



## 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.

#### PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.5 Developing primary production
- 3.7.1 Establishing postal services

#### HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 206 Mail services
- 301 Grazing & pastoralism & dairying

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Irwin House Group* is a fine example of a vernacular pastoral station group in the Irwin region, which has developed over time since its occupation as part of The Cattle Company landholdings in the 1850s. (Criterion 1.1)

*Irwin House Group*, comprising Irwin House, Kitchen (fmr), Post Office (fmr), Shearing Shed, Milking Shed, Stockyard Post, Stone Wall, Gravesite and Port Macquarie Fig tree, located in close proximity to the Irwin River, is a significant collection of farm buildings that together represent early European settlement and continuing pastoral activity in the Irwin region. (Criterion 1.3)

The Kitchen (fmr), Post Office (fmr) and Shearing Shed have aesthetic value for their simple style and pleasing use of stone and timber, as well as for their contribution to the character of the built farm environment which they form with Irwin House, Stone Wall, Port Macquarie fig tree, Stockyard Post and Milking Shed, in the rural setting of red earth and grassed areas with a few scattered mature Eucalypts. (Criterion 1.4)

*Irwin House Group* is a fine example of a vernacular pastoral station group. The Kitchen (fmr), Post Office (fmr) and Shearing Shed are significant as individual components of high aesthetic value

#### 11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

*Irwin House Group* is associated with the pastoral leaseholding of large tracts of land in the 1850s and 1860s, which were the earliest form of European

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R. and Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

settlement in the district and opened the way for closer agricultural settlement and the establishment of rural townships. (Criterion 2.1)

*Irwin House Group* is evidence of the early (1850s) European pastoral settlement of the Irwin River region. The Post Office is evidence of the sparse settlement in the area during the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when isolated farms provided small town services, such as mail and telegraph, to the surrounding region. (Criterion 2.2)

*Irwin House Group* is associated with The Cattle Company and its partners, the earliest European settlers in the area, and in particular Lockier Burges, who managed the property and was responsible for the construction of the farm buildings, his nephew Francis Burges, who inherited the property from his uncle, and his grandnephew Irwin Burges, who managed the property from 1913 to 1936. (Criterion 2.3)

### **11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

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### **11.4 SOCIAL VALUE**

*Irwin House Group* contributes to the community's sense of place because of its long association with farming in the region, and the participation of its various owners in the public life of the Irwin district. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1 RARITY**

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### **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Irwin House Group* is a fine representative example of a vernacular pastoral station that has undergone minimal change, except for Irwin House, since its establishment (Criterion 6.1)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

Generally, the *Irwin House Group* is in fair condition due to regular maintenance and continued use.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

*Irwin House Group* has operated continuously, mostly with the original function, except the former Kitchen, which is now an office, and the former Post Office that is now a storeroom. A number of alterations and additions have taken place at Irwin House over the years to facilitate the ongoing use of the place. Overall, *Irwin House Group* has retained a moderate to high degree of integrity.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

There is considerable evidence of the original fabric of each of the buildings comprising *Irwin House Group*. Overall, the place has a moderate to high degree of authenticity, although Irwin House has a low degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Conservation Consultant.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Irwin House Group* comprises former Kitchen (1850s), Shearing Shed (1850s), Milking Shed (1850s), Stockyard Post (1850s), Port Macquarie Fig trees (1850s-1860s), Stone Wall (1850s; c.1900s), former Post Office (1850s-1860s), Irwin House (1890; 1900s), and Gravesite of John Armstrong (1907). The place was developed as part of the leaseholding of The Cattle Company under the management of Lockier Burges.

The district along the lower Irwin River was initially taken up as pastoral leases. In 1852, 100-acre agricultural blocks were surveyed, the first taken up in 1859 when there was no more land available in the settled Greenough district twenty miles away. Within a decade, the seventy-one surveyed blocks had been occupied. The town of Dongara developed beside the river and the district was serviced by shipping at nearby Port Denison, at the mouth of the Irwin River.<sup>1</sup>

In September 1850, Samuel Pole Phillips made an application for a 20,000-acre lease at Irwin River, which was granted. Less than a week later, Phillips, together with Edward Hamersley, Lockier Clere Burges and Bartholomew Urban Vigors, made an application for two 20,000-acre leases in the Irwin district on behalf of a new pastoral company, The Cattle Company. There were no location numbers for the leased land. Phillips' original lease was situated southeast of Pell Crossing on the Irwin River, and the other two leases commenced near the Mingenew spring and spread eastward across the fertile areas of the Lockier River and Green Brook. The Company planned to use the leases as an 'out-station to their other existing properties.'<sup>2</sup>

