

BUILT ENVIRONMENT HERITAGE IN THE KIMBERLEY

On 4 June 1997, the Kimberley Society's guest speakers were Maurice Owen, Chairman of the Heritage Council of Western Australia and Cathie Clement, a public historian who also works as a heritage consultant.

Maurice spoke first, saying that the Heritage Act is relatively new, having been in existence only 5 years. The Heritage Council—the State's expert body—was set up in 1990 and had its first meeting in 1991. Its aim is: a) to establish and maintain the Register of places which should be conserved for future generations; b) to ensure that any development of heritage places is done appropriately; and c) to promote awareness and knowledge of cultural heritage.

The Council's nine members include two architects, an engineer, and representatives of the National Trust, building owners, and Local Government; so there is a wide knowledge base. The key function of the Heritage Council is advisory and, under the Act, it is obliged to concern itself primarily with buildings and places, and not with such things as art. The National Trust is run by volunteers and focuses on educating people about heritage matters. It classifies heritage places and owns a range of buildings but has no legal power to prevent demolition. By comparison, if a building is on the State Register it has the protection of the Heritage Act. The Register is available for public perusal and is expected to have 1000 places by the time it is completed. The Heritage Act was recently reviewed and there have been several reviews of the separate Act that deals with Aboriginal sites.

Of the Kimberley places on the Register, most are in Broome. Maurice showed us slides and told us a little about the heritage significance of the following places:

1. Sun Pictures Gardens, the oldest in Australia, important for being an integral part of Broome's social life.
2. Broome Pioneer Cemetery at Mangrove Point, where the oldest remains include those of Pemberton Walcott, an 1880s Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries.
3. Anglican Church of Enunciation, a timber-framed Federation Carpenter Gothic structure, centre for the North West diocese 1910–1964 and Pro-Cathedral of the North West.
4. Dampier Memorial in Bedford Park, commemorating the first English navigator to land on Australian soil (in 1688, well before Captain Cook visited the east coast).
5. Broome Courthouse, a corrugated iron and teak structure built by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company in 1889 and used originally as a Cable Station.

6. Derby's Old Police Gaol (also known as the Native Shelter Shed, Grill or Lock-up) has suffered considerable deterioration but is still culturally important. It is thought to be the town's only surviving pre-World War I building.

As well as the diverse places on the Register, other places are recorded in Municipal Inventories created and maintained by Local Government Authorities. The Shires of Broome and Wyndham-East Kimberley have adopted their inventories; the Shires of Derby/West Kimberley and Halls Creek have completed theirs but have yet to adopt them; and we heard that 73 of the State's 144 local authorities have completed Inventories under the Heritage Act.

The Heritage Council works closely with other government authorities and it raises public awareness partly by assisting with promotion of the 140 Heritage Trails in WA. The Council can help heritage property owners with small grants for conservation works and, although the Federal Government has discontinued its support, the Lotteries Commission recently put one million dollars into heritage projects. Maurice spoke of a range of other incentives saying that, while the Council aims for a win-win situation, it has and can use enforcement powers. The old Railway Hotel in Perth was a case where, to avoid going to gaol, the owners who demolished it illegally subsequently rebuilt the facade at a cost of around one million dollars!

Cathie Clement's delivery began with an overhead image showing heritage places nominated on the Shire of Broome's Municipal Inventory. Six are on the State Register, and another five are recommended for registration. Cathie spoke briefly about the Municipal Inventory process, saying that the breadth of the inventories differed markedly, e.g. the Derby/West Kimberley Municipal Inventory contains 51 pages whilst the Halls Creek document contains 11 pages. She then showed us slides of the following places listed in the Municipal Inventories:

1. Broome Bowling Club, originally a coastal radio station and later operated by OTC.
2. Wharfinger's House which is now the Derby Museum.
3. Derby Jetty Tramway remnants, and associated woolshed and goods shed, now disused.
4. Fossil Downs Station outside Fitzroy Crossing, a two storey homestead (built before and after World War II) with fine examples of interior design dating from the 1940s.
5. Ruins at Lillmalloora, built from local stone in the 1880s, a sheep station homestead that had been abandoned and was being used by the police when Jandamarra (Pigeon) shot and killed Constable Richardson there in November 1894.

6. Ruins of the old homestead at Leopold Downs station, built from an unusual pink stone.
7. The low level river crossing on the Fitzroy, constructed in the 1930s and widened in the 1950s, provided the main river crossing in this locality until a bridge was built in 1974.
8. Fitzroy Crossing Backpackers Hostel, formerly the Post Office, built in the 1950s and significant as part of a 100-year sequence of local post and telegraph office services.
9. Sergeant's Quarters (built 1950–52) in the Old Fitzroy Crossing Police Station Precinct, significant as part of a 100-year sequence of police presence in the area.
10. Liveringa Homestead Group, built in 1908 from local stone, with walls 18" thick and ventilation through the ceiling, includes out-buildings related to sheep rather than cattle.
11. Bungarun, the Derby Leprosarium, built in 1936 to house and treat people with Hansen's Disease, provided an essential service but one that many townspeople didn't want nearby.
12. Halls Creek Post Office ruins, built from mud bricks in 1890 but left with no roof to stop deterioration through weathering after the iron was removed and sold.
13. Original Ord River station homestead out of Halls Creek, has been roofed for protection.
14. Grave of David Suttie, who died in 1912 and was the Head Stockman in Mrs Anneas Gunn's book *We of the Never Never*. The grave is near Wyndham but hard to find.

Other places already on the State Register, or recommended for listing, are:

- a) Shire of Halls Creek – Wolfe Creek Meteorite Crater, Lake Gregory and environs, and the Bungle Bungle Range region (Purnululu);
- b) Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley – Chinese shops, Gully Cemetery, Gully Road Precinct, Honest John's shop, Gaol (former Hospital), old Courthouse, old Post Office, old Port Hall, Post Master's Residence (former), Truscott Base and Wyndham Port Hardware store.
- c) Shire of Derby/West Kimberley – Cave School and homestead on Go Go station, and old homestead on Oscar Range station.
- d) Shire of Broome – Chinatown Conservation Area, Quarantine Station Houses, Sacred Heart Church at Beagle Bay, Cape Leveque Lighthouse and Lombadina Mission.

Cathie Clement noted that conservation plans have been prepared for various places, e.g. the Broome Courthouse, and that at others, e.g. Silent Grove, which is

now a CALM Nature Reserve, evidence of human habitation has been removed. Cathy Day, a Kimberley Society member who worked on the Wyndham-East Kimberley Municipal Inventory, contributed some comments about other historic sites such as Anthon's Landing in Cambridge Gulf, Carlton Hill station, which is much visited by architects and historians, and Wyndham Port Hardware Store—the oldest building in Wyndham—which was run by Black Pat Durack. Cathy Day noted that even comparatively modern buildings and constructions in Kununurra are listed, e.g. the Diversion Dam and the Crushing Plant used to build it in the late 1960s. Who decides what goes on the list? Who arbitrates it? The local Council does by democratic means.

Cathie concluded her talk with a series of 1886 photographs showing eight vessels anchored in Cambridge Gulf and 22 buildings and sites identified by name. She and Maurice then answered questions and the 45 people present showed their appreciation in the usual manner. The evening concluded with the President introducing "Bluey" Quilty who spoke briefly on Old Halls Creek, its history and present condition, with slides of structures of interest.

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- Information about heritage places in the Kimberley can be accessed by contacting Helen Ansell, a Society member, in the Heritage Council's library on telephone (08) 9221 4177.