

Place No. 04 Balmoral Station Homestead Group (fmr)



Shearing shed at Balmoral Station 2012

LOCATION	
Name of Place	Balmoral Station Homestead Group (fmr)
Location/Address	
Street Number	Great Northern Highway, 8km NW of station entrance
Street Name	
Suburb/Town	
Other Locational descriptor (text)	408547 mE, 7659948 mN Longitude 116.1191 Latitude -21.1591

OWNERSHIP & LAND DESCRIPTION				
Owner	Address	Phone/fax	Status	Item No.
Citic Pacific Mining	GPO Box 2732 Perth WA 6001			
Reserve No.	Lot/Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio	Item No.

LISTING & ASSESSMENT	
HCWA Reference Number	NEW ENTRY
State Register of Heritage Places:(Y/N)	No
Classified by the National Trust (Y/N)	No
Register of the National Estate (Y/N)	No
Local Town Planning Scheme (Y/N)	No
Management Category	B

DESCRIPTION	
Construction Date (1)	c.1945
Construction Date (2)	1860s
Site Type (Place Type)	Individual Building or Group Historic site
Use(s) of Place	

<i>Original</i>	FARMING/PASTORAL: Homestead Servants' Quarters/Shearers' Quarters Shed Kitchen Stockyard Other
<i>Present</i>	INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING: Other - Iron Ore Mining Lease VACANT/UNUSED: Vacant/Unused
Construction Materials:	
<i>Walls</i>	1. ASBESTOS 199 Other Asbestos 7. PLASTER 701 Fibrous Plaster Sheet
<i>Roof</i>	6. METAL 606 Corrugated Iron
<i>Other</i>	11. TIMBER 1105 Weatherboard 1199 Other Timber
Condition	Sound
Integrity (how much of the original fabric is intact?):	Fairly intact
Physical Description	
<p>Balmoral station complex includes evidence of 16 identified buildings and structures dating from a range of periods and in various conditions. Many of the buildings date from post 1945, when a destructive cyclone devastated buildings at the site. Key historical structures are described below (Refer to the site plan for corresponding numbers):</p> <p>Washroom (1) – This serviced the shearers quarter's complex. It has a corrugated iron roof and open walls with metal posts and concrete floors.</p> <p>Worker's quarters (2) – This has a corrugated iron roof and iron walls above the dado, with a wooden frame and concrete floor and dado. The building has 12 workers bedrooms, with walls formed from corrugated iron and timber. The hallway has a concrete dado and timber truss frames in the open roof, with a bathroom and larger dormitory at the north end of the building. The three shower cubicles, constructed from corrugated iron and timber, remain in the bathroom, some with shower heads and pipes intact. A 44 gallon drum is rigged up on the exterior for the supply of water. There is a simple wooden shelf with four sinks. The building has wooden doors and wooden awning style windows.</p> <p>Kitchen and mess (3) – This is a smaller building with a corrugated iron roof and walls above a dado. It has a wooden frame and concrete floor and dado.</p> <p>Quarters (4) – These are smaller quarters, presumably an overseer's cottage. It is constructed of corrugated iron roof and walls above dado, with a wooden frame and concrete floor and dado. The interior has walls of fibro panels (probably asbestos).</p> <p>Toilet (5) – This structure has a corrugated iron roof and walls, wooden frame and concrete floors.</p> <p>Sheep yards (7) – Constructed from concrete posts and four wooden rails in fair condition.</p> <p>Shearing shed (6) – This structure is in a good condition and is constructed of the local cajuput timber resistant to termites, from the paperbark <i>Maleleuca leucadendra</i> and is very rare. The building has a corrugated iron roof and walls, with a concrete and timber floor. There are ten stands for shearing and the engine room is intact. The shearing shed and shearers quarters remain one of the most intact and complete examples of a disused shearing complex in the Shire.</p> <p>Work shed and garage (12) – This structure has a corrugated iron roof and walls, wooden frame and concrete floor.</p>	

Homestead (14) – This was rebuilt after the 1945 cyclone. The building has a corrugated iron roof, fibro panels above the dado, weatherboard walls below the dado, a wooden frame, metal verandah posts and a concrete floor. The south end has been enclosed with a bathroom and the north end enclosed as a kitchen.

