



# REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

## 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE \*

The place is situated in an attractive setting, with the homestead on a hill overlooking a billabong on a branch of the Fitzroy River. The Grant Ranges to the west of the homestead, form an impressive backdrop. Terraced gardens and lawns contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the place. (Criterion 1.1)

The elevated position of the homestead gives it a landmark quality. (Criterion 1.3)

The buildings and associated outbuildings form a significant pastoral precinct. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The place is associated with the early pastoral settlement of the Kimberley, specifically by the Kimberley Pastoral Company in 1881. The shareholders of the Pastoral Company formed extensive political, economic and social networks throughout Western Australia. (Criterion 2.1)

The place was the first polling station in the area for the Commonwealth elections in 1901. (Criterion 2.2)

During World War II, the Kimberley region formed a vital zone in Australia's defence strategy. From 1942 to 1943, local volunteers, an Army signals unit and a Royal Australian Air Force radar unit were based at Liveringa Station. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is associated with agricultural experimentation incorporating innovative irrigation methods in the 1950s and 60s. (Criterion 2.2)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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\* 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 & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

The homestead group is closely associated with the use of innovative irrigation methods in attempts to produce commercial rice crops and other experimental crops. (Criterion 3.3)

#### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

The place contributes to the sense of place of the Kimberley community. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

Buildings constructed with stone masonry walls are rare in the Kimberley Region. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

Liveringa is a fine and characteristic example of a Kimberley style homestead - with a strong regional influence shown in the plan form of the homestead and the workers' kitchen/dining room. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

Generally, all the buildings are in poor condition. The main homestead, which is occupied by caretakers, is in good condition. Maintenance has not generally been undertaken on the buildings as the place no longer operates as a pastoral station.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The homestead retains its original function but the associated outbuildings are not currently being utilised. It is unlikely that the property will again be used for sheep grazing and wool production. Overall the place has moderate integrity.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

Since its construction in 1908, Liveringa Homestead has been altered and extended with the majority of work being carried out c.1950. The verandahs of the workers' kitchen/dining room have been enclosed. All this work is clearly identifiable from the original fabric. Additional outbuildings have been constructed to suit changing functional requirements. Generally, the buildings have moderate authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Tanya Suba, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Taylor, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Liveringa Homestead Group*, via Derby consists of a workers' kitchen/dining room/dry store (1904), homestead (1908), guest's cottage and swimming pool (1950s), meat house/dairy (1950s), shearers' quarters/kitchen (c.1915-20, 1935), and various other structures associated with pastoral activities. The property was also referred to as Upper Liveringa.<sup>1</sup>

The Kimberley Region of Western Australia was opened up and settled in the early 1880s largely due to Alexander Forrest's expedition of 1879. Forrest explored a portion of the Kimberley Region south of the King Leopold Ranges, and his enthusiastic reports of well watered and pastured land were received with great interest in Western Australia and the Eastern States. Pastoral leases were subsequently issued; the first being to G.J. Brockman in 1879.<sup>2</sup>

The Liveringa pastoral lease, located on the Fitzroy River lands, approximately 120 kilometres south-east of Derby, was taken up in 1881 by the Kimberley Pastoral Company. As the principal applicant, W.E. Marmion lodged the original Kimberley leases on 11 November 1881, on behalf of the syndicate consisting of the Company founders Messrs. W.E. Marmion, the Pearse Brothers, M.C. Davies (Chairman) and R.F. Sholl. Subsequent minor shareholders Messrs. J.P. McLarty and W.G. McLarty were also respectively the first manager and overseer of the station. These men were very influential and established extensive networks in the colony's political, economic and social spheres. They variously held other pastoral and mining interests in the North West and timber and agricultural interests in the South West, as well as shipping and commercial businesses centred in Perth and Fremantle. Several were members of parliament.<sup>3</sup>

