



**HERITAGE  
COUNCIL**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

## Permanent Entry

### 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
- 3.9 Farming for commercial profit
- 3.12.2 Developing sources of fresh local produce
- 5.2 Organising workers and work places
- 5.8 Working on the land
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

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

- 103 Racial contact & interaction
- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 106 Workers (incl. Aboriginal, convict)
- 301 Grazing & pastoralism & dairying
- 302 Rural industry & market gardening
- 306 Domestic activities
- 602 Early settlers
- 701 Other - Indentured Asian workers

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

The Cemetery is picturesque in the undulating pastoral landscape, identified by the modified landscape of the four flanking trees each side of the small fenced plot comprising four Sewell family graves and headstones. (Criterion 1.1)

*Sandsprings Homestead Group*, comprising Homestead (1890) and Kitchen Wing (rebuilt c.1950s), ruins of 1860s-1880s farm buildings (Carriage House, Wash House, Shepherd's Cottage and Shearing Shed), a Cup and Saucer Trough (1880s), family Cemetery (1868-1906), concrete horse/cattle Trough

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

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. Parks, *Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

and Post (c.1880s-1890s) and tennis court remnants (c.1920s), has significant aesthetic value derived from its historic character, cultural environment and setting. (Criterion 1.4)

## **11.2 HISTORIC VALUE**

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* is associated with the beginnings of pastoral settlement in the Midwest region, being located on a lease taken up in 1860. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* is associated with the use of indentured and freely hired Chinese labour at various times in the 1880s and 1890s, with Chinese characters inscribed in the Homestead wall attesting to their employment in its construction. (Criterion 2.2)

The Cemetery is the burial place of four members of the Sewell family between 1868 and 1906, including two eleven-year-old children, brother and sister, and affords an insight into life and death of the period. (Criterion 2.3)

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* is associated with six generations of the Sewell family, who have worked the place since its establishment in the 1860s and have played a large part in the political and public life of the Geraldton-Greenough district. At least three generations of the family have been long-serving Road Board and Shire members, and chairmen and presidents. (Criterion 2.3)

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* demonstrates the use of locally available materials in the stone quarried on the property and timber from neighbouring areas. (Criterion 2.4)

## **11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* has the potential through archaeological excavation to yield information contributing to a wider understanding of its occupation and its function as a pastoral and agricultural property, from its establishment through to the present. (Criterion 3.2)

## **11.4 SOCIAL VALUE**

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* contributes to the community's sense of place because of its long association with farming in the region, and the participation of various members of the Sewell family in the public and political life of the Geraldton-Greenough community. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1 RARITY**

The Cup and Saucer Trough at *Sandsprings Homestead Group* is the only known example of its type in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

The Chinese characters on the Homestead wall provide rare physical evidence of the Chinese associations with *Sandsprings Homestead Group* and the region. (Criterion 5.1)

The concrete Sheep yard Post is an uncommon example of the use of this material for the 1880s-1890s period, when most such structures were of timber. (Criterion 5.1)

## **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* is a representative example of a vernacular pastoral development which shows the development of farming practises through changes in its fabric. (Criterion 6.1)

## **12.3 CONDITION**

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* is in generally poor to fair condition. The Homestead is the only intact habitable building of the group, and together with the 1950s kitchen, is in fair to good condition. Most of the other elements are in a ruinous condition, although the Cup and Saucer Stock Trough is in good condition and the Cemetery is in fair condition.

## **12.4 INTEGRITY**

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* has operated continuously, mostly with the original functions. However, the Shearing Shed, Wash House, Carriage House and Shepherd's Cottage are all in various stages of ruin and have been replaced by updated facilities over time as required. Only the Homestead has had continued use as the original residential function, although the bathroom facilities have been upgraded, and the original kitchen replaced with a new kitchen wing in the 1950s. Overall *Sandsprings Homestead Group* has a low to moderate degree of integrity.

## **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

Despite most buildings being in a ruinous condition they evidence minimal intervention and a high degree of original remaining fabric. The Homestead evidences some intervention with concrete verandahs and steel posts, and the 1950s kitchen wing. Overall the place has a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman, Historian and Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant, in October 2008, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

The proposed curtilage extends across the boundary of Location 722 to include all elements, as marked on the accompanying site plan.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* comprises a collection of nineteenth century stone buildings and structures associated with a pastoral property, including: the stone Homestead (1890) and brick Kitchen Wing (1950s), ruins of 1860s-1880s farm buildings (the stone Carriage House, Wash House, Shepherd's Cottage and Shearing Shed), concrete Cup and Saucer Trough (1880s), family Cemetery with four graves (1868-1906), Shearing Shed Trough and Post (c.1880s-1890s), remnants of a concrete tennis court (c.1920s), and several iron clad sheds.