Edward Hamersley had arrived in Western Australia in 1837, with his French born wife, Anne Louise (Elvire) Cornelis, and their first child. He purchased land in the Beverley and York districts, which he leased out, preferring to live in Perth, on his Guildford property. He also established a horse-breeding venture at 'Culham', Toodyay, in partnership with Samuel Pole Phillips.<sup>3</sup> Hamersley ran sheep for wool on his Guildford properties and, like many farmers, was affected by the collapse of the 1842 wool market. Leaving his properties in the hands of an agent, he took his family back to France in January 1843, not returning until January 1850.<sup>4</sup>

Samuel Pole Phillips was born at Culham in England. He arrived in Western Australia on the *Montreal* in May 1839, as a twenty-year-old, and purchased Alfred Waylen's property at Toodyay, which he named after his hometown. He bred cattle and horses and was one of the principal exporters of horses to

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<sup>1</sup> Bain, Mary Albertus, 'The Irwin Story', *Early Days*, Vol. 6 Part 5, pp. 7-21.

<sup>2</sup> Bain, Mary Albertus, *Ancient Landmarks: A social and economic history of the Victoria District of Western Australia 1839-1894*, UWA Press, 1975, p

<sup>3</sup> DOLA Deeds of Memorial, Book 2 No. 134; *Bicentennial Dictionary of West Australians*, UWA Press, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Erickson, Rica, 'Edward Hamersley: The Landtaker', in Hunt, Lyall (ed) *Westralian Portraits*, UWA Press, 1979, pp. 21-28; Erickson, Rica, *Bicentennial Dictionary of West Australians*, op cit.

the Indian market. Phillips married Sophia Roe in April 1847.<sup>5</sup> In 1850, he made a tour of inspection of the Irwin district, which resulted in the acquisition of leases in the area and the establishment of The Cattle Company.

Lockier Clere Burges arrived in Western Australia on the *Warrior* in 1830, as a sixteen-year-old, with his older brothers William and Samuel. They were the sons of Dr Lockier Burges of Fethard, Tipperary, Ireland. William and Samuel Burges were granted 3,000 acres of land at York, which they named 'Tipperary'. Lockier was too young to get a grant in his own name and the brothers worked 'Tipperary' in partnership. Lockier later took part in exploration of the Murchison and Hutt River district with Anthony Lefroy, and the Gascoyne region with surveyor Gregory, before becoming involved with The Cattle Company.<sup>6</sup>

The fourth member of The Cattle Company, Bartholomew Urban Vigors, arrived in Western Australia in 1842, on the *Shepherd*. He was an attorney and barrister, and acting Advocate General in the colony. He married Charlotte Bruce in 1852, and they had one son. Vigors died in March 1854, leaving The Cattle Company with three surviving partners.<sup>7</sup>

The Company's lands in the Irwin district were managed by Lockier Burges, although Samuel Phillips took over management when Burges visited Ireland early in the 1860s. The Company initially ran only cattle and horses, concentrating on breeding horses for the Indian market, and on beef production, as sheep were under constant threat from dingoes in the area. The Company won a contract to supply beef to the British Government, and did an extensive trade with butchers in Perth and Fremantle, but there were problems. Expenses were high, the partners did not always agree on what the Company should be doing, and there was a lot of public criticism because they occupied much A class land on a B class rental. In 1869, the Company was dissolved and the partners each took a portion of the freehold and leasehold lands. Edward Hamersley took the land near Greenough, Samuel Phillips the 'lower country', that is, the western section of the landholding lower down the Irwin River, known as *The Grange*, and Lockier Burges took the tract above Phillips' land, extending up the Irwin River from nine miles above Dongara.<sup>8</sup>

As manager of The Cattle Company's properties from 1850 to 1869, Lockier Burges resided on site. His first permanent residence on the Irwin River property dates from the early 1850s, shortly after The Cattle Company was formed. This residence was described as a long, low building made of pise and stone and thatched with rushes, with a living room with a matchboard ceiling, two bedrooms and a pantry. A c.1891 photograph shows the building

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<sup>5</sup> Registrar General's Office WA, Pioneer Index Microfiche RG2544/1901 WA; Erickson, Rica, *Bicentennial Dictionary of West Australians*, op cit.; *West Australia*, obituary, 15 June 1901, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> CSO records, CONS 36 Vol. 5, 12 March 1830; O'Mara, Gillian *The Burges Saga*, O. G. Burges, Cottesloe, 2000, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Registrar General's Office WA, Pioneer Index Microfiche RG429/1852, RG2038/1853, RG644/1854. Information provided by Gillian O'Mara.

<sup>8</sup> Bain, Mary Albertus, 'The Irwin Story', op cit, p. 13; Battye J. S. *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Hussey & Gillingham, Adelaide, 1913, p. 961.

fitting that description.<sup>9</sup> Lockier Burges did not marry so the provision of a larger home had not been found necessary.

