



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.

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman, Historian and Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects, in February 2003, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries
- 3.12.2 Developing sources of fresh local produce

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 302 Rural industry & market gardening
- 111 Depression and boom

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The Packing Shed is a substantial utilitarian building with minimal embellishment. The building possesses qualities of scale and orderliness by which it transcends its utilitarian purpose, balanced by its smaller replica in the form of the Office (fmr) on the lower level. (Criterion 1.1)

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex is a landmark, with a large building situated on a terrace above an area of open ground and a smaller building of similar construction below, all beside the South West Highway towards the outskirts of the town. (Criterion 1.3)

Packing Shed, Iron Clad Shed and Office (fmr) each contribute to the precinctual qualities of the site, grouped beside the railway line. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

The Packing Shed was one of the largest fruit packing sheds constructed in Western Australia in the 1930s and was built during a boom period for apple exports and at a time when the apple industry was undergoing considerable development and promotion. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

The Packing Shed represents changes to the apple industry at that time, with the development of central packing, initiated by the Fruit Grower's Association in the 1910s. (Criterion 2.2)

The Packing Shed was the largest fruit packing shed constructed in Bridgetown and was one of two commercial sheds opened in the second half of the 1930s, during a boom period for apple exports. The place provided seasonal employment for local people from 1937 to the 1960s. (Criterion 2.2)

As a group of utilitarian buildings grouped beside the railway line and prominently sited within Bridgetown, the place provides evidence of the historical importance of the fruit growing industry and other commercial operations in the town. (Criterion 2.2)

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex is associated with Paterson & Company Limited, a prominent import-export agency, involved in the agricultural and pastoral industry in Western Australia since 1905, which became one of the major export agents for the Western Australian apple industry, and also operated fruit packing sheds at Greenbushes, Balingup, Dinninup and Capel River. (Criterion 2.3)

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex is associated with Duncan Paterson who established Paterson and Company Limited in 1905 and was President of the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce for two terms in the 1900s. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The Packing Shed at *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* was an innovative undertaking for the time due to the scale of the building, its construction without internal load bearing walls or pillars, and the installation of the most modern fruit grading machinery available in Australia. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The Packing Shed is highly valued by the local community for its associations with the important fruit-growing industry in the district since 1937, as evidence by its purchase by a syndicate of local residents in 1983 to ensure its preservation. (Criterion 4.1)

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex makes a significant contribution to a sense of place for the Bridgetown and rural district community because of its considerable landmark qualities, its occupation of the site since 1937, and as a significant representation of Paterson & Company Limited's presence in Bridgetown from 1933. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The Packing Shed is rare as an example of a substantial purpose-built fruit packing shed of the 1930s, a building fulfilling a relatively uncommon purpose in Western Australia, and is also rare as possibly the largest fruit packing shed constructed in Western Australia in the 1930s. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex is a representative example of 1930s industrial construction techniques, particularly the employment of a timber and steel structure to provide a single large volume without internal load-bearing walls or columns. (Criterion 6.1)

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex is representative of the practice of constructing commercial enterprises, particularly those relating to the fruit growing industry, adjacent to railway lines to allow for easy transport of produce. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Generally *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* appears to be in sound condition.

The Packing Shed appears to receive only minimal maintenance. There has been a recent infestation of termites in the partitioning of the offices at the east end of the building.

The Iron Clad Shed is in fair condition with evidence of much replacement iron sheeting evident, particularly on the south side.

The Office (fmr) appears to be in sound condition. The additions are in fair to sound condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The elements of *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* have varying levels of integrity.

The Iron Clad Shed has high integrity as it continues in its original function as a commercial and storage premise.

The Office (fmr) has high integrity. Originally in use as an office and shopfront premise, then as a fuel depot and farm chemical store, it continues to provide a commercial and business function.

The Packing Shed has low integrity. The building no longer fulfils its original intended purpose as a fruit packing shed. Instead it is now divided into individual units that serve a range of purposes including car servicing, the sale of gardening equipment and the manufacture of garden furniture. The building was specifically designed to fulfil efficiently the specialist requirements of the fruit packing process. The removal of major elements, such as the loft, the raised timber floor from within the building and the

railway platform from beside it, has made the complete restoration of its original use highly unlikely.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex has moderate to high authenticity.

The exterior of the Packing Shed appears to be largely intact apart from the adaptation of the sliding doors following the removal of the raised timber floor and the removal of the railway platform from the side of the building. The interior is intact apart from the removal of the loft and timber floor and the adaptation of the roof trusses due to the removal of the intermediate posts.

The Iron Clad Shed has high authenticity. It appears to have had minimal alterations, although the replacement sheeting on the south side wall may cover a former sliding door opening.

The Office (fmr) has high authenticity. There is a one room weatherboard clad addition and a larger iron clad addition at the rear. While the weatherboard addition has been built in keeping with the original construction, the later iron clad addition is intrusive.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects, with additional information provided by Irene Sauman in May 2005.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex comprises the Packing Shed, which is a long rectangular single-storey utilitarian building with walls of weatherboarding and asbestos cement sheeting and a galvanised corrugated iron roof (1937), The Office (fmr), a smaller utilitarian office/shopfront building of similar construction (1937) now used as a Veterinary Hospital, and the Iron Clad Shed, a gable roofed shed with skillion section (undated). The buildings were constructed for the operations of Paterson & Company. Several smaller utilitarian buildings that were on site during the original inspection in December 2002 have been removed.

