

# **SHIRE OF DERBY/WEST KIMBERLEY MUNICIPAL INVENTORY**

## **THEMATIC FRAMEWORK**

**Prepared for  
The Shire of Derby/West Kimberley  
June 1995**



**HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION PROFESSIONALS  
in association with  
NATIONAL HERITAGE**

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# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 The Project	1
1.2 Thematic History	4
<b>2.0 THEMATIC FRAMEWORK</b>	
2.1 1818-1880	
2.1.1 Demographic settlement and mobility	5
2.1.2 Transport and communications	6
2.1.3 Occupations	6
2.1.4 Social and civic activities	6
2.1.5 Outside influences	6
2.1.6 People	7
2.1.7 Possible heritage places for the period	7
2.2 1881-1885	
2.2.1 Demographic settlement and mobility	7
2.2.2 Transport and communications	8
2.2.3 Occupations	9
2.2.4 Social and civic activities	9
2.2.5 Outside influences	10
2.2.6 People	10
2.2.7 Possible heritage places for the period	10
2.3 1886-1913	
2.3.1 Demographic settlement and mobility	11
2.3.2 Transport and communications	12
2.3.3 Occupations	13
2.3.4 Social and civic activities	15
2.3.5 Outside influences	16
2.3.6 People	16
2.3.7 Possible heritage places for the period	17

2.4	1914-1938	
2.4.1	Demographic settlement and mobility	17
2.4.2	Transport and communications	18
2.4.3	Occupations	20
2.4.4	Social and civic activities	21
2.4.5	Outside influences	23
2.4.6	People	23
2.4.7	Possible heritage places for the period	24
2.5	1939-1959	
2.5.1	Demographic settlement and mobility	24
2.5.2	Transport and communications	25
2.5.3	Occupations	26
2.5.4	Social and civic activities	27
2.5.5	Outside influences	30
2.5.6	People	31
2.5.7	Possible heritage places for the period	31
2.6	1960-1995	
2.6.1	Demographic settlement and mobility	32
2.6.2	Transport and communications	32
2.6.3	Occupations	35
2.6.4	Social and civic activities	37
2.6.5	Outside influences	39
2.6.6	People	39
2.6.7	Possible heritage places for the period	40
3.0	REFERENCES	40
4.0	BIBLIOGRAPHY	46
5.0	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	51

TRACED FROM PORTION OF  
DEPT. OF LANDS & SURVEYS  
LOCALITY MAP (Proof Copy)  
SHOWING THE PRINCIPAL  
STATIONS IN SELECTED  
DISTRICTS OF WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA, File No 6180/10

16°

INDIAN OCEAN

18°

South Boundary of the Kimberley District

123° 125° 127°

© CAC

PRINCIPAL SHEEP AND CATTLE STATIONS

PRINCIPAL SHEEP AND CATTLE STATIONS IN THE KIMBERLEY DISTRICT - 1913-16

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Project

This report was commissioned by the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley as "Project A" in its Inventory of Historical Resources: A Resource Base to Facilitate Employment and Training Programmes for Restoration of Built Heritage, and to Accommodate the Development of Environmentally and Culturally Sensitive Tourism Products.

The project deals only with the built environment and was designed to comply with the *Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990*, Section 45, which states:

- (1) The Council of a municipality shall compile and maintain an inventory of buildings within its district which in its opinion are, or may become, of cultural heritage significance.
- (2) The inventory required by subsection (1) shall be compiled no later than 4 years from the commencement of this Act and shall be --
  - (a) updated annually; and
  - (b) reviewed every 4 years after compilation.
- (3) The council of a municipality shall provide the Council with a copy of the inventory compiled pursuant to this section.
- (4) The council of a municipality shall ensure that the inventory required by this section is compiled with proper public consultation.

The Heritage Council of Western Australia prefers Municipal Inventories to be compiled to a common standard throughout the state and makes available appropriate guidelines. These guidelines have determined the approach used in this project and, in particular, account for inclusion of the thematic framework. The framework focuses on historic themes within

set time periods to provide a broad overview of historical developments within the study area. The major themes, taken directly from the guidelines, are:

1. **Demographic settlement and mobility:** why people settled; why they moved away; the things they left behind
2. **Transport and communications:** how people and goods moved; how people communicated and exchanged information
3. **Occupations:** what people did for sustenance or to add quality to life; paid and unpaid labour
4. **Social and civic activities:** what people did together as a community; the issues that divided them; the structures they created to serve civic needs
5. **Outside influences:** events, decisions or changes which affected the community, but were beyond its control
6. **People:** women and men from all walks of life who left their mark on the history of the community

The Heritage Council guidelines, in addition to recommending the major themes listed above, suggest the use of sub-themes as an aid to identifying sites with cultural heritage value. An example of this approach could involve a community using the sub-theme technology and technological change to decide that homestead ruins show signs of an indigenous building style and, thus, provide an example representative of Theme 1: Demographic settlement and mobility. The approach itself was suggested to ensure that places listed in the Municipal Inventory represent all important events in the history of the municipal area. In undertaking the Derby/West Kimberley project, however, the consultants decided that it would be more appropriate to prepare a comprehensive thematic history and to use that history to ensure that the places nominated for the Inventory are representative.

The local Council is responsible for deciding, after public consultation, which places will be included in the Municipal Inventory. The actual inclusion serves to alert the Shire's



officers to the importance of the place to the community, thus ensuring that heritage significance is not overlooked should someone submit a proposal for development. It is desirable that provision should be made, firstly, to link the Municipal Inventory to any Town Planning Scheme that is adopted, and secondly, to use it to influence the content of new tourism literature and signs that are produced.

The Heritage Council guidelines identify two aspects of the *Heritage of Western Australia Act. 1990* that are relevant to places recorded in the Municipal Inventory. Firstly, under Section 34 of the Act, the owners of listed places may apply to the Heritage Council for relaxation of bylaws which, if strictly applied, would detract from the heritage value of the place. And secondly, new town planning schemes or scheme amendments for areas that encompass listed places must be referred to the Heritage Council for advice.

Places recorded in the Municipal Inventory are not subject to the same development controls as those placed on the State Register by the Minister for Heritage. However, should full protection of the Act appear to be appropriate, details included in the Municipal Inventory will provide a useful starting point for the process by which the Heritage Council decides whether a place warrants registration.

In reading both this report and the accompanying Inventory, it should be noted that the size of the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley made it impossible for the consultants to visit all places mentioned in these documents. It is particularly regretful that the project resources did not extend to an investigation of stock routes and wells, both of which are important components of the region's history. Research into these places is strongly recommended, as is investigation of remote graves and former mining camps.

## 1.2 Thematic History

The West Kimberley has a rich and diverse history. Written accounts, which range markedly in credibility, cover various aspects but none give the reader an overview of the past. At the start of this project it was evident that, whilst much attention had been paid to the pastoral industry, almost no research had been done with regard to creation of the towns, provision of services and amenities, and the co-existence of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The latter aspect is particularly important in a region in which the population is made up of roughly equal numbers of people from the two groups. Also important is that the Shire covers a vast area (some thirty times larger than either the City of Gosnells or the Shire of Kwinana) in which mobility has always been high and recycling of building materials commonplace.

The complexity of the social history of the Shire is such that any attempt to present it in concise phrases within a matrix, or grid (a tool suggested in the Heritage Council guidelines), would prove a nightmare. The constant need to distinguish Derby happenings from those in Fitzroy Crossing and the rural areas is at odds with the notion of being able to records items neatly in small boxes. For this reason, the consultants ignored the suggestion that a matrix be compiled and, instead, put all project time allotted to the thematic framework into compiling a wide-ranging historical overview.

The thematic framework is set out so that the reader can consult it as he/she would consult a matrix for information about events relevant to a particular theme and time. The time periods (which cover 1818-1880, 1881-1885, 1886-1913, 1914-1938, 1939-1959 and 1960-1995) have been selected to reflect key events in the history of the Shire, the State and the nation. The text discusses the events and provides context for places of possible local heritage significance.