There are claims that Burges' first house was a two-room wattle and daub structure located closer to the river on lower land and that it was later moved to higher ground to become part of Irwin House.<sup>10</sup> The impracticality of moving a wattle and daub structure makes that claim difficult to credit in the first part, but it is very likely that Burges' first home was a simple wattle and daub shelter, soon replaced by the more substantial pise and stone residence, but neither the wattle and daub structure, nor the pise and stone residence, have been incorporated into Irwin House.<sup>11</sup>

Lockier Burges was one of the earliest residents in the district, his closest neighbours being the Lefroys at Walebing. During the 1850s, pastoralists took up leases at Yandanooka, Arrino, Carnamah and Coorow, and the track linking these stations and New Norcia later became the approximate path of the Great Northern Highway to Geraldton.<sup>12</sup> An unofficial post office was established at the Irwin property with employee Matthew Reardon the first postal officer. He occupied the position from 1 July 1853 to 6 September 1864. The Post Office building possibly dates from this period. The size of the building, and the inclusion of a fireplace, indicates that it was also occupied as living quarters, most likely by the postal officer.<sup>13</sup>

The next recorded postmaster was John Armstrong, a nephew of Lockier's brother, Dr Francis Carleton Burges of Ireland. Armstrong arrived in Western Australia in 1883, and held the position of postal officer from about 1887 until his death in 1907. In 1873, the telegraph line was constructed from Perth to Geraldton, and telegraph stations were set up at various points along the way. As most points of settlement along the route were at the pastoral stations, these also became telegraph stations. At each station, someone was taught Morse code and instructed in how to operate the equipment. On the Irwin property, this would have been the responsibility of the postal officer, while at some other stations, such as at Walebing, it was the responsibility of a member of the station owner's family. When John Armstrong died, he was buried on the property, supposedly at the site of Lockier's original wattle and daub house, some distance from Irwin House.<sup>14</sup>

As part of The Cattle Company's horse-breeding programme, the property had stockyards that were used for breaking horses. One of the elements of the stockyard was a notched post, originally located in the centre of the yard and used to assist in mounting. The Post is all that remains of the stockyards.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bain, Mary Albertus, 'The Irwin Story', op cit, quoting Esther Temple Russell, great-niece of Lockier Burges and daughter of Francis Lockier Burges; photograph c.1891, in Bain, Mary Albertus, *Ancient Landmarks*, op cit, plate [p. 4], between pp. 112-113 & Battye, J. S., op cit, p. 961.

<sup>10</sup> Suba, Tanya, *Shire of Irwin Municipal Inventory*, 1997, Place no. 128.

<sup>11</sup> Bain, Mary Albertus, *Ancient Landmarks*, op cit, plate [p. 4], between pp. 112-113; physical evidence.

<sup>12</sup> Bain, Mary Albertus, 'The Irwin Story', op cit, pp. 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> Erickson, Rica, *Bicentennial Dictionary of West Australians*, op cit.; Irwin District Historical Society records; O'Mara, Gillian, op cit; physical evidence.

<sup>14</sup> Irwin District Historical Society records; O'Mara, Gillian, op cit; Laurie, Maxine, *Tracks Through the Midlands: A history of the Moora district*, Shire of Moora, 1995, pp. 16-24; Erickson, Rica, *Bicentennial Dictionary of West Australians*, op cit; physical evidence.

<sup>15</sup> Physical evidence.

It is difficult to be sure exactly when The Cattle Company introduced sheep to the Irwin River property but there were considerable numbers of sheep in the district by the late 1850s, suggesting that the Company was more than likely running sheep by that time, along with neighbouring pastoralists.<sup>16</sup> The original stone shearing shed, of which only a fragment remains, could date from around that time. The milking shed may also be an 1850s construction, as milk, cream and butter, and perhaps cheese, would have been produced on the property from an early date. The property also had a produce garden.

It was a great place for growing vegetables and all kinds of fruit all the year round, and these were mainly grown for their own use. The home was supplied with fresh water from springs that covered about two acres of the most wonderful soil.<sup>17</sup>

Lockier is recorded as employing a number of Ticket of Leave men over the years, and no doubt employed free men also, so there would always have been extra mouths to feed.<sup>18</sup> Burges also employed Aborigines from the Irwin district in the late 1850s, and while no information has been located regarding their employment on the property after the break-up of The Cattle Company's landholdings in 1869, it is most likely that the practice continued.<sup>19</sup> Many Aborigines and part-Aborigines in the settled southwestern part of the State found employment on farms in the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The pastoralists employed them as shearers, scourers, blacksmiths, horse-breakers, shepherds, boundary riders, fencers and rouseabouts, as well as household staff.<sup>20</sup>