The Aboriginal name for the Champion Bay district was *Wootakarra* (Utacarra) and the region is the country of the Yamatji people. This large grouping is made up of a number of former smaller language groups whose boundaries moved according to the seasons. The term Yamatji (Jamadji, Yamaidyi, Amangu) was a general term used by the people of the region to refer to themselves in contrast to Europeans. Mount Gould (Japarang) was considered to be the central place for the region.<sup>1</sup>

First contact between the indigenous inhabitants of the Victoria district and a party of European explorers in 1846 was peaceful, but a return visit with Governor Fitzgerald in 1848 resulted in three Aboriginals being killed and the Governor receiving a spear in the leg. Organised resistance against the Europeans followed and the prison on Rottnest, which had been closed in 1849, was reopened in 1855 to accommodate those fighting against European settlement as it spread through the Greenough district. By 1870, the major resistance on the coastal areas had ended.<sup>2</sup>

On 10 October 1850, Thomas Brown of York set out to drive two flocks of sheep and a herd of cattle to the 40,000 acres of land he had newly leased in the district around the Chapman and Greenough rivers. He was accompanied by his son Kenneth, several young men who were engaged as shepherds, several servants, and three Aboriginal men. At the end of their twelve month contract, the shepherds took up a lease of 40,000 acres and assisted each other in establishing pastoral properties with their share of the progeny from Thomas Brown's flocks. On the leased land, J. S. Davis

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<sup>1</sup> Berndt, R. M. & Catherine (Eds) *Aborigines of the West: Their past and present*, UWA Press, 1980; Bates, D. M. *The Native Tribes of Western Australia*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1985; Hallam, Sylvia, J. 'The First Western Australians', In Stannage, C. T. (ed) *A New History of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth, 1981, pp. 35-71; Tindale, Norman B. *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their terrain, environmental controls, distribution, limits, and proper names*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> Green, Neville 'Aborigines and white settlers in the nineteenth century', in Stannage, C. T. (ed) *A New History of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth, 1981, pp. 93-97.

established 'Tibradden', James Walcott established 'Minninooka' and Major Logue developed 'Ellendale'.<sup>3</sup> Logue's brother-in-law, George Sewell, took up a portion of Logue's lease, and named his property 'Sandsprings' for the numerous fresh water springs on the sand plains.

George Sewell had arrived in the Colony in 1834 as an eighteen year old with his twenty one year old brother John (Jr). They share-farmed on properties in the Avon Valley and in 1841, their parents, John (Sr) and Ann Sewell, and eight brothers and sisters arrived. George married Elizabeth Frances Logue in 1845, and farmed first at Chittering and the Swan Valley. George and Elizabeth had six children: Frances Catherine (1846), Mary Ellen (1847), Julia (1848), Caleb (1850), Martha Matilda (1853), and George Ernest (1866).<sup>4</sup>

The family are recorded as having brought stock to Sandsprings in 1860, when Caleb was ten years old, but they did not settle permanently until the later 1860s. In the meantime, the property was managed by married couples, mainly ex-pirees and conditional pardon men.<sup>5</sup> The dates of occupation at the Swan Valley and the Victoria district are marked by the employment of ticket of leave labour. George Sewell is recorded as employing ticket of leave men at the Swan between 1863 and 1867 and at *Sandsprings Homestead Group* between 1868 and 1872, while his son Caleb employed four men at *Sandsprings Homestead Group* between 1869 and 1876.<sup>6</sup>

A death was recorded at Sandsprings in April 1862, when Caroline Baughan, the 33-year old wife of shepherd Daniel Baughan, died of heart disease. The Baughans had three children aged seven, three and an infant, the baby surviving his mother by only a year. It is not known if Caroline was buried in the *Sandsprings Homestead Group* Cemetery or elsewhere on the property. The first family burial in the Cemetery occurred in November 1868, with the death of twenty-three year old Catharine Frances Elizabeth Sewell. Catharine was the eldest child of George and Elizabeth, but apart from her headstone no other record of her has been found.<sup>7</sup>

The principal operation at Sandsprings in the early years was raising sheep. Horses were kept for working and riding, and there were cattle for meat and dairy. Agriculture comprised growing hay for fodder. Nothing is known of the buildings on the property during the early years and none appear to have survived. In 1871, George Sewell acquired title to Victoria Location 722, which is the forty-acre site of *Sandsprings Homestead Group*.<sup>8</sup> Sandsprings

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<sup>3</sup> Cowan, Peter, (ed) *A Faithful Picture: the letters of Elia and Thomas Brown at York in the Swan River Colony 1841-1852*, Fremantle FACP, 1977, p. 96; 'Mr. Clifton's Journal', *The Independent Journal*, 27 February 1852, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Erickson, Rica, *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, Perth, UWA Press, 1988, pp. 2769-72; correspondence, Mr & Mrs E. Sewell to HCWA, 22 January 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Bain, Sister Mary Albertus, *A life of its own: a social and economic history of the City of Geraldton and the Shire of Greenough, 1846-1988*, City of Geraldton, 1996, p. 89; Sewell, Eric Vernon, Oral History 432, interviewed by Rhonda Jamieson, 1981, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Erickson, Rica, op cit, pp. 2769-2772.

