



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

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

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Araluen Botanic Park is significant for the aesthetic characteristics created by the landscape in which the many planted exotic species in a relatively small area contrast markedly with the natural vegetation. In the autumn, a variety of deciduous species all turn to different colours before the fall. The creek and pool below the carpark and the landscaped beds add to the aesthetic importance of the setting. The steep slopes each side of the creek, planted with several eastern Australian species of Eucalyptus, add to the grandeur of the backdrop. (Criteria 1.1 & 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The architectural design of the buildings at *Araluen Botanic Park* is an example of a phase in the history of Western Australian domestic architecture. During the late 1920s and the 1930s, homes with a mix of design streams, derived from pre-industrial, medieval and Tudor Britain, were appearing in Perth suburbs. Consistent with this amalgam of styles were visual images of a romantic pre-industrial past. The honest craftsmanship of the past was symbolised by the extensive use of rough stone and timber. Many of the building designs at *Araluen Botanic Park* were taken from a Canadian magazine about log cabins. The materials used were chosen because they were inexpensive and close at hand. (Criterion 2.1)

Many of the buildings, paths and roads were constructed by Y.A.L. boys on weekends and holidays. They were also responsible for much of the landscaping. Many of the exotic trees were planted by J. J. Simons. (Criterion 2.2)

Araluen Botanic Park is significant as an early recreational camp for young people in Western Australia and as an example of the work of the Young Australia League. The League's ideal was the 'betterment of boys' through 'brotherhood, service and patriotism' and the development of a recreational camp at *Araluen Botanic Park* dedicated to 'the service of youth' illustrates this ideal. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is significant for its association with Hugh Buckingham who took up the land in 1907, with the Young Australia League and its founder, J.J. Simons, and with various benefactors such as T.V. Healey, who financed the development of the camp. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Araluen Botanic Park is significant for its potential to contribute to an understanding the natural and cultural history of Western Australia as a teaching site and as a type locality, having several plant communities within the area which are closely associated with the soil type and being an example of a phase in the history of domestic architecture in Western Australia. (Criterion 3.1)

The soil varies between weathered granite with small outcropping rocks at the top and upper slopes of the steep valley to loamy clay at the valley floor with plant species differing between the extremes. There are soil specific species on the on the shallow soils of the granite rocks and the moister loamy-clay soils along and near the creek. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Araluen Botanic Park is highly valued by the community as evidenced by the many visitors and by the generations of young people who have camped there over the years and the strong public support which influenced the Government to purchase the park in 1990 in order to secure its preservation. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The characteristics which establish the rarity of the place are; the reminders of the establishment of the Young Australia League; the log construction of the buildings and the nature of the landscape. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Araluen Botanic Park is representative of parks established in the 1930s for recreation and holiday accommodation, Yanchep National Park is the other such example in Western Australia. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The condition of the place is fair. The exotic plantings are in good condition, but large areas of bushland have been subject to invasive species such as *Watsonia*, Black Wattle, Honeysuckle and Bridal Creeper. An ongoing programme of weed control is beginning to show benefits. It is estimated that 35 to 50% of the bush areas are degraded. There is also widespread termite damage, feral animals and the threat of dieback. A riparian release pipeline has been constructed by the Araluen Botanic Park Foundation. This releases water at the site of the three bridges on the eastern boundary, ensuring a flow of water all through the summer months.

The condition of the Round House is good. The roof is under repair.

The condition of Aspro cabin is poor. Though substantially intact, the fabric is dilapidated with wall cladding holed externally, flooring missing internally and the bathroom fittings dismantled. The building is uninhabitable. It has been treated for termites, which were responsible for most of the damage, and has been made as safe as possible by the Araluen Botanic Park Foundation.

The Shepherdson Bungalow is a ruin. Only the fireplace and chimney, with remnants of flooring, remain.

The Totterdell Bungalow is fully restored (1996).

The Grove of the Unforgotten has been rebuilt by the Araluen Botanic Park Foundation with the assistance of the Armadale Rotary Club and funding through the Australia Remembers/New Work Opportunities scheme. All the steps, terraces, retaining walls, ponds, water runs and the reflecting pool were rebuilt from the ground up at a cost in excess of \$400,000.