## 2.0 THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 1818-1880

#### 2.1.1 Demographic settlement and mobility

The earliest known occupants of the lands that comprise the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley probably spoke one or several of the following languages: Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Juwaliny, Mangala, Ngarinyin, Nimanburru, Nyikina, Umida, Unggarrangu, Unggumi, Walmajarri, Warrwa, Winyjarrumi, and Yawjibarra.<sup>1</sup>

Some coast dwellers would have known about William Dampier's visits in the late seventeenth century and would have passed on stories about him, other mariners, and fishermen who came southward from islands that now form part of Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

During August 1821 and February 1822, Captain Phillip Parker King surveyed parts of the coast for the British Admiralty. He named the Buccaneer Archipelago and features south of Sunday Island.<sup>3</sup> Almost two decades later, British mariners from H.M.S. *Beagle* examined the coast more closely, naming King Sound, the Fitzroy River, islands and other features. A party also rowed approximately 35 kilometres up the river.<sup>4</sup> A second group, sailing with Lieutenant George Grey aboard the *Lynher*, simultaneously explored land around the Glenelg and Prince Regent Rivers. Lushington's Bluff (located near the northern boundary of the Shire) marks the southern limit of the party's exploration and was named after Grey's fellow lieutenant.<sup>5</sup> No settlement resulted from these expeditions, but in 1863 and 1864 fresh exploration occurred in the area around Doubtful Bay and further north.<sup>6</sup> This time, pastoral settlement was initiated either side of the study area - one venture at Camden Harbour; the other south of Roebuck Bay. Both were short-lived.<sup>7</sup>

Enduring non-Aboriginal settlement in Australia's north-west would occur only after Alex Forrest, a government surveyor, led a party across the region in 1879. He reported enormous pastoral potential, hinted at the likely presence of gold, and suggested that the indigenous people would, given time, provide labour for exploitation of the area's resources.<sup>a</sup>

#### **2.1.2 Transport and communications**

Aboriginal people swam or used rafts to travel between the mainland and adjacent islands. Outsiders arrived in sailing vessels and used whaleboats to explore the coast and rivers. Those who went inland walked and/or rode horses. The tracks they left were insignificant beside the paths worn over the millennia by Aboriginal feet.

#### **2.1.3 Occupations**

Indigenous people obtained food from the land and the water, fought battles, built temporary shelters, raised families, and passed on stories about the country. Outsiders examined the area's potential, collected marine products and natural history specimens, and drew maps, charts and sketches.

#### **2.1.4 Social and civic activities**

Aboriginal people participated in the cultural and religious aspects of their lives as they moved about the countryside. Outsiders observed the Christian Sabbath, and possibly other special times, wherever they happened to be at the time.

#### **2.1.5 Outside influences**

The visits by European and Asian people introduced exotic plants, animals foods and organisms. Some were planted or left behind with a view to catering for future colonists.

### **2.1.6 People**

Phillip Parker King, J. Lort Stokes, George Grey, and Alex Forrest recorded their impressions of the region in ways that encouraged people to think the land and climate would be ideal for pastoral settlement and tropical agriculture.

### **2.1.7 Possible heritage places for the period**

- \* Asian fishing camps (if any are identifiable)
- \* Point Torment (early mariners' landing place)
- \* Places of contact between Aboriginal people and outsiders (if any are identifiable)
- \* Tree marked by Alex Forrest (on Yeeda station)

## **2.2 1881-1885**

### **2.2.1 Demographic settlement and mobility**

In 1880, the Kimberley land district was created and strict regulations were devised to produce rapid settlement. Leases were allotted by ballot in February 1881. Julius Brockman and the Murray Squatting Company had already landed sheep at Beagle Bay and, by March, these animals were grazing on the Fitzroy River - the nucleus of Yeeda station's flock. Other stock followed for the Kimberley Pastoral Company, the Daly Brothers, Poulton & O'Reilly, Morgan & McDermott, Lukin & Monger, and Meda River Pastoral Company. They grazed up the Fitzroy River as far as Luluigui and Liveringa stations.<sup>9</sup>

Before the sheep even reached the Fitzroy, blackbirders were kidnapping Kimberley Aborigines and making them work aboard pearling boats. Violence accompanied this "recruitment" and, after some station workers began blackbirding, their contact with Aboriginal communities became extremely complex.<sup>10</sup>

At the end of April 1883, a Government Resident, his clerk, and a police contingent arrived to oversee the colonisation process. As they settled in, some sheep owners shifted north and started stations on the May, Meda and Lennard Rivers.<sup>11</sup> Surveyor General John Forrest examined the coast and decided to position the Kimberley's first town at the Pole Landing, a spot marked by settlers opposite Mary Island and directly in line with the continuation of what is now Loch Street. Surveyors pegged out the first 220 lots in the area bounded by Gladstone, Stanley, Granville, and Wodehouse Streets. An extension of Stanley Street linked this area to the port, and Derby was proclaimed a townsite on 22 November 1883.<sup>12</sup>

Arthur Nelson Manning made the first land purchase, Lot 76 in Delawarr Street at a Perth auction in August 1884. Only nine more lots sold over the following twelve months, the time it took Manning and Francis Ward to have the Kimberley Hotel open and trading.<sup>13</sup> News of gold finds at Halls Creek soon enhanced Derby's appeal and, within months, the Lands Office sold a further 35 lots. Two were at the intersection of Loch and Johnston Streets. This area was known as "The Point" and was separated from the town by a road through the bush. As the new year approached, Derby boasted five stores and a second public house (Joseph Blythe's Derby Hotel) was under construction.<sup>14</sup> Newer settlers resident out of town included King Sound Pastoral Company, who formed Lillmaloora station; Sydney P. Emanuel, who ran the family sheep on the Lennard River before shifting to the Fitzroy; Thomas Moher, who camped at Udialla and then moved up the Fitzroy; and the Gregory brothers, who settled near Geegully Creek.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.2.2 Transport and communications

Steam ships supplemented sailing vessels now but the task of putting people, goods and livestock ashore remained arduous. The government built a tramline across the marsh in 1884 but

the impact of the huge tides often made it unserviceable.<sup>16</sup> The port's shortcomings induced the government to consider a move to Point Torment but, when well-sinkers found no fresh water there, this idea was abandoned.<sup>17</sup> A false start was made on Derby jetty in March 1884, and work began on a 100 yard long structure in August 1885. By the end of that year, with only a 20 foot square iron shed available for incoming cargo, the port received 40 to 50 tons of goods per month.<sup>18</sup> No telegraphic or postal services were yet in existence.

### 2.2.3 Occupations

On the sheep stations, settlers tended flocks, erected huts and several homesteads, and started fencing. In town, people lived under canvas whilst erecting jarrah and iron buildings to house the Government Resident and police (on and near the present Numbala Nunga site). All town water had to be carted from wells. Several men had wives and children working with them and, by 1885, domestic violence had taken Ellen Moher's life. Hardship was commonplace; so was conflict involving Aboriginal people and the newcomers. Some Aboriginal people chose to join the workforce on stations and others travelled with itinerants who prospected for gold and killed wild dogs for their scalps. Few settlers wanted town labouring jobs.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.2.4 Social and civic activities

Aboriginal people maintained social and ceremonial activity but settlers had to content themselves mostly with personal contact. Derby formed a short-lived Progress Association and a successful cricket club. The Kimberley Road Board formed in 1884, with a second election in 1885.<sup>20</sup> Religion came in the guise of a Catholic priest, Father Duncan McNab, who used the town as a base whilst establishing the Kimberley's first mission in 1885. Already in his sixties, he worked at Goodenough Bay for two years before conceding defeat.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.2.5 Outside influences

Pastoral settlement in the Kimberley advanced less rapidly than anticipated when government laxity fostered widespread speculation in leasehold land. Men connected with the first Kimberley wool-growing ventures also enhanced their chances of profiting from speculation by manipulating both the land regulations and public opinion of Kimberley land values.<sup>22</sup> Politicians and bureaucrats in Perth controlled allocation of funds for public buildings, wells, port facilities, roads and bridges. In opting for widespread use of jarrah, they consigned all Derby's earliest structures to demolition by termites and their marine counterparts.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.2.6 People

Alex Forrest dealt in land and leases, influencing the pace and pattern of settlement. Robert Fairbairn, the Kimberley's first Government Resident, oversaw Derby's establishment. Settlers whose family names would become synonymous with the West Kimberley's industry and commerce included the Blythes, Emanuels, McLartys and Roses. Prominent prospectors included Philip Saunders, Adam Johns, and a party led by Charles Hall and John Slattery.