In 1852, Assistant Surveyor A. C. Gregory made the original survey of the Bridgetown area. By 1857, Edward Hester and John Blechynden had taken up large pastoral holdings in the district and in 1862, John Allnutt began to establish an orchard, which was to lay the foundations of the fruit growing industry in the area. In April 1868, a town site was surveyed and the town of Bridgetown was gazetted on 9 June 1868.¹ The population increased slowly in the 1870s, with the pastoral industry and timber cutting the predominant industries. The fruit growing industry struggled due to its distance from markets and the perishable nature of its product.²

The first railway line in the South-West, the Boyanup-Bunbury line, was officially opened on 2 March 1891. The line was connected to Perth with the completion of the Bunbury-Perth South-West line in September 1893. Two months later, the Bunbury-Boyanup line was extended further south to Donnybrook and reached Bridgetown in 1898.³ A daily rail service provided reliable and rapid transport to market, which was necessary for the development of the fruit and dairy industries in the district. The large goldfield market provided added impetus for development.⁴

In 1904, apples and pears planted in the Blackwood and Sussex districts were said to be 'not excelled anywhere else in Australia', but despite increasing production in Western Australia, fruit continued to be imported on a large scale from the eastern states and from Italy. The acreage planted to apples was rising steadily, however, and the importance of the Bridgetown

¹ *Bridgetown Centenary Year 1868-1968*, Shire of Bridgetown, 1968, p. 3-4; *Western Australian Government Gazette*, 9 June 1868.

² *Bridgetown Centenary Year 1868-1968*, op cit; May, John, 'Recollections', *Blackwood Times*, 16 March 1934.

³ Woods, P., Gunzberg, A. & Goss, P., *Bunbury-Boyanup Railway: 100 Years 1891-1991*, Leschenault Railway Preservation Society Inc, 1991, pp. 4-7.

⁴ Gunzberg, A. & Austin, J., *Rails Through the Bush*, Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 216-217; *Bridgetown Centenary Year 1868-1968*, op cit, p. 7.

area to apple production was reflected in the rail cartage figures from the town, which increased from 9,702 cases in 1903 to 26,568 cases in 1907. The chief apple varieties were those most suitable for export and included Dunns, Cleopatra, Yates, Five Crown, Rome Beauty and Spitzenberg.⁵

Each orchardist initially packed his own fruit, and occasionally several neighbouring orchardists packed together to cut costs. In 1908, The Western Australian Fruitgrowers' Association was formed. One of the Bridgetown delegates to the Association, W. Reid, was elected Vice President. The following year, the Bridgetown Fruitgrowers' Association was formed.⁶ Marketing and the cost of packing were among the main considerations of the associations. Fruit packing for export required uniformity and fruit of the highest quality. The Agriculture Department employed a packing instructor whose job it was to ensure that growers understood the correct methods of packing the various varieties of fruit. On 12 August 1912, over 100 residents of the Blackwood River district attended an apple packing demonstration at Bridgetown, conducted by J. Ramage, the 'Government packer'.⁷

In 1914, a central packing shed was established at Bridgetown by the Bridgetown Fruitgrowers Association to handle the large quantity of apples expected to be produced in the district in the following few years. Although some fruit, mostly apples, was exported during the 1915-1917 period, the fruit industry was more seriously affected by the war than any other agricultural industry. There were shortages of labour and materials, and export prices were low. Little interest was shown in new plantings during the early post-war years and the central packing shed at Bridgetown appears to have closed, either during the war or shortly following. In 1924, the area under orchards, which included apples, was twenty-percent less than it had been in 1916, being only 9,517 acres (3,854ha) compared to 11,894 acres (4,813ha). From 1924 there was a steady increase, with the area under fruit trees reaching 12,449 acres (5,042ha) by 1934 and 22,030 acres in 1939. The acreage of apple orchards in 1939 was 13,012 (5,270ha).⁸

The development in the Bridgetown district brought more businesses to the town, including Paterson & Company Limited, who opened business premises on Hampton Street in 1933.⁹ Paterson & Co was a firm of general merchants and importers with a head office in St George's Terrace, Perth. Duncan Paterson had formed the Company in Fremantle in 1905. Paterson & Co had the sole agency in Western Australia for Lysaght wire netting and handled many farm and pastoral requirements including fertilizers, 'Southern Cross' windmills and woolpacks, as well as oils and paints. The Company was also an agent for local produce including sandalwood, and

⁵ Power, H. R., 'The Fruit Industry', in Burvill, G. H., *Agriculture in Western Australia: 150 years of development and achievement, 1829-1979*, UWA Press, Perth, 1979, pp. 280-295.

⁶ Battye Research Note 670.

⁷ *Blackwood Times*, 15 August 1912, p. 5.

⁸ Power, H. R., op cit.