<sup>7</sup> Headstone in *Sandsprings* Cemetery; Information provided by John and Lynette Sewell in a telephone conversation, 18 September 2008. There is no record of Catherine Sewell in Erickson, Rica, op cit, nor in Coate, Yvonne & Kevin, *Lonely Graves of Western Australia & burials at sea*, Carlisle, Hesperian Press, c.1986 and *More Lonely Graves of Western Australia*, Carlisle, Hesperian Press, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Country grant 2864, 14 February 1871.

comprised some 150,000 acres, much of it held under pastoral lease initially. Victoria Locations 401 and 402 were freehold by 1870 and Location 814, partly surrounding Location 722, was acquired 10 years later.<sup>9</sup>

In the later 1870s, George and Elizabeth Sewell are recorded at Gingin, having left Caleb to run Sandsprings.<sup>10</sup> Around 1879, Caleb married his cousin Frances Elizabeth (Lizzie) Logue. They had three children: Rose Matilda (1880), Walter Vernon (1882) and Clayton Stanley (1894).<sup>11</sup>

By 1879, a producing orchard had been established at *Sandsprings Homestead Group* on a spring near the current Homestead. Oranges and apples were grown, as well as stone and berry fruits, grapes, figs and olives. A vegetable garden was also established, and produce from both the garden and the orchard was sold to shops in Geraldton and Walkaway and direct to neighbours. Records kept from 1879 indicate that an amount of around £180 was earned each year from the crops during the 1880s.<sup>12</sup>

Labour was provided by permanent and seasonal workers. Chinese labour is known to have been employed on the place at various times in the nineteenth century, but the only official record for *Sandsprings Homestead Group* is the employment in late 1882 of three Chinese workmen, Lau A Seng, Chiu Kiau Ek and Go A Pheng, and a cook, Ng Chhoi Seng. These men were employed for three years at a rate of £24-0-0 a year for the cook and £19-4-0 a year for the workmen, plus a daily ration of 1.5 lbs of bread and meat, 0.5 ounces of tea and 4 ounces of sugar. Under their contract, their work was not to exceed 10 hours a day, no wages were to be deducted for medical expenses, and travel costs were covered, included passage home at the end of their contract. Their employment came under the control of the Imported Labour Registry Act of 1874.<sup>13</sup>

Chinese residing at Greenough, Champion Bay and Geraldton in the 1860s to 1890s could also have been employed at times and it is possible that some indentured Chinese workers moved about between properties, as neighbours provided assistance to one another with the sharing of equipment and labour.<sup>14</sup> A number of the pastoral properties in the district were connected by marriage and practical assistance and social activity flowed regularly between them.

The employment of Chinese labour in the early 1880s coincides with the attributed construction date of the Shearing Shed, while other of the farm buildings are likely to have been constructed during this decade, replacing earlier less substantial structures. The concrete Cup and Saucer Trough is

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<sup>9</sup> Sewell, Eric Vernon, Oral History 432, op cit, p. 2; Deed of Memorial, Book 7 No. 11, mortgage of Victoria Locations 401 & 402, and eight Swan Locations by George Sewell to William Locke Brockman; Sewell family archives, MN 3/2, ACC 5075A/14.

<sup>10</sup> Erickson, Rica, op cit, pp. 2769-2772.

<sup>11</sup> Erickson, Rica, op cit, pp. 2769-2772.

<sup>12</sup> Sewell family archives, Orchard books, 1879-1920, MN 3, ACC 2902A.

<sup>13</sup> Sewell family archives, MN 3/2, ACC 5075A/1, Employment of Chinese labourer, workmen and cook, 30 December 1881 - 15 May 1883; Atkinson, Anne (comp), *Asian Immigrants to Western Australia 1829-1901*, Nedlands, UWA Press, 1989. Note: Sewell's contract with the Chinese worker is variously recorded as the above amount per year, or \$10 and \$8 respectively per month. This is likely to refer to Singapore dollars.

<sup>14</sup> Atkinson, Anne (comp), op cit.

believed to date from around this period. The Cup and Saucer Trough operates by water dispensing from the base of the Cup into the Saucer. The Cup was filled by a gravity fed pipe, probably from the nearby creek, and the water level was regulated by a float.<sup>15</sup>

Development in the 1880s was encouraged by the construction of the Geraldton-Walkaway railway, which opened in 1887. The two-day 32-mile journey to Geraldton was reduced to an 8-mile journey to the Walkaway railway station.

Diaries of farm activities and daily life were kept by Caleb Sewell from August 1890. By this time, *Sandsprings Homestead Group* was well established with its farm buildings and attention had been turned to constructing a new Homestead. The diaries begin at a time when the Homestead was being completed and record cementing the floor and skirting in the children's room, plastering the new kitchen, installing a new oven and pointing the kitchen walls. Caleb did this work himself, but in the mortar in the east wall of the Homestead there are Chinese characters, attesting to the employment of Chinese workers on at least part of the building work. The meaning of these characters is not known.<sup>16</sup> There is no mention made in the diary of moving into the Homestead so it is assumed that they were already occupying it by August 1890, except for the children's room and the new kitchen, which were completed soon after.<sup>17</sup> Stone for the buildings came from a quarry on the property, located about a mile from the Homestead.<sup>18</sup>

