



## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

### 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

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

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

*Brooklands* is a handsome and well proportioned building of high aesthetic value. (Criterion 1.1)

The siting of *Brooklands* both contributes to the landscape and enables views of the landscape to be enjoyed from it. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Brooklands* is significant in demonstrating the development of agriculture in the South-West region. (Criterion 2.2)

It is also important for its association with pioneers, explorers and politicians in Western Australia such as Walter Padbury, William Spencer, Charles Brockman and Norman Baxter. (Criterion 2.3)

#### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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#### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Brooklands* is highly valued by the religious community based on the property for its association with the establishment of their commune at Balingup. (Criterion 4.1)

It contributes to the wider local community's sense of place because of its historical associations with the earliest settlers of the region and particularly Charles Brockman who had much influence on the founding and early progress of Balingup townsite. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

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### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Brooklands*, with its elegant simplicity and symmetrical formal design is a typical Victorian Regency building. (Criterion 6.1)

It represents a rural way of life and an agricultural land function. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Brooklands* is in good condition.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Brooklands* has moderate integrity. It is still used as a private residence and the current room usages are similar to what they would have been originally. The size of the pastoral property has reduced considerably. What was a homestead on a farm is now a rural dwelling.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

Authenticity is moderate. While the overall form and structure is similar to the original, the verandah has been replaced in a less ornate style and several windows have been replaced. Internally, rooms have been altered and enlarged and out of character materials have been introduced.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Elise de Munck, B.A. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Brooklands* a substantial, single-storey, brick farmhouse, was built for Charles Samuel Brockman in 1904 on a property that had been established many years earlier.<sup>1</sup>

Walter Padbury, a wealthy merchant and pastoralist with interests in the Gascoyne and Pilbara regions, took up extensive leases in the Nelson district between 1859 and 1878. These properties along the valley of Balingup Brook were run by his brothers, Mark and Edwin.<sup>2</sup> When Edwin died in 1876, the leases he managed, collectively known as 'Padbury's Brook', were taken over by William Spencer, a contractor and storekeeper of Bunbury who had been Chairman of Bunbury Road Board, then Mayor of Bunbury and would go on to become MLC for the South-West. Spencer is credited with the construction of the town jetty at Bunbury and St Paul's Church.<sup>3</sup>

In 1879, the 'Padbury's Brook' leases were transferred to George Chandler Dowden of South Australia.<sup>4</sup> There were apparently delays before Dowden could take over management personally. His wife died in 1881, and when he arrived in Western Australia in March 1883, he brought only four of his children with him. Jane, the eldest, acted as his housekeeper on the Balingup property.<sup>5</sup>

When Dowden became interested in pastoral country near Mount Magnet in 1886, he put 'Padbury's Brook' on the market. The purchaser was Charles Samuel Brockman, a semi-retired North-West pastoralist. During his inspection of the property, Brockman met Jane Dowden and learnt of her reluctance to leave the Balingup region which she had grown to love. Brockman's solution was a proposal of marriage, a proposal that was accepted despite the difference of more than 20 years in their ages. They were married before Dowden left for Mount Magnet.<sup>6</sup>

When Brockman purchased the property, it comprised 30,000 acres held under lease and 900 acres freehold, practically unimproved with the exception of fencing and an old house.<sup>7</sup> Renaming it 'Brooklands', Brockman put Fred Lukis in as manager to carry out improvements while he and his

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1 Frost, A.C. *Baylya-Balinga: A History of Balingup* (Donnybrook, Donnybrook/Balingup Shire Council, 1979), p.35.

2 Ibid, p.24.

3 *Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914*, Vol.3, Free, 1850-1868, compiled by Rica Erickson (UWA Press, Nedlands, WA, 1979), p.792.

4 Day, Lorna and Morrissey, Karen *Drawn to Mount Magnet; Wannars, Dollypots, Shears* (Shire of Mount Magnet, 1995), p.27.

