



**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)

- 2.5 Promoting settlement
- 3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries
- 5.8 Working on the land
- 8.10.5 Advancing knowledge in science and technology

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 106 Workers
- 108 Government policy
- 301 Grazing, pastoralism & dairying
- 302 Rural industry & market gardening
- 402 Education & science

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr), comprising predominantly vernacular residential and utilitarian farm buildings, set in a cleared and periodically cultivated mallee farm landscape, is a good example of a rural cultural environment in the Wheatbelt region. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) is illustrative of State Government support for land settlement and agricultural advancement, with various schemes developed since the late 1880s to improve farming conditions and encourage people to take up agricultural land. (Criterion 2.1)

* 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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) was established to provide support for farmers on the alkaline soils of the Southern Mallee and to assist further land settlement under the 3500 Farms Scheme, and was successful in providing scientific information to enable agricultural production in mallee areas. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) was associated with the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and its officers from its establishment in 1926 to its closure in the late 1990s. (Criterion 2.3)

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) was the venue of important research into the development of pastures on the alkaline soils of the Southern Mallee and soils subject to salinity. (Criterion 2.4)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) has scientific value for its role as a research station specialising in the mallee district, especially its work in propagating Wimmera Rye Grass, which when used with superphosphates was a highly successful pasture grass in mallee areas. (Criterion 3.2)

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) is valued by the farmers of the Salmon Gums/Esperance district for its scientific contribution to the establishment of pastures on alkaline and saline soils, and the relationship of Departmental staff with the local community of Salmon Gums, as demonstrated by strong local opposition to the proposed downgrading of the Station in 1986. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) is representative of an interwar research station in Western Australia that has been largely developed post World War II. (Criterion 6.1)

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) represents an agricultural research station that embodies government initiatives to support farming in the difficult mallee area of the State, and illustrates a way of life in agricultural research that is no longer practised. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) is generally in poor to fair condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) has retained a moderate degree of integrity. The place has been vacant and predominantly unused for several years, although the 1968 Worker's Quarters and 1970 New Manager's Quarters continue to provide a residential function.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The original structure, form and fabric of the elements that comprise *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* are mostly intact, with some intervention in the Stables, where the horse stalls were removed, an exterior wall added to enclose the former stall area, and steel roof trusses inserted. Minimal intervention is evident in the quarters with only an interior wall removed in the Married Man's Quarters (1928). *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* demonstrates a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman, Historian and Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant, in February 2008, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) comprises: the site of the single men's quarters (1926); Manager's Quarters (fmr) (concrete block & iron roof, 1928); Married Man's Quarters (concrete block & iron roof, 1928); Stables (timber, fibro, steel and iron, 1928, 1965); Shearing Shed (steel, c.1960); Worker's Quarters (fibro, iron roof, 1968); Technical Officer's Quarters (fibro, iron roof, 1970); New Manager's House (fibro, iron roof, c.1970); two machinery sheds (steel & iron, 1960s); Office/Conference Room (c.1970s), Swimming Pool (c.1970s); engine room, several silos, weather station, eastern road lined with Mallee (1965), and various other elements.

In 1894, the Government established the Bureau of Agriculture (later Department of Agriculture) to assist in opening up the State to farming and increased wheat production. One of the Bureau's first resolutions involved a request to the Government to finance the establishment of agricultural colleges and experimental farms.¹

Settlement had begun in the Southern Mallee country between Esperance and Norseman as early as 1910, with the aid of direct government assistance, but the mallee country had long been regarded as a special problem area and there were doubts about the suitability of the alkaline soils for agriculture. Lack of a railway made it difficult for settlers to market wheat at a profit, with a railway line terminus being located approximately 100 kms each way, south to Esperance and north to Norseman. In 1912, G. L. Sutton was appointed to administer Government financial assistance to the Esperance mallee settlers, but 'because of the peculiar difficulties and remoteness of the area, and the adverse conditions after 1912, the scheme was a failure'.²

The 1917 Report of the Royal Commission on the Mallee Belt and Esperance Lands, however, decided that the area could and should be developed and the Agricultural Bank was persuaded to make advances to settlers in the area. In the 1920s, development proceeded rapidly amidst a general high demand for

¹ *Bureau of Agriculture Journal*, 7 August 1894, p. 132. For the background to the development of Research Stations in WA refer to Heritage Council assessment documentation P16601 Frank Wise Institute, Kununurra, P05566 Avondale Research Station and P03869 Gascoyne Research Station and Kelsall Binet Architects & Bizzaca and Assoc., *Thematic History and Preliminary Heritage Assessment of Agricultural Research Stations*, June 2000.