In November 1881, plant, provisions and stock, including horses, cattle and sheep, were transported from Fremantle to a King Sound landing site in the sailing vessel *Amur* and subsequently overlanded to the Luluigui lease at the mouth of the Fitzroy River, where the McLarty brothers and A. Cornish were based during the first years of operation in the Kimberley. In 1882, the fledgling pastoral concern suffered a setback when A. Cornish was killed by Aborigines while engaged in droving sheep.<sup>4</sup>

During the mid 1880s, the McLartys relocated their pastoral activities approximately 96 kilometres inland to the Liveringa lease where John

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<sup>1</sup> Battye, J.S. (ed) *The History of the North West of Australia* Perth, V.K. Jones & Co., 1915, p.119.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, J. 'Liveringa: Fable, Fact, Farce and Failure' in *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society*, Vol 10, Part 1, 1989, p.25.

<sup>3</sup> Battye Library Biographic Indexes.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, J. 1989, Op. Cit., p.28; Battye, J. S., Op. Cit, p.119; Anderson, J.N. 1994, Op. Cit., p.3.

McLarty built the first homestead c.1886-8 of bush timber and corrugated iron, incorporating coolabah timber for the building's frame and leichhardt pine for the roof rafters. It is believed that the original shearing shed was subsequently built to accommodate the increasing numbers of sheep on the pastoral lease.<sup>5</sup>

The McLartys used Aboriginal labour on the property, the majority of whom were born on the Station. In 1896, there were 60 or so Aboriginals on Liveringa, who were overseen by McLarty and five white men.<sup>6</sup> The men were employed in fencing, shearing, mustering and boundary riding, while the women worked in the homestead, washed wool and assisted in mustering when necessary. The Aboriginals were employed under 12 month agreements, but were not paid for their labour - instead tea, damper and meat were rationed from the kitchen and clothes were issued as required.

On 29 March 1901, Liveringa Station was used as a polling place for the election of the members of the Senate and House of Representatives; this being the election for the new Commonwealth of Australia Parliament.<sup>7</sup>

The early 1900s saw a period of considerable construction activity at Liveringa under the supervision of the third manager, Percy Rose, who succeeded William McLarty when he retired in 1901. In 1904, work commenced on the construction of the present kitchen and storeroom, which was built of stone with rough hewn bush timbers.<sup>8</sup> The following notes are taken from Percy Rose's Liveringa Diary entries and indicate people involved with the work:

1904 Friday Jan 8 Stewart Stone working on store building - Bullocky Ned Kangaroo Sambo and Willie getting out stone etc to start inner foundations. Speed squaring stone and Fahey cutting timber with boys.

Saturday Jan 9 Stewart Stone working on store building - Bullocky Ned Kangaroo Sambo and Willie getting stone and starting oven and fireplace.<sup>9</sup>

The original homestead, known as the 'top house', was demolished in June 1908, as indicated in the Liveringa Station Diaries:

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June 1908:...Mr Rose, Finlay and natives cleaning out top house.

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 1908:...Cockroft and Rawlings pulling down old house.<sup>10</sup>

Work subsequently commenced on the construction of the present homestead, which was built during the months of August to December and occupied by Christmas 1908. Although diary entries refer to 'Mason

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, J. 1989, Op. Cit., p.28; Battye, J. S., Op. Cit, p.119; , Anderson, J.N., 1994, Op. Cit., pp. 4 & 7 & *Liveringa: The Property of the Kimberley Pastoral Company* Perth, Cyclopedia Co. Publishers, 1912, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> Public Records Office, AN 1/1, Acc 495, Box 2, No. 36. Report on Upper Leveringa Station, 8 May 1896.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Liveringa Station Diary, 1904 cited in Jones, Carol-Ann 'Liveringa's Heritage - A Window on to the Past', in *Boab Bulletin*, Vol. 15, June, 1996, p.8.