The condition of Chalet Healy is good. The building is in use as a restaurant.

The condition of the City of Brisbane Bungalow is good.

The condition of the Rose Pergola is not good, the timbers need replacing.

The water quality of the swimming pool is poor, such that swimming is not permitted. The Swimming Pool Pergola is in good condition.

All the gardens at *Araluen Botanic Park* are in good condition, having been restored by the Araluen Botanic Park Foundation.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Araluen Botanic Park has a high degree of integrity. The original intention is largely intact in that the place is still used for passive recreation with the landscape and various points of interest still visited and enjoyed, even though the place is no longer used for camping.

The place was purchased by the State Government as a result of public pressure for its retention. Apart from a reducing operational grant from the Western Australian Planning Commission, due to phase out in 2000, all revenue to run the park is raised by the Araluen Botanic Park Foundation which has embarked on a programme of encouraging visitation. Through events such as Yates Tulip Time at *Araluen Botanic Park*, the Foundation has been successful in raising patronage from approximately 2,000 in 1989 to over 100,000 in 1996.

The landscape and the various buildings requiring restoration are capable of being restored and such work is being currently carried out by the Araluen Botanic Park Foundation.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Araluen Botanic Park has a high degree of authenticity. Although some of the buildings and earlier landscape features are no longer extant, most have survived and very little intrusive fabric has been introduced.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been edited from material in the National Trust exposition compiled by V. Geneve and E. Bennett. The physical evidence has been compiled by the above and from material supplied by the Araluen Botanic Park Foundation.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

In 1907, Hugh Buckingham took up the Araluen land, Canning Lot 523. In 1929, Buckingham's land was bought by John Joseph Simons for the Young Australia League and named 'Araluen' - a NSW Aboriginal word meaning 'Singing Waters', 'Running Waters' or 'Place of Lilies'.

J.J. Simons (1883-1948) was the managing director of Western Press Ltd. With Victor Courtney he founded the weekly *Call* newspaper in 1918 and the *Mirror* in 1921. With others, including Claude de Bernales, he purchased the *Sunday Times* in 1935. He was Secretary of the Western Australian Football League (1905 and 1914), the State President of the Australian Natives' Association (1910 - 1911), and Secretary of the Western Australian Trotting Association (1913-14). He won the Legislative Assembly seat of East Perth for Labor in 1921, but resigned from the Party in 1922 because of his stand against radical trade unionists. Simons was also an executive member of the New Settlers' League and was responsible for the Y.A.L. Boy Settlement Scheme, by which 192 British boys were settled in Western Australia. He was committed to Australian nationalism and social improvement.

In 1905, Simons established the Young Australia Football League to promote Australian Rules Football and sporting tours for boys. This proved so successful that in 1909 the League was expanded and renamed the Young Australia League. After World War One, interstate branches were formed. Its activities were publicised in the annual *Australian Junior* (1906-11) and in the monthly *Boomerang*, edited by Simons in 1914.

The Y.A.L. was an independent, patriotic, non-political and non-sectarian organisation. Its motto was 'Love, Service and Tolerance'. It aimed to educate youth through travel and to that end organised many reciprocal tours in Australia, Great Britain, Canada and America. It has been estimated that in Simon's lifetime 50,000 people toured with the Y.A.L. In the 1960s, the Y.A.L. was described as 'the Nation's largest, oldest established and most trusted Youth Travel organisation.' Other activities of the Y.A.L. included debating, band music, sport and theatrical performances.

After Simons purchased Canning Lot 523 for the Y.A.L. in 1929, it was designed as a youth recreation camp. In 1962, it was estimated that 21,000 youngsters had stayed there.

Araluen continued to be used as a youth camp by the Y.A.L. (from the 1950s for both boys and girls) and as a popular picnic spot for the people of Perth. When J.J. Simons died in 1948, it was managed by the executors of his estate (F. Curran, L.T. Boas, V.C. Courtney and E.F. Shackleton - all

members of the Y.A.L. executive). In 1949 it was incorporated as the Araluen Trust Inc.

