

## **BENDING THE RULES: FINDING, RECORDING AND SAVING THE BUILT HERITAGE OF THE KIMBERLEY**

On 1 July 2005, Rosemary Rosario, an Architectural Heritage Consultant, spoke to the Kimberley Society about some of the work that she has done in her fifteen years as a consultant. Rosemary's association with Cathie Clement goes back ten years, and their work has taken them to the Kimberley to assess structures from the grand to the more modest, some of which have great heritage significance.

Rosemary's presentation was a photographic overview of some of the many Kimberley buildings she and Cathie have visited and studied over the past ten years. The focus of the evening was the varied range and style of the buildings in the region and the sometimes unexpected discoveries such as the extent to which concrete was used in Kimberley construction from quite early in the twentieth century.

The Broome Court House was built as a cable station by the Eastern Extension Australasia and China Telegraph Co. Ltd, which imported it in 1889, prefabricated from England. It was a standard pattern with an iron frame, corrugated iron walls, cast iron steps and balconies, which remain from the original building. The building was erected with the help of Chinese workers from Singapore from where teak panelling was also sourced. A billiard room on one side was part of the original building. Rosemary showed a photograph of the cable station taken in 1900. It served as a cable station until 1913, and in 1921 was purchased by the state government for use as a courthouse and is now fully restored.

Also in Broome was the Coastal Wireless Station, built by the Commonwealth as part of a network of stations that communicated with ships sailing in waters off Australia. The Broome Wireless Station was used until 1967. It was vested in the Shire of Broome in 1973 and became the Bowling Club in 1980. It is a concrete building, cast in situ, and is in two parts with a breezeway between. Similar wireless stations were built at Wyndham, Roebourne and Esperance. Another concrete Commonwealth building was the Health Laboratory, built in 1937, to investigate malaria, leprosy and other tropical diseases, particularly malignant tertian malaria in the Fitzroy valley. This building is of interest because of the suspended concrete floor, poured over corrugated iron which has left its pattern on the under side. In 1955, it was transferred to the state and became nurses' quarters for the hospital. Concrete was also used in the Customs House, which is now the Broome Museum.

Double iron roofs and wind scoops are also a feature of Broome buildings. They were installed to cope with the climate before fans and air-conditioning were

available.

Derby has, and had, some significant heritage buildings such as the police station, built in 1906 with a lock-up behind it in which prisoners were chained to the floor to prevent overnight escapes. The lock-up, which had no solid walls, consists of two sections of iron grill. The 1906 police station was used until a few years before its demolition in 1977; the lock-up has now been restored.

The Flying Doctor Base in Derby is identical to one in Wyndham, now used by an aboriginal corporation. More modest but still significant Derby buildings are represented by the house in Mrs Wells lived until recently. It has an iron roof and walls with push-out shutters enclosing the veranda. The Wharfinger's house, built in 1928 to house the man who was in charge of the Derby jetty, has been restored. It is now used as a museum.

The Derby woolshed, built in 1900, was damaged by a cyclone, but was reconstructed in 1957 with a gabled roof instead of the original saw-tooth form. The huge doors have been restored.

The Leprosarium was built in 1936 and closed in 1986 when the need to segregate patients was replaced by new treatment.

Further afield, near Windjana Gorge, and probably visited by many members, are the ruins of Lillimilura, built in 1887 as the station homestead for the King Sound Pastoral Company. Much of the stone walls remain either side of the wide breezeway between the two halves of the building. The pastoral activity on Lillimilura decreased in the early 1890s, leaving the homestead available for occupation by the local police constables. It was here that Jandamarra, who was known as 'Pigeon', shot Constable William Richardson in 1894. Jandamarra was shot at Tunnel Creek in 1897.

All that remains of the Old Leopold homestead are the stone walls of the former homestead, built about 1900 and occupied until the 1920s. Other station buildings that have been assessed for their heritage value are Glenroy, built in the 1950s of concrete blocks with a stone building for staff quarters. Mt Elizabeth also built in the 1950s is another stone house. The grandest of all the station homesteads is Fossil Downs, near Fitzroy Crossing, a large two-storey homestead set in a beautiful tropical garden. It was built by the MacDonald family in the 1940s, using locally made bricks, and remains in the family. The interior was decorated in Art Deco style with a grand staircase, Art Deco furniture and furnishings.

Several more recent buildings in Fitzroy Crossing are of heritage value, such as the Post Office, built in the 1950s with a timber frame and fibro walls with a gap at the top for ventilation.

Old Halls Creek Post Office is known to all members through Cathie's efforts in raising money through the Kimberley Society to assist with its conservation. It was built of mud bricks in 1889 and served until the town was relocated in the early 1950s. A photo taken in 1964 shows the roof and veranda posts intact but soon after this, the roof was removed and deterioration started. A photograph in 1975 showed the walls intact but by 1999 they were crumbling. Now a gabled roof with eaves, the same height as the original, protects them. In 'new' Halls Creek a trackers' hut, built next to the Police Station in 1959, is an example of a simple building with walls, roof and even the fireplace of galvanised iron.

Rosemary and Cathie have also assessed or examined river crossings such as the one near Fitzroy Crossing where a concrete crossing was built in 1935 and raised in 1958 by casting concrete over the original. In contrast, the Mary River crossing is quite elegantly built of stone.

Rosemary's meticulous work has found many important features of buildings overlooked by previous surveys. She took us on a fascinating journey of discovery through the Kimberley in search of heritage buildings.

*Loisette Marsh*