According to Battye, when The Cattle Company was dissolved in 1869, Lockier Burges secured 'about 10,000 acres of the frontage to both banks in blocks of from 100 to 200 acres, which practically secures the whole of the river frontages for about 15 miles'.<sup>21</sup> The earliest Certificate of Title issued for the section of the property, which includes Victoria Location 474, on which *Irwin House Group* is situated, covers some forty individual Locations extending over both banks of the Irwin River and comprising one thousand five hundred and forty one acres.<sup>22</sup> Location 474 has an area of 16.1874 ha, and is situated adjacent to the Midland Road and the Midland Railway line.<sup>23</sup>

Francis Lockier Burges, nephew of Lockier Burges, came to Western Australia to work with his uncle when his father, Dr Francis Carleton Burges, died in Ireland. When Lockier Burges died in 1886, Francis inherited the Irwin River property.<sup>24</sup> Francis married the following year to Esther Ann Potts and, in 1890, he had a two-room brick and iron cottage constructed adjacent to the

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- 16 Bain, Mary Albertus, 'The Irwin Story', op cit, p. 13 & *Ancient Landmarks*, op cit, pp.188-191.
  - 17 Hammond, J. E., *Western Pioneers: The battle well fought*, Perth, Hesperian Press, 1980, facsimile ed, p. 108.
  - 18 Erickson, Rica, *Bicentennial Dictionary of West Australians*, op cit..
  - 19 Bain, Mary Albertus, 'The Irwin Story', op cit, p. 13 & *Ancient Landmarks*, op cit, pp.188-191.
  - 20 Green, Neville 'Aborigines and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century', & Bolton, G. C. 'Black and White after 1897', In Stannage, C. T. (ed) *A New History of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth, 1981, Chapters 3 & 4; Taylor, John, *Conservation Plan for Walebing*, July 2001.
  - 21 Bain, Mary Albertus, 'The Irwin Story', op cit, p. 13; Battye J. S. op cit..
  - 22 Certificate of Title Vol. 36 Fol. 238, 20 March 1891.
  - 23 Certificate of Title Vol. 2078 Fol 49, third schedule.
  - 24 Certificate of Title Vol. 36 Fol. 238, 20 March 1891.

piise and stone homestead as extra accommodation for his growing family. This latter cottage now forms part of Irwin House, while Lockier Burges' 1850s piise and stone residence has been removed.<sup>25</sup> Francis and Esther had four children, the eldest named Irwin, for the property and district. In April 1893, Francis Lockier died of pleurisy. Esther took their children to Britain, leaving the Irwin property under the management of C. W. O'Halloran. In 1899, she married Frederick Scroope, in England.<sup>26</sup>

It is not clear when Esther Scroope (Burges) and her family returned to Western Australia. Information provided to Mary Albertus Bain by Esther's daughter, Esther Temple Russell (nee Burges), indicates that her mother was responsible for the additions to Irwin House in the early part of the twentieth century. Esther Russell mentions the Frenchman who was responsible for at least some of the additions:

He insisted that each member of the family should tap the foundation stone; my younger brother, Frank, could not be found at the moment, and the Frenchman said the house would never have any luck. Well, he was right; my 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> brothers were killed in France in the 1914-18 war. The Frenchman and my mother later had a disagreement and I so clearly recall him dressing up in his best clothes which included a brown billycock hat, the only one I had ever seen, and it fascinated me, and him walking up and down outside the garden wall, muttering to himself. Eventually things were fixed up and he left. Shortly afterwards, the police came looking for him; he was an escaped convict from Noumea and had a life sentence for murder.<sup>27</sup>

In 1913, J. S. Battye described the Irwin property, commenting on the 'comparatively modern' homestead:

"Irwin" House is the oldest established homestead in a very wide radius, and though a large part of the residential portion is comparatively modern, the surroundings all bespeak extensive settlement long before the present structure came into existence. Situated one and a half miles from Irwin Railway Siding and 12 miles from Dongara, the house is of [sic] bungalow-like building of bricks, with a broad verandah running round it. A feature of the garden is a row of nine large fig trees, on which have been carved by visitors to "Irwin" House initials and dates reaching back as far as 1866. One of the finest windmills in the district is situated in the centre of the garden; and about a mile distant from the homestead may be found the Irwin Springs, whence necessary supplies are drawn for the locomotives of the midland railway. In addition, there are existent on the property eight wells which have been fitted with elevated tanks and windmills, so that the water supply for the whole estate has been made practically secure.<sup>28</sup>

The Stone Wall, which once surrounded Irwin House, may have had more than one period of construction, although the historic photographs do not cover a large enough area to give a true indication of the situation. The c.1891 photograph shows what could be a section of the Stone Wall in front of the former Kitchen, while a c.1913 photograph, also published in Battye's *Cyclopedia*, has been taken from a different direction and shows part of what

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<sup>25</sup> Bain, Mary Albertus, *Ancient Landmarks*, op cit, plate [p. 4], between pp. 112-113; physical evidence.