<sup>10</sup> Liveringa Station Diaries, 1908 cited in Anderson, J., 1989, Op. Cit., p.31.

and assistant at building', it is not clear who the builder was as 'Mason' could refer to a surname or a trade. The eighteen inch thick walls were built from Permian sandstone, quarried locally, while crushed anthill and mud was used to bind the stone courses. The external wall finish was provided by a mix of sand and locally burnt lime.<sup>11</sup>

Construction dates for the various other buildings which make up the *Liveringa Homestead Group* are difficult to ascertain. J.S. Battye described the station settlement in 1915 as consisting of 'a well-arranged homestead area laid out, with out-buildings, vegetable garden, etc.'<sup>12</sup> Other sources indicate that the shearers' quarters were probably built c.1915-20, while the kitchen addition of concrete, steel and corrugated iron was constructed on the western end of the building in early 1935.<sup>13</sup>

Since its construction in 1908, Liveringa Homestead has been altered and extended, with the majority of the work being carried out shortly after World War II. The verandah has been extended to its present width, a timber and corrugated iron awning was added to provide for weather protection, and a number of asbestos clad additions, including a kitchen, dining area, and laundry were built on the northern end of the homestead in the late 1940s and early 1950s. A bedroom and bathroom were also added to the Homestead, built by Nookie Hargreave in the late 1950s. However, much of Liveringa's building program during this period was carried out by Spanish migrant Frank Rodriguez, a skilled carpenter and stonemason. Assisted by a number of station aborigines, Rodriguez also built the meat house/dairy, and station cottages situated to the west and north of the homestead. Rodriguez was responsible for construction work on other stations including the present Camballin Homestead and the Inkata stockyards offices.<sup>14</sup>

The building activities of this time also included the construction of the concrete block cold room in the kitchen building, the guest accommodation, a large below ground concrete swimming pool as well as retaining walls and steps which allowed for the establishment of terraced lawns and gardens.<sup>15</sup>

In the meantime many improvements were made to enhance Liveringa's pastoral operations. In the 1940s, at the end of an intensive water boring program, the station possessed 52 bores servicing stock as well as a 96 km frontage to the Fitzroy River, 1,290 kms of fencing, 480 kms of roads, and 57 paddocks. At this stage of the station's history, the land was still running sheep and in 1942, a total of 83,000 sheep produced a 1,500 bales of quality wool.<sup>16</sup>

During World War II, the Kimberley Region became a vital zone in Australia's defence strategy, with a number of stations being actively involved. A Local Volunteer Defence unit was formed at Liveringa and

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<sup>11</sup> Anderson, J.N., 1994, Op. Cit., p.5. & Jones, Carol-Ann, Op. Cit.

<sup>12</sup> Battye, J.S., Op. Cit., p.120.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, J.N., Op. Cit., 1994, p.8.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, pp. 5-7 & Kelleher, P. 'Historic Buildings of the Kimberley Region of WA', 1988, pp. 140-1.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Jones, Carol-Ann, Op. Cit., p.8.

trained on the flats below the homestead, while in 1942-43 an Army signals unit occupied the shearers' quarters. The Royal Australian Air Force established Radar Unit No. 324 on the Paradise section of the Liveringa pastoral lease in July 1943. The Radar Station operated there for a year giving early warning protection to the RAAF airfield at Noonkanbah.<sup>17</sup>

In recent years, the Liveringa pastoral lease has been closely associated with largely unsuccessful attempts to grow commercial rice crops. Originating from experiments carried out by Kimberley Durack in the late 1940s and early 1950s on a small section of the flood-prone Camballin plains, a subsequent succession of companies tackled the rice growing project only to be disappointed. Since 1962, the Northern Development Company, Australian Land and Cattle Company and AIL Holdings Pty Ltd. have worked the Camballin Irrigation area which has included the construction of a barrage and a dam. The same area has also been used for sorghum and maize cropping as well as experiments with vegetable growing. In recent years cotton growing has been trialed on the Camballin plains.<sup>18</sup>

During this period of experimentation, Liveringa Station altered its main operational focus from sheep to cattle, with the last of the Liveringa sheep flock sold off to Pilbara pastoralists in 1972.<sup>19</sup> This period also saw the condition of Liveringa Homestead deteriorate from neglect due in part to changed ownership priorities.<sup>20</sup> The old shearing shed was demolished in the late 1960s and replaced by the present concrete, steel framed and corrugated iron roofed structure.<sup>21</sup>