⁹ *West Australian Telephone Directory*, May 1933.

was involved with the auctioneering of produce at the Perth Metropolitan Markets. Duncan Paterson was the son of a Scottish lawyer, and had worked with Scott & Co in London, before taking charge of their shipping branch in Singapore. He was appointed to open a branch of Guthrie & Co in Fremantle in 1898, following which he established his own business. He was President of the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce for two terms.¹⁰ In Bridgetown, Paterson & Co were export agents for agricultural produce and operated an auctioneering business. During the 1930s they advertised as 'fruit exporters and buyers', providing 'fruit cases, wrapping paper, strawboards, nails, fencing wire, wire netting, binder twine, Russian hemp, separator churns, Gisko rabbit poison, manures and all kinds of spraying materials; wheat, oats, bran, pollard' and operated their Bridgetown office from the corner of Hampton and Steere Streets.¹¹ The 1930s advertisements suggest the company did not use the site of *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* until the Packing Shed was constructed in 1936-37.

The increase in acreage planted to apples meant that, by the mid 1930s, more efficient handling of the fruit was required. In 1935, Westralian Farmers Limited extended their business premises in Bridgetown to provide a fruit packing shed. The shed was opened in the week preceding 15 March 1935, in time for the 1935 harvest. At the official opening it was stated that a central packing shed was much needed in Bridgetown and that individual packing was a thing of the past.¹² One of the major benefits of central packing was that the fruit was inspected on behalf of the Department of Agriculture at the sheds, rather than at the port prior to loading. If fruit was rejected at the shed, growers did not incur the costs of transport to the port and could take the fruit back if they wished. Fruit inspected at the sheds required much less handling at the port as it could go directly to the ship.¹³

In 1935, Paterson & Co consolidated its position in Bridgetown by acquired title to the site of *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex*, which comprised part of Bridgetown Lot 36, and to the adjoining site, part of Lot 35 on the corner of Bunbury Street.¹⁴ In September 1935, the Company applied for a railway spur to be constructed to their premises, from the Bridgetown-Donnybrook line. The spur line was completed on 17 June 1936.¹⁵ The Bridgetown Road Board approved Messrs Paterson & Co's plans for a fruit packing shed and also for offices on 25 September 1936.¹⁶ Later that year, they began construction on their land of the Packing Shed and Office (fmr),

¹⁰ Battye J. S. *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Hussey & Gillingham, Adelaide, 1912-13, Vol. 1, pp. 690-691.

¹¹ *Blackwood Times*, 6 October 1933, p.6.

¹² *Blackwood Times*, 15 March 1935, pp. 2-3.

¹³ *Blackwood Times*, 19 February 1937, p. 1.

¹⁴ Certificates of Title, Vol. 1045 Fol. 498, 29 October 1935 & Vol. 1045 Fol. 923, 6 December 1935.

¹⁵ West Australian Government Railways file, 'Near Bridgetown - Proposed siding for Paterson & Co', 1935, SROWA, AN260/5 ACC 1391 Item 1726.

¹⁶ *Blackwood Times*, 2 October 1936, p.2.

borrowing the tractor and grader from the Road Board for earthworks at the site.¹⁷

Messrs. Paterson and Co's New Bridgetown Packing Shed:- There is no doubt about it that this company did not hurry themselves in embarking upon central packing but when they did decide to move in this direction they made a thorough job of it. The shed may be said to almost dominate Bridgetown, and definitely stamps the town as the centre of the apple industry in this State. With the railway platform alongside the structure covers 1 [&] one-third acres of ground. The main shed is 300 feet by 60 and there is a five foot railway platform for loading purposes. One of the features of the main building is that there are no pillars or other obstructions. Therefore there is nothing to bump into or be in the way. The roof is of steel throughout and weights about 58 tons.

Grading and Packing:- The shed will be equipped with two Harvey twin graders which will serve to supply 44 packers when the equipment is in full swing. It is worthy of note, in advance, that this plant is supposed to constitute the very latest appliance, as far anything that is known in Australia. The machines will incorporate a number of new devices, and Mr. Harvey was so personally concerned that the grading of this shed should be efficient in every detail, that he made a special trip to Western Australia to study the layout of the shed, and the conditions under which the plant would operate, in order that there might not be the slightest room for mistake, or subsequent dissatisfaction.

The Rigidity of the Structure:- In a huge shed such as [this]...the rigidity of the building is a matter of most urgent consideration. The foundations, therefore, received more than ordinary consideration... When the shed is carrying its maximum load the distribution will be such that every foot of foundation will carry 4 cwt. of load. The blocks of the building are each standing upon three-feet square concrete blocks, while the bearers are 12 by 6 jarrah. The floor joists are equally massive and are 12 by 12 jarrah...

The Approaches:- It is anticipated that the traffic in regard to this building during the height of the season will be heavy, and the approach arrangements have been most carefully thought out... and a one-way traffic provided for. The building and equipment when finished will be a definite advertisement of the rising status of the fruit growing industry in this State, and the dimensions are such that it should be capable of providing for all eventualities for an extended period of years.¹⁸

The construction of the Packing Shed is remembered as having been quite an event in the town.¹⁹ It was opened on 19 February 1937 after a luncheon for growers at the Bridgetown Hotel.

