

Place No. 31 Mardie Station



Mardie Station homestead and cookhouse 2012

LOCATION	
Name of Place	Mardie Station Homestead Group and Woolsheds (fmr)
Other Name (1)	
Location/Address	
Street Number	
Street Name	North West Coastal Highway
Suburb/Town	Roebourne
Other Locational descriptor (text)	Ocean side of North West Coastal Highway mE 394017 mN 7656611 Longitude:115.979 Latitude: -21.1888

OWNERSHIP & LAND DESCRIPTION				
Owner				
Citic Pacific Mining c/o Pastoral Management PL	GPO Box 2732 Perth WA 6001	08 9226 8539		
Reserve No.	Lot/Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio	Item No.
	263 154	P220164 P220154	LR3103/79 1	

LISTING AND ASSESSMENT	
HCWA Reference Number	8674
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)	Yes
Management Category	A

DESCRIPTION	
Construction Date (1)	c1867
Construction Date (2)	1912
Site Type (Place Type)	Individual Building or Group
Use(s) of Place	
<i>Original</i>	FARMING/PASTORAL: Homestead Cottage Servants' Quarters/Shearers' Quarters Shed or Barn Stable Kitchen

	Blacksmith's Shop Stockyard Other
<i>Present</i>	MINING: Housing or Quarters Other: Iron Ore Mining
<i>Other</i>	OTHER: Aboriginal Occupation
Construction Materials:	
<i>Walls</i>	9. STONE 904 Local Stone 6. METAL 606 Corrugated Iron
<i>Roof</i>	6. METAL 606 Corrugated Iron
<i>Other</i>	3. CONCRETE 399 Other Concrete
<i>Condition</i>	Moderate
<i>Integrity (how much of the original fabric is intact?):</i>	Largely intact
Physical Description	
<p><i>Mardie head station</i></p> <p>This complex includes evidence of 11 identified buildings and structures dating from a range of periods and in various states of condition. Refer to the site plan for detail; key historical structures are described below with corresponding numbers.</p> <p>Homestead (1) –The homestead is constructed of locally quarried stone with tuckpointing, and has a distinctive white quoining framing the windows, doors and cornerstones of the building. This is a stylistic feature that repeats in other key historical buildings within the Shire (notably the Roebourne 'law and order' precinct and Old Union Bank building). A possible source of the stone may be an earlier homestead located near 'Mardie west'. The homestead has flagstone floors (internal and external) with timber framed verandahs on all sides with iron verandah posts, some subject to substantial corrosion. The roof is of corrugated iron. The building has a simple layout with entrance via a kitchen addition (renovated c1990) within an enclosed section of the verandah. The building has one large high ceilinged room with fireplace and doors leading out to verandahs on two sides, with four adjoining rooms (originally bedrooms) off the main room. Doors and windows are wooden framed. Stone wall mortar and flagstone floors are degraded in sections requiring conservation and stabilisation measures. The homestead was built in 1912.</p> <p>Cookhouse (2) – This smaller building is adjacent to the homestead and is similarly constructed with stone tuckpointed walls, quoining framing the windows and doors, flagstone floors, verandah on all sides with metal verandah posts and corrugated iron roof. The integrity of the building is compromised by a brick enclosed verandah c1980s. Concrete sections of flooring cover some parts of the flagstone verandah floors. There is evidence of substantial degradation of stone wall mortar in parts.</p> <p>Tankstand with windmill (3) – The route of the old highway passes through the station in front of the tankstand and windmill. This was once a fuel tank location.</p> <p>Vehicle shed (4) – The wooden framed construction has corrugated iron walls and roof with a breeze way on the northern section of building. This was once used as a hanger for planes. Adjacent to this building is a work shed (5) with handhewn massive timber beams, posts in concrete drummed footings, wooden frame structure, corrugated iron walls and roof and a concrete floor.</p> <p>Hut (8) – This small structure has a corrugated iron roof, walls and windows on two sides which open awning style. The hut has a concrete floor and cooker with chimney located under a little lean-to verandah with metal verandah posts. This is an example of a hut for Aboriginal workers and may have been part of a larger complex.</p>	

Quarters (9) – This has a corrugated iron roof and walls.