<sup>26</sup> Battye J. S., op cit; *West Australian*, 25 April 1893, p. 3; Certificate of Title Vol. 36 Fol. 238, 11 April 1899; Bain, Mary Albertus, *Ancient Landmarks*, op cit, plate [p. 4], between pp. 112-113.

<sup>27</sup> Bain, Mary Albertus, 'The Irwin Story', op cit, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Battye J. S., op cit, pp. 961-2.

appears to be the northern section of the Stone Wall.<sup>29</sup> The fig trees mentioned by Battye are Port Macquarie Fig trees (*Ficus Australis*), and are very similar to the Moreton Bay Fig tree. The Hamel State Nursery catalogue of 1918 claims that both varieties 'with their heavy foliage will be found to thrive well anywhere within a moderately heavy rainfall belt'.<sup>30</sup> Only one of the nine trees Port Macquarie Fig trees is extant.

In 1906, at the age of eighteen, Esther's eldest son, Irwin Burges returned to Western Australia after completing his education in Ireland. For the next four years, he worked at the Irwin property under C. W. O'Halloran, gaining experience for taking control of the place, which he did in 1910. Esther Scroope (Burges) had added more land to the property, with the result that it comprised some 36,000 acres when Irwin Burges took it over. Irwin Burges ran a flock of 9,000 merino sheep, and had 2,000 acres under wheat in 1913. He also bred shorthorn cattle and Clydesdale horses. J. S. Battye comments that Irwin Burges' stock were 'large prizetakers wherever exhibited'.<sup>31</sup> Esther Scroope returned to England after Irwin took over the property.

Mrs. Scroope, the owner of "Irwin" House, is at present (1913) residing in England, and the property is under the management of her eldest son, Mr. Irwin C. Burges, who, although still quite young, has proved himself to possess administrative powers somewhat above the average.<sup>32</sup>

In 1913, Irwin Burges was recorded as being a member of the Irwin Roads Board, vice-president of the Irwin District Agricultural Society, secretary of the local branch of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, and vice-president of the northern district polo team.<sup>33</sup> In 1919, he married Olive Mina Burt, and they had two children, Olive and Francis.<sup>34</sup>

When Esther Scroope (Burges) died in November 1928, her two surviving children, Irwin Burges and Esther Russell, inherited the Irwin property. In the division of the assets, Esther acquired *Irwin House Group* and associated lands, which she sold to Gabyon Pastoral Company in 1936.<sup>35</sup>

Gabyon Pastoral Company is owned by the Gillam family, who are currently third generation owners and managers of the property. The various buildings of *Irwin House Group* have undergone some changes in use in the past sixty-five years, in particular the former Post Office, now used as offices, and the former Kitchen, now a storeroom. Before its current function as office, the former Kitchen served for a time as living quarters for jackeroos. There have been some alterations to the fabric of the farm buildings, including the addition of new roofing and the alteration of some door and window openings, as well as general repairs to maintain the buildings. The Milking Shed and Shearing Shed have both been largely rebuilt using modern materials. Only one of the original nine Port Macquarie Fig trees remains. This tree almost comprises a stand in its own right as it has produced a number of saplings over the years, some of which have been allowed to

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29      *ibid.*

30      WA Dept of Agriculture, Hamel State Nursery catalogue, 1918, p. 7.

31      Battye J. S., *op cit.*

32      *ibid.*

33      *ibid.*

34      Erickson, Rica, *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, UWA Press, 1988.

35      Certificate of Title Vol. 36 Fol. 238, 28 November 1928; 25 August 1931; Vol. 1026 Fol. 179, 5 September 1936.



develop while others have been lopped a foot above the ground because they were encroaching on Irwin House.<sup>36</sup>

Irwin House is believed to have been constructed from bricks made on the property from Irwin River mud, and which are referred to as Irwin bricks. Irwin House was completely re-roofed in 1998 following storm damage. The original roof, comprising a number of hips, was replaced with a single hipped roof structure. The old roof cladding and timbers were used to completely re-roof the former Kitchen. The verandahs surrounding Irwin House have been largely enclosed, and other internal alterations have been made to the building to facilitate modern living.<sup>37</sup> While there have been numerous changes to the property landholding over the years, Location 474 on which *Irwin House Group* is situated has remained unchanged.<sup>38</sup>

In 2001, the place continues to function as a sheep and wheat property, and Robert and Mary Gillam occupy Irwin House.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Irwin House Group* is situated on Midlands Road in the locality of Milo, 15 kilometres east of Dongara. The group is set back from the road some 500 metres southeast down an unmade road lined with sugar gum trees. The place is signalled by a perimeter fence and open gateway leading to a gravelled forecourt with the former Post Office straight ahead with Shearing Sheds behind it, and Irwin House to the right (south). Irwin House and the former Kitchen are surrounded by flat, grassed areas. A mature Port Macquarie Fig tree is located on the south side of Irwin House. Extending west from the northwest corner of Irwin House is the original freestone wall around the house garden area. It forms a rectangle, closing near the former Kitchen. Much of the wall is no longer evident; however, the south wall is intact, and although the north wall is in place, it has been rendered. The site slopes down from the north to the south, on the river side. The Gravesite, marked recently by a plaque and surrounded by a fence, is on the riverbank a considerable distance from Irwin House and was not accessible at the time of the site inspection.

