



## 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\*

Although a simple building form the Old Police Lockup displays some aesthetic characteristics in the harmonious proportions and unsophisticated detailing. (Criterion 1.1)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The Old Police Lockup was constructed at a time of high demand for police and justice facilities throughout the Kimberley region. The place operated as a detention centre for prisoners on trial, or in police custody, from 1896-1965. (Criterion 2.1)

The boab tree at the site of *Old Police Lockup and Boab Tree* is closely associated with police officer Herbert Thomas, who served at Broome c. 1895-1901, and again in 1920, when he died on duty, and his son, Frederick, who was killed in France in World War One. A commemorative plaque has been placed at the site. (Criterion 2.3)

#### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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#### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Old Police Lockup and Boab Tree* is highly valued by the local community for its associations with life in Broome from the early years of the town's existence. (Criterion 4.1)

*Old Police Lockup and Boab Tree* contributes to the local community's sense of place. The Old Police Lockup is the only building remaining of the original police and justice complex on the site. While the street profile of the place is low, its presence is marked by the boab tree on the Carnarvon Street verge. (Criterion 4.2)

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\* 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.

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

The Old Police Lockup is the only remaining structure from the group of buildings associated with law enforcement in late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Broome which included the Police Station and Court house. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The Old Police Lockup, Broome is representative of one of the designs produced by the Public Works Department for law enforcement buildings in the north-west of the state in the late nineteenth century. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

The place is in good condition having undergone a program of refurbishment in 1994. Although unoccupied at the time of inspection the place has had a public use, most recently as a café and youth drop in centre until late in 1998.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The place has high integrity. The original use of the place is clearly evident although the place has been adapted for commercial use as a café.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

The place has high authenticity. Commercial kitchen equipment and fabric which has been introduced to upgrade the facilities and ensure ongoing viability has not detracted from the place.

## **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Katrina Chisholm of John Taylor Architect.

Further Documentary Evidence has been compiled by Dr Cathie Clement, MPhR. See 'Notes on some of Broome's Heritage Structures and their links with the Mangrove Point Stock Jetty and Tramway', National Heritage, Mt Lawley, 1999 revision.

### **13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

*Old Police Lockup and Boab Tree* is a single-storey concrete and iron building, constructed in 1896 and associated tree (1907).<sup>1</sup> After ceasing to function as a gaol in 1965, the place was used as a museum, and a community radio station. In 1994, *Old Police Lockup, Broome* was renovated and refurbished and leased to the Shire of Broome for commercial use. Its first occupant was a blacksmith shop and café. A boab tree, planted in 1897 by police sergeant Herbert Thomas to mark the birth of his son, marks the entrance to the Old Police Lockup.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: PWD Annual report for 1896-97, p. 62, states that the lockup was built of stone. While it has not been possible to verify whether the place is of concrete or rendered stone construction, it should be noted that it was not unknown at the time for a concrete building to be referred to as stone.

The town of Broome was gazetted in 1883, and named for Governor Sir Frederick Napier Broome. Together with Derby, it was gazetted in response to the growth of the pastoral and pearling industries in the western part of the Kimberley. By 1898, Broome had a government residency, customs shed, bond store, hospital, police station and gaol, and a long deepwater jetty. Aborigines were used as divers during the early years, but with the need for deep divers Filipinos, Malays, Koepangers, and later Japanese, were recruited, often as indentured labour.<sup>2</sup>

The pearling industry experienced two boom periods, 1889 to 1893 and 1898 to c. 1910. For the most part, however, the industry struggled, dealing variously with market forces, two depressions, two World Wars, immigration restrictions, government duties, and cyclones, until the advent of the plastic button finally ended the pearl shell trade in the 1950s.<sup>3</sup>

Broome developed as a segregated town, with wealthy pearlers and Europeans living at one end in elegant bungalows surrounded by tropical gardens and tended by servants, and Chinatown at the other end, where the Asian and coloured populations lived, and some of the commercial and pearling activities took place.

