

Place No. 45 Pyramid Station Homestead



Pyramid Station sign with Pyramid Hill in the background, 2012

| LOCATION | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Name of Place | Pyramid Station Homestead Group |
| Other Name (1) | |
| Other Name (2) | |
| Location/Address | |
| Street Number | |
| Street Name | Roebourne/Wittenoom Road |
| Suburb/Town | Roebourne |
| Other Locational descriptor (text) | 546070 mE, 7671550 mN (MGA94 Zone 50) Longitude: 117.4434 Latitude: -21.0564 |

| OWNERSHIP & LAND DESCRIPTION | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Owner | Address | Phone/fax | Status | Item No. |
| Peter and Dorothy Cook | Pyramid Station | 08 9276 1133 | | |
| | | | | |
| Reserve No. | Lot/Location No. | Plan/Diagram | Vol/Folio | Item No. |
| | 48 | P026333 | 1442/176 | |

| LISTING AND ASSESSMENT | |
|---|----------|
| HCWA Reference Number | 8680 |
| State Register of Heritage Places:(Y/N) | No |
| Classified by the National Trust (Y/N) | Yes |
| Register of the National Estate (Y/N) | No |
| Local Town Planning Scheme (Y/N) | Yes |
| Management Category | A |

| DESCRIPTION | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Construction Date (1) | c.1865 |
| Construction Date (2) | |
| Site Type (Place Type) | Individual Building or Group |
| Use(s) of Place | |

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| <i>Original</i> | FARMING/PASTORAL: Homestead Cottage Servants' Quarters/Shearers' Quarters Shed or Barn Kitchen Blacksmith's Shop Stockyard Other |
| <i>Present</i> | FARMING/PASTORAL: Homestead Cottage Servants' Quarters/Shearers' Quarters Shed or Barn Kitchen Blacksmith's Shop Stockyard Other |
| <i>Other</i> | |
| 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 |
| Condition | Fair |
| Integrity (how much of the original fabric is intact?): | Moderate |
| Description | |
| Physical Description | |
| <p>Pyramid station complex includes evidence of 18 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>The homestead complex is set on a flat treeless plain surrounded by picturesque hills, including a pyramid shaped hill in the far distance. A belt of white-trunked river gums marks the course of the George River.</p> <p>Homestead (4) – The homestead dates from 1957 and has a corrugated iron roof, wooden frame with metal verandah posts, walls of concrete to dado and corrugated iron above. A deep verandah surrounds the homestead. Adjacent to the homestead is a small concrete cyclone shelter and a meat shed (3) that has been converted to a pool room constructed of corrugated iron. At the back of the homestead is a stone lined well with a surrounding stone platform (7) and the remains of a wooden windmill. The well probably dates from the early period of the station. The original station homestead was located elsewhere on the station. It has been suggested that the quarry on the station provided stone for Roebourne buildings.¹</p> <p>Schoolroom (5) – The schoolroom has a corrugated iron roof, wooden frame, metal verandah posts, concrete walls to dado, corrugated iron above with the back verandah bricked in.</p> <p>A simple single room stone building (9) is located to the centre of the homestead complex and was probably used as a store. This building dates from the early period of the station c1865, with stone walls quarried from the area, a rough concrete floor and corrugated iron roof with metal roof beams and timber window frames. This building is largely intact but declining in condition and requires immediate conservation measures.</p> | |

The shearing shed (12) is constructed of a corrugated iron roof and walls, metal rail posts and local 'blackheart' timber frames, with a concrete and timber floor.² The building dates from 1920.³ The roof includes a timber framed raised enclosure for the wool press weight drop. The wool bale scales are intact, as are the 10 stand shearing stands, with overhead drive, though these are in poor condition. The generator room is partially collapsed and termite damaged. The sheep yard fencing is constructed of metal post and wire with a metal top rail.

Workers' mess (14) – constructed of corrugated iron with a metal and timber frame and concrete floor.

Worker's hut (15) – constructed of corrugated iron walls and roof with a concrete floor. Ngarluma man Maxie Sambo once lived in this hut.

History

Pyramid Station, named after the distinctive pyramid shaped hill sighted by Captain King in 1818, was taken up c1865 by the Portland Squatting Company from Victoria.⁴ It is one of the earliest pastoral stations in the northwest and was originally over 200,000 acres and stocked by 1600 merino ewes brought out from Edgar's Kadnook Station in Victoria.⁵ The company included Messrs. Grant, Anderson, Richardson and Edgar, who were motivated by Gregory's positive reports of the area. After four years, Grant and Anderson left the company and moved to DeGrey Station.⁶ Alexander Robert Richardson ran Pyramid for several years. In 1885, E.T. Hooley visited the station, describing in the *West Australian*,

'open plains well covered with Mitchell, Bundle-bundle, and other grasses, broken hilly country interspersed with small plains and grassy flats... The Southern portion is principally stony hills covered with spinifex with grass valleys; this latter country is used chiefly for cattle for which it is very suitable...Last season 15,000 sheep were shorn, clipping 125 bales of wool, which is carted to port by two teams of bullocks and one of horses, the former driven by natives, who manage their cattle very well.'

