



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.

The wording of this document has been adapted from Syred Cottage Bejoording Conservation Plan, prepared by Laura Gray, Heritage & Conservation Consultant, for Bejoording Community Group Inc. with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

Additional historical information relating to the *Bejoording Central Square* has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian, and incorporated into this document.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.5 Developing primary production
- 4.5 Making settlements to serve rural Australia
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 107 Settlements
- 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The original dwelling is a good, simple example of an early rural residence in a vernacular style. (Criterion 1.1)

The individual elements of Bejoording Homestead Complex, being the original dwelling (south wing), north wing, blacksmith shop and shed,

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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

smokehouse, and stables, together form a visually cohesive farm group in an attractive treed setting. (Criterion 1.4)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

The development of Bejoording Homestead Complex from a single cottage to a larger residence suitable for an expanding family, with blacksmith forge and smoke house enabling the family to diversify their occupations, and a local school on the property, demonstrates a common pattern of rural development in small settlements in the nineteenth century. (Criterion 2.1)

In keeping with contemporary employment trends in the Colony in the 1860s, the Syred family employed Ticket of Leave men at Bejoording Homestead Complex as both school teachers and farm labourers. (Criterion 2.1)

In the 1870s, Bejoording Homestead Complex was the site of the Bejoording School, which local residents operated privately after the government refused to grant them a school. (Criterion 2.1)

Bejoording Homestead Complex and Central Square was established from the late 1850s as part of an agricultural worker's village designed following an English model to provide small land holdings for farm workers on large estates, organised around a central square or common. Bejoording did not eventuate as a settlement of this nature due to unique social and economic conditions of the Swan River Colony in the nineteenth century, and Bejoording Homestead Complex contains the only remaining buildings associated with the planned settlement. (Criterion 2.2)

Bejoording Homestead Complex has been owned and managed by members of the Syred family since its construction in 1859. William Syred, the first European settler in that area, established his family on the property in 1859. He served on the local Road Board, was a Justice of the Peace, and is known to have held Templar meetings at his home in the early 1880s. George Syred, William's youngest son, grew up in the place and managed it from c.1890, living and working there until his death in 1950. His wife, Ruth owned the property until 1962, when Peter Syred, a nephew of George, bought the property, and retains ownership to 2004. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The archaeological record associated with Bejoording Homestead Complex, including extensive spreads of artifacts across most of the site as identified in the archaeological inspection of March 2002, has the potential to yield information on social, farming and cultural system adaptations necessitated by settlement in a remote area, as it is likely to include artifacts from both the domestic and working life of the farm. (Criterion 3.1)

William Syred was a blacksmith and therefore part of the essential services needed on the Avon Valley agricultural frontier. The blacksmith's forge and shed has the potential to inform on the development and adaptations of this industry. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Bejoording Homestead Complex and Central Square is valued by the local community, and contributes to their sense of place, as the site of the Bejoording school in the 1870s; and by the wider community of the Shire of Toodyay as a visible reminder of the early history of the Avon Valley, as demonstrated by the community efforts in the 1970s, and again in 2000, in facilitating funding for the conservation of the place. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

Bejoording Central Square contributes to the local community's sense of place as a discernible marker of the original Bejoording townsite. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Bejoording Homestead Complex was the first built element of Bejoording, the only known example within Western Australia of a settlement planned as an agricultural worker's village designed around a central square or common following the English model, and *Bejoording Homestead Complex and Central Square* is all that remains of the planned settlement. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Bejoording Homestead Complex and Central Square is a good representative example of a c.1860 workers' settlement in the Avon Valley. (Criterion 6.1)

Bejoording Homestead Complex demonstrates the characteristic development and expansion of a family farm in a remote rural townsite settlement from the late 1850s to the 1870s. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Maintenance has not taken place over a period of many years. The cumulative effects of weathering and lack of maintenance are evident on the exterior and interior. Although some elements are in poor condition, overall Bejoording Homestead Complex is in fair condition.

Bejoording Central Square is in fair to good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The original design and functional intention of the dwelling is clear. Although the original use of outbuilding 2 is unclear, outbuilding 1 clearly was used by stock and the blacksmith, and similarly outbuilding 3 was used by stock before it was relocated to this site. *Bejoording Homestead Complex* has a moderate degree of integrity.