Lots 18 and 19, reserved for telegraph purposes, were on the edge of Chinatown. Lot 18 was designated Reserve 1287 and Lot 19, Reserve 1288.<sup>4</sup> On these two lots the Broome police and justice complex was constructed by W. Monro, for a cost of £3,091-14-8.<sup>5</sup> The work was completed on 14 November 1896.<sup>6</sup> The Public Works Department annual report for 1896-97, gives details of the work, firstly under the category 'Police Stations & Quarters, &c':

Broome - Police office, sergeant & men's quarters, three-cell lockup, stable, and other offices. Wood & iron chiefly; lockup stone. These offices are in connection with the courthouse. Completed.<sup>7</sup>

and secondly, under the category 'Courthouses':

Broome - courtroom & magistrate's room. Wood & iron. This courthouse is in conjunction with the police quarters. Completed.<sup>8</sup>

The police station and quarters occupied the refurbished telegraph station, which had been built in 1889 and replaced by a new post office on another site. The Old Police Lockup was situated at the back (south-east) corner of Lot 19, between the court house (on Lot 19), and the police station and quarters on Lot 18.<sup>9</sup>

The construction of the police and justice complex at Broome came about as a result of Aboriginal resistance to the expansion of the cattle industry in the Kimberleys. The fear of settlers for their own safety was not without cause.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Edwards, Hugh, *Port of Pearls: A History of Broome*, Rigby, 1983, pp. 1-65.

<sup>3</sup> Clement, Cathie 'Notes on some of Broome's heritage structures and their links with the Mangrove Point Stock Jetty and Tramway', 4p.

<sup>4</sup> *West Australian Government Gazette*, 12 January, 1888, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> *West Australian Government Gazette*, 16 August 1895, p. 1361.

<sup>6</sup> Public Works Dept. Contract Book, 21 May 1894-21 June 1897, p. 36, State Records AN7/14 Acc 1124 Item 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Votes & Proceedings of Parliament* Vol. 2, 1897, PWD Annual report for 1896-97, Paper No. 26, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> PWD plans 15173, Broome Police office additions, 10 August 1910. See supporting material.

<sup>10</sup> Pilmer, Richard Henry, *Northern Patrol: An Australian Saga*, Hesperian Press, Perth, 1998, pp. 32-105.

The Kimberley Aborigines were described at the time as 'of a magnificent type, intelligent, and not lacking in bravery. They would attack and fight at the least provocation. Many of these natives were from 5'10" to 6'6" in height, very muscular'.<sup>11</sup> Police stations and lockups were also built at Derby, Wyndham, Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek around this time.

The Old Police Lockup had three cells, and was designed for short term detention of prisoners prior to trial, or prisoners in police custody. A separate prison was constructed at Broome, on Hamersley Street, but those prisoners who were serving long sentences were sent by ship to Fremantle. The Old Police Lockup may also have housed these prisoners prior to their departure for Fremantle.

Most of those who went through the justice system in the early years in Broome were Aborigines. Occasionally, there was a deserter from a ship, or a pearl thief, which meant the person concerned was usually Asian or 'coloured'.<sup>12</sup> So few Europeans went through the system that in the early years the gaol was referred to as the 'native prison'.<sup>13</sup> Aboriginal prisoners were chained. Steel rings, set in the concrete floor of the cells, were used to secure them and prevent escape at night. The least dangerous prisoners were employed to build and maintain the shell grit covered roads of the town. In 1904, a Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives recommended that neck irons be replaced with leg irons, and that no chains be used at all when the prisoners were inside a goal, but chains continued to be used at all times in the North West, although waist irons gradually replaced neck irons.<sup>14</sup>

The police station and police quarters were enlarged as the town outgrew the original buildings. PWD plans dated 1910 and 1916 show progressively more buildings on Lot 18. Exactly what was done and when is not clear, but *Old Police Lockup, Broome* remained unchanged except for improvements to the toilet facilities.<sup>15</sup> In 1921, the courthouse was relocated to Cable House.<sup>16</sup> This meant the Old Police Lockup would have ceased to perform the function of holding prisoners during trial.