This (Friday) afternoon the fruit packing house recently erected for Messrs Paterson & Co Ltd in Bridgetown, will be open for inspection between 2.30 and 4.30 p.m. An invitation has been extended to members of the Fruitgrowers' Association to make an inspection of the building during the afternoon...²⁰

The Packing Shed was constructed by R. A. Dusting to a design by architect J. H. Hargrave. The engineer for the project was H. T. Phillips.²¹ With roadworks and equipment, the cost of the project was over £8,000. Over 60,000 feet of floorboards had been used, weighing 50 tons, and the large sliding doors required 500 feet of door tracks.²² The prominence of the building in the town is suggested in that Paterson & Co appear to have

¹⁷ *Blackwood Times*, 16 December 1936, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Blackwood Times*, 5 February 1937, p. 1.

¹⁹ Mrs Stella Holgate, phone conversation with Penny O'Connor, 11 May 2005.

²⁰ *Blackwood Times*, 19 February 1937, p. 2.

²¹ *Blackwood Times*, 26 February 1937, p. 5.

²² *Blackwood Times*, 26 February 1937, p. 5.

ceased advertising their business in the *Blackwood Times* after the Packing Shed was built, presumably because it was felt the Packing Shed was advertisement enough. By May 1937, the Bridgetown office of Paterson & Co was listed as having relocated to the new site.²³

The Office (fmr) on Hampton Street was constructed in the same style and materials as the Packing Shed, with similar distinctive roof features. It was likely used as office, shopfront and storage for Paterson & Co's other business operations, including their auctioneering business, in conjunction with the existing Iron Clad Shed. Mrs Stella Holgate, a long-time resident of Bridgetown, recalls the Office (fmr) being on site from at the early years of the Packing Shed's operations in the 1930s. She also recalled that a family lived in a cottage on site prior to it being used as a commercial site.²⁴

A construction date for the Iron Clad Shed has not been established. The 1937 *Blackwood Times* account of the construction of the Packing Shed refers to it as the 'main shed', which may indicate that the Iron Clad Shed was also included in these works as a secondary shed. However, as both confirmed 1937 elements, the Packing Shed and the Office (fmr), are similar in style to each other and differ from the Iron Clad Shed, it would seem unlikely that the latter was constructed at the same time. The physical evidence suggests the southern end of the Packing Shed, which is less than two metres from the Iron Clad Shed, initially had loading bays similar to the northern façade, which would indicate that the Iron Clad Shed was constructed at a later date once the southern end was no longer used as loading bays. William (Bill) Sutton, who initially worked with his father in W. J. Sutton & Sons transport company, recalls in the 1950s and 1960s occasionally delivering goods to the Iron Clad Shed, which was always kept locked. The Iron Clad Shed was not part of the Packing Shed operation in this period.²⁵

The construction of the Packing Shed was an extension of the Company's work as a produce agent. In 1936, Paterson & Co Ltd had sent 325,396 cases of fruit to London, which was one-third of the total number exported from Western Australia. The Packing Shed was not opened in order to cut packing costs, but to provide better quality control and a standard product in a competitive market. The Company was concerned only to cover costs from the packing operation.²⁶

Harold Armstrong was the manager of the Packing Shed and Ernie Guest was a packer and later a foreman. The main picking season for apples ran from February to May depending on the variety. The apples were delivered direct from the orchards by the orchard owners or by a transport company. Bill Sutton was among those who carted apples to the Packing Shed. The

²³ *Wises Post Office Directories*, 1936-1937.

²⁴ Mrs Stella Holgate, phone conversation with Penny O'Connor, 11 May 2005.

²⁵ Previous information that this building was a check in point for the trucks delivering fruit has been discounted due to its location in relation to the elevated access road and information provided regarding delivery of fruit by William (Bill) Sutton in a personal interview at Australind on 6 May 2005.

²⁶ *Blackwood Times*, 26 February 1937, p. 5.

trucks delivering cases of loose fruit entered the site from Bunbury Street and drove along the elevated roadway at the front of the Packing Shed to one of the large sliding doors. Here the fruit was checked in. The trucks then exited onto Hampton Street at the south end of the site, the central access road in front of the Iron Clad Shed requiring too sharp a turn for regular use by the trucks.²⁷

The apples were kept at the Packing Shed for at least two days, but preferably three, before grading and packing. This holding time was to allow the bruising caused during picking to show up before the fruit was packed. When ready for packing, the apples were placed in the feeder bins at the head of the roller belt. As the apples entered the rollers, marked or inferior fruit was removed by hand, to be packed as seconds or returned to the grower. The rest of the apples continued along the rollers to the grading belt, where they were graded according to size. As the fruit reached the appropriately sized opening along the belt it fell into a bin with fruit of the same size. From the bin, the fruit was packed into jarrah or karri packing cases. The apples in a packed case were about 0.75 inch (19mm) above the top of the case. A press was used to hold the lid boards down while they were nailed in place. A firm pack prevented the fruit from moving in transit and getting damaged.²⁸

