



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 derives its aesthetic significance chiefly from the 1930s extension by architects Eales Cohen and Bennett who cleverly built onto the old cottage to create a larger house with a stylistically unified new frontage facing the road. (Criterion 1.2)

Forrest Homestead is a fine example of the architects' distinctive style which relates to the 1930s colonial vernacular and Arts and Crafts styles but differs significantly from both. (Criterion 1.2)

The place contributes to the aesthetic qualities of the landscape visible from a major road, and has a landmark quality created by the grouping of the house and the large mature trees which identify its original aspect. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

The old part of the homestead (ie. the original cottage) is significant for its associations with, and ability to demonstrate aspects of, the life of early European settlers in the area and in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.1)

The place is important for its close and unbroken association with the Forrest family who played an important role in the political, exploratory and economic development of Western Australia. This personal association is emphasised in the extant row of nine trees across the original frontage, with family tradition indicating that each tree represents one of William Forrest's nine sons who included John, the politician, and Alexander, the explorer. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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

Due to the variety of agricultural activities pursued on the property in the nineteenth century, the place has educational value and the archaeological potential to yield valuable historical information. (Criteria 3.1, 3.2)

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Forrest Homestead is valued by the local community as contributing to Picton's identity as an early settlement and the home of the family which produced several of the state's most distinguished political and historical figures, and contributing to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

In general terms, it is rare in Australia for houses to remain in the possession and use of the same family for several generations spanning a century and a half. *Forrest Homestead* is unique in its extended association with the Forrest family, and its value in this regard is enhanced by its contents which include many important provenanced historical objects including commissioned furniture, photographs and personal items relating the Forrest brothers' journeys of exploration. (Criteria 5.1, 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The place is representative of the distinctive regional architectural style of the firm of Eales and Cohen which designed many fine buildings in the south-west of Western Australia. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Forrest Homestead is in reasonably sound condition and the owners are aware of its historic significance.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The place has an exceptional degree of integrity as it was originally built as a private home, and later extended to provide for a family growing in numbers and social standing, and remains in the possession and use of the same family after several generations.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The place has a high degree of authenticity. The original house and the extensions of the 1930s are largely intact except for the old kitchens and the roof covering. The most recent (1960s) extensions to the place are obvious but have not destroyed its authenticity. Changes to the visible exterior fabric, namely the addition of a large kitchen and carport are confined to one side of the house well away from the oldest section and have not impacted on the appearance of its original or second frontages.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The supporting evidence has been prepared by the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage, Curtin University. The documentary evidence has been compiled by Donna Houston, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Stephens, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Forrest Homestead, built in stages from c. 1849 to c. 1960, is a single-storey building constructed of brick walls, terracotta tile roof and timber floors. The first stage was constructed by William Forrest.

British interest in the Western Australian settlement had been steadily growing since the establishment of the Swan River colony in 1829, and in 1839 the Western Australian Land Company was formed. Marshall Waller Clifton was chosen as the Chief Commissioner in Australia and the land the company proposed to develop was a large land tract originally assigned to Colonel Lautour of Bedfordshire, England.¹ The land was Wellington Location 1 at Port Leschenault and was granted to the Western Australian Land Company after Colonel Lautour failed to make the necessary improvements. The location and detailed layout of the town of Australind, hopefully named to indicate a commercial alliance with India, were posted in a real estate office in London. The plans were poorly drawn up and based on sketchy information and many of the settlers upon arriving at Australind were bitterly disappointed to discover not a town at all, but a collection of canvas tents and temporary structures.

William Forrest was born on 19 February 1819 at Bervie, near Stonehaven in Kincardineshire, Scotland. He was educated there and went onto a technical school where he was awarded a first class certificate in engineering. He married Margaret Guthrie Hill in June 1840, in Glasgow. Shortly after the death of their first child in September 1842, the Forrests answered a newspaper advertisement which asked for a husband and wife to go out to Western Australia as servants to Dr. Ferguson, a medical practitioner who intended emigrating to Australind as an investor-settler with the Western Australian Land Company.² William and Margaret were engaged by the Fergusons and left Gravesend on *The Trusty* on 2 August 1842. William and Margaret's second child, William was born during the passage to Australia. *The Trusty* arrived off the coast of Bunbury on 9 December 1842, where little or no preparations had been made for the settlers upon arrival.

The Australind scheme proved to be a failure due to poor planning as many of the farming blocks were not surveyed and proved to be unsuitable for the settlers' agricultural enterprises.³ Dr Ferguson struggled to make a success of his venture on the banks of the Brunswick River whilst William Forrest proved he could turn his hand towards almost anything. Forrest was responsible for building a number of bridges in the

¹ Sanders, T. *Bunbury Some Early History*. Roebuck Books, Canberra, 1975, p. 12.