In 1965, a new police station and cell block were constructed, directly opposite the original complex, on Frederick Street.<sup>17</sup> It has been claimed that many of the old balls and chains and waist irons, which had still been in use in the North West until the end of World War Two, were sunk into the concrete of the new block.<sup>18</sup>

The Old Police Lockup ceased to house prisoners once the new cell block was completed. The Reserves were cancelled on 21 April 1978, Lot 19 being made available to the Broome Historical Society for historical purposes.<sup>19</sup> The Historical Society occupied the Old Police Lockup as a museum, and may have been in residence from as early as the mid-1970s. In 1981, the museum moved into the old Customs House. This move was made possible by the construction of a new Customs House on the site of the original courthouse.

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, pp. 35-7.

<sup>12</sup> *From Shinju to Shinju*, a collection of articles published in the Broome News Review, 1978-79, Artlook, n.d, pp. 5-6. This information taken from Dept of Corrections annual reports.

<sup>13</sup> Published photograph with caption, Battye Library 77218P.

<sup>14</sup> Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives, Paper 3, *Votes & Proceedings of the West Australian Parliament*, 1905; *From Shinju to Shinju*, *op cit*.

<sup>15</sup> PWD plans 15173, *op cit* & August 1916. See supporting material.

<sup>16</sup> Information supplied by Val Burton, Broome Historical Society.

<sup>17</sup> CAMS, Plan 30/520/0, 1965.

<sup>18</sup> *From Shinju to Shinju*, *op cit*.

<sup>19</sup> *West Australian Government Gazette*, 21 April 1978, p. 223.

The place was taken over by the local community radio station for a few years. The place was then unoccupied for a while.<sup>20</sup>

In 1994, the Commonwealth Government had the place renovated and restored under the direction of Australian Estate Management, Darwin. The portion of Lot 19 on which *Old Police Lockup and Boab Tree* is situated was delineated Lot 1, on Diagram 90609, and leased to the Shire of Broome.<sup>21</sup> The Shire then leased out the place for commercial use. The Freedom Café, a youth drop in centre, operated from the place. A blacksmith business, Overwrought, specialising in wrought iron work, operated a forge from a corrugated iron stall in front of the place and exhibited work in the Café. The Freedom Café closed in 1998 and, in 1999, the place is unoccupied.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Boab Tree**

In 1897, Police officer Herbert Thomas planted a boab (*Adansonia gregorii*) tree on the Carnarvon Street verge to honour the birth of his son, Frederick, on 3 March that year. Frederick was born at the Police Quarters, and the boab tree was near the corner of that building (no longer extant).<sup>23</sup> The tree is also directly in front of the entrance to the Old Police Lockup. Officer Thomas was transferred out of Broome a few years later.<sup>24</sup> On 28 July 1916, Frederick Thomas was killed in France at the Battle of Pozieres.<sup>25</sup>

In 1920, Herbert Thomas returned to Broome as Police Inspector and senior officer. In December that year, a race riot erupted between the Japanese and Koepangers. The riot lasted for three days, and claimed the lives of two Japanese and one Koepanger. The riot also coincided with a severe heatwave. Inspector Thomas remained on duty for the three days, without eating or sleeping and on the evening of the third day he collapsed and died. A newspaper report at the time stated that he was 'a lover of peace who had made every endeavour to have the local trouble overcome by peaceful means, and was much disappointed with the result'. He was 54 years of age and left a wife and ten children.<sup>26</sup>

The boab tree is regarded by Broome residents as a memorial to both Frederick and Herbert Thomas, and a plaque and explanatory sign have been erected on the site. *Old Police Lockup and Boab Tree*, is a site on the Broome Heritage Trail.<sup>27</sup>

## **13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

Lot 1, a portion of Lot 19, on which *Old Police Lockup and Boab Tree* is located, has a narrow street frontage to Carnarvon Street and is situated at the southern end of the Broome town centre. The lot has an east-west orientation with the building situated well back on the block. The spreading branches of the boab tree which was planted to commemorate the birth of Fred Thomas, a commemorative plaque and a heritage trail signboard are situated on the Carnarvon Street verge, partially obscuring the view of the building from the street. A small shed is located in front of the Old Police

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<sup>20</sup> Information from Broome Historical Society; *Broome Advertiser*, 2 June 1994, pp. 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> Certificates of Title Vol. 1579 Fol. 774, 12 December 1980 & Vol. 2069 Fol. 768, 15 March 1996.

<sup>22</sup> *Broome Advertiser*, 2 June 1994, op cit; physical inspection.