In between the building work Caleb assisted his employed labour force, which included those named as Frank, Miller, Murray and Newman. The farm work during the latter part of 1890 involved milking the dairy herd of some 40 cows, churning butter, packing oranges, planting onions, tailing lambs, carting produce to Walkaway, shearing, and putting up hay cocks. Lizzie and the children sometimes helped with the milking.<sup>19</sup> Chinese labourer Ah Cheng was employed at this time and was working at cutting off the York gum shoots in the ram's paddock. He is recorded shortly after as getting lost all one night. Chinese were also employed at neighbouring Ellendale, as when Major Logue's burning off damaged a common boundary fence he sent his Chinese workers to make the repairs.<sup>20</sup>

The family found time for socialising. In late November they attended the Geraldton races, an event which involved: a day to get ready, a day travelling and overnight stay at 'Grants' (Glengarry), two days attending the races, a day sorting and selling rams, a day travelling home and staying overnight at the Davis property (Tibradden), and finally reaching *Sandsprings Homestead Group* the following afternoon. Christmas 1890 was spent at Ellendale over a

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15 Information provided by John and Lynette Sewell, op cit.

16 It has not been possible to confirm whether these are in fact Chinese characters. At least one of them does not match any known Chinese character, but has some similarities to the characters for Chinese names Wang or Ya. Grace Zhang, Curtin University Asian Languages Department, email to HCWA 15 April 2009.

17 Sewell family archives, Diary of Caleb Sewell, August 1890-, MN3 ACC 485A.

18 Sewell, Eric Vernon, Oral History 432, op cit, p. 15.

19 Diary of Caleb Sewell, op cit, August 1890.

20 Diary of Caleb Sewell, op cit, March 1891.

period of three days, with a Miss Logue returning to *Sandsprings Homestead Group* with them. In the new year, nine or ten boys and girls came over from Ellendale and stayed for tea.<sup>21</sup>

In March 1891, Caleb and Murray pulled down 'the old Chinese house' and the old kitchen.

Caleb and Lizzie's daughter, Rose Matilda, died in December 1891 aged eleven, of influenza and fever. She was buried in the Cemetery at *Sandsprings Homestead Group*. In October 1899, Caleb Sewell died aged 49, of influenza, pneumonia and meningitis and was buried near his daughter. His son, Walter Vernon (known as Vernon) was seventeen and too young to take over management of Sandsprings, so Caleb's brother George Ernest (referred to as Uncle Ernest) took over the management of the place for his nephew. George Ernest Sewell had previously worked his father's property in the Upper Swan district and been involved in several gold prospecting and business ventures.<sup>22</sup>

In 1901 Sandsprings was described as:

...consisting of 6,000 acres freehold and 4,000 leasehold, and carrying about 10,000 sheep, and sufficient horses and cattle for station purposes... There is a great deal of good agricultural land on the estate, but no attention is paid to cultivation beyond growing sufficient hay for station use... An area of two acres was, some years ago, planted with fruit trees, and from this garden in 1897, fruit of a value of £800 was sold. During that year, owing to the great influx of population to Western Australia, the oranges, apples, grapes and peaches grown were disposed of at exceptionally high prices...

A good deal of money has been spent on the estate in ring-barking and clearing... Some very fine dams have been built... The wool from the estate is carted to the Greenough River railway station.<sup>23</sup>

The Greenough River station was on the privately owned section of the Midland railway, completed in 1893, and was closer to *Sandsprings Homestead Group* than the Walkaway station previously used.

Walter Vernon Sewell continued the diaries begun by his father Caleb. His entries for the early years are scant, and there are often gaps, but the diaries indicate that while he took part in farm work he was not expected to take on a lot of responsibility and was often engaged in driving his mother and other female relatives on visits to neighbouring properties.<sup>24</sup>

In 1903, Walter Vernon took control of *Sandsprings Homestead Group*. His diary entries from 1903 to 1906 more closely followed the form of his father's, reflecting his new responsibility for the property. Shearing, mustering and drenching sheep, burning off, fencing, mending tanks and windmills, cleaning out springs, planting vegetables and packing fruit were combined with afternoon tea visits to and from the neighbouring stations, Tibbadden and Ellendale. His diaries end in 1906, around the time his younger brother

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<sup>21</sup> Diary of Caleb Sewell, op cit, November 1890-January 1891.

<sup>22</sup> Battye J. S. *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Hussey & Gillingham, Adelaide, 1912-13, Vol. 2, p. 220.

<sup>23</sup> *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, Facsimile of 1901 edition, Perth, Hesperian Press, 2000, p. 616.

