

## Place No. 27 Karratha Homestead Group



Karratha Station gates 2012

LOCATION	
Name of Place	Karratha Station Homestead Group
Other Name (1)	Maitland Station
Other Name (2)	Maitland River
Location/Address	
Street Number	
Street Name	North West Coastal Highway
Suburb/Town	Maitland
Other Locational descriptor (text)	South of North West Coastal Highway, 25 km from Karratha mE465765 mN 7690566 Longitude: 11.6708 Latitude: -20.8848

OWNERSHIP & LAND DESCRIPTION				
Owner	Address	Phone/fax	Status	Item No.
Rio Tinto Manager Ion Heseltine	PO Box 872, Karratha	9144 4794 9185 3978 fx		
Reserve No.	Lot/Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio	Item No.
	264	P220363	LR3110/52 7	

LISTING AND ASSESSMENT	
HCWA Reference Number	4024
State Register of Heritage Places:(Y/N)	No
Classified by the National Trust (Y/N)	Yes
Register of the National Estate (Y/N)	Yes
Local Town Planning Scheme (Y/N)	Yes
<b>Management Category</b>	<b>A</b>

DESCRIPTION	
Construction Date (1)	1872
Construction Date (2)	1909, 1969, 1970s, 1989
Site Type (Place Type)	Individual Building or Group
<b>Use(s) of Place</b>	

<i>Original</i>	FARMING/PASTORAL: Homestead Cottage Servants' Quarters/Shearers' Quarters Shed or Barn Stable Kitchen Stockyard Other
<i>Present</i>	FARMING/PASTORAL: Homestead
<i>Other</i>	TRANSPORT/COMMUNICATION: Other – Airstrip INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING: Other – Meat house/Cool room
<b>Construction Materials:</b>	
<i>Walls</i>	2. BRICK 201 Common Brick 3. CONCRETE 399 Other Concrete 9. STONE 904 Local Stone
<i>Roof</i>	6. METAL 606 Corrugated Iron 11. TIMBER 1199 Other Timber
Condition	Good
Integrity (how much of the original fabric is intact?):	Some
<b>Physical Description</b>	
<p>The station complex includes evidence of 29 identified buildings and structures dating from a range of periods and in various conditions. Refer to the site plan for detail; key historical structures are described below with corresponding numbers.</p> <p>Aboriginal camp (1) – Only the floors are visible.</p> <p>Shearing shed (4) – This building has been converted to stables. The building dates from 1945 and has a wooden frame, corrugated iron walls and roof and 10 stands for shearing. There are remnants of yards to the south of the shed. A later storage shed (5) has been attached to the shearing shed; this is constructed of corrugated iron walls and roof with internal brick walls and a concrete floor.</p> <p>Worker's quarters (7) – This building is constructed of corrugated iron walls and roof and a concrete floor. The internal brick walls have been added more recently.</p> <p>Stone building (8) – The exterior walls are rendered, except the original stone converted to an internal brick laundry with a corrugated iron roof. This building has been adapted, keeping parts of the original stone walls and maintaining the external form of the building. Stone wall footings (9) adjacent to the building indicate that it was earlier a larger structure.</p> <p>Worker's mess footings (10) – Concrete wall footings are evident.</p> <p>Workshops (11) – This structure has a wooden and metal frame with corrugated iron walls and roof and a concrete floor.</p> <p>Vehicle sheds (12) – These include an adapted corrugated iron hut and concrete floor (most likely originally Aboriginal quarters), with adjacent open vehicle sheds with a corrugated iron roof. The structures are nestled behind a hilly outcrop of rounded granite rocks, partially obscuring it from view of the homestead.</p> <p>Shed (13) – This was once used as stables. This building has a wood and metal frame with corrugated iron walls and roof and a concrete floor.</p>	

Building (14) – This is a small two roomed concrete structure (concrete poured between sheltered framework), with a concrete floor, distinctive round concrete verandah posts, a corrugated iron vaulted roof and a lean-to verandah front and back. This building may have been the overseers cottages and has been described as the ‘willy willy shelter’. It was built by the Withnells between 1910 and 1920.

Quarters (17) – The walls are corrugated iron fixed vertically and the roof is also of corrugated iron, with a wooden frame and concrete floors. There is an awning on three sides and a verandah on the front of the building with metal verandah posts.

Stone building (18) – This is a possible cool room or meat house, now used as a cyclone shelter. It is a small building with stone walls painted white, continuing into a vaulted corrugated iron roof. The floor is of cement.

