



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*

Mead Homestead has considerable aesthetic value as a cultural environment of high integrity, being a collection of vernacular farm buildings of the 19th century within a cleared pasture setting surrounded by native bushland. The bushland visually isolates the property from intrusive developments which have affected the setting of most early properties in the area. (Criterion 1.1)

The place also has considerable significance as a key component of a clearly definable precinct containing cultural and natural heritage sites. *Mead Homestead* is the southernmost of the early farming properties at East Rockingham, most of which survive as recognisable places. The close proximity of Lake Cooloongup further enhances the setting of the place. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Mead Homestead is historically significant for its part in the settlement of East Rockingham, being one of the earliest land grants in the area and for many years also one of the area's more prominent farms. Part of the place's historic significance is founded on the fact that East Rockingham has an exceptionally complete collection of places representing the early settlement of a district, and as such *Mead Homestead* has value for its contribution to a wider cultural environment. *Mead Homestead* was, furthermore, closely associated with farming properties on the foothills at Serpentine and Mundijong which was a phenomenon which typified East Rockingham. (Criterion 2.1)

The place has considerable importance for its long standing association with the Mead family who were early settlers in this State and who are today represented by numerous descendants. Much of the existing fabric features in the family's history, and has importance for demonstrating historical detail. For example, evidence of three consecutive dwellings,

* 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.

the various working buildings, remnant fig orchards and specific trees all illustrate aspects of the lifeways of the property's former occupants. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The place has a limited scientific significance. The lacustrine marl employed in the construction of the homestead is unusual within the context of the State, although it was commonly employed for building in the East Rockingham area. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The place is among a number of significant sites in East Rockingham which provide the district with a sense of history and permanence. The importance of these places is heightened by the impending development which is likely to substantially alter the character of the district. (Criterion 4.2)

Mead Homestead has social significance due to interest and support for its retention from the Town of Kwinana, the Mead family and members of the local community. The Mead family owned the property for over one hundred and thirty years and their ownership was relinquished involuntarily. Many of the place's elements bear some association with the activities of family members, adding to their sentimental attachment to the place. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Mead Homestead's context, East Rockingham, has an exceptional degree of rarity in so much as it contains an almost intact collection of historic buildings and sites relating to its early settlement. Few districts, particularly within such a close range of Perth, are able to boast of a comparable cultural environment. (Criterion 5.1)

Mead Homestead is one of few early farms in East Rockingham that has retained a relatively intact rural setting. Most other places in East Rockingham have suffered dramatic changes to their surrounds, mainly due to the intrusion of railways, industry or residential development. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Mead Homestead demonstrates the principal characteristics of early rural settlement in East Rockingham. Its buildings are mainly constructed of local stone, and the setting is one of open pasture bordered by native bushland and dotted with remnants of the native vegetation. (Criterion 6.1)

Evidence of three consecutive dwellings remain on the property, demonstrating the process of settler consolidation that was typical in the area. The barn and dairy buildings furthermore demonstrate aspects of settlement and farming which were typical in East Rockingham where many places had a stable or a barn at an early stage and during the interwar period developed as a dairy. The ruined state of the dairy is evidence of the demise of dairying in this area which occurred in the early post-World War II period. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The place is currently in a poor state, largely due to its having been a rental property for many years. Few repairs to the buildings have been carried out during this time, evident from the deterioration of structural fabric and finishes. Alterations made to the house in the 1960s were generally of an inferior quality and subsequently in need of considerable repair work. Original fabric likewise requires repair. The timber framed outbuildings near the house are in fair condition, and having received little or no maintenance for some years are also in need of repairs. The barn is structurally sound although sections of roofing iron and a wall are gone. The dairy is in ruinous condition. Little fabric remains of the earlier cottage besides a length of half height wall which is in fair condition and some footing material.

Pasture land around the place is degraded and infested with noxious weeds, and the number of mature trees has been depleted by poor property management. Remaining fruit trees are in fair condition, but may deteriorate if neglected.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Mead Homestead retains a high degree of integrity, there being sufficient intact fabric and evidence of its former condition to allow the place to be restored. At present development in the region has not noticeably infringed on the rural setting of the property, and future development may be shielded by plantings to minimise its impact. The place is still occupied and used to run stock, although not as a commercial farm. The Mead family no longer occupy or own the place, although descendants remain interested in it and would probably return if circumstances allowed.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