Bejoording Central Square has low to medium integrity. Designed as the central square and water source for a townsite, it has not realised this function due to the non-development of the surrounding town, but it is

possible that its function as a town square could be realised in the future with the development of the Bejoording Subdivision.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The original fabric of the original dwelling (south wing) has been substantially altered externally, while the interior remains remarkably intact. The external mud walls have been rendered over, the shingle roof replaced with corrugated iron, and the flagstone verandah relaid. Similarly the north wing interior is mostly intact although there is evidence of various interventions over the years, including the ceilings. The external mud walls have been rendered over, the south slate verandah relaid and cemented, and the north and west verandah floor and roofs are relatively new additions. Similarly, the external mud walls of outbuilding 2 (smokehouse) have been rendered over.

Bejoording Homestead Complex has a moderate degree of authenticity.

Bejoording Central Square has medium to high authenticity. There has been some degradation in the natural bushland covering due to grazing and road access through the place, but these impacts could be reversed. The place remains, by and large, in its original state.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Gaye Nayton, Archaeologist.

Supporting evidence has been taken from "Syred Cottage, Bejoording, Conservation Management Plan" prepared by Laura Gray, Heritage & Conservation Consultant, for Bejoording Community Group Inc.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the documentary evidence, refer to "Syred Cottage, Bejoording, Conservation Management Plan" prepared by Laura Gray, Heritage & Conservation Consultant, for Bejoording Community Group Inc.

Key sections used: Documentary Evidence (pp.5-17)

Additional Documentary Evidence relating to Bejoording Central Square:

Bejoording Central Square was designed in 1856 as a town square and watering place centred on the Bejoording Spring and comprises a 10-acre (4.0469 ha) parcel of bushland within a farming landscape. The place is located in the centre of the undeveloped Bejoording townsite.

Bejoording is located 16 miles (25 kms) north of Toodyay. The first recorded mention of the place was by George Fletcher Moore in his journal in June 1836, on his first exploratory trip east of Northam in search of an inland sea:

Towards evening we came to a beautiful Valley having a perennial spring gushing out water which flowed for half mile before it was absorbed. This place is called "Bejoording".¹

The name is believed to be the Aboriginal word for 'drowsy place', the English equivalent perhaps being 'sleepy hollow'.²

According to a 1997 DOLA historical tenure search, Bejoording was 'set aside for a future townsite prior to 1839'.³ The townsite land was initially included in a pastoral lease issued to Padbury Loton & Co.⁴ Bejoording townsite was laid out in 1856 and the first sale of Bejoording town land was gazetted on 25 November that year, by proclamation.⁵ At the same time, notice was provided that 'Rights of Commonage over unappropriated

¹ Quoted by Erickson, Rica, 'Notes on Bejoording', 6 page typescript provided by researcher Gillian O'Mara. DOLA nomenclature file, Battye Library, gives the source of the quote as Moore's Exploration Diary, Vol. 2, p. 433.

² Erickson, Rica, 'Notes on Bejoording', op cit.

³ DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2, p. 50; Erickson, Rica, *Old Toodyay and Newcastle*, Toodyay Shire Council, 1974, p. 208, gives the date as 1836.

⁴ DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2, p. 50, pastoral lease 6-1239 and 8943.

⁵ DOLA, Bejoording Town Plan, 1856; *West Australian Government Gazette*, Issue 636, 25 November 1856, p. 1. The townsite of Bejoording was not gazetted until 1899.

portions of Bejoording Townsite is given to all resident purchasers of Town Lots'.⁶

The design of the townsite had rows of lots radiating out from Bejoording Central Square, which was Suburban Lot 1 and designated Reserve 3338 (later Reserve 6847). The lots grew progressively larger the further they were from Bejoording Central Square, with the 8 lots immediately adjoining being 3.99 acres (1.61 ha) in size, surrounded by 2 rows of 5-acre (2.02 ha) lots and outer rows of 10-acre (4.04 ha) lots. Roads were in a grid pattern and were named First to Seventh, with Second Road and Sixth Road accessing Bejoording Central Square.⁷ The place encompassed the Bejoording Spring, so that, while streams ran from the spring in several directions through various town lots, the source of the water was available to all. The Jandaging Spring, which also fed into the system of streams linking to the Bejoording Spring, was located in the southeast part of the townsite, on Suburban Lot 101.⁸