During shearing season, Hooley reported, '80 natives including women and children are employed at shearing, woolscouring and pressing, as well as a few shepherds who are kept with sheep outside the fences. Some thirty of these natives are now fed at the homestead get good wholesome bread and meat three times a day: the men also get tea and tobacco. There is no denying that the lives of Mr Richardson's natives have fallen in pleasant places. The adults are a fine intelligent lot of people and very useful as domestic, also as outdoor servants.'⁷

In 1876 Alexander Richardson moved south to farm a property at Serpentine, with J.E. Richardson managing, and later part owning the station until 1907.⁸ Mr H.T. Broadhurst owned the property with J.E Richardson for a time (c1904-1909); his wife Eva Broadhurst dying of pneumonia at age 37 in 1909.⁹ Her grave remains on the station, not far from the homestead.

The station was bought by John G. Meares in 1909. Meares bought Pyramid, Sherlock, Warrambie and Croydon Stations and gave one to each of his sons with Pyramid Station given to Sherlock Meares in 1925.¹⁰ Pyramid and Warrambie were run together until 1925 with all shearing done at Pyramid.¹¹

In the 1930s Pyramid was renowned for its 'LC' thoroughbred horses bred by the Meares family, named 'LC' after Sherlock Meares' mother 'Elsie'. Sherlock's daughter Judith continued breeding horses, and several of Pyramid's horses won races around the state.¹² However Meares encountered financial difficulties in the mid-1930s, writing to the Pastoral Appraisal Board seeking relief from pastoral rent for the lease of Pyramid. Meares declared that in 1934 Pyramid ran 23,481 sheep and by 1939 sheep numbers had been reduced to 10,600 after drought and severe storms. Meares continued correspondence with the Board until 1948, when sheep numbers were down to 6,430 and no cattle.¹³

Doug Stove and Judith Stove (nee Meares) managed the homestead in the 1940s and early 1950s. In 1951 Doug replaced the blackheart timber posts in the shearing shed with railway iron from the

Roebourne-Pt Samson railway line. He purchased iron posts from the Norwest Jockey Club grandstand that burnt down in 1945, using these as the posts for the driving shaft in the shearing shed. Stove also bought a Ferrier press from Warrambie, which was used until the 1960s when it was replaced with an automatic press. Judith remembered how water was used around the homestead to keep dust at bay, with walls and verandahs washed regularly.¹⁴

In January 1955 a cyclone caused extensive damage to Pyramid Station and the owner, Sherlock Meares, arrived by plane to inspect the damage.¹⁵ The Reimers recalled that Doug and Judith Stove took refuge under the dining table during the 1955 cyclone and that the homestead had collapsed.¹⁶ According to National Trust classification assessment research, an earlier homestead was destroyed by fire in about 1955, with the new homestead being built in 1957.¹⁷ It is likely that the 1955 cyclone caused damage to the earlier homestead and this may have necessitated partial or full rebuilding of the homestead.

The station was sold in 1973 and sold again in 1977 to Kevin and Billie Reimers.¹⁸ The Reimers described Pyramid Station as 'beautiful but rugged scenery. Some of its features are native carvings, permanent water holes, rock pools, old gold mines, the 'Mundamire' (which is Aboriginal for 'stone house') and an old horse reserve where the mounted police used to camp when they patrolled the area many years ago.'¹⁹

The 'Mundamire' was built c1865 and according to the Reimers was built to house station stores. They claim that the building once had a verandah and bars or slats on the windows 'to keep the Aboriginals out'.

According to the Reimers, Pyramid ran 25,000 sheep in 1932, and got 412 bales of wool; but during the late 1970s had 12,000 sheep, 27 horses and numerous wild cattle.²⁰ During the Reimers's period at Pyramid, they employed six Aboriginal stockmen for mustering six weeks before shearing, using motor bikes and horses.

In 1996 Pyramid stopped stocking sheep, despite having been renowned for fine merino fleeces, and started cattle.²¹ Pyramid Station is currently owned by Peter Cook.

Archaeology

There is great potential for archaeological sites to reveal details of the use of the head station over time, including aspects related to the lives of Aboriginal workers and residents.

| SIGNIFICANCE | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Historic theme (s) | 1. DEMOGRAPHIC SETTLEMENT & MOBILITY 106 Workers (including Aboriginal, convict) 107 Settlement 110 Resource Exploitation and Depletion 113 Natural disasters 2. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS 201 River and sea transport 203 Road transport 3. OCCUPATIONS 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying 303 Mining (including mineral processing) 6. PEOPLE 601 Aboriginal people 602 Early settlers |
| Statement of Significance: | |

Pyramid Station has historical and social significance as it is one of the earliest stations in the Northwest, where the Portland Squatting Company established themselves. A stone building, probably used as a store, and a well dating from this early period are amongst the earliest European structures in the Northwest. There is research potential for an understanding of the use of this station over its long history from architectural and archaeological information.