### 2.2.7 Possible heritage places for the period

- \* Places of contact between Aboriginal people and outsiders (if any are identifiable)
- \* Original homestead site, Yeeda station (if known)
- \* Nobbys Well, Derby
- \* Lukins Bore, Kimberley Downs station
- \* Site of former Government Residency, Derby
- \* Site of former Kimberley Hotel, Derby



## 2.3 1886-1913

### 2.3.1 Demographic settlement and mobility

In April 1886, people throughout Australia and New Zealand were reading and hearing stories about the discovery of gold at Halls Creek.<sup>24</sup> Shipping companies began touting passages to Kimberley ports and, quite independently, pearlers from Torres Strait began moving westward into Kimberley waters.<sup>25</sup>

By September 1886, however, the gold rush was over and the focus again returned to the pastoral industry. The MacDonald family was busy establishing Fossil Downs station and, over the next decade, other stock owners occupied fresh lands on the Fitzroy and Robinson Rivers and in the adjacent ranges. The Emanuels, for example, sent Joseph Blythe to Noonkanbah to establish a station late in 1890. Expansion continued as people like Frank Hann explored country "over the range" and the gold rushes around Kalgoorlie increased demand for beef. This expansion also saw the owners of some big stations buy out "undesirable" neighbours and exchange isolated leases to consolidate holdings. By 1905, the Emanuels, James Game, the Roses, M.C. Davies, and the Kimberley Pastoral Company each controlled between one and three million acres of the finest and most accessible lands on the Fitzroy and Lennard Rivers. The big stations thus began to adopt recognisable shapes.<sup>26</sup> With prosperity and confidence came replacement of early homesteads and shearing sheds. Jubilee Downs and Quanbun had new buildings by 1903 and, when Kimberley Pastoral Company erected a new stone homestead at Liveringa in 1908, the old 1880s building was demolished.<sup>27</sup>

Stations that existed in this period included Balmaningarra, Brooking Springs, Cherrabun, Fairfield, Federal Downs, Fossil Downs, Fraser River, Gilgally, Glenroy, Isdell Downs and/or Isdell River, Jubilee Downs, Kalyeeda, Kimberley

Downs, Kimbolton, Lennard River, Leopold Downs, Liveringa, Lower Liveringa, Luluigui, Meda, Margaret Downs (Go Go), Millie Windie, Mondooma, Mt Anderson, Mt Barnett, Mt Hart, Mt House, Myroodah, Napier Downs, Nerrima, Noonkanbah, Nowla Downs, Obagooma, Oscar Downs, Oscar Range, Point Torment, Quanbun Downs, Rarriwell, Roebuck Downs, Secure Downs, Tarraji River, and Yeeda.<sup>28</sup> Several of these station were abandoned between 1886 and 1913.

### 2.3.2 Transport and communications

Carriers continued to depend on bullocks and camels but now supplemented them with donkeys and mules, the latter being resistant to the Kimberley horse disease that devastated the region's horse population. Initially, the agile donkeys were essential for access to stations in the ranges but in 1910 a major breakthrough occurred when "Bullocky" Bill Johnson, then aged sixty years, pushed a team of 22 bullocks through the Leopold Ranges from Yeeda station to Isdell Downs, thus opening a passable road to Derby. Police still used horses to patrol the region and, whilst motor vehicles had appeared by 1913, they were limited to the main roads.<sup>29</sup>

In shipping, increased use of steam reduced risks associated with dependency on wind. The Derby jetty required constant attention and underwent major improvement in the 1890s. In 1910, King Sound claimed the s.s. *Colac* and people in the north complained at the infrequency and inefficiency of the steamship service. Two years later, State Shipping Service emerged and eased some of the region's transport problems.<sup>30</sup>

In the field of communications, a significant technological development occurred in 1888-1889 when the government pushed the telegraph line from Broome through Derby to Halls Creek. The Derby post and telegraph office opened in April 1889, on Loch Street near Ashley Street, handling mail for locals and

people as far afield as Halls Creek. The Fitzroy telegraph office then went up at Blue Bush Swamp. It opened in 1891, with Charles Annear as the telegraph master. The telegraph line was rewired in 1892 and, about 14 years later, a new Fitzroy office went up nearer the Crossing.<sup>31</sup>

### 2.3.3 Occupations

The gold-inspired boom resulted in fresh sales of town lots at both Derby town and The Point, where four new hotels were built. Services on offer included those of an auctioneer, a grocer, baker, chemist, blacksmith, carpenter, barber, and carriers.<sup>32</sup> The exodus of prospectors then savaged private investment and government spending. Forty-one men worked on the Derby tramway in January 1887, but within months only three hotels and two stores were open. The doctor treated his patients in a tent, and jurors deliberated over matters of justice in a room in the Kimberley Hotel. William Adcock, spurred into action by this setback, produced Derby's first newspaper. In the 16 page *Derby News*, his rough handwriting urged town development whilst promoting the family store.<sup>33</sup>

Fresh expenditure saw the Club Hotel (the predecessor of the Spinifex Hotel) operating by April 1888. It also produced a court house near the telegraph office (1890), a grandstand built by prison labour at the race course (1893), cattle yards and a race (1894-95), and a new police station (1897) on the site used by the police today. Out at Myalls Well, surface water-storage increased by about 5 000 gallons with the 1898 installation of two corrugated iron tanks and two troughs. In 1911, the artesian bore was drilled there and the cattle drank at long troughs before moving on down the stock route, past the dinner tree, to the yards at the port.<sup>34</sup> In Derby, drinking water was still hard to come by but, after 1905, residents could at least keep food and drink cold with ice purchased from McGovern's Ice Works.<sup>35</sup>

Outlying police camps were formed in this era, but only the one at Fitzroy Crossing proved to be permanent. The earliest buildings, constructed from bush timber and corrugated iron in 1895, soon succumbed to storm damage, floods and ravenous termites. Charles C. Blythe, one of Joseph's sons, built a wayside house nearby in 1897. As well as selling wine, beer and spirits, he also operated a store. A ride of two hours on horseback separated Blythe and the police from Annear and his staff at the telegraph station. At the Crossing, police gave Aborigines' Protection Board blankets and food to old, blind or otherwise infirm people who could no longer fend for themselves. This service evolved into a ration depot.<sup>36</sup>

More and more Aboriginal people were working on stations but pastoralists resented their kinfolk disturbing stock as they moved about the land hunting, gathering food, and camping on water holes. Ovens at the camps roasted countless carcasses, especially during ceremonies. The ensuing conflict included the well known battles in which Jandamarra (Pigeon) and his people fought police, settlers and other Aboriginal men.<sup>37</sup>

By 1905, the Kimberley ranked as the second biggest producer of beef in the Commonwealth. Pastoralists no doubt benefited from reduction of kangaroo numbers by professional shooters and, on several stations, they had men boring for artesian and sub-artesian water. A Government Bore existed at the 67 Mile Post on the telegraph line and, up in the north of the region, prospectors searched for minerals and gold. By 1907, they had proved the existence of a copper field but hopes of exploiting iron ore deposits in Yampi Sound had been dashed. Entrepreneurial spirit was evident in 1909 and 1910 when residents experimented with tropical fruit and cotton crops at Derby and Oscar Range station.<sup>38</sup>

A survey of the electoral rolls between 1909 and 1912 shows West Kimberley occupations now ranged from assayer, barmaid,

billiard marker and bird catcher to missionary, painter and decorator, stone carver, wharfinger and wheelwright.