Bejoording was planned as a workingman's village, where labourers employed on nearby large estates could set up their homes, keep a cow and grow wheat for their own needs. This concept, based on the English class system where the gentry owned large acreages and employed members of the labouring class to work it, did not eventuate in the Swan River Colony for a number of reasons. The landowners did not have the wealth required to employ large numbers of workers in the early years of the colony, even if there had been large numbers available, which there were not, and many members of the labouring class saw the Swan River Colony as presenting them with the opportunity of acquiring land of their own.⁹

John Robert Thompson (Tomson) of Bindoon was the first purchaser of Bejoording town land, buying at least one of the lots offered in 1856, but he did not live at Bejoording.¹⁰ Thompson's brother-in-law, Charles Syred, purchased Lots 4 and 27 offered at the next sale in 1858, and another brother-in-law, William, purchased adjoining Lots 3 and 28 the following year.¹¹ William Syred and his wife Frances (Martin) built a residence on Lot 3, adjoining the north side of Bejoording Central Square, and were the first Europeans to reside at Bejoording. William gradually acquired the lots

⁶ *West Australian Government Gazette*, Issue 636, 25 November 1856, p. 2. 'Return showing the Acreage reserved for Commonage in the various Towns of the Colony', in *Votes & Proceedings of the Western Australian Parliament*, 1878, Paper A9, shows that there was no reserved commonage at Bejoording.

⁷ Dept of Lands & Survey, Bejoording town plan, 1856, 1899 and 1912; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 29 September 1899, p. 3154; *West Australian Government Gazette*, Issue 636, 25 November 1856, p. 1.

⁸ Dept of Lands & Survey, Bejoording town plan, 1856. This is Reserve 3338, gazetted for the purpose of water, 1 May 1896.

⁹ Erickson, Rica, 'Notes on Bejoording', op cit.

¹⁰ *West Australian Government Gazette*, Issue 636, 25 November 1856, p. 1; Erickson, Rica, *Old Toodyay and Newcastle*, op cit, p. 208.

¹¹ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 20 July 1858, p. 1; Town Land Enrolments No. 1607 (Lot 4) & 1608 (Lot 27), 1858, and No. 1689 (Lots 3 & 28), 1859.

owned by his brother and brother-in-law and extended his landholding as other town lots were offered for sale.¹²

In the 1860s, Frances Syred's brother, Alfred Patrick Martin and their parents, Henry and Elizabeth took up land at Bejoording. Two other families, the Ralphs and Cousins, also settled there in the 1860s.¹³

In 1899, the townsite of Bejoording was gazetted.¹⁴ Bejoording Central Square was gazetted Reserve 6847 as a Class C reserve for the purpose of 'central square watering place', with an area of ten acres (4.0469 ha).¹⁵

When William Syred died in 1903, he owned Bejoording Suburban Lots 3, 4, 7, 20-22, 24, 27-29, and 55-57. Frances Syred inherited the property, which continued to be farmed by her youngest son George. He acquired the title in 1923, after providing an annuity for his mother.¹⁶ By that time, he had added further town lots to the landholding, including Lot 32, on which another residence was constructed. George died in 1950 and the property passed to his wife, Ruth.¹⁷ In 1962, Peter Syred, farmer of Bolgart and nephew of George and Ruth Syred, purchased the property from his aunt.¹⁸ At some time, he occupied the residence on Bejoording Lot 32.¹⁹

The Syred residence on Bejoording Lot 3 had not been occupied for some time, and in 1974, the Shire of Toodyay and the local community took over management and restoration of the place as an historic site.²⁰ Access to Lot 3 was via a gravel track through Bejoording Central Square from Second Road. Another gravel track through the Square provided access to various parts of Peter Syred's property, which had been enlarged to the extent of surrounding the Square. Roads through the western portion and northern portion of the townsite had been closed over the years, but their route can be seen in the aerial photograph.²¹

In September 2000, Peter Syred made enquiries to the Department of Land Administration (DOLA), through his solicitors, with regard to the possibility of acquiring Reserve 6847. He expressed his willingness to have a caveat put in place, should this be considered necessary, to protect the natural

¹² Deed of Memorial, Vol. 14 No. 980, 11 May 1869, Letters of Administration of the estate of Charles Syred; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1872, p. 260; 1877, p. 122; 1882, p. 69; 1883, p. 429 & 1885 p. 598.