5 Ibid, p.30.

6 Frost, A.C. *Baylya-Balinga: A History of Balingup* (Donnybrook, Donnybrook/Balingup Shire Council, 1979), p.34.

7 Battye, J.S. *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.2 (Cyclopedia Company, Perth 1913 - facsimile edition, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, WA, 1985), p.217.

young wife resided on another of his properties near Bunbury.<sup>8</sup> The Delaportes carried out farm work on the 'Brooklands' estate, while Millars Timber & Trading Co. felled and hauled timber from the valley slopes. When the railway went through to Bridgetown in 1898, the estate was considerably reduced in area by the creation of Balingup townsite.<sup>9</sup> Brockman built several of the early buildings in the town, including the hotel, a general store and a blacksmith's shop.<sup>10</sup>

In 1901, Brockman leased his Bunbury property, 'Sandridge' out as a stud farm and moved with his young family to the 'Brooklands' estate at Balingup. They lived in the old homestead and Brockman was elected to the local road board. In 1904, he built a new home on the property, *Brooklands*. A man named O'Brien secured the contract to build the new house with a price of £800 with £100 bonus if it was completed before Christmas, which it was. Built with bricks baked on the property, the house consisted of 'five bedrooms, a lounge 22ft x 24ft, a dining room 20ft x 22ft, hallway, kitchen, pantry, laundry, bathroom, workroom, etc. with a verandah all round'.<sup>11</sup>

Over subsequent years, Brockman gradually reduced his 'Brooklands' holdings to about 1,250ha (approximately 3,000 acres) around the homestead. This was sold to Wedge and Lowe in 1911, when Brockman retired to 'Sandridge', then to Lee Allnut. After World War One, the property was purchased by the State Government and subdivided for soldier settlement. Initially there were 25 dairy farmers settled on the estate but this was reduced to ten when the farms proved less productive than anticipated.<sup>12</sup>

*Brooklands* and a part of the subdivided property was purchased by Charles Baxter in 1930 and farmed by his sons. One of the sons, Norman Baxter, farmed the property until 1945 when he left to enter Parliament. He was, for a time, Minister for Health in the first Court Government.<sup>13</sup>

After 1945, *Brooklands* was taken up by V.P. Widdup who leased the 128ha property to Dick Cause.<sup>14</sup> Widdup eventually sold out in 1973 to the Universal Brotherhood Inc., a religious organisation founded by Fred and Mary Robinson.<sup>15</sup> The Universal Brotherhood developed the property into a commune type of settlement. The aim of the community was to live simply, organically and self-sufficiently. Two additional dams were built on the property, an apiary and vineyard were established, and commune members, initially housed in caravans, tents and old railway carriages, built their own cottages on the property.<sup>16</sup> *Brooklands* itself was used as an administration block, with one of the rooms set up as a sanctuary and another as a

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8 Frost, A.C. *Baylya-Balinga: A History of Balingup* (Donnybrook, Donnybrook/Balingup Shire Council, 1979), pp.34-35.

9 'Balingup', BL - RN634.

10 Frost, A.C. *Baylya-Balinga: A History of Balingup* (Donnybrook, Donnybrook/Balingup Shire Council, 1979), p.35 & 37.

11 Ibid, p.35.

12 Ibid, pp 25-26 & 37.

13 Ibid, p.26.

14 Ibid, p.58.

15 *Countryman*, 28 February 1985.

16 Ibid.

community dining room.<sup>17</sup> In 1996, the 92 year old building is now utilised as a private residence.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Brooklands* is a single-storey farmhouse currently used as a private residence. It is located on the northern side of Airstrip Road about 2km from the junction with the Balingup-Nannup Road.

*Brooklands* is built in what is essentially a Victorian Regency style, even though it was built in 1904. The construction consists of brick walls, timber floorboards on traditional joists, bearers and stumps, and a corrugated metal roof. It has a perimeter verandah with a shallower roof pitch than the main roof. The top of the verandah roof is just below the gutter of the main roof.