In terms of its setting, buildings and trees the place retains a high degree of authenticity. Some elements have been lost and the property has deteriorated, but few intrusions have detracted from its significant qualities. At the level of individual buildings, the place has a medium to low degree of authenticity. Those structures which have survived as ruins retain a relatively high degree of authenticity by virtue of the fact that the only modifications they have sustained have to do with their gradual deterioration. The barn retains a medium degree of authenticity, having continued as a working building until the present day and sustained only minimal modification of a practical nature. The homestead has a low degree of authenticity, mainly due to the fact that it was substantially modified in the 1960s, although many original elements such as floors, ceilings and internal door frames have survived in the original part. Outbuildings on the south side of the homestead retain a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Rachel Plug B.A.(Hons. History) UWA, and is based on the reminiscences of Hazel and Russel Mead, and various secondary sources. The physical evidence has been compiled by Ian Boersma of Kevin Palassis Architects.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Background history of the Cockburn Sound area

Although East Rockingham was not permanently settled until the 1850s, the history of European activity in the area predates colonisation. The French, under the command of Nicholas Baudin, explored the area in 1803, and named île Bauche (renamed Garden Island by James Stirling), Point Peron and île Berthollet (now Carnac Island).¹ The British, who had already settled parts of eastern Australia, had a military outpost at Albany, but became more and more alarmed at the threat of French territorial expansion, and decided to look into the possibility of colonisation rather than simply maintaining a military presence. In 1827 James Stirling was sent to examine the Swan River area and report on its suitability for colonisation. He was greatly impressed by what he saw, and reported very positively on its potential as agricultural land. In June 1829 he returned as Lieutenant-Governor to establish the Swan River Colony, with two ships carrying soldiers and settlers. Upon arriving, the settlers made their first camp at the southern end of Cockburn Sound, and for a time it was seriously considered as a suitable place to found the colony's capital, owing to its potential as a harbour.² In the end, Perth was chosen as the capital, but Cockburn Sound continued to be used as an anchorage, and Careening Bay at the south end of Garden Island was used for ship repairs.³ Later, when steamers became common, a coaling hulk was set up in Careening Bay, which was used by most of the ships visiting Fremantle until 1897, since it was much safer than Fremantle itself.⁴

Another attempt to settle the area around Cockburn Sound was made in December 1829 by Thomas Peel, an English speculator who brought out four hundred indentured settlers, hoping to obtain great amounts of land in the Swan River Colony and thus make a fortune.⁵ A townsite called Clarence was surveyed near Woodman's Point to provide temporary accommodation for Peel's group, with the intention that the lots would eventually be sold to private settlers.⁶ The site was, however, inhospitable, living conditions were miserable, and Peel neglected to show proper leadership, with the result that almost thirty people died. Peel himself lost a great deal of capital, including four ships wrecked in the

¹ Russell, L. (1979), *Kwinana: third time lucky*, pp. 16-17; Taggart, N. (1984) *Rockingham looks back: a history of the Rockingham District 1829-1982*, p. 2.

² Taggart, N., pp. 11-14.

³ Palassis Architects (1997), *Study of conservation options for Thorpe, Thomas and Bell Cottages*, p. 7.

⁴ Taggart, N., p. 72.

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 5-9, 16-24.

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 24-31; Palassis Architects, p. 7.

Sound (one of which was named the *Rockingham*), and within two years the town had been deserted.⁷

Due to his late arrival in the colony, Thomas Peel was unable to take up his original grant of land which had included extensive Swan River frontage, so during his stay in Clarence he made a new selection. The northern boundary of this grant is of some significance, as it was a major factor in determining the location and layout of the East Rockingham settlement. It ran east from Point Peron as far as the Baldivis hills, turned north and ran as far as the approximate line of modern-day Rowley Road (south of Thompson's Lake), then east again as far as what is now Hopkinson Road, near the western edge of the Darling Scarp (see the map "Part of the South-West Portion of Western Australia", land actually granted to Thomas Peel).⁸ The reversed "L" created by the Point Peron-Baldivis-Thompson's Lake line was to form the eastern and southern boundary of East Rockingham. The Mandurah area was settled by Peel and others in the 1830s, and the main road to Fremantle passed on the east side of Lake Cooloongup and so on up to the coast. This route, which is now known as Mandurah Road, became a "spine" along which the East Rockingham settlement was to develop.⁹

In 1846 yet another attempt was made to set up a town on Cockburn Sound. Thomas Peel's original suggestion to establish a port at Safety Bay for whaling and timber export was passed over in favour of setting up a town at the southern end of Mangles Bay, outside Peel's grant. Already on Stirling's maps, taken back to England when he left in 1832, an area of some 1000 acres marked as "townsite of Rockingham" had been shown. The area was surveyed, a jetty was built, and lots were released for sale, but only two were sold.¹⁰