² Glynn, Sean, *Government Policy and Agricultural Development: A study of the role of government in the development of the Western Australian wheat belt, 1900-1930*, UWA Press, 1975, p.125;

agricultural lands in the state that saw more and more 'light lands' - those considered marginal, or even unsuitable for agriculture - thrown open for selection. Despite some misgivings from agricultural advisers the general feeling was one of optimism and faith in modern methods.³

In 1920, the Agriculture Department decided it was necessary to turn its attention to the issues of the Esperance district and that an experimental farm should be started to carry out experiments in wheat growing. The first suggestion for a research station in the area had been made by G. L. Sutton as early as 1915, prompted by the prospect of a railway and increased settlement, and Fitzgerald Locations 26, 41, 74 and 81 had been set aside as possible future sites. Criteria for a desirable site included the need to be near a town so that those visiting could get accommodation, the land must be typical of the area, and it must be near a railway line so travellers could see the progress being made from time to time.⁴

The railway had still not eventuated by 1920, and Commissioner Sutton again expressed his support for a research station for the region, claiming that the information required for farming in the district could not be acquired by any other means than a local experimental farm, and that its function should be the same as the Merredin Farm, with little cost to the State if it provided seed wheat to the district. The establishment of *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was approved in principle but 'held in abeyance' as the expense had not been placed on the current treasury estimates.⁵

In 1921, the position of Director of Agriculture was re-established and G. L. Sutton was appointed to the post. Despite his further lobbying of his Minister in 1921, when two new possible sites were reserved, and again in 1924, the matter of establishing *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* remained on hold.⁶

In January 1925, Sid Hayes, Secretary of the Mallee District Settlers Association centred at Salmon Gums, wrote to local MLA Thomas Walker pointing out the deficiencies of the Agriculture Department's Journal in that it did not provide information relevant to the mallee district, which was different regarding climate and soil conditions. The farmers wanted relevant information as they were struggling. Director Sutton again asked the Minister for authority to establish the research station.⁷

In September 1925, the Esperance-Salmon Gums railway line was opened and in March 1926, Agriculture Minister M. F. Troy, local MLA and Speaker T. Walker, and G. L. Sutton spent a week inspecting the prospects of the district between Esperance and Norseman, returning with glowing accounts for its future while acknowledging its problems.⁸

³ Glynn, Sean, op cit, p. 125; G. H. Burvill *Agriculture in Western Australia: 150 years of development and achievement, 1829-1979*, UWA Press, 1979, p. 33. Glynn provides a more critical analysis of the way development of the wheatbelt was handled than does Burvill, who was an agricultural officer with the Department.

⁴ Correspondence 4 February 1915, G. L. Sutton to the Under Secretary for Agriculture, Agriculture Dept file, 'Salmon Gums, establishment', SROWA, WAS 135 CONS 1545 Item 1955/0877.

⁵ Correspondence 6 July 1920, Agriculture Dept file, Item 1955/0877, op cit.

⁶ Correspondence, 1921 & 1924, Agriculture Dept file, Item 1955/0877, op cit.

⁷ Correspondence, Agriculture Dept file, Item 1955/0877, op cit.

⁸ Gunzberg, A. & Austin, J., *Rails Through the Bush*, Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Melbourne, 1997, p. 208; Article 'Big granary future of Esperance. Mr Troy enthusiastic. Bright prophesy', *Daily News*, 25 March 1926.

The impetus at that time was the 3500 Farms Scheme, which was to see 3500 farms of around 1,000 acres each established east of Lake Grace to the rabbit proof fence and south to Ravensthorpe and Esperance, under the Development and Migration Agreement with Great Britain. There was a lot of preliminary work going on with surveys for a railway line to Narembene, PWD parties out looking for water and dam sites, road and land surveys, and a plant survey to ascertain local rainfall. The Scheme ground to a halt when high salinity levels were found, but the establishment of *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was underway in the meantime.⁹

After much consideration, Fitzgerald Locations 240-242 were chosen as the site, and an area with a belt of larger timber on a slight rise located on Location 241 was selected as the site of the buildings and horse paddock. While it was not quite the centre of the landholding, which was desirable for ease of access to work in all parts of the property, it was considered close enough.¹⁰