<sup>24</sup> Diary of Caleb Sewell, op cit,



Clayton died, aged eleven, also of influenza complications, and became the last burial in the *Sandsprings Homestead Group Cemetery*.<sup>25</sup>

Sometime in the early years of his ownership of *Sandsprings Homestead Group*, Walter Vernon acquired Boodanoo Station near Mount Magnet in partnership with Edward Lejeune, and in 1928 purchased the nearby Koogereena Station, which had resulted from a subdivision of Tibradden. Walter Vernon's wife Mabel (nee Snodgrass) and Agnes Davis of Koogereena were sisters. Walter Vernon and Mabel had three children: Eric Vernon (1908), Reginald Vernon (1910) and Margaret Noel Vernon (1913).<sup>26</sup>

Walter Vernon developed a merino breeding program at Sandsprings. His knowledge of merino sheep saw him judge at shows around the State, including at the Royal Perth Show, and at least once at the Adelaide Royal Show. The area of cultivation on the property was increased to about 500 - 600 acres of wheat and about 300 - 400 acres of oats. As more land was cleared, the water table rose and the orchard area became boggy, gradually killing many of the fruit trees. Much of the work on the property continued to be done with horses, due to the sandy and hilly nature of the land, and a labour force of about fourteen or fifteen was employed, some permanent and others on contract for various projects, such as dam sinking.<sup>27</sup>

Probably in the late 1910s or 1920s, the Shearing Shed was upgraded with a two stand mechanised plant, which replaced the five blade-shearers previously employed. Old sheds that were mechanised usually ended up with a lesser number of shearing positions than previous.<sup>28</sup> The merino stud operation was gradually reduced in the 1930s and was abandoned during World War II. The concrete tennis court was installed by Walter Vernon. Concrete was chosen as it required no maintenance.<sup>29</sup>

Randolph Stow, a second cousin of the Sewells, wrote of *Sandsprings Homestead Group* in *Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*. He called the place Sandalwood and the Sewells were the Maplesteads. 'Maplestead' was the name of the Pingelly farm established by George Sewell's brother, John Sewell Jr. Stow wrote of *Sandsprings Homestead Group* as it was in the late 1930s-early 1940s, through the eyes of the main character Rob Coram. Rob lived in Geraldton, but during World War II he lived with various members of his extended family for several months at *Sandsprings Homestead Group* and then at Koogereena (which he named Andarra).<sup>30</sup> At *Sandsprings Homestead Group*:

The orchard was a bog, dangerous to children, a green bog of grass and reeds and cress... In the orchard was a crumbling cottage full of swallows' nests... it stood in the bog inaccessible, like a moated castle. All kinds of fruit grew in the orchard, planted there by Great-grandfather Maplestead, who had come from the

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<sup>25</sup> Diary of Caleb Sewell, op cit; Erickson, Rica, op cit, pp. 2769-2772; Cemetery headstone.

<sup>26</sup> Eastman Poletti Sherwood Architects & Martin, Gary, Koogereena Homestead Conservation Plan, 2004, pp. 19-27.

<sup>27</sup> Sewell, Eric Vernon, Oral History 432, op cit, pp. 3-4, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Sewell, Eric Vernon, Oral History 432, op cit, pp. 13, 31; Boersma, Ian, 'A distinct form: shearing sheds in Western Australia', Foreword to June Lacy's, *Off shears: the story of shearing sheds in Western Australia*, Bentley, Black Swan Press, 2002, p. xv.

<sup>29</sup> Sewell, Eric Vernon, Oral History 432, op cit, 1981, pp. 13, 31.

<sup>30</sup> Stow, Randolph, *The Merry-Go-Round in the sea*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1965.

Swan, where farmers cared about fruit. But the grapes were planted by Uncle Ernest [in a cage to keep birds out]...And near the birdcage grew the biggest figtree in the world; not really one figtree at all, but a whole family of trees that were constantly trailing their branches to the ground and starting new figtrees... At the edge of the orchard grew tropical jungle.<sup>31</sup>

There were olive trees around the Homestead and wide verandahs with a cellar beneath. The 'horizon was spiked with windmills' and the shearing shed, near the stables, had 'rifle-slits in stone walls', which refers to the idea that these were for fending off hostile Aborigines, rather than for ventilation.<sup>32</sup>

Walter Vernon and Mabel Sewell retired to Geraldton in 1943 when eldest son Eric Vernon Sewell was married to Ayris Francesca Lejeune, daughter of his father's partner in Boodanoo Station. Eric Vernon and Francesca took over management of Sandsprings and occupied the Homestead. Brother Reg inherited Koogereena.<sup>33</sup> Walter Vernon had been elected to the Geraldton Road Board in 1910, and was its Chairman from 1913 to 1944, and then chairman of the combined Geraldton-Greenough Road Board from 1952 until his death in 1954. Eric Vernon continued the family association with the Road Board, being elected a member in 1934 and in 1965 was elected President of the Geraldton-Greenough Shire.<sup>34</sup>

During their occupation of *Sandsprings Homestead Group*, Eric Vernon and Francesca had the Kitchen section of the Homestead rebuilt and modernised. The timber verandah floors were replaced with concrete, which helped stabilise the building as it was subject to cracking due to movement in the soil. The Homestead was reroofed in the late 1970s. A new shearing shed was built, with a four stand electric shearing plant to halve the shearing time of the six thousand to seven thousand sheep.<sup>35</sup>

In 1970, Eric Vernon and Francesca's sons, Eric John (known as John) and Patrick Richard (Pat) were added to the title to *Sandsprings Homestead Group*. John built a new residence on the property, which he occupied with wife Lynette. The senior Sewells continued to occupy the Homestead. Eric Vernon remained President of the Geraldton-Greenough Shire until his retirement in 1975. Following his death in 1985, *Sandsprings Homestead Group*, then comprising about 13,000 acres, was divided between John and Pat, with John and Lynette acquiring title to Location 722.<sup>36</sup>

The Homestead was rented out from 1987, and was more recently occupied by John and Lynette's son Tim Sewell until early 2008. *Sandsprings Homestead Group* currently has an area of 5,500 acres. It is stocked with only a couple of thousand sheep and about 80 head of cattle following several dry seasons. Wheat, canola, lupin and oat crops are grown.<sup>37</sup>

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31 Stow, Randolph, op cit, pp. 26-27.