The settlement of East Rockingham

Meanwhile the land behind the planned townsite, backing onto Thomas Peel's estate, was being taken up by small farmers, who were able to afford only the small pieces of land left once large grants had been selected by wealthier individuals. The belt of fertile swamp and woodland, sandwiched between the Point Peron-Safety Bay limestone ridge to the west and the Baldivis sandhills to the east, was not extensive enough to attract the interest of large-scale landowners, but was able to support a number of small properties. Although land was taken up from the early 1840s onward, it was not until the 1850s that most of the holdings were occupied. Some of the first families in the area included the Bells, Herberts, Hymuses, Keys, Meads, Smirks, Thomases and Thorpes.¹¹ While the Keys, Hymuses and Thorpes were able to build permanent houses from the local East Rockingham building stone¹² at an early date, some of

⁷ Taggart, N., pp. 27-30, Palassis Architects, p. 7. Peyton Meares acquired land a little further south of Clarence and proposed the establishment of a small port, Jamestown, but this settlement never passed the planning stage (Taggart, N., p. 31.).

⁸ Palassis Architects, pp. 7-8.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Taggart, N., pp. 36-42.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 45, 47-49

¹² This stone is most accurately described as vuggy lacustrine limestone. It is soft enough to be easily shaped when freshly dug, but hardens on exposure to air. It is also known as swampstone, coral stone and lacustrine marl (Palassis Architects, p. 11, footnote 11).

the inhabitants initially lived in wattle-and-daub dwellings and replaced them within the first few decades. By this time the area was beginning to develop a definite identity, with a school being built in 1865 for the district's growing number of children.¹³ According to the descendants of the Mead family, William Mead assisted with carting the limestone used to build it, and his eldest daughter Sarah Hannah was one of the school's first pupils and planted a tuart tree there.¹⁴

The Mead family of Lealholm

William Mead

William Mead and Frances, his wife, had come out to Western Australia in 1851 on the advice of William's brother Henry, who had gone to the Colony with their brother Thomas in 1842, and worked as a labourer before beginning to acquire land in the Serpentine area. It was Henry who originally purchased the land in East Rockingham on which William lived and farmed. Research undertaken by family members shows that Henry finalised this purchase in 1857.¹⁵ William himself was not granted title to the land until 1878. The property was named 'Lealholm' after the village in Yorkshire from which the Mead brothers had come.¹⁶ Like most of the inhabitants of East Rockingham, the Meads probably used their land to raise small animals (larger animals were grazed on the commonage on the west side of Mandurah Road until at least the 1960s¹⁷) and grew vegetables, and some crops, as well as fruit trees.¹⁸ In 1860 William planted about seventy fig trees near where the ruined dairy now stands and along the drive, and by the 1880s figs were regularly transported and sold to Plaistowe's jam factory in Fremantle.¹⁹ The first house built on the property was a wattle-and-daub one-roomed dwelling which is no longer standing, although the mound on which family members believe this cottage was built is still visible.²⁰ William's wife and children must have moved permanently to Rockingham between 1860 and Frances' death in 1866.²¹ It is possible that the second house, built of cap limestone obtained from the property, was built in time for William's family to move into it upon arriving in Rockingham. It seems likely that it was built before Frances' death in 1866, as Laurie Russell's account of her death in childbirth implies a home of more than one room.²²

¹³ Palassis Architects, p. 8.

¹⁴ Mead, A. and Mead, H. (no date), Mead family history, p. 93.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 133. Nora Taggart's account states that Henry Mead bought the land in 1854, and that William had perhaps already been farming it before that time (Taggart, N., p. 48).

¹⁶ Taggart, N., pp. 48-49.

¹⁷ Notes taken during a telephone interview with Russell Mead on 27.2.1998. He described how the local cattle were pastured on the commonage, and remembers having to go out at the end of the day to call in the Mead cows

¹⁸ Many of the inhabitants of East Rockingham gained part of their income from selling meat, garden produce and dairy goods in Fremantle (Taggart, N., pp. 65, 87). Once Serpentine Farm became established in the 1860s, it became an important source of employment and stores (*ibid.*, p. 45).

¹⁹ Russell, L., p. 54.

²⁰ Hazel Mead, great-granddaughter of William and Frances Mead, who was born at the property in 1923, visited the site with me on 7.3.1998, and pointed out a small mound behind the remains of the second house, saying that she thought that it was the site of the first house. Family tradition has it that this first house may have been built by Henry Mead (Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 133).

²¹ Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 133. Esther Mead was born at Serpentine in 1860 (*ibid.*, p. 137).