In the 1926-1927 year, the first work of developing *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was undertaken. Some 578 acres of scrub was rolled and burned and 195 acres planted with wheat and oats for fodder and seed for the following year, with possibly a small quantity of the grain to be made available to settlers for seed purposes. Single men's quarters were erected (not extant), and a 2,000 cubic yard tank (dam) was excavated by contract and covered with bush timber by Farm staff. The following year an eight-horse Stable, with chaff and engine-room attached, an Implement Shed, Manager's Residence and one teamster's residence (Married Man's Quarters) were built. Fencing of the cleared areas and the horse-feed paddock entailed construction of 5.5 miles of fence, erected by Farm staff and casual labour.¹¹ Power for farm work was provided by horses, mostly Clydesdales, as no motorised farm equipment or transport was provided.¹²

Pasture species and fertiliser experiments were carried out from the beginning of the establishment of *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)*. Wimmera ryegrass established with superphosphate proved to be a valuable plant as a pasture on the Kumarl clay and Kopi soil types, which were both unsuitable for cereal crops. Other trial plants that were showing promise were the salt tolerant plants, Creeping Salt Bush (*Atriplex semibaccatum*) and American Burr (*Bassia hyssopifolia*). Trials for wheat were concentrated on the Circle Valley Sands, which were found to produce well after deep fallowing, the main problem being low rainfall.¹³

In 1935, *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* had the smallest acreage under cultivation of the seven Research Stations in the Wheatbelt, with 164 acres compared to between 237 and 592 acres, and the smallest of three with areas under fodder or non-cereal crops (34 acres compared to 61 and 105 acres).¹⁴ In that year, there was a reorganisation to bring the general plan of work - exclusive of experimental work - into line with what was recommended for the farmer, to

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- 9 Throssell, George Ledsam, Agricultural Advisor 1921-1965, Oral History 330, Battye Library, pp. 81-88; Kelsall Binet & Bizzaca, op cit, p. 6 & Salmon Gums Research Station data sheets.
 - 10 Correspondence, 4 May 1926, Superintendent of Wheat Farms, I. Thomas, Agriculture Dept file, Item 1955/0877, op cit.
 - 11 Agriculture Dept, *Annual Report*, 1926-27, p. 37, 1927-28, p. 43 & 1928-29, p. 41.
 - 12 *Faith, hope and reality: Esperance 1895-1995*, Esperance Shire Council 1995, pp. 165-166.
 - 13 Agriculture Department, *Annual Report*, 1938, p. 6; Agriculture Dept, *Salmon Gums Research Station Field Day*, 13 October 1964, p. 1.
 - 14 Agriculture Dept, *Annual Report*, 1936-36, p. 5.

better mirror life and work on a commercially run farm. This required a larger area for wheat, and also required fencing, additional water supply, sheep yard and dips, and sheep. To provide more land, the abandoned farm on the adjacent Location 246 was acquired and added to the landholding.¹⁵

Labour was in short supply during and immediately following World War II and maintenance was not carried out. *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* had accommodation for only one married man apart from the manager, but in 1946 the station employed a second married man who had to live in the Salmon Gums town. This was only approved by the Superintendent of Wheat Farming because of the labour shortage, which meant there were no single men available for the position. In normal circumstances the Station would have employed a single man to fit the available accommodation. When Bernie Norris joined the staff of *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* as a general farmhand in 1948, he found the only other staff member at that time was the manager, Jesse Tudor. A third staff member, Jack Backman, with his wife and family, arrived a few months later. *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* still did not have a tractor or any other petrol driven vehicle and the work was done with some twenty horses. Heavy haulage of hay or bagged grain was by a four-wheeled wagon pulled by three to six horses, and a three-horse team was used to cut hay with a binder. Other work was done with a horse and cart, or just a horse.¹⁶

From the Interwar years, the role of the Department of Agriculture's State farms was expanded to provide research facilities, and in 1935 they were officially renamed 'research stations' rather than 'experimental farms'. Education was provided for farmers, with new techniques and scientific developments demonstrated at field days, often held annually.¹⁷

The provision of Research Stations was seen as significant for the agricultural development of marginal farming areas. The work at Salmon Gums and Wongan Hills in the 1930s and 1940s had provided information to enable a suitable balance of wheat and sheep production on mallee land. The farming community at Esperance, seeing the value of this work in other areas, advocated for their own Research Station.¹⁸ In 1949, the Esperance Downs Research Station was opened as an out-station of *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)*, and motor-driven equipment was provided for the first time. This included a Caterpillar tractor, Bedford truck, 6-wheel tractor, an Austin utility and a caravan. The equipment was moved back and forth between Esperance Downs and Salmon Gums with the caravan used for living quarters while at the out-station. The farm horses were sold.¹⁹ Esperance Downs later became a Research Station in its own right.