32 Stow, Randolph, op cit, pp. 22, 34.

33 Sewell, Eric Vernon, Oral History 432, op cit, pp. 3-4, 10-11.

34 *Municipal and Road Board Gazette*, Vol. 19 no. 9, January 1954, p. 10.

35 Sewell, Eric Vernon, Oral History 432, op cit, 1981, pp. 13, 31.

36 Certificates of Title, Vol. 1166 Fol. 362, 24 December 1953, 12 December 1956; Vol. 1309 Fol. 235, 3 November 1970; Vol. 1594 Fol. 913, 5 February 1986; Information provided by John and Lynette Sewell, op cit.

37 Information provided by John and Lynette Sewell, op cit.

In 2008, the Homestead is unoccupied. The stone farm buildings are unused and in various stages of ruin.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* comprises Homestead (1890) and Kitchen Wing (rebuilt c.1950s), ruins of 1860s-1880s farm buildings (Carriage House, Wash House, Shepherd's Cottage and Shearing Shed), a Cup and Saucer Trough (1880s), family Cemetery comprising four graves (1868-1906), concrete horse/cattle Trough and Post (c.1880s-1890s) tennis court remnants (c.1920s), a corrugated iron hut and several corrugated iron sheds. The places that comprise *Sandsprings Homestead Group* are of a rural vernacular functional style that demonstrates some influences of the Victorian Georgian style.

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* is situated midway along Sandsprings Road approximately 15 kilometres south-east of Kojarena on the Geraldton Mt Magnet Road and 45 kilometres east of Geraldton, in the Greenough district. Located on the south side of the road, the entry access road is north-west of the group that comprises *Sandsprings Homestead Group*. The entry track leads down a slope overlooking a creek and rolling hills of pastured landscape beyond. The entry track forks to the east and south, with the east track diverting around the Carriage House and corrugated iron hut (north-east of the homestead) and then south to the main farm operation buildings. The south track leads directly to the rear (north) of the Homestead where the 1950s kitchen on the west and a corrugated galvanised iron shed on the east form an open courtyard flanking the Homestead on the south. The Homestead site is delineated by a wire fence across the south and part of the east and west boundaries, with a vehicular gate on the east side (off the track to the farm sheds) near the south east corner of the homestead yard. There are various mature plantings in the Homestead yard to the south and east. In close proximity to the Homestead is the former Wash House on the west side. On the east side of the south track, on a slight rise, is the Shepherd's Cottage, with a more recent steel framed dwelling some 50 metres north of it, on the same alignment. The track continues further south terminating in an expansive forecourt on the north side of contemporary machinery sheds, with the Shearing Shed forming the west side with the more recent shearing shed immediately adjacent on the south. Approximately 300-400 metres south-west of the Shearing Shed, down a slope and on the west side of the creek is the Cup and Saucer Stock Trough. South-east of the machinery sheds, 300-400 metres down a slope, the Cemetery is identifiable by rows of four Eucalypt trees flanking the fenced plot that comprises four graves.

#### Homestead

The homestead is a single-storey random face stone dwelling that shows influences of Victorian Georgian style appropriate to country homesteads, further demonstrated in the materials, form, scale, and symmetry. The front wall (south) is detailed in tuckpointed face stone with arched quoin detail to the central front door, and stone quoin window detail. There are two Chinese characters inscribed in the mortar on the east wall of the verandah enclosure. The plan of the building is rectangular with perimeter verandahs. The hipped roof, clad with corrugated iron, breaks pitch over the surrounding verandahs.

The chimneys are rendered and square in form with a simple corbel detail. The original verandah floors and posts have been replaced with concrete floors and 0.075 metre diameter steel posts. On the south 'front' the verandah has a brick rendered up-stand and balustrade where the ground slopes away, and has a central curved set of concrete stairs. The windows are timber framed double hung sashes to the front and sides (verandah enclosures also in random stone). The north side (rear, access side) has no windows. French doors open from both rooms flanking the central corridor. The front door (south) has an arched fanlight, and the rear door a rectangular fanlight. The Homestead comprises four main rooms, two each side of the central corridor that runs from the front verandah (south) to the rear (north). The east verandah and northeast corner is enclosed, forming three rooms,<sup>38</sup> and part of the west verandah and north-west corner is also enclosed. The interior has original 15cm floorboards, hard plaster walls and decorative pressed metal ceilings with deep cornices. The east verandah enclosure also has decorative pressed metal ceilings lined on the rake. The four main rooms have fireplaces with original timber mantelpieces in place, although some have been painted.