²² Russell, L., p. 53. Frances was not a strong woman and experienced many difficulties in pregnancy. One of her children was born prematurely and lived only a few days, she is thought to have suffered at least one

Charles (George) and Sarah (Hannah) Mead

After her mother's death, the eldest daughter, Sarah Hannah (known as Hannah), ran the household. In 1876 she married her cousin Charles George (known as George), son of Thomas Mead of Northam, and they lived at *Mead Homestead* with her family. Hereafter all of the Rockingham Meads would be descended from both Thomas and William Mead.²³ In 1895 a third and larger house was built, since the previous dwelling was close to the swamp, and the resulting dampness was blamed by a doctor who treated several of the children when they contracted rheumatic fever.²⁴ At any rate, the house must have been far too small by this time, as it was occupied by Hannah, George, their eight children, Hannah's father William (until his death in 1892), and Hannah's sister Esther. The old house eventually found another use as a pig pen and duck run, with the kitchen being used as a feed store.²⁵ It was finally pulled down in 1965 or 1966, when it had deteriorated to the point of being considered unsafe.²⁶

The new house, built closer to Mandurah Road, was built from East Rockingham building stone sourced from swamp land on the other side of the road, between Office and Dixon Roads.²⁷ It consisted of a parlour and dining room with five bedrooms off to the sides, a detached kitchen, and large verandahs at front and back, the front one flanked by two rather unusual wing walls. Behinds these walls were two storerooms, a large one to the left and a smaller one to the right.²⁸ A cellar was located under one of the back bedrooms, with the steps leading from the back verandah, but the ground proved to be too damp to store vegetables successfully in the cellar, so it was closed off.²⁹ The house was surrounded by a picket fence, and a photograph of the house taken in 1907 shows it to have an established garden and a tidy picket fence.³⁰

A barn and shed were constructed at about the same time as the house. The barn comprised three horse boxes with floors lined with black gin trunks, which were durable yet had sufficient "give" for the horses'

miscarriage, and her two youngest surviving children, Henry and Esther, were brain damaged from birth. Henry, the only surviving son, died in 1874, but Esther lived with her older sister Hannah's family presumably until her death in 1911 (Hazel Mead, on the visit of 7.3.1998, spoke of Esther occupying one of the small bedrooms in the third house). Frances' last pregnancy resulted in her death by septicaemia (Mead, A. and Mead, H., pp. 133, 137; Russell, L., p. 53). Frances was the first inhabitant of East Rockingham to die. According to the family, she was buried in Fremantle and her headstone was later moved to the East Rockingham cemetery, although Nora Taggart writes that she was buried at East Rockingham (Mead, A. and Mead, H., pp. 133-134; Taggart, N., p. 64).

²³ Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 93. The Northam and East Rockingham families remained in close contact, with children making often making annual visits during school holidays.

²⁴ Russell, L., p. 54;

²⁵ Notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998.

²⁶ Notes taken during a telephone interview with Russell Mead on 27.2.1998. He remembers pulling it down with ropes, together with his grandfather Andrew and his cousin Ross.

²⁷ Notes taken during a telephone interview with Hazel Mead on 2.3.1998.

²⁸ Notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998, as well as evidence from photographs in the possession of Hazel Mead and remaining foundations.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Hazel Mead has described the garden as having four diamond-shaped beds in front of the house, edged with upturned bottles [see the description of Bell Cottage garden in Taggart, N., pp. 93-94] and surrounded with paths of hard-beaten white clay. The garden also had two large figs trees on either side of the north gate, nectarine and lemon trees, a grape trellis, may bushes, oleanders on either side of the front gate, various native shrubs and grape- and currant- vines growing on the verandah. A photograph of the flower beds is in the possession of Hazel Mead, as are several photographs showing the front of the house in its garden setting.

hooves; a storage area for hay which was open to the east, and had a window high on the south gable through which hay would be forked in; space for a horse-driven chaff cutter; and storage for other feed. Tack was stored in the wide passage, and there was a single door at the front of the barn. The shed was about ten metres by five metres in size, closer to the house, and was open towards the barn. It contained an enclosed toolshed as well as space for several carts. Both structures were built from timber slabs and roofed with iron.³¹

Besides improving *Mead Homestead's* buildings, George Mead increased the farm's acreage by purchasing 3000 acres of land on the seaward side of Lake Cooloongup, known as the "coast pasture." This land became important as seasonal pasture for the Meads' cattle, which wintered in Rockingham and were driven up to Mundijong in summer.³² He also seems to have leased land on the nearby Peel Estate.³³