² Crowley, F. K. *Forrest 1847-1918* University of Queensland Press, 1971, pp. 2-3.

³ Crowley, F. K., *Australia's Western Third*, Heinemann, 1960, p. 16.

district.⁴ The Forrest's second son, James Hill, was born at Australind in 1845, and the following year William and Margaret were released from their employment with the Fergusons. William decided to return to his trade as a millwright and engineer and, in 1846, he leased some land on an exposed promontory on the Leschenault estuary and constructed a wind-powered mill and a small timber and shingle home for his family. It was here that William and Margaret's third son, John Forrest, was born on 22 August 1847. The milling enterprise proved to be a failure due to inconsistent winds and flooding and, in 1849, William bought a hundred acre (40 ha) block of land from James Hertman for £50 on the banks of the Preston River at Picton.⁵ Their fifth son, Alexander, was also born in 1849.

William discovered a seam of clay on the banks of the Ferguson River on his property and used hand fired bricks, crushed limestone and pit-sawn jarrah timber to build his home.⁶ The house had a low split-shingle roof and thick walls which gave it a very squat and solid appearance. After building the house, quite a bit of the furniture and the fencing, William set about constructing a mill and water race which opened in March 1851 and was an immediate success. From this time onwards the Forrest family prospered and William bought all the adjacent blocks consolidating his farm into about four hundred acres. Five sons were born at Picton: David (January 1852), Robert (September 1854), Matthew (January 1857), George (November 1858) and Augustus (November 1861) who, as a toddler, wandered away from the house and drowned in the mill race. William Forrest is said to have planted nine olive trees on the west side of the house, one for each of his nine sons, these still stand today. Of the sons, Alexander went onto become one of the colony's leading financiers and pastoralists and William and James became successful farmers in the south west. John became Premier of Western Australia in 1890, and the first Federal Treasurer in 1901. George stayed on at the Old Place and took over the property when William died. The Old Place is now occupied by Kimberley Forrest, William and Margaret's great grandson.

Over the years, *Forrest Homestead* has grown organically into its present form. The isolation of the early settlement no doubt had its influence on the homestead and documentary and physical evidence shows that there have been three additions to the original farm buildings. A 1930 Eales Cohen and Bennett plan shows the original building which can be described as a colonial vernacular style and the 1930s additions which are in the Arts and Crafts style. Ian Molyneux and John White in their chapter on the subject identify the fact that in rural areas it was often the farmhouse that was the administrative centre as opposed to the town.⁷ In the case of the *Forrest Homestead*, William started a school in an old shed where the railway bridge stands. Further extensions were made to the house in the 1960s.

⁴ Crowley, 1971, p. 5.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶ See Crowley, 1971, p. 8 and Sanders: p. 42 for descriptions of the house and the construction methods.

⁷ Molyneux, I et, al., 'Farmhouses' in Margaret Pitt Morison and John White (Eds) *Western Towns and Buildings*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1979, pp. 180-187.

In 1997, *Forrest Homestead* is the home of Mr Kim Forrest, a collateral descendant of Sir John Forrest.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Forrest Homestead is a former farmhouse with additions in four distinct stages since first built c. 1849 by William Forrest.

The house is situated in a rural setting on a large tract of land surrounded by trees and paddocks close to the South-West Highway and railway. The original land on which it stood has diminished in area to a smaller parcel through diminution of farm operations and the encroachment of industry. There are no other buildings on the site. The house can be seen through trees from the highway and is approached over a railway track via a gravel drive.

The house is a single-storey building constructed of brick walls, terracotta tile roof and timber floors. Verandahs to the north, west and south elevations and large bay windows to the north dominate the building form. Although built up in stages, an orange terracotta tile roof (Bristle and Wunderlich 'Roman' pattern) installed in the 1960s unifies the house. Walls to the older section of the building appear to be laid on brick footings. Bricks to the pre 1930 building were made from clay dug on site. The clay pits are extant.⁸

Examination of documentary and physical evidence shows that there have been additions to the original farm buildings. The Eales Cohen and Bennett plan of 1930 shows the extent of the home at that time. Inspection of external walls of the pre 1930 building reveals that there were probably at least one addition to the original 1849 building as both Flemish and Colonial bond brickwork can be discerned. Coursed stonework inscribed render covers the wall area enclosed by the west verandah so that the brickwork bond can not be seen.

