay, where the church is located centrally in a grassed area, surrounded by other mission buildings.

1907. Once again the Puertollano family vacated their small house for the sisters to use until a convent was built for them. At this time paperbark huts served as a school and dining hall.¹⁵ The early years at *Lombadina Mission* were hard, with food shortages, no doctor or hospital for the sick, and constant difficulties in communication with Broome and Beagle Bay, which could only be achieved by using a small boat or donkey cart.¹⁶

The outbreak of World War One in 1914 made little impression on activities at *Lombadina Mission*, apart from restricting the movement of the German Pallottines. However on 8 March 1915, Fr Nicholas, whose health had been severely effected by the strenuous work and travels he undertook, died. He was buried in the dunes nearby but later moved to the present Lombadina Cemetery.¹⁷ The death of Fr. Nicholas presented Fr. John Creagh, who had been appointed Pro-Vicar Apostolic of the Kimberley Vicariate and Superior of the Pallottine Society in that district, with the problem of maintaining *Lombadina Mission*. Since Fr. Nicholas' death funding for the mission had ceased and it was now in a critical situation. Nevertheless, the mission continued at subsistence level until the end of the war.¹⁸

In addition, there was some confusion regarding the ownership of the Lombadina property, with Fr. Creagh for some time incorrectly assuming that the property was owned by the Pallottines. Nevertheless, Thomas Puertollano agreed to Fr. Thomas Bachmair being placed in charge of the mission at Lombadina, a situation which was far from ideal given that Fr. Thomas was bitterly disappointed at having to leave Beagle Bay where the church of his design was being built. It was not long before Puertollano was considering the sale of the property which was subsequently bought by the Pallottines for £1,100. Thomas Puertollano left Lombadina with his family in 1918, and went to live in Broome.¹⁹

By 1918, the health of Fr. Thomas Bachmair had seriously declined and shortly before his death he returned to see the nearly completed church at Beagle Bay Mission.²⁰ Around this time the Pallottine missionaries were facing some opposition to their work and could no longer rely on the previous support of Bishop Gibney who had retired in 1910. In 1918, and again in 1919, Mr. A.O. Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, unsuccessfully proposed to Cabinet that the missions on the Dampierland Peninsula be closed and a government native reserve be declared by the government in their place. A further perceived threat arose in the early 1920s when members of an Italian Society came to the area with the authority of the Church in Rome, apparently to supplant the Pallottines. Fr. Ernest Coppo of the Italian Salesians was consecrated as Bishop of Kimberley in 1922, and arrived soon afterwards to join the five priests and two brothers of his Society who had preceded him to Beagle Bay and *Lombadina Missions*. However, the Salesians stay was shortlived,

¹⁵ Durack, M., Op. Cit., p.189.

¹⁶ Zucker, M., Op. Cit., p.72.

¹⁷ Durack, M., Op. Cit., pp.190-2.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p.201.

¹⁹ *ibid*, pp.201-02 & 257.

²⁰ *ibid*, p.203.)

returning to Italy in 1928, following several failed attempts at projects previously tried by the Pallottines such as the gathering of guano.²¹

The bush Church at *Lombadina Mission* was built in 1934 by Br Joseph Tautz, who being a skilled tradesman in carpentry also made the timber church pews. Fr. Joseph, who arrived at Beagle Bay Mission in 1929 from Kunzendorf in Germany, was also responsible for the construction and repair of a number of buildings at Beagle Bay as well as the first parish hall at Broome.²² Timber for the Church was gathered from the surrounding bush by Fr. August Spangenberg and Aboriginal helpers.²³ The Lombadina Church was blessed by Monsignor Raible on the feast of Christ the King. The celebrations included singing by the children's choir from Beagle Bay, sports in the afternoon and a concert that night. Additional construction work at *Lombadina Mission* included a new school, completed in 1937.²⁴

During the 1930s, cases of leprosy increased and concerted efforts were made to isolate sufferers. All lepers in the Dampierland area were rounded up and ordered to be held at Beagle Bay, where they were to remain until accommodation became available at the Leprosariums first in Darwin and later in Derby. Lepers were also cared for at *Lombadina Mission*. Just as the Depression lifted, stock prices picked up and the panic over leprosy subsided, then came the outbreak of World War Two. Four months after celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Beagle Bay Mission in June 1940, police arrived at the mission and arrested all non-naturalised German priests and brothers, including Father John Herold from *Lombadina Mission*. Escorted to Broome, the six Pallottine priests and seven brothers were held in the local jail pending their removal to internment camps in the south. Bishop Raible, having rallied support, secured the release of the Pallottines after ten days detention. All except three of the most recent arrivals from Germany, including Fr. John Herold, were allowed to return to Beagle Bay.²⁵