In 1973/74, approximately 6,000 hectares of land to the west of the homestead was excised from Liveringa and reserved for the Looma Aboriginal Community.<sup>22</sup>

In 1984, *Liveringa Homestead Group*, located on pastoral lease 3114/975, was classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA).<sup>23</sup> The homestead underwent extensive restoration works in 1986-7, around which time the homestead was used as a residence for visiting directors and advisers involved with the Camballin Farms project.<sup>24</sup>

In March 1988, a storm damaged the kitchen/storeroom/dry store building and resulted in the roof being replaced with new custom orb sheeting.<sup>25</sup> In 1989, the Liveringa pastoral lease consisted 263,500 hectares.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Anderson, J.N., 1994, Op. Cit., p.10 & Anderson, J., 1989, Op. Cit., p.35.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, J.N., 1994, Op. Cit., pp. 1 & 10-12 & Anderson, J., 1989, Op. Cit., pp. 36-7.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, J., 1989, Op. Cit., p.36.

<sup>20</sup> National Trust Assessment Exposition, 05/06/1984.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, J.N., 1994, Op Cit, p.7.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, J.N., 1994, Op. Cit., p.1 & Conversation by Tanya Suba with Jim Anderson, 17 July 1997.

<sup>23</sup> National Trust Assessment Exposition, 05/06/1984.

<sup>24</sup> *West Australian*, 18/12/1986.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, J.N., 1994, Op. Cit., p.4 & Kelleher, P., Op. Cit., p.141.

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, J., 1989, Op. Cit., p.25.

In 1996, Liveringa Station was owned by the Anglo Australian Food Company and run by Bruce Gray out of Camballin, the caretakers being Jim and Norma Anderson at Liveringa.<sup>27</sup>

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The *Liveringa Homestead Group* is located in an undulating area overlooking a billabong on Uralla Creek, a tributary of the Fitzroy River. The majority of the main homestead was constructed in 1908, and this building occupies the highest and most prominent position of the group.

The homestead is approached via a loop roadway that allows access to perhaps fourteen or so other associated buildings of varying ages, usage, construction, and design styles.

The entry to the homestead group is via a gate to the west. As one proceeds along the roadway towards the buildings, the impressive aspect of the homestead and the kitchen/dining room/dry store (1904) which command a spectacular view over the billabong is emphasised.

The buildings that are specifically identified are:

1. worker's kitchen/dining room/dry store - 1904 [stone and corrugated iron roof] - highly significant.
2. main homestead - 1908 [stone and corrugated iron roof] - highly significant
3. guest's cottage and pool - 1960s [timber framed and fibro-clad] - moderately significant
4. meat house and dairy under - 1950s [concrete wall and corrugated iron roof] - highly significant
5. hayshed - significant
6. shed with sawbench - significant
7. stable - significant
8. shearing shed and woolshed remnants attached - significant
9. workshop and storage shed - significant
10. shearer's quarters c.1915-20 and attached kitchen c.1935 [steel framed and corrugated iron roof] - highly significant
11. open shed/garage - significant

There are three other houses located to the north of the main homestead group that were used for staff accommodation and these have some significance only as a part of the larger working station operation. Three gravesites have been identified by the caretaker of the property at approximately a kilometre to the north-west of the homestead and these are of moderate significance to the homestead group.

The buildings that are identified as significant (only) are so in respect to their value as portions of a representative working group. Individually

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<sup>27</sup> Jones, Carol-Ann, Op. Cit., p.8.



these buildings are probably not greatly different to other rural buildings of the same purpose found throughout Western Australia, and are not exceptional in any regard.

The moderate and highly significant buildings are described:

1. worker's kitchen/dining room/dry store - 1904. Set onto the hillside this building has extensive retaining walls constructed to the southern, eastern, and western sides to provide the level area. The walls are constructed of solid stone masonry rendered and painted both sides. The characteristic surrounding verandahs supported by steel posts have generally been enclosed by asbestos fibre cement sheet clad walls. The roof is of 'corrugated iron' of timber framing. Features of this building are the extremely thick walls (500 mm) and fireplace at the east end, the tuck pointing of the walls visible under the paint, the bars placed on the windows to secure the dry store, and the extensive shelving indicating the purpose of the dry store room.