There is evidence of other buildings around the site, with the floors and footings visible. There is a derelict water tank and a bore with windmill remaining, which is now powered by a solar pump. There is evidence of horse yards adjacent to this.

History

Balmoral Station was established by Robert and David Fraser c1866. The adjacent Mardie Station was first leased in c1867 by David Simpson and Malcolm MacIntosh, who worked with the Frasers in the early years until both stations' stocks increased. In the mid-1870s it is likely the parties separated continuing to work each station as separate enterprises.¹

The landing at the mouth of the Fortescue River was built to enable supplies to be brought in and wool clip to be loaded onto ships. This was in use until the 1940s.

In 1878 the post office on Balmoral Station was erected, approximately 3 kms west of Tom Bull Pool, about 6 km from the landing. In the late 1870s/early 1880s the overland telegraph line passed through Balmoral and Mardie Stations.

In 1910 James Munro purchased Balmoral Station from David Stewart, who had owned Balmoral at least as early as 1886², and the station was managed by 'Baron' Aarnold Berthold Camerer. In 1916 Samuel Peter 'Sam' McKay and H. Green purchased Balmoral from Munro with 18,000 sheep and 5,000 lambs for £27,000.³ McKay's grandfather had established Mundabullangana Station, and the McKays also went into successful pearling. The family, and Sam in particular, were known for 'shocking treatment of natives on their luggers and the station.'⁴ It is unknown if Sam McKay continued such cruel practice on Balmoral; he died in 1923.

Frank E. Venn, the adopted son of Henry Whittal Venn, who was a member of the Denison Plains Pastoral Co., purchased Balmoral in 1924. Balmoral was managed by a war veteran Donald Cox at this time. Historian Peter Gifford quoted Venn's letters to Dalgety's that he:

'like[d] the Balmoral country – must look very nice in a decent season. I have seen a good deal of Sharpe and Moseley – Mardie Sheep look well. Karratha rotten, dying everywhere.'⁵

In 1925 Balmoral and Mardie Station were amalgamated, with Benjamin Sharpe taking over Balmoral. During the next decade the Balmoral-Mardie Station 'reached its zenith in terms of sheep – 52,000 shorn in 1934 for 1,280 bales of wool.'⁶

In 1945, Robert 'Bob' Sharpe took over the lease from his father, with his wife Phyllis. In March 1945 a destructive cyclone hit Mardie and Balmoral Station. Twenty thousand sheep were lost overnight; 500 miles of fencing, two homesteads, two woolsheds, the shearer's kitchen and mess were also destroyed. There was also extensive damage to the staff quarters, blacksmith shop, windmill man's cottage and stables.⁷ The present homestead, woolshed, and shearers' kitchen, mess and quarters were built after 1945. Balmoral Station was taken over by Robert's oldest son, Benjamin Sharpe, in 1968. Ben Sharpe operated the station for another 11 years, before selling it to Philip Blackman, a Victorian, who in turn sold it to a professional fisherman David Thompson in 1999. In 2000 sheep were abandoned for beef cattle. In 2007, Citic Pacific Mining purchased the Station for iron ore mining.

An oral history with Dorrie Wally who was born on Mardie Station indicates that the Aboriginal name for the country of Balmoral Station is *Kulimpan*.⁸

Archaeology

Balmoral Station shearing complex has architectural and stylistic integrity. It is a relatively intact set of buildings clearly reflecting the post-war period, and the disciplined working life of shearing.