#### 2.3.4 Social and civic activities

In boosting Derby's population, the 1886 gold rush acted as a catalyst for the commencement of community activities in the town. Lectures and concerts were offered, usually at the Kimberley Hotel. Two-up became popular, and the first round of annual horse racing took place with one of the jockeys wearing 'a proper Yankee suit of striped trousers and vest a long tailed blue coat, high hat with stars and stripes with flowing hat band and black face'.<sup>39</sup> The Fitzroy River Racing Club formed in 1899.<sup>40</sup>

Sport, particularly cricket, remained popular in Derby and, by 1899, the West Kimberley Athletics Club was operating and holding an annual concert and ball.<sup>41</sup> Around this time, the Derby people saw the need for a new Progress Committee and discussed the possibility of opening a Mechanics Institute. The Institute came into being but later provoked complaints over a lack of reading material and its hours of opening.<sup>42</sup> The town's first school opened in 1907, a tribute to parents whose petitions had drawn the government's attention to the children's needs over the previous eight years. Amongst the early pupils was George Wells who, at the age of 92, passed away recently after a lifetime in the Kimberley.<sup>43</sup>

Also very much part of life in Derby, and to a lesser degree in Fitzroy Crossing, were public meetings at which settlers argued for expenditure on public works and implementation of strong measures against Aboriginal people who continued to resist expansion of settlement.<sup>44</sup> Local government changed in 1887, and the creation of the West Kimberley Road Board made separate representation in parliament possible. When the Kimberley was divided into two electorates with the

declaration of self-government in 1890, Alex Forrest became the representative for West Kimberley.<sup>45</sup>

### 2.3.5 Outside influences

Issues affecting the pastoral industry beyond West Kimberley sometimes had profound effects on the region. The discovery of tick and redwater fever in East Kimberley herds in 1896 intensified economic and political rivalry between east and west. And, after the government declared East Kimberley an infected area in January 1898, the tick question influenced government decisions as to where public money would be spent on facilities linked to cattle slaughtering and marketing.<sup>46</sup>

Derby's development was probably constrained by a perception that, based on the findings of Fred Brockman's 1901 survey of the north Kimberley, the government would establish new port facilities at Napier Broome Bay.<sup>47</sup> Another constraint existed in the limitations of the gaol facilities. In 1902, people attributed a reduction in Derby's white population - 56 men, women and children - to the gaol's closure; and, in 1908, they argued that the absence of a gaol for sentenced prisoners deprived the town of labour for public works.<sup>48</sup>

### 2.3.6 People

Dr Lovegrove, who succeeded Robert Fairbairn as Government Resident, was the region's first doctor. He was apparently a very pompous man who made a strong impression on his peers. The Blythe family contributed to the expansion of pastoral settlement and to Fitzroy Crossing's transition from police outpost to service centre. The original Fitzroy telegraph master, Charles Annear, was appointed the first Inspector of Telegraphs (Northern District) after five years at Blue Bush Swamp. Alex Forrest remained prominent, using his political influence to generate funds for public works in Derby.

### 2.3.7 Possible heritage places for the period

- \* Original Cemetery (including Aboriginal portion), Derby
- \* Site of former Port Hotel (now Lwoy's), Derby
- \* Site of Club Hotel (now Spinifex Hotel), Derby
- \* Ruins of telegraph office, Blue Bush Swamp
- \* Ruins of Oscar Range station homestead, near Fitzroy Crossing
- \* Ruins of homestead / police outpost, Lillmalooora
- \* Police Camp Bore, Kimberley Downs station
- \* Site of first post and telegraph office, Derby (if identifiable)
- \* Site of first court house, Derby
- \* Site of first post and telegraph office, Fitzroy Crossing (if identifiable)
- \* Old Townsite, Fitzroy Crossing
- \* Crossing Inn, Fitzroy Crossing
- \* Trees marked by Frank Hann (if identifiable)
- \* Myalls Bore and Prison Boab Tree, Derby
- \* Stock Route and Dinner Tree, Derby
- \* Site of former jetty and cattle race, Derby
- \* Remnants of tramway and early goods shed, Derby
- \* Homestead, Liveringa station
- \* Old police gaol (and adjacent vacant land), Derby
- \* Site of first school (now Masonic Lodge), Derby
- \* Copper mine and gold stamper, Napier Downs

## 2.4 1914 - 1938

### 2.4.1 Demographic settlement and mobility

During this period, World War I drew some people away from the region. On the stations, as had long been the case, some workers took small mobs of breeding cattle further out and

established their own places. In 1915, for example, "Scotty" Sadler established Isdell Junction station on the west side of Mount House. Small holdings did not necessarily warrant erection of permanent accommodation and, in this case, The Glenroy Pastoral Company Ltd took over the tenure in 1918.<sup>49</sup>

Changes in station ownership accounted for some of the moves that people made to, from, and within the region. Sir Sidney Kidman contributed to this mobility between 1916 and 1919, when he purchased Glenroy, Mount House, Fairfield, Yeeda and Isdell Downs stations. Returned soldiers, such as William and Frederick Easton (Avon Valley station), could obtain an Agricultural Bank mortgage to re-establish themselves.<sup>50</sup>

Almost a decade of relative stability followed the war, and then the combined impact of drought and the Depression again put people on the move. Stations abandoned during this time included Glenroy, Mt Barnett, Isdell Downs, and Oobagooma.<sup>51</sup> Abandonment of these long-established stations resulted in homesteads, outbuildings and yards being left untended. Some structures probably succumbed to the forces of nature whilst others would have been stripped and material used elsewhere.

#### 2.4.2 Transport and communications

The picturesque bullock teams disappeared in this period, cut down by the ravages of the insidious cattle tick, and, by 1928, motor trucks had begun to replace horses, donkeys, mules and camels on the manageable roads. The resourceful drivers must have breathed easier when a low level concrete bridge was constructed across the river at Fitzroy Crossing in 1935. By the end of the decade, motor vehicles were an accepted component of equipment used by owners and managers on such stations as Liveringa, Myroodah and Mount Anderson. In hillier areas, pastoralists relished visits by carriers but continued to rely on animals for their station needs.<sup>52</sup>



A major change in transport and communications occurred in 1921 when the State government called for tenders for an air service to link Derby with Geraldton, and thus with Perth. War veteran Major Norman Brearley won the tender, and his company, Western Australian Airways Limited, serviced the route until 1934 when, following a fresh call for tenders, MacRobertson Miller Aviation Company took control.<sup>53</sup>

The changes in the air service out of Derby have been listed as follows: extension of Derby-Wyndham flights to some of the further inland stations (1931); introduction of M.M.A.'s twice-weekly air service (1936); and flights connecting with Darwin (1938). Also noted amongst these changes was that the forerunner to the Flying Doctor Service - Australian Aerial Medical Service - commenced its Kimberley work in 1934.<sup>54</sup>

State Ships and privately owned vessels continued to provide passenger and cargo services at Derby port. The State Ships were essential for such groups as the West Kimberley cattle growers, who needed to send stock to markets, and Brasserts Ltd, whose management needed to ship personnel and equipment to Yampi Sound for the development of the iron ore industry. Improvements effected at Derby port in the 1920s included extension of the jetty and the erection of a new house for the wharfinger.<sup>55</sup>

In the field of communications, the telegraph line remained the critical link not only between places within the region but between it and the outside world. Research undertaken in connection with displays in Wharfingers House revealed that a manual telephone exchange opened in Derby in 1915. Serving only the town area at first, it was linked with Meda, Yeeda, and Kimberley Downs, and possibly other stations, by 1922.<sup>56</sup>

The development of the pedal wireless in the late 1920s gave greater opportunities for communication. Such remote places

as Koolan Island could now contact Broome, thereby accessing telegraph services and, once the Flying Doctor Service base was established in Wyndham in 1934, station people could use wireless technology to discuss medical matters or have their messages forwarded as telegrams. By the late 1930s, wireless contact was supplementing occasional visits from drivers of camel teams and trucks at Tableland station, adjacent to the region's eastern boundary.<sup>57</sup>

#### 2.4.3 Occupations

The usual broad range of occupations remained available but with changes obvious in some fields. Kangaroo hunters, for example, now used snares instead of guns.<sup>58</sup> Prospecting was more varied and, by 1921, Martin R. Freney was drilling for oil at Mt Wynne and Prices Creek. The exploration activities of Freney Kimberley Oil Company resulted in the expenditure of many thousands of pounds before the war intervened.<sup>59</sup>

Ideas and projects which looked as though they would provide employment in the region sometimes failed to realise their potential. The Sydney firm F.J. Walker & Co., for instance, sought land on which to establish meat canning works on the eastern edge of Derby townsite in 1919 but gave up after making no progress with lethargic civil servants.<sup>60</sup> Renewal of interest in experimenting with crops of tropical produce prompted a more positive reaction and agricultural lots were made available at Knowsley. During the 1922-23 wet season, twelve group settlers had no success in growing cotton on a plantation about 15 miles from Derby. Another six people who worked under Josiah Sawdon's at Udialla also failed.<sup>61</sup>