Since the death of J.J. Simons, the park has faced increasing management and maintenance costs, resulting in the decision to log timber growing on the site, this being the second or third time that the area had been logged. (Note: There are no large Jarrah, *Eucalyptus marginata*, left. Most of the regrowth is Marri, *Corymbia calophylla*. The Araluen Botanic Park Foundation has been replanting Jarrah.) In 1985, the Y.A.L. decided to sell the garden area, and it has changed hands several times, coming onto the market again in February 1990. Concern was felt that either foreign investors or developers would purchase it, so Noelene Drage, a hills resident, took an \$8,000.00 option to take the land off the market until Government or public help could be enlisted. A public meeting attended by 170 people was held at Chalet Healy on 14 May 1990 at which a steering committee was elected to set up a public trust to acquire the property, with the hope of Government involvement in the acquisition.

On 11 June 1990, the Minister for Planning and the Arts, Kay Hallahan visited the park and announced that the Government would negotiate to buy Araluen, but ultimately it would be vested in a suitable body for the ongoing maintenance and development of the park. The Araluen Botanic Park Foundation (Inc), which was formed as a result of the public meeting in May 1990, worked on a voluntary basis for five years restoring the gardens and infrastructure before taking over management of the Park in September 1995 under the terms of a lease with the Western Australian Planning Commission. The Foundation invites membership, voluntary workers, donations and sponsorships to ensure the development and care of the Park. Visitors pay an entry fee.

When the Young Australia League acquired Araluen, William G. Bennett, a popular and prolific architect of the 1930s, who had been a member of the League from the age of sixteen, designed many of the buildings including the Memorial Pergola.

The policy adopted in the development of Araluen aimed 'to preserve indigenous trees and natural features of the bush.' The work of landscaping and constructing the paths and roads began during Easter in 1931 and continued for several years. It was largely carried out by the working parties of Y.A.L. boys on weekends and holidays. The boys also planted native maidenhair fern along a series of trails, probably originally formed by the passage of kangaroos, subsequently widened and smoothed by YAL members to become pathways.

Much of the stone used to construct the steps and the foundations of the buildings is believed to have come from the Canning Dam site, only a few miles away, when the granite rock face in the valley of the Canning River was blasted away.

The first building to be erected was the Roundhouse made from the sides of barrels. This building apparently burnt down and was replaced by the present rectangular stone building in 1931 which was added to in 1941. The Roundhouse was used as accommodation for Y.A.L. boys and officers. The building has recently been restored and is functioning as an information centre and souvenir shop in busy periods.

Shepherdson and Totterdell bungalows (1931) were named after donors - (Shepherdson was owner of the Adelaide Timber Mill Co. which operated nearby) and served to accommodate boys and officers. All that remains of Shepherdson Bungalow today is the stone ruin of its fireplace and chimney and the remnants of floors with some bathroom floor tiles. This is planned to become a picnic spot. The Totterdell Bungalow has been restored and is used as the administration office for the park.

The bungalows were also designed to accommodate honeymoon couples. One of these, called the Log Cabin, was built in 1932. Only the stone chimney is still standing and this has been incorporated into a tiled roofed covered area.

In 1932, the Rustic Entrance, a timber archway over the road, was constructed at the southern end of Araluen. Weakened by termites and wood rot over the years, this structure was finally destroyed by a high vehicle failing to pass underneath.

In 1933, work began on the Grove of the Unforgotten to commemorate Y.A.L. boys killed in the Great War. It was originally planned to have 89 steps and the same number of pencil pines. This was to commemorate the 88 fallen Y.A.L. boys and one for the unknown soldier. It is difficult to know how many pines were actually planted as various sources give various figures.

This was planted in the shape of a lyre, the emblem of music. J.J. Simons considered musical training to be a very important aspect of the Y.A.L.'s work and there were several Y.A.L. bands which toured Australia. The theme of the Grove, with its cascading waterfall, was said to be 'the everlasting waters, singing an eternal requiem' to the fallen and the pool at the base reflects the loss. The grove is built around a huge Blackbutt *Eucalyptus patens*.