Immediately adjacent with connecting concrete verandah floor, on the north-west corner of the Homestead, is the 1950s Kitchen Wing, with a breezeway connection at the south end. The bathroom facilities open onto the breezeway. The Kitchen Wing is a single storey red brick structure with a simple gable roof clad with corrugated Asbestos. There is a steel posted verandah along the east side where the kitchen is accessed. The rear (west) has a recessed verandah under the main roof with concrete stair access, as the ground slopes away on the west side. The windows are sets of three horizontal timber framed awning windows in horizontal configurations at non-conventional locations of the walls. The interior has concrete floors, hard plaster walls, except interior partition walls that are lined framed walls that do not extend full height. The kitchen is centrally located in the Kitchen Wing with a dining room on the north end. The fitout is the original 1950s cupboards and stove.

The Homestead is currently unoccupied but has been in recent use and is generally in fair to good condition. It has undergone minimal change over time to facilitate the ongoing residential function. The Homestead has a moderate degree of authenticity. The timber framed corrugated iron gable roofed shed, located near the north-east corner of the Homestead, has a flat roofed steel framed carport on the east side. The shed is of little heritage significance, and the carport of no significance.

### **Dairy & Washhouse (ruin)**

Located only 50 metres or so west of the Kitchen Wing, the Dairy & Washhouse is a small single-storey random face stone building. It was originally a dairy and fruit sorting and washhouse.<sup>39</sup> The plan is square with an open section on the west wall. Other door and window openings have

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<sup>38</sup> Mr & Mrs E. Sewell (correspondence to HCWA, 22 January 2009) state that the evidence suggests that there never was an east verandah, but that the rooms were constructed as if a verandah had been enclosed.

<sup>39</sup> Correspondence, Mr & Mrs E. Sewell to HCWA, 22 January 2009.

rendered surrounds. The hipped roof is clad with corrugated iron. There is a stone fireplace structure and narrow vertical chimney against the exterior wall on the west side south corner. The floor is concrete. The remains of the windows reveal they are timber framed double hung sashes.

The Wash House is in fair condition and the least ruinous of the stone farm buildings, having retained its roof structure to date. It has undergone minimal intervention and has a high degree of authenticity.

#### **Carriage House (ruin)**

Located north-east of the Homestead, the building is aligned north-south opening onto the east. It is a single-storey random face stone dwelling that shows influences of Victorian Georgian style demonstrated in the materials, form, scale, and symmetry. The plan of the building is rectangular with north and south rooms with door on the east, and an open fronted central area. The hipped roof is clad with corrugated iron. The floor is concrete, the interior walls are whitewashed rough stone, with interior division walls timber framed and clad with horizontal corrugated iron. The windows are timber framed double hung sashes.

The building is in ruin with part of the roof structure collapsed and roof sheeting missing but otherwise is generally in fair to good condition. It has undergone minimal intervention and has a high degree of authenticity. The corrugated iron hut on the west side was originally a shepherd's hut relocated from near the orchard.

#### **Shepherd's Cottage (ruin)**

Located south-east of the homestead, east of the south track on a rise, the Shepherd's Cottage is aligned north south. It is a single-storey random face stone dwelling that shows influences of Victorian Georgian style demonstrated in the materials, form and scale. The plan of the building is rectangular with north and south rooms opening onto the east, and the north end of the east verandah enclosed with timber framed corrugated iron, and the south end verandah stone walled. The hipped roof is clad with corrugated iron. The floor is concrete; the interior walls are hard plaster. The windows are replacement timber framed casements on the west frontage. A wood stove remains in situ in the fireplace and cupboard fitouts are still evident.

The Shepherd's Cottage is in ruin with most of the roof structure collapsed and roof sheeting missing and is otherwise in fair condition. It has undergone some intervention with concrete floors, kitchen fitout, verandah enclosure, and window replacement, and therefore has a moderate degree of authenticity.

#### **Shearing Shed (ruin)**

Located south-east of the Homestead, on the west side of an open forecourt formed by the contemporary farm machinery sheds to the south, and the more recent shearing shed immediately south, the Shearing Shed faces east. The remaining structure is a single-storey random face stone building with no particular architectural influences. The plan of the building is rectangular with most of the west (rear) wall intact and the south gable also intact. The south wall shows that the main roof was a high-pitched gable with a break pitch

roofed verandah area along the east frontage. There are buttress elements and a room at the north end, with narrow vertical wall openings in a pair. There is no remaining evidence of the original roof structure or cladding. Sections of the walls have collapsed, there is evidence of areas of reconstructed walls, and some original openings show timber lintels.

The Shearing Shed is in ruin and in poor condition with a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

The adjacent shearing shed and machinery sheds are of no significance.

A concrete water trough for horses stands in the forecourt. Standing beside the Trough is a concrete Post that formed part of the fence surrounding the sheep yard. The holes in the Post were for the fence railings. The Shearing Shed Trough and Post are of some significance.