Prospects for new employment opportunities looked bright in 1928 when Royal Commissioners examining the beef industry supported a local recommendation for Derby to have chilling or freezing works, or at least a boiling-down plant for old

"pikers". Unfortunately, neither this recommendation nor a 1934 proposal (for cattle growers to establish meatworks in Derby on a co-operative basis) brought the desired results. Another setback also occurred when bovine pleuro-pneumonia broke out in the West Kimberley and the government imposed a quarantine line south of Broome in October 1929.<sup>62</sup>

The pastoral industry continued to be the dominant area of employment but underwent changes. As stockmen, stationhands and bookkeepers enlisted for World War I, big station owners brought labour from the south as well as placing greater reliance on their Aboriginal workers. By 1917, the 803 male and 560 female Aborigines engaged in the Kimberley pastoral industry far outnumbered the 277 white males employed.<sup>63</sup>

Aboriginal people also continued to provide labour for homes and businesses in the towns. It was not unusual for the wife of a police tracker to work as a domestic servant in a house occupied by a policeman and his wife. The policeman's wife, spared from some of the more time-consuming tasks around the house, might put time into cooking cakes, keeping fowls, and growing vegetables. One cut the hair of men who were in from the stations, receiving meat in exchange. Other women worked in the hospitals, hotels and offices, and one ran a boarding house which stored working clothes for steamer passengers.<sup>64</sup>

Employment prospects brightened each time someone took a new interest in the Yampi Sound iron ore deposits but, despite intermittent investment in Koolan and Cockatoo Island leases from 1918, success remained elusive until the 1930s.<sup>65</sup>

#### **2.4.4 Social and civic activities**

The region seems to have acquired its first power generating plant in 1936 when Gillis Coleman, a Derby butcher, had one carted from Broome after it became surplus at the picture

theatre. He used it to run a freezing chamber, make ice, and supply power to fellow residents. Kerosene sufficed in many instances, although the lighting for one of the Derby stores and an adjacent basketball court was derived from an engine situated behind the store.<sup>66</sup>

Improvement of conditions in the region continued to provide a focus for residents' attention but they usually waited a long time for new facilities. The Australian Inland Mission, for example, considered building a nursing home in Fitzroy Crossing in 1922 but did not do so until 1939. In 1923, the Kimberley Progress Association lobbied for public works and the building of a wharf at Napier Broome Bay. Neither works nor wharf eventuated, but the possibility of expenditure on Napier Broome Bay continued to reduce the likelihood that money for major port improvements would be spent at Derby.<sup>67</sup>

Health care became a very controversial issue in the 1920s and 1930s because people suffering Hansen's disease, then known as leprosy, received treatment in Derby. They were mostly Aboriginal, and acrimonious debate about the risks of transmission to the white community ensured that the new hospital, built in 1924, did not accept Aboriginal patients. Treatment was available at the old hospital, and people with Hansen's disease were isolated in the house once occupied by the Government Resident. This situation changed in 1925 when a lazaret opened at Cossack and took the Derby patients. The old Residency was burnt as a disease control measure.<sup>68</sup>

During the 1930s, after Darwin replaced Cossack as the place for treatment of Hansen's disease patients, many fresh cases emerged around Derby. These people, housed in 'wretched huts' at the Native Hospital, renewed anxiety and antagonism amongst townspeople. The State Medical Department used 5 000 pounds Federal subsidy to have Mortimore and Thompson build a new leprosarium, at the site known as Bungarun, in 1936.<sup>69</sup>

Another place that provided services to Aboriginal people in this period was Munja, the old Avon Valley station, which was purchased as a "Native Station" in 1926. Buildings were erected there during and after 1927. The Management of Munja would eventually pass to the Presbyterian Church in 1949.<sup>70</sup>

#### 2.4.5 Outside influences

Fitzroy River floodwaters reached a new high in January 1914 and caused heavy stock losses. Then, as mentioned above, the station owners had to contend with the dual impacts of staff going off to war and cattle tick arriving in the region. The tick problem was such that, between 1917 and 1919, the local cattle numbers dropped from an estimated 408 366 to 308 194, and calving figures fell from 18 000 to 8 000.<sup>71</sup>

During the Depression, unemployed people walked through the region seeking work or enough sustenance to keep them alive. Little work was available, particularly since few had skills that lent themselves to station work. Many of these people were simply walking around the continent, escaping from the idleness and indignity of receiving city handouts. Wherever possible, they caught rides on motor vehicles or drays.<sup>72</sup>

#### 2.4.6 People

Martin R. Freney's early oil drilling activities brought a new industry to the region and Harold Buckley brought about the long awaited development of the iron ore deposits in Yampi Sound. Major Norman Brearley's introduction of air transport to the region was similarly noteworthy. Others who made a mark included Dr W. Theodore Hodge, Dr Elwood Byron, and Mr and Mrs F. Luyer, all of whom cared for the people who had Hansen's Disease.

#### 2.4.7 Possible heritage places for the period

- \* Remnants of Freney oil drilling sites (if any still exist)
- \* Wharfingers House, Derby
- \* Site of first airstrip, Derby (if identifiable)
- \* Original Cemetery, Fitzroy Crossing
- \* Low level bridge, Fitzroy Crossing
- \* Leprosarium (former), Bungarun
- \* Site of Munja Native Station (abandoned)
- \* M.M.A. Office (former), Derby
- \* M.M.A. Staff Quarters (former), Derby
- \* Homestead ruins, Leopold Downs station

#### 2.5 1939 - 1959

##### 2.5.1 Demographic settlement and mobility

The demographic make-up of the West Kimberley changed during the Second World War when some residents either enlisted or shifted to safer places. Other people arrived to serve in defence facilities that included No. 80 Advanced Operational Base at Derby. The life of this RAAF facility, which changed to an Operational Base Unit in 1944, spanned the years when Australia was under threat of Japanese attack and invasion. In July 1944, personnel from No. 3 Platoon of 125 Platoon General Transport Company built Frosty Pool, presumably for cooling off purposes, near Myall's Bore.<sup>73</sup>

Service personnel were also sent to No. 75 Operational Base Unit on Noonkanbah station (March 1942 to December 1945) where the Army provided anti-aircraft protection for the RAAF. Further protection for the Noonkanbah airfield came from No. 324 Radar Station which, after twelve months on

nearby Paradise station, shifted to Cockatoo Island. From July to November 1944, the radar station protected Catalinas which flew long-range mine-laying missions out of a secret advance base, code-named "Shecat", in Yampi Sound. Other service personnel in the Kimberley included an army signals unit accommodated in the shearers' quarters at Liveringa (1942-1943) and the 3rd Australian Corps Guerilla Warfare Group. Army personnel based at Fossil Downs were protected by Bren guns mounted on top of the wings of the then still unfinished new homestead. Buildings that are reminiscent of this period are still in evidence on the station.<sup>74</sup>

In the years after the war, people moved about the region in response to employment opportunities created by the mining of iron ore at Yampi Sound, mineral and oil exploration, the Air Beef Scheme, and the delivery of health services.