The west verandah was deepened in 1930, but the west wall left intact including two fine cast iron casements in Gothic trace patterning. Removed at this time was a small fireplace in room 3. Whilst there is no firm evidence – a best guess would be that the rooms serviced by the west verandah constitute an earlier section of the building. The colonial bond brickwork and the cast iron casements suggest that this may be the case. It is probable that the provision of a large living room (room 7) and servants' quarters (rooms 8 & 9) – defined by Flemish bond brickwork - were a later addition. This speculation would be in line with general patterns of farm building in Western Australia where more substantial rooms were built after farms were better established and the family grew.

There are three distinct building styles discernible in the exterior of the building which match stages in building. The older part of the building, as defined by the 1930 additions, could be best described as 'Colonial Vernacular' as identified in Hocking (1995) which is a Western Australian

⁸ The National Trust of Australia (WA), Classification of Forrest's House, 1970. Also conversation with the owner on 19 May 1997.

extension of Apperly (1989).⁹ The extensions designed by Eales Cohen and Bennett are in an arts and crafts style defined by Hocking as 'Inter War Arts and Crafts'. This extension and extensive remodelling of the exterior and interior of the house betrays Eustace Cohen's intense interest in arts and crafts architecture and his early training with the British Arts and Crafts architect, Guy Dawber. Cohen was also very active in the Bunbury area in the years 1908 to 1913 when he went into partnership with Joseph Herbert Eales. The arts and crafts flavour of the 1930 extension sits very well with the earlier vernacular building.

Forrest Homestead was again altered in the 1960s with a new wing containing a large kitchen, laundry and garage in painted stretcher bond brickwork and aluminium windows. At this time the entire building was re-roofed in Brisbane and Wunderlich Roman pattern clay tiles. The architect for this extension was Raymond Jones.¹⁰ While functionalist, in inspiration this extension is very plain and inoffensive to the rest of the building. Displaying clean brickwork, orange roof tiles, exposed timber eaves, verandahs and regard for climate the style could be described as Late Twentieth Century Perth Regional.¹¹

Planning is essentially organic following the various stages of the building's history. Typically, additions would have been made to the farmhouse buildings when need and funds allowed. Apart from the functionalist kitchen wing of 1960 most rooms display the marks of the 1930 additions. Eales, Cohen, and Bennett continued the organic nature of the farmhouse as found in 1930 (Fig 3) and enhanced the building by using the large living room to separate living areas on the east from sleeping areas on the west. This separation was further cemented with the additions of the 1960s.

The 1930 extensions also included alterations to the existing fabric including the probable replacement of ceilings. Ceilings throughout are plain with no rose and small plain cavetto style cornices. The main bedroom has no cornice. Most doors used in the building appear to date from the 1930 alterations. However, the door to room 1 (bedroom) is a six-panelled jarrah door 30mm thick, suggesting an early date. Eales, Cohen and Bennett's plan notes this door as being reused from room 7 (living room). External and internal doors to room 4 and the external door to room 7 also appear to pre-date 1930.

Free use of Tudor style arches have been made in hallway openings in the older section of the building. A salient feature of the 1930s addition was the introduction of a number of fireplaces to bedrooms, living room and new dining room where the Tudor arch motif has been repeated. In the living room an existing fireplace was remodelled. Fireplace mantles to the

⁹ Hocking, I. and F. Bush, *Influences on Architectural styles and Building Materials in the South West and Great Southern Regions of Western Australia*, Hocking Planning and Architecture, Perth, WA, 1995. For early building in Western Australia, *Identifying Australian Architecture, Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* by Apperly et al, has very limited application and offers no direction for buildings in this region.

¹⁰ Conversation with the owner on 19 May 1997.

¹¹ Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

main bedroom, living and dining rooms are of a robust design, arts and crafts inspired and constructed in polished jarrah. The main bedroom also features large bay windows on the north and west sides of the room.

Despite the various additions, the homestead continues to display a coherent approach to planning and design which enhances rather than detracts from its significance.

Overall the condition of the building is good. The whole has been painted externally and there is little external deterioration. The roof is in good repair. Gutters have been removed from sections of the north elevation but this does not contribute to fabric deterioration. Generally the interior is sound. There is evidence of termite activity in the west rooms of the building which has been arrested although not repaired. There is significant cracking to walls adjacent to the fireplace in room 5 (main bedroom).

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust assessment of *Forrest House*. National Trust of Australia (WA).

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

As indicated, the distinctive regional style of Eales and Cohen is not documented in some standard texts. A study of their work would be of value.