Each apple grade had a standard packing pattern determined by the West Australian Department of Agriculture and based on the size and shape of the apple. Some apples, such as Jonathans, are round, while others, such as Cleopatras, are long. The number of apples in a standard case could vary from 84 large Cleopatra apples to 260 small Jonathan apples. Each apple variety had between eight and ten different packing patterns according to size. Colour was also used to grade fruit, particularly those referred to as 'fancy'.²⁹

For export sales, each apple was wrapped in paper. Paterson & Co had wrapping paper printed with 'P & Co'. The apple was wrapped and placed in the case in such a way that, when the case was opened and put on display for selling, the name on the paper could be read. Speed in packing was essential in order to reduce costs, and the best packers could pack up to 200 cases a day. The packer put a numbered slip in the top of the case, each packer having his own number. Before the lid was put on the case, the slip was torn in half, one half being kept to calculate the packer's daily tally, and the other remaining in the case so the packer could be identified later if there was a problem with the pack.³⁰

At the Packing Shed, the packing cases were made at the northern end of the shed and stored in the loft. A young employee sent the cases down a chute to the packers as required. Jarrah cases were used for local sales

²⁷ Lockley, J. E., op cit, p. 15; Telephone conversation January 2003 with Ernie Guest, packer and foreman at *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed* in the 1930s; personal knowledge.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ 'Packing Chart for Australian Dump Case', *Western Australian Journal of Agriculture*, WA, March 1936, pp. 44-48; personal knowledge.

³⁰ Telephone conversation with Ernie Guest, op cit.

and karri for export sales. The karri was 'polished up' to make it more attractive for display in retail outlets. The ends of the case were smooth, to take the stencil that identified the fruit, the pack and the Company. The cases of fruit were loaded onto the two or three rail trucks waiting on the siding. The trucks were collected each night for the journey to Fremantle on the train that left Bridgetown at 3.30 a.m. each morning.³¹

In 1939, classes for apple packers were held at *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* and Westralian Farmers' packing shed.³² These were part of an ongoing effort to acquire skilled packers. Many local women took up seasonal packing work in the sheds, and each season saw an influx of workers from other parts of the State for both picking and packing work. Both Wesfarmers and Paterson & Co had 'tent cities' adjacent to their sheds where visiting packers lived during the season. Paterson & Co employed up to 100 workers in the Packing Shed during these periods.³³ Ernie Guest opened packing sheds for Paterson & Co at Greenbushes and Balingup in the early 1940s, and in 1947, Patersons sent Harold Armstrong to reopen a packing shed on a large orchard at Dinninup. These three sheds were operated from Bridgetown.³⁴

Because of the possible effects of the war on the export of apples and pears, fruit growers' organisations requested that the Commonwealth acquire crops, arrange marketing and pay compensation to growers. Surplus apples in the 1940s were utilized by the establishment of four large apple-dehydration plants, situated at Bridgetown, Mount Barker, Donnybrook and Greenmount.³⁵

From around the late 1940s, the Office (fmr) at *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* was in use as a fuel depot and farm chemical store. The southern end of the property, adjacent to the railway line, was a fuel storage area for the depot and for a service station (not extant) on the adjoining site (south). The fuel was stored in drums on a large built up area which was raised to the level of a truck bed for ease of loading.³⁶ From 1972, the fuel storage area was leased to the Caltex Oil Company.³⁷

In 1950, title to *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* was transferred to Tropical Traders & Patersons Limited, of Wellington Street, Perth.³⁸ Tropical Traders was an import-export company operating in the food industry. It is not clear what sort of partnership existed between the two companies at this time, but in 1960, Tropical Traders withdrew from its involvement in the packing sheds and title to *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing*

³¹ Telephone conversation with Ernie Guest, op cit. Interview with Bill Sutton, op. cit.

³² *Blackwood Times*, 9 December 1938, 28 April 1939.

³³ Interview with Bill Sutton, op cit

³⁴ Telephone conversation with Ernie Guest, op cit.

³⁵ Power, H. R, op cit.

³⁶ Interview with Bill Sutton, op cit; telephone conversation with Bridgetown councillor Brian Wheatley, 26 April 2005.

³⁷ Certificate of Title, Vol. 9 Fol. 29A, 21 June 1972.

³⁸ Certificates of Title, Vol. 1045 Fol. 498 & 923, 14 July 1950.