*Irwin House Group* comprises Homestead, former Kitchen, former Post Office, Shearing Shed, Milk Shed, Post, Stone Wall, Gravesite, Port Macquarie Fig trees, and various outbuildings of no heritage significance.

The places that comprise *Irwin House Group* are of a rural functional style showing the change and development that has taken place over the years, and display no characteristics of a specific style.

Irwin House. Irwin House is characteristic of the evolution of the main dwelling on a pastoral property, and displays vernacular functional attributes.

It is a single-storey masonry construction with a hipped corrugated iron roof and timber framed hardiplank clad verandah enclosures, except the southeast corner that is brick. The footprint of the building is a square with perimeter verandahs, with the informal main entry on the east side, and the formal entry on the west side. Externally, there is minimal evidence of the original 1890 dwelling or the subsequent additions c.1900. Recent verandah enclosures wrap the entire east side (entry), most of the north side viewed

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36 Physical evidence; information provided to Laura Gray by Mary Gillam.

37 *ibid.*

38 Certificates of Title Vol. 1105 Fol. 180; Vol. 494 Fol. 192A; Vol. 1355 Fol. 285; Vol. 2078 Fol. 49; Vol. 2112 Fol. 562.

from the drive-in entry, and part of the south and west sides, obscuring the original 1890 and subsequent c.1900 additions that are incorporated into the place. The large hipped roof with break pitch verandahs is not original and bears no resemblance to the original roof form.

The original residence and c.1900 additions are both brick construction in an English bond. All the original external walls have been painted, and there is evidence of the two periods of construction on the south wall. On the walls behind the bathroom on the northwest corner, there is a timber-framed asbestos-clad dado wall with removable panels. Essentially the wall conceals the plumbing services and the fretted face brickwork. There are two twelve-paned double hung sash windows that would have been symmetrical on the west wall of the original building. They are now asymmetrical, flanking the front door insertion, which has been relocated from the c.1900 entry at the east end. The original c.1900 windows remain intact. They are in pairs of two timber framed double hung sashes. Each window is a narrow vertical configuration. Each set of two windows is divided by a section of brick wall, and has brick sills and arched soldier course headers. The verandah enclosures are timber framed and clad with hardiplank with aluminium framed sliding glass windows and door openings. The open verandah areas are supported by square timber posts. The entire perimeter verandah has a concrete floor.

Internally, there has been considerable refurbishment to comply with contemporary standards, but the structure and most of the layout of the original 1890 and c.1900 sections remains in place. In a corner of each of the four c.1900 rooms, there is a vertical PVC pipe extending from floor to ceiling. This is a sub-floor ventilation system designed to facilitate the flow of air and prevent rising damp. The timber floors are covered and the walls are painted hard plaster. The ceilings in the 1890 rooms are clad with plasterboard and battens. The c.1900 ceilings are clad with more recent gyprock and plain cornices. The verandah ceilings are lined with gyprock, on the rake.

The main entrance on the east side is through an aluminium sliding glass door, into the verandah extension of the kitchen and dining area. The kitchen has a modern fitout and the entire space along the east side has a tiled floor. The c.1900 section is evident from the east verandah infill, with a central front door opening into a corridor flanked by a room each side. The corridor extends to where the door and sidelights have been relocated to the west wall of the 1890 cottage. The corridor is wide and unadorned with four original four-panel doors opening into the two rooms each side. The first room on each side of the corridor has a fireplace with an elaborate mantelpiece, and picture rails. The second room on the right has a door leading through to a c.1970s bathroom fitout. The door has been fitted into an original window opening.

At the west end of the corridor, a large rectangular opening in the wall gives access directly into one of the rooms of the original cottage, with the second room on the left and front door ahead. A c.1930s brown face brick fireplace is in place on the north wall, flanked by flush panel doors opening into the toilet on the left and a bathroom on the right, currently under renovation.

Irwin House is generally in good condition. It has undergone a number of incremental developments and changes over time to facilitate the ongoing residential function of a pastoral Homestead, and has a moderate degree of integrity. Irwin House has a low degree of authenticity.