#### **2.5.2 Transport and communications**

West Kimberley residents faced transport problems during the war years but the presence of military personnel ultimately improved transport facilities. The Department for the Army, for example, financed the building of a shorter all-weather road between Derby and Fitzroy Crossing around 1945. On the departure of the services, jeeps, trucks, bulldozers, nissen huts and other useful items came into residents' possession. Access to the vehicles decreased their reliance on mules in some areas and, as use of vehicles increased, improvements were made along major roads. The low-level bridge at Fitzroy Crossing, for example, was upgraded.<sup>75</sup>

An important post-war event involved Lindsay Gordon Blythe drawing on his wartime experience of air-freighting to send an experimental load of unchilled beef from Mount House to Perth in 1947. The arrival of the beef in good condition paved the way for the Air Beef Scheme, which operated out of

Blythe's Glenroy station, financed by Australian National Airways, MacRobertson Miller Aviation, the Blythe brothers and other local pastoralists. The Glenroy abattoir was built in 1948, and carcasses belonging to Glenroy and other nearby stations were chilled and flown to the Wyndham meatworks by Bristol freighter. Plans for an additional killing centre at Fitzroy Crossing were shelved in 1953. Six years later, the port of Derby replaced Wyndham as the export outlet.<sup>76</sup>

The Air Beef Scheme planes also carried passengers and cargo and enabled Blythe brothers to initiate major improvement programmes. This work included flying stud bulls from Fossil Downs to Mount House and bringing in the materials for new homesteads on Glenroy and Mount House. By 1953, the Air Beef planes faced competition from road-trains that transported livestock from the West Kimberley region to the meatworks at Broome. M.M.A. planes also met some station transport needs and, in one instance, flew the entire Myroodah wool clip out when the roads were cut by floods. During the second half of the 1950s, M.M.A. purchased its first turbo-prop aircraft, a Fokker Friendship, and amalgamated with Airline (W.A.).<sup>77</sup>

Advances in the area of communications saw the installation of the teleradio mast and aerial which, situated adjacent to Derby's second post office, facilitated telegraphic traffic. Completion of a new two-wire telephone circuit between Derby and Broome reduced reliance on the telegraph in 1952 and, by 1959, Derby residents were enjoying the advantages of a new Perth-Derby radio-telephone link and the excitement of being connected to national and international telephone systems.<sup>78</sup>

### 2.5.3 Occupations

In the 1950s, Kimberley Durack experimented by growing rice crops on the floodplains at Camballin - land formerly used as lambing paddocks for Liveringa. Neither he nor Northern



Developments Company, which continued the trials, was able to produce a commercially viable crop. Experimentation with artificial fodders increased after the 1952 finding that an indigenous "rattlepod" caused Kimberley horse disease. Some stations began watering livestock from sub-artesian bores; a new strain of cattle was imported; and sheep numbers dropped to 192 300 in 1947, and then to 142 200 in 1954.<sup>79</sup>

By this time employment and living conditions for Aboriginal station workers had undergone immense change. West Kimberley pastoralists discussed the likelihood of having to pay wages to these people in 1946 and, by 1948, the Kimberley was said to be the only region in Australia paying Aboriginal workers in food, clothing, tobacco and shelter. Negotiations between the Pastoralists Association and the Department of Native Welfare led to a wage of one pound per month for a stockman and half that rate for a domestic in 1950.<sup>80</sup>

Derby's employment prospects improved in 1959, following the re-routing of the Air Beef Scheme planes, with commencement of meat processing operations about two miles out of town.<sup>81</sup> In the mining arena, once the threat of Japanese attack had receded, Australian Iron and Steel organised new equipment for Cockatoo Island. Shipment of ore to Port Kembla began in July 1951 but the following year an official embargo against the export of Yampi iron ore limited the company's potential markets. Expansion occurred nonetheless and included plans for bringing the Koolan Island leases into production.<sup>82</sup> The West Kimberley search for oil was renewed in 1956 when WAPET commenced drilling operations for the Commonwealth Bureau of Mineral Resources. The company struck oil at Meda in 1958.<sup>83</sup>

#### **2.5.4 Social and civic activities**

Erection of the two-story Australian Inland Mission hospital at Fitzroy Crossing late in 1939 afforded safety and comfort

to inland people. Sisters Margaret Coakes (later Mrs George Wells) and Alice Hall were the first of many AIM people to care for people from the surrounding district in the decades to come. The Flying Doctor Service continued to handle cases requiring attention beyond the skills of the AIM staff.<sup>84</sup>

Between 1948 and 1959, MacRobertson Miller Airways provided the Flying Doctor Service with both a plane and pilot under a hire arrangement. These planes used Derby airstrip until 1955, when the Flying Doctor Service opened a base in Derby. One plane, an Avro Anson, crashed during a violent tropical storm whilst flying from Tableland station in February 1956. The pilot, two nurses, the male passenger and his sick baby all perished. The memorial plaque erected for them is now at Derby airport terminal. The Service purchased its own plane for Kimberley work, a Dove, in 1959.<sup>85</sup> Another event in the area of health care was the arrival in 1956 of Dr L. Holman who, apart from absences to undertake postgraduate training, served as District Medical Officer for fifteen years.

Public works expenditure in Derby produced a new courthouse in 1955. Four years later, community facilities available to people coming to town from elsewhere in the region improved with the opening C.W.A. Cottage, a project of West Kimberley Branch of the Air.<sup>86</sup> In the sphere of regional management, ideas espoused by Kimberley Durack in 1947 led to formation of a Kimberley Development Council. This organisation had barely begun to function when 'it shared the melancholy fate of all previous associations of northerners'.<sup>87</sup>

In Derby, schooling underwent major changes in this period. Attendance figures fluctuated between 15 and 48 during the 1940s, necessitating the building of a second room in 1950. Attendance figures continued to rise, standing at about 70 in 1952 and 80 in 1953. This number, split between the rooms with one teacher each, caused considerable pressure.<sup>88</sup> The

opening of the Holy Rosary School in 1954 saw the transfer of 22 children but problems still existed in coping with 74 students, of whom 45 were in infants classes. The government consequently built a new three-room school in 1957 and made the disused one a Home Science and Trade Block for technical education.<sup>89</sup> Elsewhere, a travelling schoolmaster provided tuition for children on stations from 1951, Cockatoo Island had a school by 1952, and a cave on Go Go station, formerly air raid shelter, became a schoolroom for 20 students.<sup>90</sup>

Sports continued to be a feature of social life in Derby and Fitzroy Crossing and, at Derby, the school closed each year for the annual races and sports. A new development in the early 1940s brought more regular excitement as Derby people attended moving picture shows at the theatre built by Nellie Ah Chee.<sup>91</sup>

The lives of many Aboriginal people changed after the war, partly due to the United Aborigines Mission which took over the ration depot at Fitzroy Crossing (1952) and, some years later, provided hostel accommodation for children attending school in Derby. The Presbyterian Church played a similar role, and its missionaries took over the Aboriginal cattle station at Munja in 1949. Two years later, they dismantled the buildings at Munja and Kunmunya Mission and moved almost all the people to Wotjulum near Cockatoo Island.<sup>92</sup>

In 1956, when it was obvious that Wotjulum would never prove a satisfactory mission site, the people tackled the task of dismantling their buildings and making a fresh start on what had been a 125 000 acre cattle station at Mowanjum, outside Derby. This move was completed in mid-November. Subsequent attempts to plant gardens and to farm pigs, fowls and dairy cattle were thwarted by the inadequacy of the water supply. Volunteers from Geraldton built Mowanjum church in 1959.<sup>93</sup>

### 2.5.5 Outside influences

The impact of the Second World War on the region increased after December 1941 when Japan entered the hostilities. The threat of invasion dominated people's lives; evacuation of women and children occurred; men enlisted in the Volunteer Defence Corps; school classes in Derby were suspended from February 1942 until September 1943; army personnel used the school buildings for several months; the availability of transport, especially shipping, decreased; and pastoralists, if they could market livestock at all between 1942 and 1944, received five pounds per bullock, in government money, for animals killed at Broome meatworks. An interesting aspect of the Volunteer Defence Corps, which had 200 men enrolled in the north of the state, was that its activities included an experiment in training Aboriginal people in military tactics at Liveringa station in 1943. Cyril Longmore, correspondent for *The West Australian*, participated in this experiment and lobbied unsuccessfully for a Native Auxiliary Corps to be established in the Kimberley.<sup>94</sup>

At the end of 1944, people interested in pastoral enterprise and shipping matters recommended the establishment of boning works and a deep-water outport for Derby. Talk of relocating Broome meatworks and the actual town of Derby to the western side of Point Torment followed. At this time Derby had less than 40 houses, two condemned hotels, few public buildings and no public power supply. But no funds were available for the proposed shift - a situation that has been attributed to a change in government (from Labour to Liberal/Country Party Coalition) and the pursuit of incompatible goals by company interests and individuals.<sup>95</sup>

Talk of shifting the Broome meatworks emerged again in 1952 when the Executive Council endorsed a new plan for regional development. As in the 1940s scheme, the meatworks were to

be rebuilt at a proposed deepwater outpost at Point Torment. By the following year Napier Broome Bay had replaced Point Torment as the preferred new port site but a continuation of political maneuvering and rivalry between pressure-groups prevented action. This pushed the much needed improvements to Derby's shipping facilities into the next decade.<sup>96</sup>

#### 2.5.6 People

In a period marked by innovation and development, Lindsay Gordon Blythe and his brothers stand out for the energy and courage they brought to the creation of the Air Beef Scheme in the late 1940s. Kimberley Durack likewise stands out for his rice-growing experiments at Camballin.