Shed Complex reverted to Paterson & Co Limited.³⁹ In its 1968 *Annual Report*, Tropical Traders stated it had totally withdrawn from involvement in fruit and vegetables as 'future development was not encouraging'. This would appear to have been the reason for its withdrawal from the fruit packing sheds in 1960.⁴⁰

In the 1950s and 1960s, acreage planted to apples decreased but technological advancements in disease control, cultivation methods and chemical control of cropping problems meant higher production. Harvesting and exporting in bulk bins and the development of cardboard cartons eliminated the use of the jarrah and karri packing case. Refrigerated shipping containers were first used in 1969. The developments in bulk handling, the takeover of more flexible road transport from rail, and the changes in retail marketing from a nicely packed case of wrapped fruit displayed in a shop to bulk bins in a supermarket, spelt the end of the commercial packing shed.⁴¹

The apple growing industry at Bridgetown declined with the introduction of new varieties, which were grafted onto root stock that required irrigation. Unlike areas such as Donnybrook and Manjimup, the Bridgetown district did not have access to water suitable for irrigation.⁴²

For a brief period in the 1970s, the Office (fmr) was used as a tourist information bay. It was not open full-time, and once it grew into a full-scale tourist bureau, it relocated from the Office (fmr).⁴³

The exact date that the Packing Shed ceased to operate has not been discovered. The place had been empty for a number of years when Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort Limited acquired it in 1976.⁴⁴ They do not appear to have made any use of the place, and it is likely that acquisition of *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* was part of a general acquisition of Paterson & Co Limited.

In 1983, in order to preserve the Packing Shed, a group of ten local residents, registering themselves as the P.P.S.B. Syndicate, purchased *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed* at auction. The members of the Syndicate, each of whom contributed \$5,500 for the purchase, were Nigel Jones (instigator of the group and a local Medical Practitioner), Medical Practitioner Michael Dewing, farmers Harold Rowan-Robinson, Sandy Bagshaw, Tom Wheatley and Kimberley Scott, George Holroyd (mill owner),

³⁹ Certificates of Title, Vol. 1045 Fol. 498 & 923, 8 February 1960.

⁴⁰ Tropical Traders, *Annual Report*, 1968-1971.

⁴¹ Power, H. R., op cit.

⁴² Interview with Bill Sutton, op cit.

⁴³ Mrs Lesley Doust and Mrs Stella Holgate, phone conversations with Penny O'Connor, 11 May 2005.

⁴⁴ Certificates of Title, Vol. 9 Fol. 29A, 23 July 1976; Telephone conversation with Ernie Guest, op cit, and information provided by his son, John Guest, and by syndicate manager Sylvia Jones.

Robert Walton (fuel depot owner) Hugh Morton (retired engineer) and Stan Doust (supermarket and store owner).⁴⁵

The Syndicate decided that the buildings should be used to support new business enterprise in the town at a time of economic downturn for rural areas and new businesses were offered rent free accommodation until they were established. The Packing Shed was initially used as a roller skating rink and a rock concert venue to raise funds for charities. The timber floor was removed and replaced with concrete. The jarrah timber loft was taken out and the timber used to partition the building into eight separate units, each accessed by one of the original sliding doors. The excess timber was sold and the money used for repairs. A water supply and separate electricity meter was provided for each unit. The offices at the south end of the place were converted into an accommodation unit for a caretaker for a time, but have since reverted to offices. Tenants have included a mechanic, potters, wood turners, antique restorer, cabinet makers, kitchen manufacturers, and farm sales and at one time the place housed the local fire engine. Rent is low as security is minimal and conditions in the building are described as 'rough'.⁴⁶

Due to increasing heavy traffic passing through the centre of Bridgetown, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure has been developing options for a heavy vehicle bypass of the central town area. In a report produced in December 2004, the preferred route proposed for the bypass crosses the southwest corner of the site of *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* and also involves realigning the railway from approximately in line with the northeast corner of the Packing Shed so that it runs further to the east than its current configuration. Should this plan be implemented as outlined in this preliminary report, the Office (fmr) and possibly also the Iron Clad Shed would be removed.⁴⁷

In 2005, only two of the original Syndicate members remain, being the doctors, Nigel Jones and Michael Dewing. The children of some of the original members have inherited a share of *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex*. Sylvia Jones, wife of Dr Nigel Jones, acts as manager, while the trustees for the Syndicate are Jennifer Wright and Charles Sullivan. The Office (fmr) on Hampton Street continues to be occupied by Bridgetown Veterinary Hospital, the Iron Clad Shed is occupied by the Redback Furniture Gallery, and several units in the Packing Shed are occupied by Carlson's Automotive Repairs & Service and Bridgetown Chainsaw Service.⁴⁸

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

⁴⁵ Information provided by email, 5 May 2005, by Sylvia Jones, wife of Dr Nigel Jones; Certificate of Title, Vol. 9 Fol. 29A, 21 November 1983.

⁴⁶ Information provided by Sylvia Jones, op cit.

⁴⁷ Department of Planning and Infrastructure Integrated Transport Planning, 'Bridgetown Road Planning Study: Planning Summary Report', December 2004, DPI File No. 402/6/5/3PV.

⁴⁸ Information provided by Sylvia Jones, op cit; physical evidence; Certificate of Title, Vol. 9 Fol. 29A.

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex comprising the Packing Shed, which is a long rectangular single-storey utilitarian building with walls of weatherboarding and asbestos cement sheeting and a galvanised corrugated iron roof (1937), The Office (fmr), a smaller utilitarian office/shopfront building of similar construction (1937) now used as a Veterinary Hospital, and the Iron Clad Shed, a gable roofed shed with skillion section (undated).

Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex is situated at the north end of the block bounded by Steere Street, Hampton Street and Bunbury Street and the railway line that runs along the east side of the site.