In 1952, when R. Walcroft, a married man with a wife and three children, successfully applied for the position of general farmhand at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)*, he was informed that, while quarters were provided for the single men who had to batch for themselves, 'it is desired that the married men provide board for these single men by arrangement between themselves',

15 Agriculture Dept file, 'Salmon Gums Research Station', SROWA, WAS 135 CONS 3603 Item 64-1787 Vol. 1.

16 *Faith, hope and reality: Esperance 1895-1995*, Esperance Shire Council 1995, pp. 165-166.

17 Kelsall Binet Architects & Kristy Bizzaca & Associates, op cit, p. 6.

18 Rintoul, J. *Esperance: Yesterday and Today*, printed for the Esperance Shire Council, Fourth Edition, 1986, pp.125-27.

19 *Faith, hope and reality: Esperance 1895-1995*, op cit.

and in fact, that it was a 'condition of employment' that married men 'are prepared to give an undertaking to board up to 2 single men when required'.²⁰ In effect of course, it was the wife who was required to cook, wash and iron for the one or two extra men.

The Wimmera ryegrass pasture management demonstration plots had been a special feature at the annual field days since the establishment of the place, and the Department felt it could justly claim that the results at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* were largely responsible for the development of fine pastures on the farms in the district. Many species of legumes were also tested over the years, with Barrel Medic, a clover, showing encouraging results from plots planted in the late 1940s and featuring in a number of farms by the early 1950s.²¹

Development of *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* in the late 1950s-early 1960s, included the provision of a Chamberlain 14 disc plough, air compressor, 4-wheel tractor, 3-ton truck, grain silos and auger, a 10-foot header, 35hp tractor, 4-furrow disc plough, 4-furrow Mouldboard plough and a 12-run disc drill. A shearing shed and workshop were constructed at this time. In the early 1960s, programmes at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* were still concentrating on the two successful pasture grasses with most of the cleared land dedicated to these crops. Some 24,000 acres of land were cleared in the district during 1961, and it was considered that the future of the district rested more on utilising land for stock than for cereal crops. Location 242, adjacent to the main road, was cleared to be planted with demonstration plots in various stages to present to the travelling public. A new road to the Homestead Block was cut through the middle of the paddock, and signs were put at both main road entrances, 'as few people visiting to inspect land know the research station is there'.²²

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) had carried about 500 sheep in the summer but with improved pastures and better water supplies the numbers had been increased to 1000.

Staffing was a problem at this time, however, as no improvements had been made to the accommodation. There had been two managers in five years, while twelve waged employees had been engaged and ten had ceased employment. Staff from Esperance Downs Research Station had been temporarily allocated to make up the labour shortage. A contract was let for repairs and renovations, which provided some basic improvements such as flyscreens to the residences, and new toilet facilities plus a new floor in the shearing shed. The purchase of a new harvester required construction of a new machinery shed, as the harvester was too tall to fit into any of the existing sheds.²³

In 1965, the Stables were renovated at a cost of £1,500 to provide an office and storeroom in the former stallion box and harness room. The storeroom was lined with shelves and the office was lined with asbestos sheeting and had a new timber floor installed. The timber posts of the horse stalls were removed to

20 Correspondence, 18 March 1952, Agriculture Dept file, Item 64-1787 Vol. 1, op cit.

21 Correspondence, 14 September 1955, Agriculture Dept file, Item 64-1787 Vol. 1, op cit.

22 Correspondence, 24 May 1961 & 23 July 1962, Agriculture Dept file, Item 64-1787 Vol. 1, op cit.

23 Agriculture Dept file, 'Salmon Gums Research Station, buildings', SROWA, WAS 135 CONS 1559 Item 1963/1018.

provide an open area for a bulk store, requiring new trusses to support the roof over the entire span. A concrete floor was installed in that area.²⁴

A second 1200 bushel grain silo and portable auger for reserves of supplementary feed were required for the increased number of sheep, as 'the pasture seasons were variable'.²⁵ A house for a field assistant (Worker's Quarters) was built in 1968, located at the southern end of the Homestead site on the new entry road, and the New Manager's Quarters was built in 1970 located to the north on the original entry road. These were Housing Commission type T3 110B houses.²⁶ Technical Officer's Quarters were also completed in 1970, immediately east of the 1926 Single Men's Quarters. These were built to a standard plan, similar to the quarters provided around this time at the Merredin and Gascoyne research stations.²⁷

In 1973-74, a 120-tonne underground grain storage pit was put down at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* as a trial, following a smaller test pit at Merredin. The pit was lined with plastic sheeting and was designed to deplete the oxygen required for infestations that affected the quality of stored grain. Most grain in the Salmon Gums pit was satisfactory after 3.5 years.²⁸