Quarters (10) – This has a corrugated iron roof and walls.

Mardie wool sheds (Mardie west)

This complex comprises 13 identified buildings and structures dating from a range of periods and in various states of condition. Refer to the site plan for detail; key historical structures are described below with corresponding numbers.

Sheep yards (1) – These are constructed of concrete posts and timber rails with variously six rails and a top rail and elsewhere four timber rails only. A drench (2) is connected to the sheep yards on a raised concrete floor with steel post frame and corrugated iron walls.

Shearing shed (3) – This is a large 10-stand shearing shed with ‘Cooper engineering’ equipment and post and rail entry pens. Some jarrah posts are stamped with the lettering ‘JAW COS’ and it has been suggested that these were originally from the goods shed building on the Cossack wharf.¹ The structure has corrugated iron walls and roof, metal and timber framing spanning the entire width, and a timber floorboard, earth and concrete floors. There is a generator room on south side of building. The cast iron wool bale scale is in situ with stencils for marking wool bales. A metal wool press remains within the building.

Stone building (4) – This stone building may date from the earliest period of the station. The building may have been quarters and may also have been used as a safe house, or a temporary holding prison in this contested landscape. The stone is of the same type used in the Mardie homestead, with tuckpointing and concrete corner pillars and framing the roof line, windows and door. The walls are very thick and suggest Victorian Georgian proportions. The building has a concrete floor, corrugated iron and wooden frame roof, almost without awning. The building would have had one wooden door and small windows of corrugated iron set within the thick stone walls. Exterior bolts have been added to the front door top and bottom. A modern lean-to brick construction with wooden door has been added on the north side of the building. Internal fibro walls and ceiling have been added, possibly at the same time as the lean-to, creating two rooms.

Worker’s quarters (7) – This structure has painted corrugated iron walls and roof, concrete floor and internal dado to 30 cm. A wash-room made of corrugated iron and timber with a concrete floor is located to the south west of the quarters, although this is collapsing.

Mess and cook house (10) – The structure has painted corrugated iron walls and roof, a concrete floor and wooden frame. A meat house (11) is to the east of the mess, made of corrugated iron with mesh ventilation on all sides at top of walls.

There is a track, obscured by overgrown mesket, leading to a water pool and date palms. This is the location of an Aboriginal fertility thalu site.

History

Victorians David Simpson and Malcolm McIntosh, members of the Denison Plains Association, were likely the first lease holders of the area of Mardie Station, probably from c1867.²

On 6 February 1868, after increasing violence between Aboriginal people and the colonial settlers, Resident Magistrate Sholl directed a punitive expedition against Aboriginal people in the area. This was in retaliation for the murder of Constable Griffis and his Aboriginal assistant Peter, who had arrested an Aboriginal man, Coolyerberri. Coolyerberri was accused of stealing flour from a pearling vessel anchored in Nickol Bay. The pearler Bream and his partner Jermyn, who were camped nearby were also murdered. Coolyerberri was released by the Aboriginal group responsible for the murders. The Aboriginal men fled to the islands around the Flying Foam Passage.³ Sholl’s party, led by special constables Alexander McRae and John Withnell, sought retaliation resulting in what has become known as the Flying Foam Massacre, in which up to 60 people were killed including women and children. It later came to light that the police constable and others had raped Aboriginal women and

the Aborigines saw his murder as retribution.⁴ Gara believes that Aboriginal people resented Europeans taking control of water resources, and that it is also probable that sacred sites were being desecrated and that Aboriginal people were being used for slave labour in the pearling and pastoral industries.⁵

It is thought that the survivors of the massacre fled to the region of Mardie Station and also to Karratha Station, eventually living and working on the stations. This is verified through an oral history account by Dorrie Wally in 2010, who stated that her father's grandfather was shot in the Flying Foam Massacre. Dorrie's ancestors went to Mardie, and Dorrie lived there until the late 1960s/early 1970s.⁶