**Former Kitchen** The former Kitchen is a stone building situated approximately 10 metres from Irwin House on the east side. It is rectangular in form, on an east west alignment. The Stone Walls have been rendered, although much of that is fretting around the lower sections of the wall, particularly on the north side wall. It has a hipped roof clad with the original corrugated iron from Irwin House, including roof lights, and new sheeting on the east end. There are no gutters or drainage. The place comprises two main rooms that are separated by a timber-framed stud wall. The door on the north end is a recent intervention, into what was originally a window opening. The original ledge and brace doors midway along the north and south walls are still in place. The ceilings are coved and lined with overlapped timbers (not original) to replicate the underside of the original shingle roof in the centre room. The west end room has a plasterboard ceiling with contrasting battens. The original kitchen fireplace has been removed although there are some associated remains in a rendered plinth. A room on the east end, with an unlined skillion roof, leads through to the meat room on the south side, several steps down. The meat room has a high-level flyscreen enclosure and the original chopping block and hooks. A prefabricated cool-room is located alongside the meat room that is still operational. A c.1950 timber framed lean-to laundry is located on the west end of the south side. It has a skillion roof clad with corrugated asbestos, and is fitted with a three bowl concrete trough and a freestanding copper.

The former Kitchen is generally in fair to good condition. The north walls are in poor condition where the render and mortar joints have fretted. The painted roof is in fair condition. The former Kitchen has undergone some change in the rendering of the stone walls, removal of the fireplace, construction of a partition wall, and reconstruction of the ceiling lining and roof. It has not functioned as a kitchen for many years, although the meat room is still functional. Overall, the former Kitchen has a low to moderate degree of integrity and a moderate degree of authenticity.

**Former Post office.** Forty metres north of the kitchen is the former Post Office. It comprises three rooms and a lean-to. It is a random mortared stone construction, with a colourbond roof that has been constructed in recent times. A considerable portion of the upper sections of the walls was reconstructed and rendered at the time the new roof was added. The north wall features a huge chimney with a stone breast and brick chimney, and a rounded fireplace opening on the interior. A ledge and brace door on the north wall accesses the west room, which has a floor level approximately 0.600 metres below the north side ground level. A small window is in place on the south wall, and there is external evidence of a doorway infilled, although there is no internal evidence of that door. The internal walls are lime washed and the floor is concrete. The roof is unlined and the stone wall extends to the gable ends. Two original gimlet bearers are still in place. The second main room at the east end has been divided into two rooms by a timber framed asbestos clad partition to the underside of the roof. There is a timber-framed corrugated iron clad lean-to at the east end.

The former Post Office is generally in fair condition. It has undergone minimal change in construction of partition walls, infill of a doorway, and reconstruction of the roof. The stone walls are in fair condition with evidence of considerable fretting around the lower sections of the walls and some cement render repairs that are exacerbating dampness problems. The place has not functioned as a post office for a considerable number of years. The former Post Office has a low to moderate degree of integrity and a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

Shearing shed. Located about 30 metres due east of the former Post Office, the Shearing Shed is on the east side of a recent fence with the original timber turnstile still in place. The c.1920s Shearing Shed is timber-framed and corrugated iron clad structure with a double gable roof. It is aligned east west, with a double gable roof and break pitch skillion lean-tos along the north and south sides. Within the south side lean-to are remains of laterite stone walls of the original shearing shed. The stone walls have been restored, while the brick-quoined edges remain intact and original.

The c.1920s Shearing Shed is generally in fair to good condition. It has undergone minimal change to continue to function as intended. It has a high degree of integrity and a high degree of authenticity.

Former Milking Shed. South of the shearing shed is the former Milking Shed. Constructed of bush timbers, the square structure has a corrugated iron roof, new walls except for a stone dado wall with corrugated iron above on the west side, a concrete floor, and pipe rails to lead cows in for milking.

The former Milking Shed is in fair condition. It no longer functions. It has a low degree of integrity and a high degree of authenticity.

The Post. A few hundred metres north of the Shearing Shed, located close to one of the two expansive, steel framed and clad machinery sheds, is a large timber Post. It has deep notches at regular intervals up the length of it on the west side, and some metal inserts. The Post is about 1.5 metres high and 0.450 metres in diameter.

The Post is in poor to fair condition. It shows extensive evidence of termite activity, possibly recent. It is the one remaining element of the stockyards, and has a low degree of integrity and a high degree of authenticity.

The Stone Wall. The Stone Wall runs a hundred metres or so due west from the northwest corner of Irwin House before turning due south, then east and west, returning to the back of Irwin House. The Stone Wall is a random rubble construction to a height of approximately 0.900 metres. The north section has been rendered, and has a gateway opening. The east section of the wall is intact. Much of the west and south sections of the wall are no longer evident.

The wall is in fair condition overall. The east wall has a high degree of integrity and authenticity. The other remaining section of wall on the north has a lower degree of authenticity due to the render treatment.