Andrew Mead

After George's death in 1917, his third son Andrew took over the farm. Alfred, the eldest brother, had run a farm in Serpentine until his death by influenza in 1918, and the second son, William, had been killed in action in France in 1916.³⁴ In 1918 Andrew married Muriel Pollard, whose mother Ellen came from the Thorpe family of East Rockingham. The peppermint tree still standing in the back yard of the house was planted from seed obtained by Andrew and Muriel on their honeymoon in Busselton.³⁵ Like his father, Andrew leased land from the Peel Estate until it was subdivided for Group Settlement in the 1920s.³⁶ Andrew was able to make up for the loss of this land by running a butchering business from *Mead Homestead*, selling meat to the workmen who were putting in the drainage system on the Estate.³⁷ A large gum tree still standing between the barn and the site of the old shed was known as the "killing tree".³⁸ The storage room behind the left wing wall of the main house was used as a butchering room, and a portable meat safe was put onto a horse drawn cart for deliveries and kept in the toolshed when not being used.³⁹

During the inter-war period a number of farms in East Rockingham were developed as dairy farms, among them *Mead Homestead*.⁴⁰ Andrew Mead bought up a substantial amount of the East Rockingham land originally owned by Henry Mead, as well as property in Mundijong, and established a dairy herd at *Mead Homestead*, with a retail outlet in Beaconsfield in

³¹ Notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998, as well as evidence from photographs.

³² Notes taken during a telephone interview with Russell Mead on 27.2.1998. He spoke of participating in moving cattle from one property to another when he was a child. See also Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 133.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 133.

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

³⁵ Notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998; notes taken during a telephone interview with Russell Mead on 27.2.1998.

³⁶ Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 96.

³⁷ *ibid.*; notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998.

³⁸ Notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998. She noticed that there were still bees in the tree, just as there had been when she lived on the property.

³⁹ *ibid.*; notes taken during a telephone interview with Russell Mead on 27.2.1998.

⁴⁰ Palassis Architects, p. 11; Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 96.

south Fremantle.⁴¹ The dairy is still standing, albeit in a somewhat ruinous condition, close to the remains of the second stone house. Directly behind the dairy are the remnants of a stone wall which formed part of a smaller and older dairy building, used to hold calves once the larger dairy was built.⁴² The paddock between the dairy and the house was used to grow maize for fodder for the dairy cattle. A pathway ran through it from the house to the dairy, slightly raised since the paddock used to become very wet in winter. A ridge of ground can still be seen where this path used to be.⁴³ The farm employed several hands, who were quartered in the building known as “Mr. Flynn’s room”, thought to have been built in the late 1920s or early 1930s, on the south side of the main house. Andrew’s wife Muriel kept the accounts for the dairy and used to go to Fremantle on a weekly basis to check the books at the shop there.⁴⁴

In the mid-1920s several outbuildings were added to the homestead at *Mead Homestead*. The kitchen building, which is still standing, had been used as a kitchen and dining room up to this time, and there were no special laundry or bathroom buildings. The area directly behind the storage room behind the right wing wall was covered by a trellis, and the laundry copper was kept there. A large tin bath was also kept there when not in use (baths were taken by the children in front of the kitchen fire, the adults bathed in the small store room on the south side of the house). Water was obtained from a well several metres south of the laundry area, and a rainwater tank stood under the southwest corner of the kitchen roof.⁴⁵ These arrangements were changed with the construction of the new outbuildings. An extra room, the floor of which is still visible, was added to the south side of the kitchen, and was used as a kitchen in its place, while the old kitchen was used as a dining room. An outside toilet was built several metres south of the new kitchen, with laundry and bathroom buildings to the west of the toilet. The well was replaced by a windmill in 1927 or 1928, and a tank stand was put up behind the new bathroom and laundry (slightly north of the existing tank stand).⁴⁶ Probably at this time the cellar steps were removed and filled in, the walls of the cellar were rendered and it was used for rainwater storage. The unsatisfactory vegetable cellar now became an unsatisfactory tank: it leaked, and the roots of the fig trees at the gate found their way into it.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 96; notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998.

⁴² Notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998. Nearby is a small hollow in the ground, now with a shrub growing out of it, which Hazel Mead identified as the location of the pit into which the water used to hose down the dairy was drained. On one occasion her younger brother Colin, fearing punishment from his mother for some misdeed, ran and stood in the middle of the manure, thinking that she would not be able to get at him there. Much to his dismay, she followed him in. Also associated with the dairy calves is the pomegranate bush growing just inside the north fence of the house enclosure. The pith of the fruit could be dried, crushed and used to treat calves with scours. This particular bush was planted by Eva Mead, but there had been other previously.