In 1986, *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was mooted for downgrading as a budgetary measure. Rather than continue to cut the budget for all operations, consideration was being given to changing the place from a research station to a demonstration property operating on a commercial basis.²⁹ The threat of closure brought a rapid response against the measure from the Department, the Salmon Gums Research Station Advisory Committee, and Salmon Gums businesses and farmers. It was argued that *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was the only research station in the state representing the interests of about 250 individual rural settlements on 1.5 million hectares of the alkaline soils of the south eastern wheatbelt. Similar research could not be done from Esperance Downs Station without an increase in staff and equipment. Initial success in the control of rhizoctonia and takeall, which were major cereal problems in the State were claimed to have originated at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)*.³⁰

Businesses in the town rued the loss of the five staff members and their families from the district and joined in the protest. Four days after the initial announcement, the decision to close *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was reversed, with the plant breeding work to be phased out instead. The rapid turnaround was welcomed but viewed with some cynicism.³¹

The reprieve was short lived. In February 1994 it was announced that the Department would cease research at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* and instead provide more mobile research support teams to service the region. Research would continue on private properties and leased land. This format had proved successful in the Geraldton region, where research station staff were

24 Correspondence 20 January 1965, Agriculture Dept file, Item 1963/1018, op cit.

25 Agriculture Dept file, SROWA, Item 1963/1018, op cit.

26 Correspondence 20 July 1965, Agriculture Dept file, Item 1963/1018, op cit.

27 Agriculture Dept file, 'Salmon Gums, technical officer's quarters', SROWA, WAS 82 CONS 6781 Item 1968/1174; HCWA assessment documentation for P6839 Gascoyne Research Station.

28 Agriculture Dept, *Annual Report*, 1977, p. 32.

29 Agriculture Dept file, Ministerial draft from C. M. Francis, Chief of Plant Division, 7 April 1987.

30 Correspondence, Agriculture Dept file, Item 64-1787 Vol. 1, op cit.

31 'The day they tried to close down the SGRS', *Esperance Express*, 7 November 1986, pp. 2-4.

used in conjunction with local Departmental district office staff. *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* research staff were to work from the Esperance Downs Research Station and Esperance Agricultural Centre, with work spread more widely across the Esperance mallee region.³² This was part of a general process of property rationalisation by the Department which affected the stations at Swan, Stoneville, Wokalup and Salmon Gums. 'Work and demands had diminished at Wokalup and Salmon Gums due to lack of diversity of soil types, conditions and locations'.³³ Work in areas with salinity problems was ongoing at the Wongan Hills Research Station.³⁴

In 2001, *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was transferred to the Education Department for use as part of the Esperance Farm Training Centre, which was attached to the Esperance Senior High School and the WA College of Agriculture. *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was one of three main locations utilised by the Farm Training Centre, but the main focus was on the Demo Block in Esperance and the Escholar Farm, located only 30kms from Esperance. The 1968 Worker's Quarters and 1970 New Manager's Quarters at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* were used for accommodation when courses were conducted at the place, but the rest of the buildings were falling into disrepair with little or no maintenance. Distance from Esperance was clearly a factor in its lesser use.³⁵

In 2008, the Education Department no longer makes use of *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* and the place is listed for disposal. The place is vacant except for the 1968 Worker's Quarters and 1970 New Manager's Quarters, which are rented privately.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) is located west of the town of Salmon Gums, 105 kilometres north of Esperance. Accessed off Salmon Gums West Road, 2 kilometres west of the town, a gravel track south leads directly to the area where the buildings and other farm elements are located, with cropped paddock areas on the east, and natural bushland on the west. Approximately 500 metres along the access road, from Salmon Gums West Road is the New Manager's Quarters on the east side. A further several hundred metres, and the Manager's Quarters (fmr) is located on the west side of the track, and another 50 metres or so, at the juncture of a track to the west, the Married Man's Quarters is located on the south-west corner facing east. On the south side of the Married Man's Quarters is the site of the Single Men's Quarters, delineated only by a front fence, and then the Technical Officers' Quarters at the 'T' junction of the original entry road to the east. The Worker's Quarters are located on the east side of the former entry road.