Simpson and McIntosh ran mainly sheep, and some cattle and horses. The history of Mardie Station is closely intertwined with Balmoral Station, which was settled by Robert and David Fraser. The Frasers were joined by Simpson and McIntosh, working together in the first years until stocks increased. In the mid-1870s it is likely the parties separated, continuing to work each station as separate enterprises. McIntosh died in 1875, only a few years after branching out into pearling at the Flying Foam Passage pearling grounds. Simpson was also involved in pearling from the late 1870s and it is likely each would have used forced unpaid Aboriginal labour. E.T. Hooley reported that 'these hardy pioneers lead a rough life, two or three of the party being often absent for a fortnight in different directions with parties of natives beach-combing. Diving for shells was not then thought of.'⁷ Simpson and McIntosh are listed as 'sheep grazers and pearlers' in newspapers of the time.⁸ Simpson left Mardie in 1883 and Mardie was advertised for sale the same year; this advertisement contains a description of the property. The homestead was a:

'five room jarrah house with detached kitchen, plus a blacksmith's shop and woolshed with 'Robinson and Son patent woolpress'. There were two large stock yards, plus sheep yards...'⁹

By 1886, a newspaper reported on the 'well-known' Mardie Station, and the Fortescue River running through the station where 'there is abundance of permanent water and some first class country.' Adjacent to Mardie was Balmoral Station owned by D. Stewart, described as 'some nice country...recently enclosed for sheep.'¹⁰

It is interesting to note that the name Mardie appears to have come from the local Aboriginal language. As Peter Gifford reveals, Radcliffe-Brown noted that many personal names of the tribe began with 'Mardu', and this may be the reason why David Simpson was known as 'Mardie' from this time. However, the 2010 oral history with Dorrie Wally who was born on Mardie Station says that the Aboriginal name for the country of Mardie Station is Wirrawanti.¹¹

In 1883 the lease was taken over by Murray Squatting Company principals Alexander Robert Richardson and William and George Paterson, with S.R.L. Elliot and Hamlet Cornish becoming the station managers.¹² According to Peter Gifford, from this time, sheep were transported overland, via E.T. Hooley's stock route, which was cheaper than sea. The landing at the mouth of the Fortescue existed from the early years where wool was loaded onto lighters and taken to a ship offshore for export. The stock route ran through Mardie and Balmoral Stations.

In 1912 the Murray Squatting partnership was dissolved and the station was taken over by James Aubrey Withnell, son of John and Emma Withnell who founded Mt Welcome Station. James Withnell's discovery of a gold nugget in 1884 on Mallina Station is said to have caused a mini gold rush to the Pilbara, with many unsuccessful prospectors from the Kimberley.¹³ It is thought that Withnell was responsible for constructing the new homestead on Mardie, 3 kms east of the original homestead next to Mardie Pool. Peter Gifford states that 'Mardie's shearing shed, also erected by Withnell near Mardie pool, was originally the goods shed at Cossack. The woolshed beams carry stencil in several places: "JAW COS", meaning Cossack.'

Mardie Station is described in 1921 as 'an excellent property, plenty of grass and top feed, some splendidly good pastures of salt bush. Very little waste country. On the coast near a good landing, which is furnished with a loading jetty and a goods shed...In a good season Mardie could carry 40,000 sheep or the equivalent. Mardie is splendid cattle country.' The report notes that there is a mail service

to Mardie and licensed telegraph office situated on the station. In 1921, the station was 300,000 acres and carried 30,000 sheep, 100 horses and 200 cattle. The station had 31 wells, 29 mills and 10 permanent pools and springs. It is described as being '16 miles to Fortescue landing where wool is shipped, rations carted from Roebourne.'¹⁴ Evidently by this stage, the landing was still in use.

Withnell sold Mardie to Benjamin Hale Sharpe in 1922, 'the first of three generations of Sharpes who would lease Mardie' until the late 1970s.¹⁵ George Mosely was the manager at the time that Sharp took on the lease and he was kept on. It was during this period that the noxious weed mesquite was introduced at Mardie as it was thought to provide feed for sheep. Mesquite now litters the landscape and has been an environmental catastrophe for Mardie. It is listed as a weed of national significance. In 1925 Balmoral and Mardie Stations were amalgamated, with Ben 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.'¹⁶