The Healy Weir was built across Stinton Creek, about 350 metres south of the present dam, as part of an ingenious watering system which drew water from the weir and filled the Water Tanks, located on the slopes above and east of the gardens, by gravity. The scheme was financed by Mr T. V. Healy, Managing Director of Wrigley's Chewing Gum, of Vacluse, NSW. His gift is commemorated by a bronze tablet on the top terrace of the Grove of the Unforgotten. Healy Weir has since been replaced by the present dam but the watering system is still operating. The water is reticulated around the gardens and feeds the waterfall of the Grove of the Unforgotten.

In 1933, the Nicholas family, major shareholders in the Aspro Co., financed the building of a third bungalow that became known as Aspro Bungalow. This is in poor condition. Restoration is planned.

One of the most important buildings in the Araluen valley is Chalet Healy, named for T.V. Healy who financed it. Designed by W.G. Bennett, the Chalet was situated on the site of the Buckingham Mill and was originally built as a 'tea garden' and to provide guest room accommodation. According to newspaper reports at the time, it was 'specifically designed to harmonise with the site and existing buildings.' A description of the plan stated that it 'will be set on a foundation stone with

external walls of log construction. This rustic appearance will be maintained inside the building. The main interior will be of natural logs for the walls and ceilings, and there will be a large rustic stone fireplace as a central feature. The building will be surmounted by a colour-blend tile roof. In order that teas may be served in the open air, large stone-flagged pergolas have been designed.' Chalet Healy was constructed by H. Dinsdale at a cost £1,250.

The Y.A.L. boys helped with the construction of Chalet Healy, the Aspro, Totterdell and Shepherdson cabins, and the Roundhouse which was used to accommodate the boys themselves.

Chalet Healy was officially opened by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir James Mitchell, on 19 June, 1937 before a crowd estimated at 200. He congratulated J.J. Simons and the Y.A.L. for the 'initiative of acquiring Araluen and improving the beauty spot.' Both Sir Charles McNess, Perth builder and philanthropist, and Gomer Edwards, made donations to the Y.A.L at the ceremony. The ceremony received considerable publicity in the *West Australian*.

City of Brisbane Bungalow was constructed in 1937 and paid for by the Queensland branch of the Y.A.L. Restoration of the building has recently been completed. The building is used as the caretaker's residence.

In 1941, the swimming pool was constructed at Araluen. It is believed that the rock wall which dams the pool was constructed over the earlier gauging weir that had been built in 1921. An earlier swimming pool project for the boys was a spectacular failure when marauding gilgies ate away the sandbag weir on Stinton Creek and rains burst through to flow into the Canning River. A second pool was also unsuccessful, but the third, with its sturdy rock walls, remains today. The swimming pool was extremely popular for many years. For health reasons the pool is no longer used for swimming.

A building housing changing rooms (1943) and showers was erected nearby, but is no longer extant.

A pergola near the pool, with plaques on each of the supporting timber pillars commemorating people associated with the Y.A.L., appears to have been built in the 1950s. Recently the timbers of the pergola were replaced with new jarrah poles.

Of the several pergolas at Araluen, the most impressive is the Rose Pergola, designed by Bennett and built by Jack Italiano in 1940. 38 pillars support 80 climbing roses of many varieties. It was built as a memorial to Mrs. Margaret Simons, mother of J.J. Simons. The pergola was opened by Lt Governor Sir James Mitchell on Mother's Day, 1940.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Araluen Botanic Park is located about 7 km east of the fault line of the Darling Range, in the desiccated scarp. The site straddles a young creek valley, all approximately 30km south-east of the Perth General Post Office.

The place has an approximately 450 metre frontage to Croyden Road and extends northward approximately 1,350 metres. Stinton Creek enters the park on the northern boundary and, after finding its way to the centre of the rectangular lot, travels southward to flow into the Canning River south of Croyden Road, exiting the park at the centre of its south boundary. The creek within the park flows through a steep valley containing remnants of the native vegetation. There are many introduced and naturalised species established in the vicinity of the creek. Most of the exotic species are established adjacent to the creek where a carpark and picnic areas are established.

The higher areas, away from the creek include areas of near pristine bushland and have weathered granite and laterite soils with areas of granite and laterite outcropping. Lower down the slope, the soil changes to a loam and at the creek the soil is of a clay loam composition.