Hampton Street is one of the main thoroughfares of Bridgetown and forms part of the South West Highway. In the vicinity of *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* the street contains a mix of light industrial sheds serving as garages and feed suppliers, and a few small houses. Directly opposite, on the south side of Hampton Street, are the Memorial Gardens and the Fire Station.

The Packing Shed runs in an almost north south direction and measures about 110 m x 22m. The narrower north façade faces Bunbury Street, which rises up to and past the railway line to a steeply sloping hill. The side of the hill is terraced with an area of flat open land against Hampton Street separated by an embankment from the area of land on which the packing shed stands. Beyond this is the embankment that edges the railway line.

The intermediate terrace level provides a level platform for the shed and for the roadway that runs on the west side of the shed and the former railway spur line that used to run beside the east side. A row of Poplars (*Populus nigra*) previously ran along the outer (west) edge of the roadway beside the shed. Some of the trees were removed c.2002 because of termite infestation. In November 2004, the remaining trees were removed, also due to problems with white ants.

There are three routes for reaching the roadway that runs beside the Packing Shed. The north entry is directly off Bunbury Street. The central roadway leads from the open area at the level of Hampton Street. It is opposite the centre of the Iron Clad Shed and winds up the embankment that forms the terrace. The third route is a ramp that rises from the south west corner of the site.

The Office (fmr) stands in Hampton Street on part of the open area of land that is at the same level as the road, and is currently occupied by a Veterinary Hospital. Although the building is much smaller than the Packing Shed it shares some of the constructional characteristics to the extent that it seems reasonable to assume that it was part of the Packing Shed complex of buildings. The Office (fmr) measures about 22m x 7m. The walls are divided horizontally into two bands. The lower level, which is about 1.6 metres high, is of feather edged weather boarding. The upper section is of asbestos cement sheeting. The building has a gambrel roof with a large semicircular ridge vent; the roof is covered by galvanised corrugated iron sheeting. There is a one room extension at the rear of the veterinary surgery,

clad entirely in weatherboards and with a hipped iron clad roof. Adjoining that is a rectangular skillion roofed iron clad addition. Both additions have exposed timber stumps while the original part of the building has the area below floor level enclosed. There is evidence of a large sliding door in the south side wall of the iron clad addition.

The Iron Clad Shed is a much smaller packing shed located about 1.5 metres away from the eastern end of the Packing Shed. The building is about 22 x 22 metres. It is a very simply composed building with the east and west facades reflecting the form of the steeply pitched gabled roof which breaks to a lower pitch over the skillion section that extends the full length along the south side. The building is completely clad in galvanised corrugated iron sheeting. It has a large sliding door in the front wall of the main part of the building, an entrance door in the skillion section, which has a more recent porch treatment for the commercial business that occupies the place, and a larger door in the rear wall for former access to the railway siding.

The Packing Shed is a long rectangular building measuring about 110 metres long x 22 metres wide. The top of the wall is 4500 mm above ground level. The building is utilitarian in design, efficiently fulfilling the functional requirements of a fruit-packing shed. The small amount of embellishment that there is displays the aesthetic characteristics of the Federation Arts and Craft Style. It is limited to a half-timbering effect in the gables and the banding in the walls achieved by use of weather boarding to the lower section and asbestos sheeting above.

The planning of the building is simple and directly related to its function. There are loading docks distributed evenly along the south side of the building for the unloading of the trucks, which stood on the roadway running along the side of the building. The apple packing process took place in the internal area. The packed cases of fruit were loaded onto the rail trucks, which stood on a spur line that ran beside the shed on the east side of the building. There was a platform running along the east side of the Packing Shed.

The long (east and west) facades of the building are divided by eight regularly spaced large timber sliding doors.

The wall construction on the western side of the building is in three horizontal parts. The lower part of the wall comprises a concrete base and a band of weatherboarding that extends to a height of 2900 mm above ground level. The upper part of the wall is covered with asbestos cement sheeting with cover battens. Fixed glazed windows, measuring about 4000 x 450 mm, are set in the upper part of the wall between the door openings. The double door openings along the facade are about five metres wide by three metres high. The door leaves are of painted tongue and groove boarding.

Originally both the floor of the shed and the loading dock thresholds were set about 1100 mm above ground level. The timber floor has been removed and replaced by a concrete slab at ground level. Consequently, the section of wall that used to be below threshold level of the loading dock has been removed thereby increasing the overall height of the opening. The doors

have been adapted to suit this new arrangement. A metal-faced section has been added to the bottom part of each leaf.

The east façade is similar to that of the west, the difference being that the door openings remain at their original size. From the lower section of the wall it can be seen that an external platform used to run the length of the building. Although the floor joists of the platform have been cut back to the face of the building, the original extent of the platform can be discerned because the concrete footings that used to support the posts along the outer edge of the platform remain. The section of walling below platform level is of timber sleeper construction.

The north facade contains three double sliding doors. The threshold of each is raised about 1100 mm above the uneven ground. A heavy section of timber is fixed to the lower face of the building, presumably to serve as a protecting buffer. It seems reasonable to assume that this arrangement is typical of how the loading bays along the south side would have been originally.