<sup>23</sup> *Broome Heritage Trail*, WA Heritage Commission, 1988, pp. 16-17.

<sup>24</sup> *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1899-1901.

<sup>25</sup> *Broome Heritage Trail*, op cit.

<sup>26</sup> *Nor-West Echo*, 25 December 1920, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Broome Heritage Trail*, op cit.

Lockup and separate sanitary facilities are sited along the south boundary, in a courtyard at the rear of the lot.

The unsophisticated form and detailing of the place is most closely associated with the Victorian Georgian style.<sup>28</sup> The uncontrived order and harmonious proportions are characteristics of this style, although the construction date falls outside of the time period. The single storey building has a simple rectangular form and is constructed with concrete which has been rendered and painted. The 450mm thick walls are evidence of the level of security required for the original use of the building as a lockup. The corrugated iron roof has gable ends facing east and west with corrugated iron cladding and a central timber louvre ventilator in the gable infill. High level windows with an expressed sill are spaced at regular intervals along the north and south elevations. Rectangular fanlights above the front and rear doors allow additional natural light into the interior.

The internal layout comprises an L-shaped corridor which wraps around the south and west sides of the building giving access to the three former cells and a toilet which has been incorporated in the corridor at the rear. The concrete floor is at a lower level than the paved entrance to the building with a step down at the front door in the east elevation. A rear door is located in the west elevation, at the opposite end of the main corridor. The spacing of the high level windows has been determined by the internal layout with one window located centrally in the north wall of each cell. This spacing is reflected in the south elevation. Walls of the cells have been plastered and painted and the corrugated iron ceiling is divided into three vaults. The west end cell has been fitted out with commercial kitchen equipment and the walls clad with 'ripple iron'.

The former use of the place as police lockup is evident in the thick walls, cast iron bars of the cell doors, and bars on the windows. Remnant pegs in the floor immediately outside the cell gates indicate the former existence of additional security doors to each cell. This is confirmed by drawings of the Public Works Department.<sup>29</sup> Only the cells have a ceiling although wire mesh has been placed above the corridor at ceiling level so that the timber truss roof framing and underside of the decking is apparent. Metal ventilator faces of differing patterns are evident in the cell and corridor walls.

Evidence of a former, small structure with a pitched roof attached to the western end of the building is apparent in the west elevation beneath the gable infill. Drawings confirm the former existence of an earth closet in this location.<sup>30</sup> It is not known when this structure was removed.

A wall on the south boundary encloses the paved courtyard behind *Old Police Lockup, Broome* with a timber panelled gate providing security between front and rear of the block. Male and female toilets have been constructed behind the wall to the south with a free-standing timber panelled privacy screen in front. The arched openings to each toilet are accentuated with face brick soldier course and the top of the wall has a brick capping. The painted white walls and terracotta colour brick features introduce characteristics of a Mediterranean style to the place.

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<sup>28</sup> Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989, pp. 42-45.

<sup>29</sup> PWD drawing 3116A, Proposed Station and Quarters. Detail of Grill and Doors to Cell, 1892.

<sup>30</sup> PWD plans 15173, op cit.

With the exception of the small structure at the rear of the building, which is no longer extant although evidence of its existence still remains, the place is highly representative of the original form. A plaque inside the front door records that renovations to the building were completed in 1994 and consequently the place is in good condition. It is likely that new roof cladding, timber doors and windows and rear toilets were part of this refurbishment. The building was used as recently as late in 1998 and although unoccupied at the time of inspection, still housed office and café equipment.

Construction drawings for the small structure in front of the Old Police Lockup were approved by the shire council in June 1994.<sup>31</sup> The drawings record that the structure was to be used as a Blacksmith's Display and detail a steel framed rectangular structure with Custom Orb sheeting to the lower part of the walls and mesh above. Folding security gates in the south elevation and a pressed metal Colorbond shutter in the north elevation secure the place when not in use. The structure is in sound condition.

### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

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### **13.4 REFERENCES**

No key references.

### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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<sup>31</sup> Drawing HOW 031-094 S-1 Proposed Blacksmiths Display Lot 19, Carnarvon Street, Broome, from Shire of Broome.