SIGNIFICANCE	
Historic theme (s)	<p>1. DEMOGRAPHIC SETTLEMENT & MOBILITY 106 Workers (including Aboriginal, convict) 107 Settlements 109 Environmental change 110 Resource exploitation and depletion</p> <p>3. OCCUPATIONS 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying</p> <p>5. OUTSIDE INFLUENCES 503 Natural disasters</p> <p>6. PEOPLE 601 Aboriginal people 603 Early settlers</p>
Statement of Significance:	
<p>Balmoral Station has high historical significance as one of the early sheep stations of the region.</p> <p>The shearing precinct is representative of post-war Pilbara stations, reflecting a highly organised workforce, with the provision of disciplined live-in working environments in the form of utilitarian quarters, mess, kitchen and wool shed. Each element of the built environment in the station's shearing precinct is intact, complete and largely unmodified since its post-war construction. It thus provides a rich source of evidence about the shearing industry in c1947 as well as having aesthetic value because of the uniform style of building within the precinct.</p>	
ASSOCIATIONS	
Architect/Designer (1)	
Other Associated Person(s)	<p>Robert and David Fraser David Stewart James Munro Samuel Peter 'Sam' McKay H. Green Frank E. Venn Benjamin Sharpe Robert Sharpe Ben Sharpe</p>
MHI Review 2013	Assessment Undertaken, Place Record Form Created



View of Balmoral Station buildings: workers' quarters and shearing shed 2012



Work shed and garage at Balmoral Station 2012



BALMORAL STATION HOMESTEAD

1. Washroom (CI roof; open walls; metal posts; concrete floors)
2. Workers' quarters (CI roof and walls above dado; wooden frame; concrete floor and dado)
3. Kitchen and Mess (CI roof and walls above dado; wooden frame; concrete floor and dado)
4. Quarters (CI roof and walls above dado; wooden frame; concrete floor and dado)
5. Toilet (CI roof and walls; concrete floor and wall footing)
6. Shearing shed (CI roof and walls; wooden frame; concrete floor)
7. Sheep yards (concrete posts and 4 wooden rails)
8. June 2012: site of shipping containers
9. Building floor (concrete, possible wooden frame and CI walls and roof)
10. Building floor (concrete, possible wooden frame and CI walls and roof)
11. Building floor (concrete, possible wooden frame and CI walls and roof)
12. Work shed and garage (CI roof and walls; wooden frame; concrete floor)
13. House floor (concrete)
14. Homestead (CI roof; fibro panels above dado, weatherboard walls below dado; wooden frame, metal verandah posts; concrete floor: S end enclosed as modern bathroom; N end enclosed as kitchen). Metal shed to N.
15. Water tank (some derelict)
16. Bore (windmill remains; replaced by solar pump; concrete tank base; modern tank at 15)

¹ Much of the information in this assessment has been researched by the historian Peter Gifford, whose work on the history of Mardie Station provides the basis for this history. *Unpublished History of Mardie Station*, Kate Gregory personal correspondence with Peter Gifford.

² "Bucolic", 'From Roebourne Westward', *West Australian*, 24 April 1886; quoted in P.J. Bridge (ed.) *Pastoral Pioneers of W.A. 1884-1989 by E. T. Hooley (Bucolic)*, Carlisle, WA 2004, p 27.

³ Balmoral Station Inspector's Report on Classification of Pastoral Leases, Lands and Surveys Department, c1916.

⁴ R. Erickson, quoted in Heritage Council of Western Australia, 'Register of Heritage Places – Assessment Documentation: Mundabullangana station', 2007, p 10. See also, K. Forrest *The Challenge and the Chance: The Colonisation and Settlement of the North West Australia 1861-1914*, Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 1996, p 197

⁵ Venn to Nichol, 12 June 1924, 100/3/154/1, Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour, Australian National University, Canberra. *Unpublished History of Mardie Station*, Kate Gregory personal correspondence with Peter Gifford.

⁶ Sharpe, *Some Ghosts Some Not*, Deepdale, WA, 1979, used in *Unpublished History of Mardie Station*, Kate Gregory personal correspondence with Peter Gifford.

⁷ Annotated photographs from the Sharpe family, personal communication with Ben and Eleanor Sharpe.

⁸ Oral History with Dorrie Wally, Interviewed by Kate Gregory, 4 Feb 2010 for the National Trust of Australia (WA)'s *Burru Stories Project* sponsored by Woodside. Oral History now housed at AIATSIS.