### **Cup and Saucer Trough**

Located some 300-400 metres south-west of the Shearing Shed, down a considerable slope and on the opposite side of a creek, is the Cup and Saucer Trough. Close inspection was not possible due to the flooded creek area. The Cup and Saucer Trough is a concrete element with a semi circular water storage element (cup) sitting on a saucer element. The Cup and Saucer Trough appears to be in good condition with a high degree of integrity and authenticity. It is not in use. A further two such troughs can be located in this area.<sup>40</sup> One of these troughs, constructed of cement c.1930/40 using the same cup and saucer principle, served as a trough for the large piggery that was once located between the old shearing shed and the cemetery.<sup>41</sup>

### **Cemetery**

Located some 300-400 metres south-east of the Shearing Shed, down a considerable slope and identified by the eight Eucalypt trees, four flanking each side of the fenced plot, is the Sewell family Cemetery. The plot is a small square fenced area with four graves, each delineated by cast iron surrounds and identified with marble headstones facing east. The headstones are intact except for one broken one, and the grave surrounds have subsided and broken in places. Overall, the cemetery is in fair condition with a high degree of integrity and authenticity.

Concrete remnants of the tennis court are also evident in a flat area above the creek approximately 100 metres south-west of the Homestead. The remnants are of some significance.

The original orchard site has no remaining plantings.

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<sup>40</sup> Correspondence, Mr & Mrs E. Sewell to HCWA, 22 January 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Correspondence, Mr & Mrs E. Sewell to HCWA, 8 February 2010.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are over 800 places on the HCWA database with homestead listed as a use. Ninety-eight of these are on the State Register with sixteen in the Midwest region. Nine of those Registered in the Midwest are associated with an historic farm complex.

Sandsprings' Homestead (1890) fits somewhere in between the first generation of residences, constructed in the 1850s-70s for those who initially settled the region, and the new station residences, many architect designed, which were built in the first decade or so of the 1900s, generally as a result of a later generation taking over the properties.

P12245 *Irwin House Group* includes the homestead constructed in the 1890s and enlarged in the 1920s. It has undergone considerable alteration, including a different roof form to the original construction. The farm buildings and kitchen date from the 1850s and include the former Post Office, shearing shed, milk shed, timber stockyard post, stone garden wall, and a 1907 gravesite. The place was developed as part of the leaseholding of The Cattle Company under the management of Lockier Burges.<sup>42</sup>

The stone Homestead at P3268 *Walebing*, near Moora, was built in 1888 and has undergone minimal change. The verandah floors have been concreted and the large hearthstone for the original open fireplace in the kitchen has been removed. The homestead is associated with a significant group of stone farm buildings constructed in the late 1850s. Like *Sandsprings Homestead Group*, the property has been in the one family since its establishment; in the case of *Walebing*, it is the Lefroy family.<sup>43</sup>

P1215 *The Grange* in the Irwin district comprises the Homestead (1881, 1920s, 1940s) and former Kitchen (1881), with farm buildings constructed in the 1850s to 1870s, including shepherd's cottage, shearer's quarters, granary, stables and slaughterhouse (ruin). The place was developed by Samuel Pole Phillips and his son, Samuel James Phillips.

P6353 *Narra Tarra Homestead, Outbuildings and Cemetery* (P06353) comprises the ruin of the 1850s stone homestead, late 1860s brick and tile homestead, kitchen outbuildings, store and a stone wall enclosed Cemetery. The Cemetery has 26 known burials, including 12 members of the various families who owned the place, and 15 headstones. The place was associated with the Mills, Green, Burges and Darlot families. It continues to be occupied. A conservation plan for the place was prepared in 2003.<sup>44</sup>

The Cup and Saucer Trough has its modern equivalent in farm stock watering, with, usually, a polycarbonate tank of various capacity sitting in a saucer of similar material. This design is still called a cup and saucer trough.<sup>45</sup> An extensive on-line search failed to find any other examples in Australia of this early concrete Cup and Saucer Trough.

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<sup>42</sup> HCWA assessment documentation P12245 *Irwin House*.

<sup>43</sup> John Taylor Architect, Conservation Plan for Walebing, July 2001.

<sup>44</sup> John Taylor Architect, Conservation Plan for Narra Tarra, 2003; HCWA assessment documentation P6353.

<sup>45</sup> Various websites, including bushyproducts.com.au and evotanks.com.au.

The only other Midwest place with known physical evidence of nineteenth century Chinese labourers is P01914 *Willow Gully*, an 1860s property on the Bowes River. Conservation works in 1996 uncovered the corner of a mural on the dining room fireplace that has been attributed to the Chinese cook Washy (Ho Ah Sin). The mural has oriental motifs of a horse-riding theme. The property also retains some stone remnants around its wells suggesting a social division in access to the water supply.

*Sandsprings Homestead Group* is a good representative example of a 1890s pastoral homestead in the Midwest. The farm buildings, largely in ruin, and other structures are typical of the later part of the nineteenth century. The Cup and Saucer Trough is rare and the concrete Sheepyard Post is an uncommon example when most such posts would most likely have been timber.

#### **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

No key references.

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further research may provide interpretation of the Chinese characters in the east wall of the Homestead.

Further research may identify construction dates for the c.1860s-1880s buildings.