2. main homestead - 1908. The elevation of this building and the resultant spectacular view over the billabong and all surrounds are attractive. The style of the homestead (and of the worker's kitchen/dining room/dry store) could be described as of a Federation Bungalow style<sup>28</sup>, although this would simply classify the place by time (Federation c.1890 - c.1915) and external shape (Bungalow - a single storey building with commodious verandahs). A more complete style description would perhaps include the word 'tropical' (Federation Tropical Bungalow). In the Kimberley Region in Western Australia, a climate responsive architecture has been developed, with narrow linear planning to facilitate cross ventilation, extensive shady outdoor spaces surrounded by dense planting, ventilating ridges to release hot air from in the roof, and roofs generously extended to shelter verandahs and breezeways. Where possible large insect screened areas of living and sleeping accommodation under verandahs are provided to take advantage of maximum airflow.

The homestead walls are also 500 mm thick and are built from roughly squared Permean sandstone. The external appearance of the contrasting light colour pointing/ dark colour of the stone is pleasant to the eye, and only some grey cement repairs tarnish the appearance of the outer walls of the three main rooms. The internal walls are rendered and painted, with high ceilings and a top course spaced to allow through ventilation at high level in the rooms. Ceilings are of plaster sheet, window and door frames are of steel and are probably later additions, and the majority of the steel posts to the verandahs have ornate capital decorations. The balustrade is of steel mesh, although documentary photographic evidence reveals that the original balustrade was of lattice. It is possible that (as with many timber construction items in the Kimberley) the timber was progressively replaced with steel as termite damage occurred. The verandah has been extended to the west over time, and the kitchen/laundry/bathroom/spare bedroom & bath to the north end of the building are asbestos fibre cement clad later additions of the late 1940s/early 1950s.

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<sup>28</sup> Apperly et al, op. cit., pp. 144 -147.

3. guest's cottage and pool - 1960s. This building accommodated American and Australian leasehold owners and their guests (including senior executives from BHP Pty Ltd) who were considered of some importance, and was fully air-conditioned in an attempt to provide respite from the often uncomfortable climatic conditions. Although of relatively simple construction the prime location of the cottage and the swimming pool (in front of the view from the homestead to the billabong and beyond), illustrates the importance attached to the comfort and amenity of these generally remote property leaseholders.

4. meat house and dairy under - 1950s. This two level building is constructed of concrete to the lower level, and is timber framed to the upper level. It is enclosed by flywire with generous overhanging corrugated iron roof shades and features a chopping block, meat hook rails, and drained cutting benches.

10. shearer's quarters c.1915-20 and attached kitchen c.1935. The sheer size of these quarters illustrates the large scale of the former sheep operations on Liveringa. It is believed that up to 100 or more men were employed at peak shearing times. The floors are of concrete, the walls to the south are timber shutters that prop open, and the steel posts support the timber roof framing clad with corrugated iron. The kitchen to the end with a high pitched roof gable end roof and fixed open shutters was once entirely closed with insect mesh. The large 'Metters' stove would have meant that this building would have been an extremely hot area in the hot months in the Kimberley.

Generally, all the buildings are in poor condition. The main homestead, which is occupied by caretakers, is in good condition. Maintenance is generally not undertaken on the buildings as the place no longer operates as a pastoral station.

### 13.3 REFERENCES

Anderson, J. 'Liveringa: Fable, Fact, Farce and Failure' in *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society*, Vol 10, Part 1, 1989.

Anderson, J.N. 'Liveringa - A Historical and Heritage Perspective', 1994.

Jones, Carol-Ann 'Liveringa's Heritage - A Window on to the Past', in *Boab Bulletin*, Vol. 15, June, 1996.

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National Trust Assessment Exposition, 05/06/1984.

#### **13. 4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further research on Aboriginal labour and relations.