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, with 20,000 sheep lost overnight, 500 miles of fencing, two homesteads, two woolsheds, the shearer's kitchen and mess destroyed. There was also extensive damage to the staff quarters, blacksmith shop, windmill man's cottage and stables.¹⁷ According to Ben Sharpe, it took about ten years to rebuild the station buildings after the cyclone.¹⁸

In October 1952 and May and June 1956 the British Government conducted nuclear bomb tests on the Montebello Islands off the coast of Mardie Station. Members of the British and Australian press covering the event established a 'hill top observation post' on Mardie Station to document the events.¹⁹ Dorrie Wally recounted the event in her oral history,

'Testing atom bomb. I was up there, Mardie (Station) then, I was about 11 or 12. I was up the tank, big tank... I seen that. Like a mushroom, lot of flame in the bottom...Flame just went 'boosh', like that... all that flame in the bottom and shoot up like that and flash! And is a mushroom on the top. The boss told us, is going off soon and we all got up in (on) the tank. But not glasses (binoculars), we had bottles, looking through water bottles.'²⁰

Mardie 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.

Archaeology

There are extensive remains of the use of the head station and Mardie west including standing buildings (all modified over time) and building bases (footings, floors and wall stubs). The remains of substantial stone structures may date from the earliest uses of the site (refer to structure number 4). Archaeological deposits associated with the use of the Aboriginal camp exist. Across the station there would be remains of pastoral activities and historical uses including Aboriginal.

SIGNIFICANCE

Historic theme (s)

1. DEMOGRAPHIC SETTLEMENT & MOBILITY
 - 106 Workers (including Aboriginal, convict)
 - 107 Settlement
 - 110 Resource Exploitation and Depletion
2. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
 - 201 River and sea transport
 - 203 Road transport
 - 205 Air transport
 - 206 Mail services
3. OCCUPATIONS
 - 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying

	303 Mining (including mineral processing) 6. PEOPLE 601 Aboriginal people 602 Early settlers
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Statement of Significance:

Mardie Station homestead and woolshed are of historical significance as one of the early sheep stations in the region. Mardie homestead and cookhouse are aesthetically impressive buildings set within a lawned garden with established Eucalypt trees providing shade and contrasting from the harsh station environment. The homestead complex has considerable interpretive potential with the capacity to demonstrate the story of station life, connected to networks of transport (stock route, road and maritime), and communications (telegraph and post). The remaining in-situ Aboriginal hut, set well outside of the homestead complex, shows the division within the station workforce, the lowly status and poor conditions provided for Aboriginal workers and their families in stark contrast to the station owners and managers. This aspect of station life is rarely represented so well in the region.

The historical precinct of the separate woolshed is well preserved, with evidence from the earliest stages of its use (with the stone structures) and the intact yards, sheds, and associated structures for workers.

ASSOCIATIONS

Architect/Designer (1)	
Other Associated Person(s)	David Simpson Malcolm McIntosh A.R. Richardson William and George Paterson S.R.L. Elliot Hamlet Cornish James Aubrey Withnell Benjamin Hale Sharpe Robert and Phyllis Sharpe, Benjamin Sharpe Dorrie Wally

NOTES

MHI 1996	Site assessed and Place Name Record created
MHI 2012	Entry updated



Mardie Station: Aboriginal worker's hut 2012



Mardie Station interior of shearing shed 2012



Gates at Mardie Station 2012



Mardie Station: stone structure at Wool shed



Mardie Station garage and worksheds 2012



Mardie Station homestead 2012



MARDIE HEAD STATION

1. Homestead (CI roof; stone walls with tuckpointing; bricked in E ends verandah; metal verandah posts with flagstone floor)
2. Cookhouse (now Residence: CI roof; stone walls with tuckpointing; bricked in W+E ends verandah; metal verandah posts with flagstone floor)
3. Tank stand and windmill on route of old highway (once fuel tank location)
4. Vehicle shed (CI roof and walls; wooden framed; concrete floor). Breeze way (CI roof) at N
5. Work shed (CI roof and walls; wooden frame with handhewn massive timber beams, posts in concrete drummed footings; concrete floor)
6. Modern house and verandah
7. Modern houses and recreational area (4 in total, 3 in map)
8. Hut (CI roof and walls; metal frame; concrete floor) for Aboriginal worker(s)
9. Quarters? (CI roof and walls)
10. Quarters? (CI roof and walls)
11. Workshed (Modern) -- not visible in aerial