The track to the west, located between the Manager's Quarters (fmr) and Married Man's Quarters, leads to a group of buildings only 50 metres west of the intersection. On the north side is a small fenced area with the timber weather station, 10 metres beyond that, is the remains of the swimming pool, and another 20 metres or so is the c.1970s office/conference room, immediately next to the

32 Agriculture Dept, Media release, 'Department to rationalise research station activities', 24 February 1994.

33 Kelsall Binet Architects & Kristy Bizzaca & Assoc, op cit, pp. 31-32.

34 Agriculture Dept website www.agric.wa.gov.au.

35 Website for Esperance Farm Training Centre & information provided; site visit.

machinery shed (north). Machinery shed (west) meets the north shed at right angles forming an expansive gravelled forecourt to both sheds. That area is further enclosed by the Stables to the south. The track veers south-west around the Stables and continues west with a substantial silo structure 50 metres west of the Stables. On the south side of the Stables, 100 metres or so, is the shearing shed, accessed along the east side. There is also a substantial gravelled area south of the shearing shed. The timber holding pens are located immediately to the north and east of the shearing shed. The engine room is located opposite the weather station on the other side of the track.

The buildings on the site are predominantly vernacular in style. The dwellings are mainly quarters that were purposely designed for on site residential use by government employees. Similarly the Stables and extension, shearing shed, office and machinery sheds are in the operational area and specific to their functional purposes.

Manager's Quarter's (fmr) (1928)

Located on the west side of the north south access road, Manager's Quarters (fmr) are east of the operational area, facing east. The dwelling is located centrally on a delineated fenced site. The front fence is timber framed chain link mesh with a central pedestrian opening. The remaining fences are 'chicken wire' to the rear and south side and corrugated fibro cement to the north boundary. A concrete pathway leads from the front pedestrian opening and gate, to the front verandah and central entry door. The dwelling is a two-room fronted asymmetrical building with a protruding gable and return verandah, a vernacular design with some elements of Interwar Californian Bungalow style. It is a concrete block construction detailed in face block work with flush joints and a paint finish. The roof is gabled with front and rear gable features at right angles to the main gable pavilion, and break pitch over the front and rear verandahs. The roof is clad with the original short sheets of corrugated iron that have been painted. The original timber framed double hung windows with six-pane sashes remain insitu. The front verandah supported by square timber posts, paired on the corners, is timber, as are the floors throughout. On the interior, the hard plaster walls, plasterboard ceilings and stained jarrah framing remains except for the skirtings that have been removed throughout. The fireplace in the lounge room has an arched firebox and the mantelpiece has been removed. The kitchen fireplace backs onto it, and is tiled, as are the kitchen walls in the vicinity of the simple cupboard and bench fitout. The exterior doors are ledge and brace. The other interior doors have been removed, although the doors off the rear verandah into the kitchen and laundry are both vertical panelled jarrah sliding doors. The toilet off the back verandah is lined with fibro cement cladding.

There is a zincalume clad steel framed gable garage located in the rear of the delineated yard, in the north-west corner. The place is vacant. Manager's Quarter's (fmr) is in poor condition. The roof, walls and exterior timber detailing has flaking paint and reveals bare materials extensively. The timber front verandah is badly deteriorated and in a dangerous condition. On the interior, the floors appear sound but the walls have several vertical cracks, particularly in the vicinity of the fireplace. Windows on the south wall have collapsed and the front window is in a similar condition.

Married Man's Quarters (1928)

Located on the west side of the north south access road, 50 metres south of the Manager's Quarter's (fmr) and on the south-west corner of the track leading west to the operational area, the Married Man's Quarters faces east. It is located central on a delineated fenced site. The front fence is timber framed weld mesh with a central pedestrian opening. The remaining fences are 'chicken wire' to the rear and south side and corrugated fibro cement to the north boundary. A concrete pathway leads from the front pedestrian opening and gate, to the front verandah and central entry door. The dwelling is a symmetrical two-room fronted building with a surrounding verandah that is enclosed at the rear on each side, in a vernacular style with elements of Federation Bungalow style, despite its Interwar construction date. It is a concrete block construction detailed in face block work with flush joints and a paint finish. The roof is a single hipped roof, breaking pitch over the perimeter verandah. The roof is clad with the original short sheets of corrugated iron that have been painted. The original timber framed windows remain insitu except the verandah enclosure room on the south side where the window and frame have disintegrated. The windows are double awning sashes with each sash comprising three vertical glazed panels. The verandah is supported by square timber posts, and has a concrete floor. On the interior, the hard plaster walls, plasterboard ceilings and stained jarrah framing remains, although some framing has been painted. The floors are tongue and groove timber boards although the living room and kitchen have flat sheet boards over. Evidence reveals that the wall between the living room and dining room has been removed. The fireplace in the front room is truncated and has an arched firebox and the mantelpiece has been removed. The kitchen fireplace backs onto it, and is tiled. The kitchen has a simple cupboard and bench fitout. The toilet off the back verandah is lined with fibro cement cladding.