¹³ Erickson, Rica, *Bicentennial Dictionary*, op cit, pp. 3000-3001, 2088 & 2094; Erickson, Rica, *Old Toodyay and Newcastle*, op cit, p. 208.

¹⁴ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 29 September 1899, p. 3154.

¹⁵ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 29 September 1899, p. 3152; DOLA Reserves Index, Reserve 6847.

¹⁶ Certificate of Title, Vol. 32 Fol. 96, 30 November 1923.

¹⁷ Certificate of Title, Vol. 846 Fol. 132, 31 March 1950, 15 March 1951.

¹⁸ Certificate of Title, Vol. 846 Fol. 132, 31 March 1950, 15 March 1951 & Vol. 846 Fol. 132, 5 October 1962.

¹⁹ Correspondence, 25 September 2000, DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2.

²⁰ Shire of Toodyay Municipal Heritage Inventory; Certificate of Title, Vol. 1394 Fol. 009, 6 November 1974, 26 February 1982.

²¹ Certificate of title Vol 1394 Fol. 009 shows removal of roads from landholding; Aerial photograph of Bejoording, 6 June 2000, with cadastral overlay, DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2. Cadastral overlay is considered by DOLA to be average fit only.

bushland on Bejoording Central Square.²² In April 2001, Peter Syred decided not to go ahead with the acquisition.²³ Instead, he proposed to sell the entire property as the Bejoording Subdivision, comprising sixty-nine of the original Bejoording Suburban lots. Although zoned Rural, under Toodyay Town planning scheme No. 4 the zoning could be changed to Special Rural, which would allow the lots to be purchased individually for 'hobby farms' and 'small lifestyle properties'.²⁴

An encumbrance on the subdivision was the historic site of Bejoording Homestead Complex on Bejoording Lot 3. Peter Syred proposed transferring this site to the Toodyay Council. The Council was agreeable to the proposal, but it brought to the fore the question of formal access to the site, and to other lots in the subdivision, through Bejoording Central Square. A request for an easement through the Reserve was put to DOLA, who sought the opinion of interested departments, based on an aerial photograph with cadastral overlay, which they had prepared.²⁵

The Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) considered that the reserve had no nature conservation value and that they, therefore, had no interest in the area. The Department of Minerals and Energy and the Western Australian Planning Commission also expressed no objection to the provision of an easement.²⁶

The Department of Agriculture provided the following report:

Remnant vegetation on Reserve 6847 appears to be significantly degraded and dominated by mature trees. The site also appears to be unfenced and has areas that may have been cleared. Stock grazing has probably also been carried out at the site for an extended period, as indicated by the bare areas in the air photo. Whether this activity is in accordance with the purpose of the reserve ie. as a watering point, presumably for stock, is unknown. The location of existing tracks and farm buildings would indicate that the adjoining property owner has had unrestricted access to the site for a number of years.

Revegetation work along fence lines and farm roads leading to the site suggests that the reserve has some value to the landholder/s concerned, either for nature conservation, or for stock shelter.

The reserve is small and is located in an area which would appear to be difficult to manage, as it is located in the centre of a number of farming blocks. Its original use as a watering point has been superseded over time. At present the site has minimal biodiversity value and appears to have greater value to the adjacent landholder for the reasons outlined above. Fencing, revegetation and development of links to other remnants, including revegetation of the drainage line would be needed to enhance the biodiversity function of the reserve. The salinity risk posed by ongoing degradation of the site is likely to be small due to the confined drainage found in this area.

The effect of the access road cutting across the drainage line may have a moderate impact on remnant vegetation in the reserve, due to the damming or slowing of water. This may also explain the loss of vegetation to the west of the existing easement road.

²² Correspondence, 25 September 2000 & Aerial photograph of Bejoording, op cit, DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2.

²³ Correspondence 9 April 2001, DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2.

²⁴ 'Bejoording Subdivision', DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2.

²⁵ Aerial photograph of Bejoording, op cit.

²⁶ Correspondence 17 September 2002, DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2.