A road within the park leaves and rejoins Croyden Road with a loop to the north close to the confluence of Stinton and Convine creeks. This loop road is flanked by numerous buildings and other features as listed below:

Bennett Bridge (named for the architect) is a small metal framed culvert.

The Roundhouse (1931) is a rectangular building and has stone walls topped with medieval crenellations hiding a flat roof. Internally the remnants of a painted Y.A.L insignia (a kangaroo holding a Y.A.L. shield) can be seen on the concrete floor. On the southern side of the Roundhouse is an addition dating from 1941. The building has recently been renovated.

Shepherdson Bungalow (1931), named for a benefactor, is demolished, save for the ruin of the fireplace and chimney with remnants of flooring.

Totterdell Bungalow (1931) is of log construction with a clay tiled roof. It is currently under restoration. (1996)

The Log Cabin (1932) is no longer extant save for a stone chimney standing within a tiled roofed covered area.

The Aspro Bungalow (1932) is built of log posts and beams infilled with rough timber planks fixed horizontally. Gaps and crevices between these timbers are sealed with sisal rope. The stone foundations appear to grow out of the natural rock surroundings, symbolising the important relationship to the surrounding bush. The large window overlooks the bushland setting. Most of the roof is tiled, although the back verandah is made of corrugated iron and is supported by natural timber posting.

The Aspro Bungalow shows considerable dilapidation. The fibrolite wall cladding at the rare lean-to is holed, most of the living room floor is missing as are the bathroom fittings.

The Grove of the Unforgotten (1933-34) - The axis of the grove lies between a viewing platform defined by stone walls high up the slope of the valley and a huge Blackbutt tree at the valley floor. Beyond the tree is a reflecting pool. Water cascades down from the viewing platform to the reflecting pool. In the recent restoration project, the Grove was returned as far as possible to the original design. No plans exist but the original design could be discerned from photographic evidence. The original surface on the terraces was gravel but this would have presented an unacceptably high risk factor for visitors. The terraces are now treated with chipped organic material.

Water Tanks - There are three circular tanks constructed of concrete and located high upon the eastern slope of the valley to reticulate water, drawn from the dam to the gardens below.

The Mackintosh Pergola (1934) is a small pergola alongside and up hill from the Log Cabin ruin.

Chalet Healy (1937) is the largest building in the park and operates as a restaurant. The building is set on granite foundations with walls of log construction. This rustic appearance is maintained inside the building. The internal wall and ceiling surfaces are of natural logs, and there is a large rustic stone fireplace as a central feature of the large dining room. The building is surmounted by a colour-blend clay tile roof. On the western side of the building, overlooking the valley, is a large stone-flagged pergola which provides shade for alfresco dining. During the spring, the pergola is highlighted by flowering wisteria.

City of Brisbane Bungalow (1937) is of log walls and tiled roof similar to Chalet Healy and the Totterdell Bungalow. It has recently been renovated and is occupied by the park gatekeeper.

The large Memorial Pergola (1940) straddles the road exiting the car park and is stepped to the grade of the road. It consists of 38 circular stone pillars supporting a canopy of large logs. At the south end, Wisteria covers the log canopy.

The Swimming Pool (1941) is crescent shaped and is dammed at the south end with a rock wall. At the north end, a wooden bridge crosses the stream feeding the pool. The pool is no longer used for swimming.

The Swimming Pool Pergola (1951) on the west side of the Swimming Pool is a curved pergola of circular pillars built of stonework supporting a canopy of large logs upon which grow climbing plants which flower in the summer and the spring. Each pillar bears a plaque honouring a person who played a significant role in the Y.A.L. The timbers have recently been replaced.

The 'Old Dunnies' are a stone ruin on the west side of Stinton Creek opposite the Roundhouse.

The toilet block at the entrance to the park is of recent construction with a corrugated iron roof and cement rendered walls.

Also at the entrance is a transportable unit serving as the entrance kiosk. Neither of these is of significance.

There is a large garden shed (1996) located east of City of Brisbane Bungalow.

13.3 REFERENCES

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