There is a zincalume clad steel framed gable garage located in the rear of the delineated yard, in the north-west corner, and a low level series of timber framed chicken wire cages are located along the rear fence. The place is vacant. Married Man's Quarters is in poor condition. The roof, walls and exterior timber detailing has flaking paint and reveals bare materials extensively. On the interior, the floors appear sound, although two rooms have boarding over. There are several vertical cracks, the most significant on the rear wall.

Stables (1928, 1965)

Located 100 metres west of the Married Man's Quarters, the Stables are central within the operational area. They are a vernacular building with elements of Interwar Carpenter Gothic style design. A double volume room is the axis for the single storey 'L' plan form building that has a north wing and a west wing. The west wing is as constructed, with weatherboard cladding on a timber frame with a gable corrugated iron roof, with a simple hipped roof over the double volume section. The roof has been painted. The windows are timber framed double sashes awning from the base, with each sash comprising three vertical glazed panels. The interior is mostly unlined unpainted timbers although horizontal boards form a dado around most walls. The floor is concrete. Doors are ledge and brace. The double volume room has a first floor level platform around the west and south sides with a simple metal ladder access, but otherwise is an open space. The north wing is steel framed and mostly weatherboard clad although there are flat sheets of fibre cement on the north wall and painted corrugated iron double width sliding doors. The skillion roof is also clad with painted corrugated iron over the pipe metal truss. The floor is concrete except for the raised area of

the timber framed offices at the east end. The main section is unlined on the interior and has a series of three blackboards on the north wall flanked each end by the sliding doors.

There is an expansive round concrete water tank on the south side of the extension.

The Stables are in poor condition. The exterior timber walls are almost bare of paint on the original stables section, and the timber is seriously weathered. On the interior, the timber walls and floors are damaged throughout the south wing of the original stables. The extension is in fair condition.

Shearing shed (c.1960)

Located 100 metres south of the Stables, it is an expansive steel framed and clad structure with timber holding yards on the north side and across the front (east), with a timber ramp access on the east. Clad with unpainted corrugated iron, it has a split skillion roof with clerestory of fixed glazing facing south. Window openings are small sets of timber-framed louvres. The entire building is elevated off the ground and has spaced timber floorboards throughout. Metal gates and fences form the interior fitout. It is in fair condition.

Technical Officers' Quarters (1970)

Located 50 metres south of Married Man's Quarters, with the site of the single men's quarters between, the Technical Officers' quarters is a simple rectangular pavilion of single rooms opening onto a north verandah, with a 'T' rectangle providing the ablution facilities. The building is elevated off the ground, and is clad with flat sheets of painted fibrocement, exterior and interior, and has a simple low pitched gable roof clad with corrugated iron. The windows central to each room, along the south wall, are aluminium framed double hung sashes. Opening onto the verandah each room has a full height window section next to a flush panel door. The interior has flat-boarded floors and the verandah is concrete supported by round slender steel posts. There is a double carport section at the east end under the main roof. The rooms contain the original basic pair of twin beds fitouts.

Technical Officers' Quarters are in fair condition.

Worker's Quarters (1968) and New Manager's Quarters (1970)

Both quarters are located east of the access entry road, with the New Manager's Quarters north of the main group of buildings, located on the edge of the paddock. Both are aligned on a north south axis. Each place sits within a delineated fenced area. The New Manager's Quarters are sited at an offset angle in comparison to all other grid-aligned buildings on the site. It seems that both quarters are the same design, although the New Manager's Quarters has an extensive timber framed shade cloth structure across the front. Both quarters are elevated off the ground, clad with fibrocement sheeting, have simple low pitched pavilion gable roofs clad with corrugated iron, timber framed casement windows, a front verandah, and have adjacent steel framed and clad garages.

Both quarters are occupied and in fair condition.

Office/Conference Room (c.1970s)

Located within the operational area, the office is clad with fibrocement sheeting, and has a simple low pitched pavilion gable roof clad with corrugated iron, that extends to form a verandah along the front supported by slender steel posts.

Machinery sheds (c.1960s) north and west

Located immediately east of the office/conference room, the north machinery shed is aligned east west and the west machinery shed is located at right angles on a north south alignment. The sheds both have open fronts to an expansive forecourt to the south and east respectively. At the north-west juncture of the sheds there are two steel framed and clad garage structures. The sheds are expansive steel framed structures with corrugated iron external walls and roof cladding. The north shed has a skillion roof with valance across the open front with open span access. The west shed has a gable pavilion roof.

Both sheds are vacant and in good condition.

Pool (c.1970s)

Immediately east of the office is a small metal fenced area, with a metal framed and clad shed adjacent to a concrete below ground pool. There is evidence of a liner in the vicinity and a steel stair access in the pool.