Albert Barunga and David Mowaljarlai played a central role when the Ngarinyin, Wunambul and Worora people shifted from Wotjulum to Mowanjum in 1956. With Alan Mungulu and Watty Ngerdu, the two men then helped their people to settle into Mowanjum and interact with the Derby townspeople.<sup>97</sup>

#### 2.5.7 Possible heritage places for the period

- \* Site of former A.I.M. Hospital, Fitzroy Crossing
- \* Homestead and associated structures, Fossil Downs
- \* Picture Theatre, Derby
- \* Teleradio mast and aerial, Derby
- \* Frosty Pool, Derby
- \* World War II airstrips, Noonkanbah and Paradise
- \* Remnants of Catalina moorings off Cockatoo Island (if still in existence)
- \* Remnants of Air Beef abattoir etc., Glenroy
- \* Remnants of Munja settlement
- \* Remnants of Donkey Meat Factory, near Mt Hart
- \* Courthouse, Derby
- \* Royal Flying Doctor Service Base, Derby

- \* Site of United Aborigines Mission (now Junjuwa Community), Fitzroy Crossing
- \* United Aborigines Mission Hostel, Derby
- \* St Joseph's Hostel, Derby

## **2.6        1960 - 1995**

### **2.6.1    Demographic settlement and mobility**

The number of people living in the West Kimberley has grown steadily over the past few decades, with figures rising from 4 765 in 1966 to 7 712 in 1991.<sup>98</sup> Mobility has stayed high, reinforced by dramatic social changes, improved access to transport, and growth in tourism. This mobility has impacted on potential heritage places by increasing the likelihood of vandalism. Removal of materials and buildings to alternate sites has stayed constant too because no realistic drop has occurred in the cost of importing new building materials.

In 1960, for instance, after the Federal Government lifted some of its restrictions on the export of iron ore, ships carrying ore from Cockatoo Island returned with materials for a crushing plant, township, wharf facilities and service workshops on nearby Koolan Island. This building programme destroyed many relics of earlier mining activity. When the B.H.P. era ended, the buildings were sold for use elsewhere. Some of their accommodation is now part of a tourism venture on former meatworks land outside Derby.<sup>99</sup>

### **2.6.2    Transport and communications**

Important changes in transport and communications occurred during the 1960s because both Federal and State Governments committed funds to infrastructure in northern Australia. The beef roads scheme, although by no means universally popular,

revolutionised transport. The first phase of this scheme saw Main Roads Department upgrade existing roads and construct a new one between Derby and Mount House station. Refrigerated vans instead of the highly subsidised Air Beef aircraft were thus able to convey more than 4 600 carcasses of beef from Glenroy abattoir to Derby during the killing season of 1963. The boned-out meat supplemented that from thousands of head of cattle slaughtered near Derby and, on arrival, Derby Meat Processing Co. Ltd packed it for export.<sup>100</sup>

Planning for a second phase of beef roads construction was underway by April 1965 with provision for a new road between Gibb River station and Kalumburu. Work on the Great Northern Highway included the building of two major bridges over the Fitzroy River - at Willare (1968) to replace Langi Crossing and at Fitzroy Crossing (1974) to reduce the traffic burden on the low-level bridge.<sup>101</sup>

Parallel work to replace Derby's aging port facilities began in 1963 with 800 000 pounds in Federal funds and, by August, workers had built a new cattle race, widened and raised the approach road, and greatly expanded a reclaimed area at the foot of the old jetty to provide additional areas for a new goods shed and cattle yards. The new circular concrete and steel jetty was in use by November 1964; demolition of the old jetty took place in 1966. Cargoes dispatched from Derby included beef and hides from local meatworks (going south), rice from Camballin and lead-zinc ore from Napier Downs station (going overseas), and cattle (bound for Fremantle, Singapore and the Philippines).<sup>102</sup>

The new port facilities improved cargo handling but did not reduce the local navigation hazards faced by vessels. These caused withdrawal of service by Blue Funnel Line, decreased service from State Ships and, in 1983, brought about closure of the port by the Department of Marine and Harbours.<sup>103</sup>

Development of a new harbour was anticipated late in 1984 but an official report published soon afterwards expressed the view that the level of general cargo shipped through Derby justified neither re-opening the existing jetty nor building a new deep-water port. The jetty today supports a restaurant and is a popular recreation spot for residents and tourists. Derby people restored the Wharfingers House as a museum during the late 1980s and, with the cattle race and remnants of the old goods shed and tram line, it now stands as a memento of the port's contribution to the region.<sup>104</sup>

The withdrawal of State Ships resulted in greater reliance on road and air transport and shipping through Broome. Rapid turnaround and door to door delivery made trucking popular and, despite the likelihood of cuts during the Wet, many businesses and residents came to prefer it over shipping.<sup>105</sup>

Air transport underwent many changes in the period 1960 to 1995, with Ansett taking over the Kimberley routes from the pioneering firm M.M.A. and gradually upgrading the aircraft. New airport facilities were built at Derby in the 1960s and, two decades later, the RAAF constructed the Curtin Base out of town. By late 1987 the Derby airport required extensive work and a decision was taken to shift the civil facilities to the Curtin Base rather than upgrade the existing airport. The new civil terminal opened in 1989.<sup>106</sup>

Improvement of regional communications included a fourfold increase in telephone circuits between Derby and Broome in 1960. A new Derby post office and telephone exchange opened in May 1961, leaving the way clear for conversion of the old building (on the site of what is now Elders Pastoral) into a line station. Other improvements saw the 1965 opening of a radio-telephone link between Derby and Wyndham and the 1967 commencement of broadcasting from 6DB, the national regional station which serviced not only Derby but also Cockatoo and



Koolan Islands. Technological advances of the early 1980s were perhaps most significant of all as they brought Derby and Fitzroy Crossing into the world's longest solar powered microwave system and provided access to automatic telephone services.<sup>107</sup>

### 2.6.3 Occupations

The pastoral industry remained important and, although sheep initially grew more numerous than in 1954, they gradually disappeared from the region. Figures available for the years 1966, 1971 and 1973 show an initial decrease from 104 500 to 80 500 and a second drop to 20 700. The last Kimberley sheep station is said to have 'closed its gates' in 1974.<sup>108</sup> An era had ended, but such structures as the Liveringa shearing shed and the Mount Anderson wool press stand as reminders of the region's first form of animal husbandry.

Employment associated with slaughtering and meat processing fluctuated in this period. Kimberley Meats Ltd, a privately owned meatworks, operated at Derby for two seasons before being sold to Norwest Development Corporation Ltd in 1963. This corporation announced plans to build abattoirs at Derby and Broome but, shortly afterwards, angered West Kimberley people by closing the Derby works and expending its money in the Broome area. The option of killing at Glenroy remained available, but the viability of that abattoir was so reduced by the loss of air freight subsidies that it was closed down after the 1964 killing season. A fire swept through it in 1966, leaving only the skeleton of the main building, a few huts and the stockyards.<sup>109</sup> Antagonism towards the Norwest Development Corporation and its Broome meatworks increased the number of live cattle shipped out of Derby and reputedly encouraged Derby Meat Processing Co. Ltd to raise funds for construction of a new abattoir. By 1966 this facility was employing about 60 people; but it, too, has since closed.<sup>110</sup>

Other changes that affected the pastoral industry during the 1960s included the establishment of a research station near Fitzroy Crossing and increased diversification into tropical agriculture. State government involvement in the Camballin project produced a barrage across the Fitzroy and a weir across Uralla Creek (17 Mile Dam). People also talked about a government proposal for a multipurpose project which was to include a major storage reservoir at Dimond Gorge on the Fitzroy and further storage facilities on the Margaret and Leopold rivers. The project stalled but dreams of irrigated crops, flood control and hydro-electric power in this area have remained alive.<sup>111</sup>

By 1969, Australian Land and Cattle Company (ALCO) had taken over the Camballin project and was interested in damming the Fitzroy and using irrigated crops to fatten cattle. Purchase of multiple stations by this company, and others, heralded a new approach to land management.<sup>112</sup> ALCO abandoned Camballin irrigation area in 1983 after floodwaters breached the levee banks built to control seasonal inundation from the Fitzroy River. Camballin Farms and A.I.L. Holdings Pty Ltd then took on the Camballin/Liveringa project but they, too, met with disappointment.<sup>113</sup> On other stations, owners had to contend with government-instituted measures aimed at controlling tuberculosis, brucellosis and pleuro-pneumonia in cattle. During the 1970s, these animals were yarded at Myall's Bore and dipped before travelling south over the pleuro line as store cattle. Others were sprayed or dipped before being shipped either overseas or to killing works in the south of the State. Fresh outbreaks of disease in 1993 showed that the problem had not been beaten.<sup>114</sup>

As the ownership of pastoral leases has changed, so too has the use to which leases are put. Aboriginal people now run stations and educate their children locally, and some leases are being used for nature conservation and tourism purposes.