⁴³ *ibid.* She remembers that, as a child, she used to walk along the path in winter, grabbing handfuls of water-weed to see how many gilgies there were. This indicates that there must have been substantial amounts of water lying over the paddock for fairly lengthy periods of time.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *ibid.* The front verandah of “Hazel’s room” sags because it is built over the filled-in well, and the ground has since settled considerably.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.* Eventually the cellar was drained, and Meryl, Murray and Eva’s daughter, had her siblings help her to paint the walls black, with figures of skeletons and ghosts, and used the cellar as a place to hold seances (notes taken during telephone conversations with Hazel Mead on 2.3.1998 and Russell Mead on 27.2.1998). According to Carol Burns, the current resident, the paintings are still there.

The depression of the 1930s did not prevent the Meads from operating their dairy successfully. Andrew, in fact, took the opportunity to improve his land by employing local men to clear it for him.⁴⁸

Murray Mead

In 1946 Andrew's wife Muriel died, and he married her sister Elizabeth in 1947 and retired to Hamilton Hill.⁴⁹ His oldest son Murray married Eva Wilkinson in 1948, and ran *Mead Homestead* along with his brother Colin. Hazel, their sister, had married Ernest Mead, a cousin, in 1946, and the outbuilding known as "Hazel's room" was built for them.⁵⁰ Hazel and Ernest lived and worked at *Mead Homestead* until they moved to Baldivis in 1954 to start their own dairy farm.⁵¹ The two brothers both suffered from haemophilia, which almost certainly contributed to their relatively early deaths: Colin died in 1950, at the age of twenty-five, and Murray died in 1959 at the age of thirty-six.⁵² During the time in which Murray ran *Mead Homestead*, part of the Mead property was resumed by the government for the future suburb of Medina, the dairy ceased to operate and the Meads reverted to farming beef cattle.⁵³ Murray is also known to have bred skewbald and palomino horses, perhaps on the Mundijong properties.⁵⁴ At this time the government, which had been resuming much of East Rockingham in order to be able to use it for industrial purposes in the future, took out an option on the Mead properties in the area, which prevented the land from being sold to anyone but the government.

Eva Mead and her children

After Murray's death his wife Eva continued to live at *Mead Homestead* with their four children. During the early 1960s substantial renovations to the main house took place, with the front verandah being closed in and turned into a bedroom, front hall and dining room; two bedrooms being joined to form the present kitchen; the parlour being converted to a bathroom, and the 1930s kitchen addition being removed. The original fenestration was entirely remodelled, and new joinery was installed. The wing walls and the rooms behind them were removed, and a small stone garage was built near the north gate. The original garden arrangements also seem to have been changed during this time.⁵⁵

Also during this time, the railway line from Kwinana to Alcoa was put through the Mead property, effectively splitting the main homestead block in two. In addition to this, the railway is thought to have contributed to the spread of the noxious Geraldton carnation weed, which contributed to the demise of many farms in the area.⁵⁶ The railway is also believed to

⁴⁸ Notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998.

⁴⁹ Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 96.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 95.

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

⁵³ Notes taken during conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998.

⁵⁴ Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 97.

⁵⁵ Notes taken during telephone interviews with Hazel Mead on 2.3.1998 and Russell Mead on 27.2.1998; conversation with Hazel Mead on the visit of 7.3.1998.

⁵⁶ Notes taken during telephone interview with Russell Mead on 27.2.1998.

have caused the house and the new garage to develop cracks due to the vibrations made by passing trains.⁵⁷ The garage was so badly cracked that it collapsed in the late 1980s or early 1990s.⁵⁸

In 1965 Eva died from asthma, and *Mead Homestead's* viability as a farm took another blow when the Coo loongup pastures were sold to the government in order to pay the probate duty. The family had been able to raise the money to pay probate duty on the deaths of Andrew, Colin and Murray, but when Eva died there was no option but to give up some of the property.⁵⁹ After her death a cousin, Glenis, moved in to look after the children. Robin, the eldest, was fifteen, and Russell, the youngest, was nine. The Brennan family eventually took over *Mead Homestead* as caretakers, and leased the remaining Mead properties to run horses. These horses were apparently responsible for ringbarking many of the farm's young trees. In 1977 Meryl Mead married Raymond Oversby and they lived at *Mead Homestead* until 1981.⁶⁰ Russell married Terry Lamperd in 1978, and they also lived at *Mead Homestead* for some time, before moving away in 1985.⁶¹ After this, the property was leased to a series of tenants, but by 1989 it had become clear that the property was not viable as a farm, and the land taxes had become crippling⁶²

Mead Homestead had remained in the hands of the Mead family for over one hundred and thirty years when in 1989 it was finally sold to the government.⁶³ Once a flourishing farm, and the centre of the Meads' extensive pastoral leases in the area, it was reduced to a fragmented farm, too small to be viable. From this time on the property was occupied by a succession of tenants, some of who had little regard for the place, and the land and buildings slowly deteriorated due to neglect.