*Brooklands* is sited on gently sloping land that falls away to the east, so that the front centrally located eastern entrance is about 1.8 metres above ground level, whereas the back or western verandah is just above ground level. The house is square in plan and formally designed with an M shaped roof emphasising the main centrally located eastern entrance. The main rooms face east and south, and have French doors which lead on to the verandah.

Upon leaving Airstrip Road, the visitor proceeds between two mature poplars along a pea gravel driveway, up the centrally located front steps of the house, across the verandah and into a long central hallway which runs the length of the house in an east-west direction. The largest room in the house, the living room, is on the left. The floor of this room is carpeted and the walls are of plaster. Doors, windows, skirtings and the fireplace appear original. The ceiling consists of plastic laminated panels, with the joints of the panels being covered with either plastic strips or timber battens. The lower part of the cornice appears original.

The next room west is a bedroom, with a carpeted floor and plaster walls. The ceiling consists of plasterboard panels with expressed joints. The fireplace surround is original but the hearth has been partially bricked in to form a low plinth.

The room opposite the living room is a bedroom. The floor is carpeted, with plaster walls and ceilings. The ceiling has no cornices and appears to be original. The fireplace has been boarded over but the timber surround appears original, as do the skirtings and doors.

An interconnecting door leads to an adjoining bedroom, located at the north-east corner of *Brooklands*. This room has a carpeted floor, original skirtings and plastered masonry walls. The ceiling consists of caneite with timber cover battens. The window to the north and the door to the south original. In recent times a sliding interconnecting door has been inserted which leads to a study centrally located on the north side of the house.

The floor of the study has a timber floor and skirtings, which appear original. The window and ceiling also appear original. Another interconnecting door leads to another bedroom, which being located in the middle of the house, has no windows. This room has a carpeted floor, plaster walls and a cracked

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<sup>17</sup> Frost, A.C. *Baylya-Balinga: A History of Balingup* (Donnybrook, Donnybrook/Balingup Shire Council, 1979), p.59.

plaster ceiling. This room was originally part of the room that is now a study, and was formed by the insertion of a plastered masonry dividing wall.

A second door from the central bedroom leads into a secondary hallway that runs north-south and at right angles to the main hallway. Across this hallway and to the north is a kitchen. This room has been enlarged in recent years by the removal of a wall and the construction of a stud wall further south. The inside faces of the external walls have been rendered. The new stud wall has been lined with pine panelling. The remaining internal wall is original plaster. The ceiling consists of primary timber beams running north-south with secondary timber beams within the same plane running east-west, with plasterboard infill panels. The kitchen has a new timber floor, no skirtings and a window dating from around 1935 which appears to have been installed in recent times.

By proceeding south along the secondary hallway, turning right or west at the main hallway, one comes to the laundry. This room has a vinyl floor, plaster walls to three sides and a plasterboard wall to the north where it adjoins the kitchen. Full height cupboards have been installed in the eastern wall. The ceiling appears to be new plasterboard and the window is original.

Opposite the laundry, across the main hallway, is a bathroom. Ceramic tiles are on the floor, the walls are plaster and the plaster ceiling appears original. There are skirtings to the hallway wall only.

The front or eastern part of the main hallway is carpeted, up to the secondary hallway. The secondary hallway and the remainder of the main hallway have exposed timber floorboards. The walls of the hallways are plaster, and the ceilings consist of asbestos with timber cover strips and a timber scotia cornice.

At the south-west corner of *Brooklands* is a small room that is entered by a door off the verandah. This room was probably a maid's room and is now used as a guest room.

In recent times the original perimeter verandah was replaced by a new verandah in a construction similar to the original, but with less ornate timber work, judging by a file photograph. For example, about three-quarters up the original verandah posts there were decorative mouldings; these have not been reproduced in the present verandah posts.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

No key references.