The end of World War Two coincided with a gradual change in the government's official Aboriginal policy evident in the passing of legislation giving half-castes the right to vote (1944), the commencement of payments for aboriginal stockmen and station hands in the Kimberley (1950) and the issuing of regular social service allowances. Nevertheless, Mr S.G. Middleton, the Commissioner of Native Welfare appointed in 1948, regarded the Pallottine missions as 'valuable and important administrative adjuncts' to his department.²⁶

By the late 1950s, both Beagle Bay and *Lombadina Missions* were reaching a point of crisis with many of the old priests suffering from failing health and no new missionaries to take their place. In 1959, two St John of God sisters and one Pallottine priest made up the Lombadina staff, but poor health was forcing the latter to leave. However, Lombadina continued to

²¹ *ibid*, pp.209, 214 & 217-18.

²² *West Australian*, 15 August, 1985, p.4 & *Australasian Post*, 12 December, 1985, pp.14-15.

²³ Durack, M., *Lombadina Mission*, Perth, 1961 p.4.

²⁴ Zucker, M., *Op. Cit.*, pp.91 & 106.

²⁵ Durack, M., *The Rock and the Sand* *Op. Cit.*, pp.228-29, 250-51.

²⁶ *ibid*, pp.260, 263-64.

be seen as an important 'bulwark against the zealous, wealthy Protestant missionaries on nearby Sunday Island'.²⁷ In 1959, Father John Jobst succeeded Bishop Raible and Beagle Bay and Lombadina Missions entered a new phase of activity. Due to the industriousness of the new head, new schools, hospitals and housing facilities were built while the Lotteries Commission supplied equipment for the missions.²⁸ Whereas in 1961, the condition of *Lombadina Mission* had been so poor that the Minister for Native Welfare suggested it be amalgamated with Beagle Bay, by 1963 the new dining hall, pensioner house and basketball court made a positive impression on visiting officials.²⁹

The shift in official government Aboriginal policy from paternalism to assimilation and then to integration resulted in a gradual move for the mission communities to become independent of the church and government. This trend was given further impetus after the 1967 referendum, and also in the 1970s with the Whitlam Government policies of decentralisation and self-determination.

These policies were reflected in changes undertaken at the missions of the Dampierland Peninsula, where control was gradually handed over to the Aboriginal communities. Whereas the Beagle Bay Community were issued with the lease title of their land in 1976, the *Lombadina Mission* was slower to achieve self-management. In 1984, the Lombadina grazing lease and assets it contained together with the mission enterprises such as the butchery, bakery and the store were transferred by Bishop Jobst to the Lombadina Aboriginal Community.³⁰

Lombadina Mission was classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) on 4 June 1985.³¹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The four places identified as the significant core of the *Lombadina Mission* are surrounded by many other mission buildings. There are former dormitories for boys and girls, a new convent, new presbytery, school buildings, houses, machinery sheds, store buildings, etc. Coastal sand dunes are easily viewed to the west of the mission, and these dunes provide a hint to the relatively close proximity of the Indian Ocean.

The three buildings in the four places identified as the core of *Lombadina Mission* could be described as Inter-War Bungalow style³², although this would simply classify the place by time (Inter-War c.1915 - c.1940) and external shape (Bungalow - a single storey building with commodious verandahs). A more complete style description of the buildings forming the core of *Lombadina Mission* would perhaps include the word tropical

²⁷ Zucker, M., Op. Cit., p.133.

²⁸ Durack, M., Op. Cit., pp.275 & 282.

²⁹ Zucker, M., Op. Cit., p.142.

³⁰ *ibid*, p.143, 152 & 157.

³¹ National Trust Assessment Exposition, 04/06/1985.

³² Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*. pp.206-209. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1994.

(Inter-War Tropical Bungalow). The Kimberley Region in Western Australia has developed a climate responsive architecture with narrow linear planning to facilitate cross ventilation, extensive shady outdoor spaces surrounded by dense planting, ventilating ridges to release hot air from in the roof, and roofs generously extended to shelter verandahs and breezeways. Adjustable louvres can be provided for maximum cross-ventilation, with buildings often raised above flat sites to permit maximum airflow. Shading planting is important.