MARDIE WOOL SHEDS (MARDIE WEST)

1. Sheep yards (post and rail -- concrete posts, 6 rails and top rail)
2. Drench (raised on concrete floor; steel post frame, CI walls)
3. Shearing shed (CI roof and walls; metal and timber framing spanning entire width; timber, earth, and concrete floor post and rail entry pens; generator room; water tank)
4. Stone building (original Quarters?: CI roof; stone tuckpointed walls with concrete corner pillars and window surrounds; wooden framed roof; internal rooms sheeting ceiling and rendered walls; stone and concrete floors; bricked walled modern leanto to N)
5. 2 walls of structure for wool bale loading (no roof; metal posts; wooden framing; CI walls; earth floor)
6. Toilet (CI roofs and walls)
7. Workers' quarters (CI roof and walls; concrete floor and internal dado to 30cm; concrete floor)
8. Washroom (CI roof; post and timber frame; open walls on W, S, & E side, CI N wall; concrete floor) -- collapsing
9. Flagstone floor of structure (similar length to structure 7)
10. Mess and cookhouse (CI roof and walls; wooden frame; concrete floor)
11. Meathouse (CI roof and walls; wooden frame; concrete floor)
12. Water tank
13. Track to date palms and waterpool
14. June 2011: location for storage of drums

¹ Lacy, J. 2002, *Off-Shears: the story of Shearing Sheds in Western Australia*, Black Swan Press, Curtin University of Technology, Bentley, p 49

² Research by Peter Gifford on the history of Mardie Station provides a comprehensive account. Peter Gifford *Unpublished History of Mardie Station*, provided to Kate Gregory.

³ Gara, T. J 199?, *The Aborigines of the Dampier Archipelago: an Ethnohistory of the Yaburara*

⁴ Tom Gara's research notes the account of the Roebourne settler W. Taylor who wrote to the Colonial Secretary to complain about the harsh treatment of Aborigines by police in the North West. Taylor's letter written in January 1869 reflects on the massacre a year before. Gara.

⁵ Gara, T. J 199?,

⁶ Oral History with Dorrie Wally, Interviewed by Kate Gregory, 4 Feb 2010 for the National Trust of Australia (WA)'s *Burrup Stories Project* sponsored by Woodside. Oral History now housed at AIATSIS.

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- ⁷ E.T. Hooley (Bucolic) 'From Roebourne Westward', *West Australian*, 24 April 1886, published in Peter Bridges (ed) *Pastoral Pioneers of W.A. 1884-1889 by E.T. Hooley*, Hesperian Press, 2004, p 26-28
- ⁸ *West Australian*, 6 May 1881
- ⁹ *West Australian*, 8 June 1883
- ¹⁰ Bridge, p. 27.
- ¹¹ Oral History with Dorrie Wally.
- ¹² David Black and Geoffrey Bolton, *Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of Western Australia Vol One 1870-1930*, Western Australian Parliamentary History Project, Perth 2001, p 168
- ¹³ Owen, W.L 1984, *Cossack Gold: the chronicles of an early goldfields warden*, Carlisle, WA., Hesperian Press
- ¹⁴ Mardie Station Inspector's Report on Classification of Pastoral Leases 1567/96, Inspection on 19 Sept 1921.
- ¹⁵ Gifford.
- ¹⁶ Sharpe, *Some Ghosts Some Not*, Deepdale, WA, 1979, used in *Unpublished History of Mardie Station*, Kate Gregory personal correspondence with Peter Gifford.
- ¹⁷ Annotated photographs from the Sharpe family, Kate Gregory personal communication with Ben and Eleanor Sharpe.
- ¹⁸ Oral History with Ben Sharpe, Interviewed by Peter Gifford, 28 March 2009. Personal correspondence with Ben and Eleanor Sharpe.
- ¹⁹ Personal correspondence with Ben and Eleanor Sharpe. Papers and photographs given to the Sharpes by the West Australian Newspapers to thank the Sharpe's for their help the 'Press Expedition' to document 'Britain's First Atomic Explosion'.
- ²⁰ Oral History with Dorrie Wally.