Mead Homestead was included in the Town of Kwinana's Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places in March 1998. The Town is supportive of the place's conservation and in early 1999 is investigating alternatives for the place's use.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Mead Homestead is a collection of farm buildings and landscape elements, the homestead block of what was formerly an collection of large rural holdings farmed by the Mead family. A homestead with outbuildings forms the key element, other elements include a barn, dairy ruin, footings of the second cottage, raised mound believed to be the site of the first cottage, a raised pathway between the dairy and homestead, and a number of trees.

The cleared pasture of the farm is approximately square in plan, with a driveway running through from a point in the middle of the western

⁵⁷ Notes taken during telephone interview with Russell Mead on 27.2.1998.

⁵⁸ Information obtained from Wendy Durant. According to Russell Mead, the walls of the garage had developed six-inch cracks.

⁵⁹ Notes taken during telephone interview with Russell Mead.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ Mead, A. and Mead, H., p. 97, information from Wendy Durant.

⁶² Notes taken during telephone interview with Russell Mead.

⁶³ The Mead family involuntarily relinquished the property to the Government due to an inability to pay death taxes.

boundary to the centre. The homestead and adjacent outbuildings are located along the driveway approximately one third of the distance across the clearing. A row of old fig trees exists in a line parallel to and near the driveway, extending from near the house to the barn which is centrally located in the clearing. The remains of a cottage and dairy are further towards the rear of the property, also approximately along the line of this same axis. Several fig trees stand south of the dairy ruin, and north of the cottage ruin is a very old mulberry tree growing on its side. A mound of earth near the cottage ruin is believed to be the foundation of the first wattle and daub hut erected on the property.

The homestead is built of masonry, the older part made of blocks of vuggy lacustrine limestone and lime mortar,⁶⁴ the newer with red brick and a weak cement mortar. The structure is composed of a main house with a verandah along the rear and south side, and a semi-detached room which was formerly the kitchen. The entire homestead is roofed with timber structure clad with galvanised corrugated iron. Floors inside the house consist of tongue and groove hardwood boards, 135mm wide in the older portions of the house and 110mm wide in the newer areas. The floor of the south-east room is raised 275mm higher than the main, and this room has a cellar beneath. Access to the cellar is from a hatch in the floor of the back verandah. A detailed inspection was not made of the cellar, but is of similar volume as the room above it and its walls have been painted black. Some crude drawings are also evident on the cellar walls. Two types of ceilings are evident within the house, flat lathe and plaster ceilings in the older portions, and plasterboard with coved cornices in the newer. Walls are plastered internally. The fenestration of the house is of a kind that is consistent with post World War II work. Windows are typically a fixed pane flanked by a tall side-hung casement on either side, external doors are timber framed with patterned glass inserts. External openings in the limestone part of the building are trimmed with red brick quoins. Flush panel interior grade doors have been fitted throughout the interior, and all existing door furniture is a common type with art-deco motifs.

Internal walls and ceilings of the former kitchen are lined with asbestos sheeting, and the floor consists of tongue and groove hardwood boards. A fireplace evident outside the structure is obscured by the asbestos lining internally. The room has two external doorways with Oregon internal grade four-panel doors. On the south side of the kitchen are the floor and limestone footings of a room slightly smaller than the former kitchen. Behind the homestead, north of the former kitchen, is a very large peppermint tree which overhangs the house.

Alterations made to the house in the early 1960s were of an inferior quality and less durable than the earlier work, and this work comprises the greater part of the deteriorated fabric. Notable defects in the more recent fabric of the house included cracking at the interface of new and old work, failing mortar (to the point where some masonry units are loose), crumbling internal plasterwork, weathered and brittle joinery, stained ceilings,

⁶⁴ A marl type limestone formed as a sediment in the bed of coastal lakes. Examples of the stone found between Jandakot and Mandurah have an unusual textural quality that is probably best described as network of fine holes or chambers (which geologists refer to as "vugs"). At East Rockingham the stone occurs as a crust of roughly consistent thickness, averaging 300mm, and when excavated the stone is generally soft enough to be chopped into blocks for building purposes.

broken door hardware, marked and flaking internal paintwork, and worn floor coverings. Defects in the older portion of the house include eroded mortar (particularly serious on the eastern wall), cracked plasterwork to the interior, similar condition wall finishes and floor coverings as the newer part. Apart from eroded mortar on the eastern wall, most old wall fabric appears to be sound, and early ceilings and floors also appear to be sound. Part of the timber deck of the east verandah, where it is exposed to weather, is in poor condition with sections of flooring gone. The roof appears to be satisfactory, but gutters are mostly rusted through and in sections non-existent.