The administration offices, which occupy the south end bay of the building, are reached externally from the western side of the building by an entrance within a recessed porch. A set of timber steps within the porch lead to the front door. The windows to the offices are multi-paned timber-framed double hung sashes.

The building has a gambrel roof with a half-timber effect to the half gables. A large semicircular ridge roof vent runs for the length of the building. The roof overhangs along the north and south sides of the building to provide shelter to the loading bays and platform. The roof is covered by galvanised corrugated iron sheeting and includes sheets of wired glass to form fixed glass roof lights.

Apart from the offices that were housed in the south end bay of the building, the Packing Shed had been a single space that ran for the length of the building. The building is now divided into separate tenancies by studwork transverse walls that are lined on both faces by ribbed metal sheeting. The original walls of the building remained unlined on their internal faces.

Originally the floor of the shed and the loading dock thresholds were set about 1100 mm above ground level. The timber floor has been removed and replaced by a concrete slab at ground level.

The soffit of the roof is unlined. The roof is supported on steel trusses. Most of the trusses have been modified by the addition of a lower chord to their central section. This modification was necessitated by the removal of the two posts per truss that used to partly support the truss at its strutting points.

The offices at the eastern end of the building are connected to the packing area by a double door. Because of the removal of the raised timber floor this door is now reached by a set of timber steps. The partition separating the packing area from the office area contains a band of fixed glazing. The office area is planned with a corridor running the length of the partition that overlooks the packing area. Five offices open off this corridor. The walls of

the corridor have a tongue and groove timber dado. The walls and ceilings of the office area are lined with battened asbestos cement sheeting. The floors are carpeted. One office contains a brick fireplace with face brickwork surround and a jarrah mantle.

The Packing Shed was renovated and divided into commercial units in 1983. As part of this work the raised timber floor was removed and replaced with a concrete slab at ground level, and the loft was removed.⁴⁹

Generally, the Packing Shed appears to be in a sound condition. The building appears to receive only minimal maintenance. There has been a recent infestation of termites in the partitioning of the offices at the east end of the building. The Office (fmr) appears to be in sound condition, apart from the iron clad addition which is in fair to sound condition. The Iron Clad Shed is in fair condition, with much replacement iron sheeting evident, particularly on the south side where there may have been a large sliding door.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are two smaller packing sheds located at Bridgetown, which were associated with single orchards and were not commercial sheds. They are both small stone buildings with a corrugated iron roof. *Packing Shed*, Lot 340 Roe St Bridgetown (HCWA Place 3199) and *Packing Shed*, Lot 392 Greys Hill Road (HCWA Place 3200) are entered on the Bridgetown-Greenbushes Municipal Inventory with a high level of protection recommended.

The site only of another shed known as *Patterson's Packing Sheds* (sic) (HCWA Place 15165) is located on Goodwood Road, Capel River. It is reputed to have operated from 1937 to 1977, and appears to have been another of the sheds owned by Paterson & Co. A concrete slab is all that remains of the timber-framed corrugated iron clad sheds.⁵⁰

The *Dehydration and Canning Factory* at Donnybrook (Place 05000) was one of the four places constructed for the dehydration of apples in the 1940s, and is a smaller barn-like structure associated with the industry. The place is currently used as a single retail outlet.

Donnybrook Railway Precinct (Place 05012, RHP) includes three packing sheds from the 1940s adjacent to the railway within the central railway reserve, the largest of which remains in use for packing fruit and vegetables.

In 1917, the Mount Barker Fruit Grower's Cool Storage Co-operative was formed by local orchardists. In 1918, the Co-op established a packing shed in a building adjacent to the railway station, which was enlarged for the purpose. In 1936, the building was further enlarged to house five fruit graders and three case-making machines. The packing shed closed in 1975. In 1978, the place was extensively renovated and extended for occupation by Mount Barker Co-op Limited's grocery and haberdashery

⁴⁹ Physical evidence.

⁵⁰ Shire of Capel, *Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places*, Entry no. 135.

departments, and continues to house the Co-op's grocery store.⁵¹ The place does not appear on the Heritage Council database.

The Packing Shed at *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* bears similarity to contemporary farm buildings.

The Packing Shed is rare as a building fulfilling a relatively uncommon purpose in Western Australia and is also rare as one of the largest fruit packing sheds constructed in Western Australia in the 1930s. *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* is a representative example of 1930s industrial construction techniques, particularly the employment of a timber and steel structure to provide a single large volume without internal load-bearing walls or columns. *Paterson & Co Fruit Packing Shed Complex* is representative of the practice of constructing commercial enterprises, particularly those relating to the fruit growing industry, adjacent to railway lines to allow for easy transport of produce.

13. 4 REFERENCES

No key references.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research may ascertain the exact date of closure of the Packing Shed and of the construction of the Iron Clad Shed.

⁵¹ Mount Barker Heritage Trail, WA Heritage Commission, [1988], pp. 4-5; 'Mount Barker Co-operative Limited, *Plantagenet News*, 31 July 2002, p. 1; Glover, Rhoda, *Plantagenet: A history of the Shire of Plantagenet, Western Australia*, UWA Press, 1979, pp.348-351.