*Irwin House Group* is generally in fair to good condition. It has undergone a number of incremental developments and changes over time to facilitate the ongoing function of a pastoral homestead and operational facilities, and has a moderate to high degree of integrity. Irwin House has a low degree of authenticity, but in the former Kitchen and Post Office, and south section of the Stone Wall, there is considerable evidence of all periods of development, and they have a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

*Irwin House Group* can be compared to a number of properties in the region that feature groups of early farm buildings. Each has their own particular distinction, but all exhibit the unifying feature of a village character.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> [Molyneux, Ian & White, John, 'Farmhouses', in Pitt Morrison, M. & White, J. \(eds\) \*Western Towns and Buildings\*, UWA Press, 1988, Chapter 7.](#)

*The Grange* was developed by Samuel Pole Phillips on adjoining former Cattle Company land on the Irwin River. It comprises Homestead, former Kitchen, Shepherd's Cottage, Shearer's Quarters, Granary, Stables, Slaughterhouse (ruin), and Grange Cottage located a kilometre south west of the main group. It dates from the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>40</sup>

*Walebing*, near Moora, comprises a significant group of stone farm buildings constructed in the late 1850s, probably with the help of convict, or ticket-of-leave, labour. They comprise: Cottage, Kitchen Stores, Bulk Store & Quarters, Stables, Cart Shed & Dairy, Wool Shed, Flour Mill & Store, remnant Horse Works, and site of Blacksmith Shop. The stone Homestead was built in 1888 and has undergone minimal change. The property has remained in the Lefroy family since its inception and has continued to operate as a farm with continuing use of the majority of the farm buildings.<sup>41</sup>

The property of *Summer Hill*, New Norcia comprises Homestead, Stables, Cattle Barn, Shearing Shed and Granary constructed in Victorian Georgian style in the 1870s and 1880s. Form of construction was generally random rubble granite and pug, with corrugated iron roofs later replacing the original sheoak shingles. Other elements of the *Summer Hill* farm precinct include stockyards, remnant orchards, stick fences, gates, stone-lined wells, and stone paved roads and river crossings.<sup>42</sup> *Summer Hill* is entered on the Victoria Plains Municipal Heritage Inventory.<sup>43</sup>

The farm buildings at *Glentromie* were built in brick, with the help of 26 ticket-of-leave men. The Stables is a two-storey building which housed horses bred for the British Army remount trade in India. The property was later owned by Walter Padbury. The Homestead, Stables and Shearing Shed are in good condition. The flourmill is a ruin, and only the sites of four worker's cottages, blacksmith shop, polo field and cricket pitch remain.<sup>44</sup> *Glentromie* is entered on the Victoria Plains Municipal Inventory.

The buildings at *Berkshire Valley* include a one-room stone hut (c.1842); Homestead (c.1847); two-storey Flour Mill (1847); Dairy, and two-storey Stables (c.1855) which includes a harness room, blacksmithy, coach house and stalls; Shearing Shed and Store (1869); triple-arched stone bridge (1869); and, Pig Sty (1870). The Homestead has a gatehouse entrance. Stagecoaches called at *Berkshire Valley* to change horses, and bunk accommodation was available for travellers overnight. Horses were supplied to the British Army remount trade in India. The Mill was restored following damage in the 1968 earthquake, and currently houses the Moora museum. *Berkshire Valley* is entered on the Moora Municipal Inventory and the Register of the National Estate, and is classified by the National Trust.<sup>45</sup>

*Yathroo Homestead and Outbuildings*, in the Shire of Dandaragan, dates from c.1855, and comprises stone and concrete block Homestead, timber Book-Keeper's House, stone Cool Room built into a soak, stone Machinery and Storage Shed, stone Barn, stone Stables/Dairy, stone Slaughterhouse, Stone Wall built as part of an irrigation network, Mill site and Lime Kiln. The

<sup>40</sup> HCWA Assessment No. 1215, *The Grange*.

<sup>41</sup> Taylor, John, *Conservation Plan for Walebing*, July 2001.

<sup>42</sup> [Erickson, R. Taylor, R. and Considine & Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, \*Summer Hill Farm Precinct Conservation Plan\*, April 2001.](#)

<sup>43</sup> [HCWA database.](#)

<sup>44</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>45</sup> [ibid; Moora Historical Society, 'A Sketch of James Clinch of Berkshire Valley', Battye PR6461; Register of the National Estate, Database No. 010230 & 016073.](#)

Yathroo property was developed by Walter Padbury. It was a social centre of the district for many years and accommodated a school and postal service. The place is entered on the Shire of Dandaragan Municipal Inventory.

*Kayabana* is also in the Shire of Dandaragan and entered on their Municipal Inventory. The place dates from 1869 and comprises the brick Homestead (1907), stone Manager's House (1882), timber slab and stone Workman's Hut & Schoolroom (1869), stone Slaughterhouse, Farm Sheds, Employee's Cottage and Cottage Ruins, Lime Kiln, and remains of timber Grandstand (1880s). Developed by Edward Roberts who originally worked for Walter Padbury at *Yathroo*.

#### **13.4 REFERENCES**

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#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Correct identification of the fig trees is required.