Some Fitzroy River valley Aboriginal communities have been granted excisions from stations and, in areas where unsealed roads dominate, some pastoralists have diversified into the area of tourism by providing fuel, general stores, food and accommodation.<sup>115</sup>

Tourism also emerged at Yampi Sound in 1989 when, following the gradual winding down of iron ore operations on Cockatoo Island, this mine site was developed as an exclusive tourist destination. Cockatoo Island Resort Pty Ltd suffered from a long-running pilots' strike, however, and by 1991 had become enmeshed in the liquidation of its parent company, Dallhold Investments. Koolyanobbing Joint Venture has since formed to develop the Cockatoo Island deposits and these are now being mined in an open pit operation.<sup>116</sup>

On the mainland, exploration and mining activities expanded during the 1960s. WAPET continued its search for oil, two companies looked for coal from 1965 and, twelve years later, Conzinc Riotinto Australia Exploration discovered diamonds in the Ellendale area. The nearby Blina Oilfield, discovered in 1981, began commercial production of 1 000 barrels per day in 1983. Today, black granite is exported from the King Leopold Ranges, zinc and lead are mined at Cadjebut, garnets are found in the Napier Range and local sandstone sells well through Kimberley Colourstone, a Derby company.<sup>117</sup>

#### 2.6.4 Social and civic activities

Community attitudes changed considerably in this period, due partly to legislative changes relevant to Aboriginal people. Expansion of the Derby District Hospital in the 1960s, for example, ended decades of segregation with the provision of a ward for Aboriginal patients. The Native Hospital closed in 1965 and was replaced by Numbala Nunga Nursing Home.<sup>118</sup>

In 1985, the government unveiled plans for a reconstruction of the District Hospital. Community members rallied to save Holman House, a residence that had been built in the grounds by Owen Ah Chee and, many years later, named after Dr Lawson Holman. It now stands on a block out of town. Closure of the Bungarun leprosarium, in September 1986, saw health services give way to conferences and other activities there.<sup>119</sup>

Dramatic changes occurred at Fitzroy Crossing too when town services were relocated to higher ground during the 1970s. A new hospital, again run by Australian Inland Mission staff, replaced the old one. The nurses quarters and some smaller buildings were shifted to the new site but the old hospital itself was eventually demolished. Construction of new houses for the police led to the old sergeant's house accommodating the Geikie Gorge ranger for some years. Current plans for this house and the adjacent buildings, which include an iron structure that probably housed the trackers, focus on the creation of a museum. The former post office is now used for low-budget accommodation.<sup>120</sup>

Other civic changes that occurred in the region included the inception of the Boab Festival (1960); provision of schools at such places as Kimberley Downs, Cherrabun, Camballin, Christmas Creek and Fitzroy Crossing; improvement of school opportunities for teenagers; and the opening of new Shire Offices, civic centre, shops, hotels, offices, infant health centre, cultural centre, tourist information centre, caravan park, Aboriginal Community Centre and other agencies. From about 1970, the State Housing Commission became much more active, expanding the region's rental stock and constructing transitional housing for Aboriginal people. The use of sites continues to change and in recent years Mowanjum Community has relocated, the Masonic Lodge has restored Derby's first school, and the government has announced plans to upgrade the Curtin Base as a detention centre for boat people.<sup>121</sup>

### 2.6.5 Outside influences

In 1963, outside attention focussed on the Collier Bay area when the state government assessed the site's potential for the generation of tidal power. Hope remained high for more than two years but the projected cost of the concept proved prohibitive.<sup>122</sup>

Another outside issue that affected the community was the nation's involvement in the Vietnam War. Its effect on the West Kimberley was like that of World I insofar as it drew residents away but did not demand local defences. The long list of those who lost their lives included Gordon D'Antoine from Derby.<sup>123</sup>

### 2.6.6 People

In this period of development and change, David Mowaljarlai and others worked to pass Aboriginal language and culture to young people at Mowanjum. Mowaljarlai also developed links with outsiders, helping the WA Museum to identify Aboriginal sites, presenting conference papers, contributing to books and campaigning for land rights. The National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee recognised this work in 1991 by naming him Aboriginal of the Year. Another Mowanjum Community elder, Daisy Utemorrhah, also gained considerable recognition through poetry and land rights activities.<sup>124</sup>

When the big companies began to take over groups of stations in the late 1960s, attention was drawn to the property that local resident Robert Rowell had accumulated since arriving in Derby as an accountant in 1941. Prominent in both civic affairs and business, his interests extended to R.M. Rowell and Co. (general agents and merchants in Loch Street), some freehold property in Derby, and Kimberley Downs and Napier

Downs stations. Upon selling to ALCO, Rowell became one of only two West Australians to gain a seat on that company's board.<sup>125</sup>

Another prominent resident of this period, Maxine MacDonald, arrived at Fossil Downs in 1938 as the bride of William Neil MacDonald. She stayed after William died in 1963, becoming well known for the hospitality she provided to the numerous, and often famous, visitors who called at the homestead. Mrs MacDonald died in September 1988 and was buried in the small station cemetery beside her husband.<sup>126</sup>

#### 2.6.7 Possible heritage places for the period

- \* Remnants of the Kimberley Meats Ltd meatworks (now the property of Rod Kneebone)
- \* Remnants of Derby Meat Company abattoir
- \* Shearing sheds, Liveringa and Noonkanbah
- \* Wool press, Mount Anderson station
- \* Barrage on the Fitzroy River
- \* 17-Mile Dam on Uralla Creek
- \* Shop facades, Clarendon Street, Derby
- \* Jetty and cattle race, Derby
- \* Langi Crossing / Willare Bridge
- \* Cadjebut zinc mine
- \* Blina oil project
- \* Site of old Mowanjum Mission
- \* Cemetery, Fossil Downs station

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## 5.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completion of this work would not have been possible without input from people within the region. The effort and local knowledge contributed by the following individuals and organisations is therefore acknowledged with gratitude: Aboriginal Sites Department (Kevin Shaw), Mary Aiken, Beryl and Wally Ah Chee, Jim and Norma Anderson, Elsie Archer, Kevin Beere, Bob Beharrell, Nellie Bennett, Wayne Bergmann, Pastor Phil Brewster, Norma Brierley, Ian Crimp, Laurel Edwards, Mrs M. Foster, Anne Godfrey, Cheryl Grant, Michael Guger, Jack Hamilton, Annette Henwood, Pat Hurst, Kimberley Development Commission (Gary Taylor), Chris and Jenny Kloss, Peter Kneebone, Phil LeLievre, Frances Lewes, Maureen Macfarlan, William McGregor, Carol Martin, Pam Masters, Carmel Moore, Dale Morton, Joy Motter, David Mowaljarlai, Ian Obern, Howard Pedersen, Agnes Puertollano, Andrew and Karen Robertson, Joe Ross, Peter Ross, Shire of Derby/West Kimberley (Morris Stevens and library staff), Peta Smallshaw, Kerry Smith, John Smoker, Chris Travers, and Margaret Wells.