



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES – ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.3.4 Looking for land with agricultural potential
- 3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries
- 3.5.1 Grazing stock
- 3.7.1 Establishing postal services

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 106 Workers (including Aboriginal, convict)
- 204 Droving
- 206 Mail services
- 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying
- 602 Early settlers

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The Homestead of *Cowalla Homestead Group* is a good, intact and substantial example of Colonial Georgian style residence exhibiting well-proportioned form and spreading verandahs forming colonnades. (Criterion 1.1)

Cowalla Homestead Group is a cohesive collection of farm buildings which together with the mature plantings form a picturesque pastoral environment set on the banks of the Moore River. (Criterion 1.3 & 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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.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

Cowalla Homestead Group demonstrates the evolution of farming in the region from its initial opening up by European settlers in the 1850s to the present. (Criterion 2.1)

Cowalla Homestead Group was an important stopping place on the northern stock route in the nineteenth century, as it is adjacent to a ford on the Moore River used by travellers on the route, and was also a wayside mail receiving station on the route between Champion Bay and Perth from 1853 to 1860. (Criterion 2.2)

The property continued to be frequented by travellers into the twentieth century as the only all-weather bridge crossing the Moore River from 1908 to 1956 was located approximately one mile from the homestead. (Criterion 2.2)

In the early 1940s successful experimental trials to develop sandy soils for grain growing were carried out at *Cowalla Homestead Group* by William and Robert de Burgh in collaboration with agricultural scientists. (Criterion 2.2)

Cowalla Homestead Group has been owned and occupied from its construction by prominent local families, including the Whitfield family (1850-1858), pastoral pioneers who built the homestead, and five generations of the de Burgh family (1858 to 1973 and 2003 to the present), who are closely associated with agricultural and local government development in the region. (Criterion 2.3)

Cowalla Homestead Group was owned by prominent land owner Robert de Burgh who established significant rural properties Caversham and Yandanooka, was Superintendent of the Convict Depot in Toodyay, Director of the Western Australian Bank, and employed 60 ticket of leave men from 1852 until 1873. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Four areas of potential archaeological significance have been identified at the place, which have the potential to provide information relating to nineteenth and early twentieth century farming practices and ways of life, including use of the northern stock route. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Cowalla Homestead Group is valued by the community of Gingin and the wider community of Western Australia for social and cultural reasons, as evidenced by its permanent classification in the Register of the National Estate, Classification by the National Trust of Australia (WA), inclusion in the Municipal Heritage Inventory of the Shire of Gingin, and the interest shown by the National Trust in the early 1970s in purchasing the property. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Cowalla Homestead Group is rare as an intact collection of mud brick buildings dating from the nineteenth century. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Cowalla Homestead Group is representative of a pastoral outpost settlement that has incrementally developed since the 1850s from a pastoral homestead to an agricultural property. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

The buildings that comprise *Cowalla Homestead Group* are in fair to good condition. Maintenance takes place on a regular basis.

The renovations to the homestead, kitchen and cottage in the early 1970s were carried out under the direction and supervision of a National Trust architect with consideration given to the cultural heritage significance of *Cowalla Homestead Group*. The Cottage has been refurbished recently.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Cowalla Homestead Group has a high degree of integrity as it has functioned continually as a working farm, the purpose for which it was built, from c.1850 to the present (2006), with the house still occupied for domestic purposes. Extensions at various times, and incremental changes have enabled the continued use of the place over the years.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Cowalla Homestead Group has a moderate degree of authenticity. The original 1852 structure remains within the existing Homestead but is mostly unidentifiable from later extensions and alterations. The kitchen and coach house demonstrate a moderate to high degree of authenticity, with little evidence of alteration to the original fabric despite additions to the Kitchen. The cottage has a low degree of authenticity with no visible evidence of the original structure.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The wording of this document has been adapted from 'Cowalla Homestead Conservation and Management Plan', prepared for S. de Burgh and J. Ottaway by Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant in September 2003, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

Key Sections used: Documentary Evidence (pp.6-30), Physical Evidence (pp.35-59), and Comparative Information (p.63).

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the documentary evidence, refer to 'Cowalla Homestead Conservation and Management Plan' prepared for S. de Burgh and J. Ottaway by Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant in September 2003.

In 1907-08, the Government constructed an all-weather bridge across Cowalla Pool, approximately one mile southwest of the homestead. The site of the northern stock route crossing, which was close to the homestead, was not used as it would have been more costly, requiring a longer span and an approach causeway. The bridge was the only all-weather crossing of the Moore River from 1908 until 1956. It was replaced in 1975.¹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the physical evidence, refer to 'Cowalla Homestead Conservation and Management Plan' prepared for S. de Burgh and J. Ottaway by Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant in September 2003.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For a discussion of the comparative information, refer to 'Cowalla Homestead Conservation and Management Plan' prepared for S. de Burgh and J. Ottaway by Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant in September 2003.

Of the 165 places constructed of mud brick on the Heritage Council of Western Australia (HCWA) database 44 were constructed prior to 1870.²

Sixty-five of these 165 mud brick places feature a homestead. Twenty-four of these mud brick homesteads are in wheat belt region of Western Australia. Five of these 24 mud brick homesteads located in the Wheatbelt region were constructed prior to 1870.³

There are 19 places on the HCWA database that include a separate kitchen building.⁴

Cowalla Homestead Group is rare as an intact collection of mud brick buildings dating from the nineteenth century.

¹ W.J. de Burgh, *Cowalla and its Buildings: The Story of an Early Moore River Cattle Station*, Resource Press, 2004, pp.28-31, 56.

² HCWA database search 1/6/2005.

³ HCWA database search 1/6/2005.

⁴ HCWA database search 1/6/2005. It was not possible to search kitchen buildings in construction material and date of construction in the HCWA database.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

“Cowalla Homestead Conservation and Management Plan” prepared for S. de Burgh and J. Ottaway by Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant in September 2003.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Archeological significance of *Cowalla Homestead Group* including the water mill site.