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| ASSOCIATIONS | |
| Architect/Designer (1) | |
| Architect/Designer (2) | |
| Other Associated Person(s) | Alexander Robert Richardson H.T. Broadhurst J.E Richardson Eva Broadhurst The Meares Family Doug Stove and Judith Stove Kevin and Billie Reimers Maxie Sambo |

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| OTHER | |
| References | |
| See endnotes. Richardson, Alexander Robert, <i>Early memories of the great Nor-West : and a chapter in History of W.A.</i> , Perth, E.S.Wigg, 1914. | |

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



Woolshed at Pyramid Station, 2012



PYRAMID STATION HOMESTEAD

1. Yards
2. Shed (CI rood and walls)
3. Meat shed (connverted to pool room: CI roof; CI walls to dado)
4. Homestead (CI roof; wooden frame, metal verandah posts; CI walls above dado, concrete walls to dado; concrete floor)
5. Schoolroom (CI roof; wooden frame, metal verandah posts; CI walls above dado, concrete walls to dado; concrete floor; back verandah bricked in)
6. Shed (CI roof; metal walls; concrete floor)
7. Stone lined well with remains of wooden windmill (stone platform srrounds well)
8. Location of demountable shed used as playroom
9. Stone building, one room (CI roof; stone walls; metal roof beams bolted to top of walls; rough concrete floor)
10. Garage and machine shed (CI roof and wall; concrete floor)
11. Workers' quarters (CI roof; verandah posts metal rails; metal frame; CI walls; concrete floor).
Ablutions block (CI roof and walls; wooden frame; concrete floor)
12. Shearing sheds (CI roof and walls; metal rail posts, wooden framed roof; timber and concrete floor; timber framec raised enclosure in roof for weight drop for press; generator room partially collapsed and termite damaged)
13. Sheed yards (holding goats: metal post and wire with metal top rail)
14. Workers' mess (CI roof and walls; metal rail and timbr frame; concrete floor)
15. Workers's hut (CI walls and roof, concrete floor) – used by Maxie Sambo
16. Generator room (CI roof and walls; wooden and metal frame, earth floor)
17. Demounatble building
18. Hanger (Metal roof; metal frame, open walls)



Interior of woolshed at Pyramid Station, 2012



Header for wool bale press at Pyramid Station, 2012



Worker's quarters at Pyramid Station, 2012



Loading wool at Pyramid Station, 1925-30
Courtesy Shire of Roebourne Local History Office, 2005.389



Old homestead, c1860s. This was destroyed in 1955
Courtesy Shire of Roebourne Local History Office, 2005.2166



Pyramid Station 1970's, courtesy National Trust of Australia (WA)

¹ According to the station manager who stated that Maxie Sambo recounted this information, site visit by Alistair Paterson and Kate Gregory on 29 June 2012.

² June Lacy, *Off-Shears: the story of Shearing Sheds in Western Australia*, Black Swan Press, Curtin University of Technology, Bentley, 2002, p 40-41

³ Lacy, p 40-41

⁴ 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

⁵ J.S. Battye, *History of the North West of Australia*, facsimile edition, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1985, p 210; 'The Pyramid Station, Nor' West' *The West Australian*, 15 May 1885 in P.J. Bridge (ed) *Pastoral Pioneers of W.A. 1884-1889 by E.T. Hooley (Bucolic)*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 2004, p 11.

⁶ Battye, p 210.

⁷ Bridge, p 11.

⁸ Black and Bolton, p 210.

⁹ Kevin and Billie Reimers, 'A Short History of Pyramid Station', Local History Office, Shire of Roebourne; Lionel V. Praagh, *The Great North West and its resources: the undeveloped heritage of Western Australia: Roebourne to Port Hedland*, L.V. Praagh and R. Lloyd, Perth 1904.

¹⁰ Reimers; Lacy, p 40-41

¹¹ Lacy, p 40-41

¹² Reimers.

¹³ Pyramid Station, Cons 541, Item No. 2483/1936, 1936-1948, State Records Office.

¹⁴ *Water. Life Source of the Pilbara: the 21st year of Hamersley Iron*, 1987

¹⁵ 'Roebourne News Items' *Northern Times*, 27 January 1955

¹⁶ Reimers.

¹⁷ Pyramid Station, Assessment Exposition, Built Environment Committee, National Trust of Australia (WA), July 1982.

¹⁸ Reimers.

¹⁹ Reimers.

²⁰ Reimers.

²¹ Reimers.