Four outbuildings occupy the yard immediately south of the homestead. A limestone toilet (W.C.) with an adjoining timber framed/asbestos clad laundry and store is situated near the former kitchen. The laundry is open on the side facing the house, and contains a brick washing "copper". A later laundry facility with a "copper" and concrete wash trough is also located in the partially enclosed portion of the south verandah, and is more intact than the other.

An old timber tank stand and lean-to are situated just south of the toilet and laundry. West of this, and immediately south of the main part of the homestead, are two asbestos clad huts with corrugated iron roofs. The huts are of timber framed construction, are also lined with asbestos internally and have tongue and groove floors. That closest to the house has a main room under a duo pitch roof, an enclosed skillion on the south side and a verandah on the east. The other hut consists of a single room under a duo pitch roof, and a partially enclosed verandah with a concrete floor on the south side.

The huts are in fair condition, some stumps having gone and verandahs deteriorated from exposure to weather.⁶⁵ External joinery has mostly weathered badly and will need replacement. The walls are asbestos clad (internally and externally) but generally in sound condition. The internal floors (timber) and ceilings (asbestos) are sound although all interior finishes are deteriorated.

The barn is a timber structure constructed of vertical bush poles with milled hardwood rafters. The roof, pitched at approximately 30°, terminates in a gable on the south and is hipped on the north, with skillions forming a continuation of the main roof on the north and west and sides. Corrugated iron sheeting covers the roof and most external walls. Some sheeting is, however, missing from the roof, exposing parts of the barn to weather. Internally a wall lining of milled hardwood boards is evident. The internal arrangement of the barn is such that it contains a main volume of approximately 6 x 9 meters in plan and 3.7 meters tall to the wall plate, a skillion 4.2 meters deep extending along the west side (being more or less integrated with the main volume), and stables on the north side (also 4.2 meters deep). The main volume is open towards the east, and the stables open out to yards on the north. A section of walling and roof on the north side has been burnt out and as a result is also open. Of interest are a concrete machinery mount in the west part of the barn,

⁶⁵ The verandah of the hut closest to the house has subsided on the south end where it is built over an old well.

black gin trunks on the floor of the passage in the stables area, and evidence of a door high in the south gable. A short distance west of the barn is a large tree, mostly dead wood, which is known as the "killing tree".

Although in ruinous condition, all roof fabric is missing but most masonry walling of the dairy remains intact and appears to be in a relatively stable condition. The structure is composed of several different materials including vuggy lacustrine limestone blocks, limestone rubble, and brick walls, and a concrete floor. Some areas of wall have been rendered. The layout of the dairy may be described as follows: the main area is a rectangle oriented north-south, with a brick and mortar feed trough extending through its centre. A small room is located off to the west from this area, and the southern end of the building contains two small rooms divided by a narrow passage. Remnants of a stone wall, part of an earlier dairy building, are evident a short distance east of the building.

Little remains of the stone cottage other than some limestone foundation material, part of which appears to be a chimney, and a 6.4 meter length of capstone rubble walling. The wall averages 1.2 meters in height and is located approximately 10 meters from the area containing foundation material. A large pile of lacustrine limestone blocks and other rubble, obviously demolition debris, covers much of the area with the foundation material to a depth of up to 1.4 meters. The half height wall is likely to further deteriorate unless conserved.

13.3 REFERENCES

Written Sources

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- Russell Mead
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- Wendy Durant

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

A search of land titles may be useful to determine the full extent of the Mead family's holdings in the area, and to methodically document all changes in the acreage of the homestead block.

Further research may be undertaken to determine any impact that the timber railway from Jarrahdale which passed close to *Mead Homestead* may have had on the place. On this theme it is worth noting that the

demise of the property as a viable farm is in part attributed to the effects of the Alcoa line put through in the 1950s, and that plans exist to put through another rail line immediately north of the place.

Archaeological investigation may assist in confirming whether the mound believed to be the site of the first cottage was indeed the site of that structure. It may furthermore assist in determining the exact layout of the stone cottage which at present is mostly buried under stone rubble, and provide details of the original set-out of the homestead garden as it is described in the documentary evidence.