The pool is unusable and in poor condition.

Engine room

East of the pool, on the opposite side of the track, is a small gable roofed corrugated iron clad shed.

It is in fair condition.

Silos

Located 50 metres west of the Stables, this silo structure is substantial with two large silos and steel framed and clad associated structure.

Smaller silos are located north of the shearing shed.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) was one of five government Research Stations established in the interwar period. The others were Wongan Hills (1923), Avondale (1924), Dampierwah and Yilgarn (1926).³⁶ After World War II, a large number of research stations were established to supplement the five pre-World War I and five interwar research stations previously established in response to the enormous growth of the State and Post War reconstruction and development. These included: Abydos-Woodstock (1947-48); Bramley (1950-52); Wokalup (c.1951); Wembley (1950s); Swan viticulture (1954); Stoneville horticulture (1955); Newdegate (1955); Badgingarra (1959); Medina (1963); Fitzroy Crossing (1965); Manjimup (1967); Mt Barker (1968); and Northam (1969).

Architecture

Generally, house styles at research stations varied little in the first half of the 20th century, but cladding material changed from weatherboard in the early 1900s to

³⁶ Kelsall Binet Architects & Kristy Bizzaca & Associates, op cit, p. 10.

fibrous cement by World War II. Examples of Married Man's Quarters are also found at Wongan Hills, Merredin, Avondale and Esperance Downs.³⁷

The steel-framed, rectangular farm buildings of the later 20th century are common to all the various types of research stations in the State. *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* includes fair representative examples of architectural styles typical at research stations across the State.

Use

Almost all the stations established prior to World War II were for research into wheat and sheep production so their buildings were similar, with wheat silos and shearing sheds, etc, while those established Post War were for more varied uses.³⁸ While *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* was established for the same reason, its main focus soon moved to plant breeding for pastures suitable for the local mallee soils. P05566 *Avondale Research Station* (1926) and P09080 *Merredin State Farm Manager's House (fmr)* (1904), are related places entered on the State Register. Both are associated with wheat and sheep research. P06839 *Gascoyne Research Station*, also on the State Register but associated with tropical agriculture, has similar buildings dating from 1940.

The Public Works Department developed a range of standard plans for barns, stables, machinery sheds and silos and timber-framed houses in the 1920s. The Silo at Avondale was built to a standard plan and examples are found at other research stations, including Wongan Hills and Merredin.³⁹ The silos at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* were erected in the 1960s. There is no indication or mention of them prior to that date in either annual reports or Agriculture Dept archives.

Research stations considered to have 'Some Significance' in the 2000 comparative survey are Wongan Hills, (1923) Salmon Gums (1926), Gascoyne (1940), Kununurra (1945) and Esperance Downs (1951). Wongan Hills is the only other surviving station established during the interwar period and was involved with the development of the Wheatbelt. Gascoyne was associated with the establishment of tropical agriculture in the State and has buildings from the World War II period. Kununurra was associated with the Ord River scheme and Esperance Downs with Post War development.⁴⁰ Kununurra is also entered on the State Register (P16601 *Frank Wise Institute of Tropical Agriculture*), while Wongan Hills and Esperance Downs are both in the HCWA assessment program. The former Research Station at Manjimup (P05976) was also identified in the 2000 survey as being of little or local significance. P16304 Agricultural Research

³⁷ Kelsall Binet Architects & Kristy Bizzaca & Assoc., op cit, pp. 13-15.

³⁸ Kelsall Binet Architects & Kristy Bizzaca & Assoc., op cit, pp. 11-12.

³⁹ Kelsall Binet Architects & Bizzaca and Assoc., op cit, Summary of findings, p. 16.

⁴⁰ Kelsall Binet Architects & Bizzaca and Assoc., op cit, Summary of findings, pp. 16-18. Note that this report identified Merredin and Avondale as being of Considerable Significance, and both have since been entered into the Register.

Station Manager's House (fmr), Denmark, has been assessed and found to be Below Threshold.⁴¹

The Stables erected at *Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr)* in 1928 were to a similar plan as those built in the same year at the Chapman, Merredin and Wongan Hills Farms.⁴² Conversion of the Stables in 1965 was also similar to that undertaken at Merredin.⁴³

Salmon Gums Research Station (fmr) is representative of an interwar agricultural research station in Western Australia that has been largely developed post World War II.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

⁴¹ HCWA assessment documentation and database.

⁴² Agriculture Dept, *Annual Report*, 1928, p. 43.

⁴³ Correspondence 20 January 1965, Agriculture Dept file, Item 1963/1018, op cit.