The current value of the site is minimal and the easement should be permitted. However, the road that comprises the easement needs to be a Shire of Toodyay approved design and may require a culvert to reduce the impacts of water-flow restrictions.²⁷

DOLA determined that the provision of access was implicit in the original purpose of Central or Town Square and in the town design, which had several roads leading in and out of the Reserve. It was suggested that the purpose of the Reserve could be amended to include 'Access', as this use would be of 'no greater impact'. DOLA's opinion was conveyed to the Toodyay Council.²⁸

In 2004, Bejoording Central Square is an undeveloped area of natural bushland around a spring-fed watercourse in a largely cleared farming landscape. If the Bejoording Subdivision is successful and a community develops in the townsite, Bejoording Central Square has the potential to become the town square it was designed to be.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the physical evidence, refer to "Syred Cottage, Bejoording, Conservation Management Plan" prepared by Laura Gray, Heritage & Conservation Consultant, for Bejoording Community Group Inc.

Key sections used: Physical Evidence (pp.20-48).

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For a comparative analysis refer to "Syred Cottage, Bejoording, Conservation Management Plan" prepared by Laura Gray, Heritage & Conservation Consultant, for Bejoording Community Group Inc.

Key sections used: Comparative Information (pp.50-51).

Additional Comparative Information relating to Bejoording Central Square:

The first towns established in the Swan River Colony almost invariably followed the more formal design of English country towns with a square as a focal point. Fremantle (King's Square), Guildford (*Stirling Square*), Perth (*Victoria Square*, which ended up not being in the centre of town) and Bunbury (Leschenault Square) are examples of towns designed with prominent squares. Towns established in farming areas, such as Beverley, York, Toodyay, Northam, Kelmscott and Pinjarra, for example, did not follow such a formal layout.²⁹ Later country towns developed around features such as a railway station or post office, and parks were located on the edge of the townsite.

Guildford's *Stirling Square* comprises about 30 acres of land around *St Matthew's Anglican Church*. It has mature formal and informal plantings

²⁷ Correspondence from Peter King, Regional Manager, Central Agricultural Region, Dept. of Agriculture, 23 December 2002, DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2.

²⁸ Handwritten note, 5 & 6 June 2003, p. 51, DOLA correspondence file 11164/99 Vol. 2. This is the last piece of correspondence located on the issue.

²⁹ Poole, Max, 'Town Planning', pp. 220-227, in Pitt Morison, M. & White, John, *Western Towns and Buildings*, UWA Press, Perth, 1979.

with pathways, fencing and gardens, as well as several memorials. *Stirling Square* has been a focal point of sporting, social and cultural activities in Guildford since the 1830s, and was the site of the first agricultural shows in the Colony. The place is entered on the State Register and the Register of the National Estate and is classified by the National Trust.³⁰ King's Square, in the heart of Fremantle, is the site of *St John's Anglican Church* and the *Fremantle Town Hall* and Civic Centre. The area has been developed as a pleasant park with trees and paved areas to suit pedestrian traffic.³¹

Victoria Square in Perth was designed to be the centre of the town and the site of an Anglican Church, but the town developed around the Swan River landing places at Barrack and William streets, and *Victoria Square* was eventually granted to the Catholic Church. *St Mary's Cathedral* was developed on the site, with landscaped grounds including lawns and trees. The proximity of *Victoria Square* to Royal Perth Hospital has made the Cathedral grounds an attractive and pleasant retreat for workers and visitors to the area.³²

Bejoording Central Square bears no comparison to the highly developed town squares described above. Because Bejoording did not develop as a town, the place remains largely in its original state. Bejoording Central Square, and the design of the Bejoording townsite, is unusual in Western Australia, and rare in rural areas of the State.

Beagle Bay Mission Precinct, *Lombadina Mission* (HCWA database no. 690, Registered) and Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia (Registered - Register of National Estate) are all examples of settlements planned around a central common. These were based on missions, unlike the Beejoring settlement.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

"Syred Cottage, Bejoording, Conservation Management Plan" prepared by Laura Gray, Heritage & Conservation Consultant, for Bejoording Community Group Inc.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

³⁰ HCWA assessment documentation, Place 2478.

³¹ Register of the National Estate entry, Place ID 10579.

³² Pitt Morison, M. 'The Shaping of Early Perth, 1829 to 1845', *Western Geographer*, Vol. 6 No. 1, January 1982; personal knowledge.