Timber stumps were used to support the elevated timber floors of these buildings. The stumps were capped with metal to assist in termite control measures, and in some cases (e.g. wall studs in the Convent) metal ant caps are placed at high level as a further indication that termites were entering into roof framing. The stumps (under the Church particularly) have been replaced over time as deterioration has eroded their integrity (local sources indicate dry rot was a problem - although the floors are well ventilated), and only a few log stumps remain to this building.

The floors are of 'bloodwood' floorboards on pit-sawn bearers and joists to the Presbytery and Church. The framing of the walls is generally of timber (mangrove pole) construction with the one-side only corrugated iron wall cladding placed to the inside on the Presbytery and Church, and the outside on the Convent. The roof framing for all the buildings is of timber (mangrove pole) construction with the corrugated iron roof sheeting placed directly over the insulating layer of paperbark - which may have been an original roof cover for a period of time.

The Church is orientated on the traditional east-west axis, with the entry to the west end of the building. This entrance is sheltered by a large verandah raised to main floor level and surrounded by a balustrade of mangrove trunk hand rails and cross-braced mangrove trunk infill. The long rectangular nave is crowned by a pyramidal roof and louvred fleche for the bell at the west end; the plan form then tapers to the east as one progresses through the central aisle towards the east end sanctuary and altar. The nave has large hinged door openings to the side walls to provide excellent cross-ventilation to the space. The plan form of the Church approximates the Latin cross with 'transepts' protruding to the south and north under the verandah roof form. A sacristy at the rear is separated from the sanctuary by a vertical 'bloodwood' paneled wall lining. The roof is terminated at the east end by a simple hip roof over the sacristy. The door for the priest to enter the Church from the sacristy has a grill opening, presumably placed to allow the formation of a confessional.

The Presbytery is of similar construction to the Church. It is of rectangular shape with dividing partitions lined with 'corrugated iron' and central openings between each of the rooms. Each room has a characteristic window opening each side to assist in the cross-ventilation of the areas. As with the Church the carpentry is rough and rudimentary, with timber junctions cut to suit the un-machined nature of the members. The Presbytery (again like the Church) has generous verandah cover to both the north and south 'long' faces of the building, and is crowned with a simple hip roof.

The former Convent is more sophisticated in plan form than the other buildings, and has a more enclosed nature following the residential accommodation usage by the St. John of God Sisters. The frontage to the west has a slightly formal presentation with two gable end walls enclosing the protective west verandah. Both the east side and west side verandahs provide circulation between the various areas of the former Convent.

The Cemetery is an enclosed area approximately 20 metres wide and 60 metres in length running in an east-west direction, and is situated approximately 60 metres to the east of the Christ the King Church. It is enclosed by a low (approximately 400mm - 600mm high) wall of concrete block, with several trees growing within the enclosed area and around the perimeter. Crosses of steel and timber mark the grave sites, with occasional memorials of inscribed stonework. Some gravestones are decorated with shells. The area of the Cemetery enclosed is now 'full', and more recent grave sites are being placed to the north-east end of the place and outside the rectangular area previously described.

The date of the earliest burial marker observed on the headstones or markers in this Cemetery is that of Fr. Nicholas Emo (1915), although documentary evidence notes that his remains were transferred from a previous burial area that existed in the sandhills close to the community. Local sources note that no obvious markers remain of this earlier burial area.

The place is in sound condition. As the buildings are located in a tropical environment, and the maintenance needs are significant. The Convent and Presbytery are no longer occupied by permanent residents; however, short-term residents continue to use the buildings. Maintenance is apparently undertaken on a relatively ad hoc basis.

13.3 REFERENCES

Durack, M., *The Rock and the Sand* London, Constable, 1969.

Durack, M., *Lombadina Mission* Perth, 1961.

Edwards, H., *Port of Pearls* Adelaide, Rigby, 1983.

National Trust Assessment Exposition, 04/06/1985.

Zucker, M., *From Patrons to Partners: A History of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley 1884-1984* Fremantle, University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

The Diocese of Broome has a report, given to Bishop John Jobst by Br Tautz, which outlines the details of the building materials used etc.