Workshop (20) and salt store (19) – These were built adjacent to each other by Charles Thompson for Bill Leslie in 1935. Both buildings use railway sleepers and steel pipe as framing and each has a vaulted corrugated iron roof. The workshop has corrugated iron cladding walls and the salt store is made of brick with one wall removed. The salt store housed salt that Leslie gathered from locations near Dampier. Dampier Salt later adopted this enterprise a commercial scale.

Homestead (21) – The homestead is two separate buildings constructed in the 1970s, with partial reconstruction of the front homestead in 1989 after cyclone damage. The homestead buildings are adjoined by a concrete path. The front homestead building is of salmon brick construction with a corrugated iron roof and concrete floor. The verandah is wooden framed and reuses the cast iron verandah posts from the 1909 homestead. The back homestead dates from the 1970s, with fibro panel walls, corrugated iron roof, concrete floors and a wooden framed verandah with the 1909 verandah posts. Behind the homestead buildings is a stone wall housing a cast iron heater (23) which is a remnant from an earlier building.

Wall footings (24) – Stone wall footings indicate a large building which may have been an earlier homestead.

Ruin (25) – Stone walled structure 3 m x 2 m.

Blacksmith shop – Used as a garage in 1983.

Stables – The stables are of corrugated iron cladding with a vaulted roof and date from before 1929.

Old Shearer’s Quarters – Ruined stone building originally with a shallow vaulted roof. Only three walls now stand.

Shearer’s quarters – This structure is of steel and timber framing and has a corrugated vaulted roof and a concrete floor.

Shearing shed – This dates from 1945.<sup>1</sup>

An earlier tree lined driveway entrance to the station complex is evident with earlier iron gated entrance with the name ‘Karratha’ in moulded metal.

Stock yards and a probable race course are located to the north of the complex.

### History

An early pastoral lease was taken up in 1865 by Dr Baynton, a member of the Denison Plains Association. This lease was taken up by Harry Whittal Venn of Maitland River, who took up pastoral lease No 232 for 10,000 acres in 1873. This was let ‘on very easy terms’.<sup>1</sup> Venn owned the station until 1878.<sup>2</sup>

The station lease changed hands frequently, but it was once owned by Mr McKean, who sold the property after a year to J. & R. Clarksons.<sup>3</sup> At that time, in 1886, there were reported to be 20,000 sheep, 1,000 cattle and 500 horses.<sup>4</sup> Later owners include John Thomas Denny, the Withnell brothers

from 1899 until 1925, Edgar G. Meares from 1925 to 1929 when it was transferred to Ernest Samuel Foulkes Taylor and William Allan Leslie. With the death of Foulkes Taylor in 1953 the station transferred to William and Normana Leslie. The Leslies continued to operate Karratha Station until 1966, when Hamersley Iron purchased the station. For most of its history, Karratha Station was a sheep station and was one of the first stations to diversify into cattle in 1971.

In 1921 the head station was referred to as 'Baynton' in an Inspector's Report on Karratha Station for classification of the pastoral lease.<sup>5</sup> At that time, Karratha Station was described as a 'very choice grass property; near town and coast where there is a good creek and landing for coasters, compact, shallow sinking for invariably good water; easy and cheap to run. Belts of snakewood (top feed) and soft spinifex for dry times, not dangerous in flood, owing to being watered by three small streams vis Nichol, Maitland and Yanyarre... practically no waste land except the salt marshes.... The coastal stock route runs through the full width of the property.'<sup>6</sup> The 1921 report reveals 310,000 acres carrying 18,000 sheep (although in 1917 there were 41,500 sheep), 18 cattle and 130 horses. The station had 26 wells, 23 with wind mills and 170 miles of fences. Its port to transfer stock to market was the Maitland River Landing.

The station is unique because it includes islands through the Dampier Archipelago. West Lewis Island may have been used as part of Karratha Station's activities as early as 1882, as there is evidence of stock yards and building remains.<sup>7</sup>

The first homestead, built in 1872, was destroyed by a cyclone the same year and rebuilt shortly after. Another cyclone in 1909 destroyed the 1872 built homestead, which was replaced with a stone, iron, cement and stamped metal building built by Robert and Arthur Bunning and quarried from local granite. The 1909 homestead was demolished by Hamersley Iron in 1969 and a new homestead was built, incorporating the verandah posts and other materials from the 1909 house.<sup>8</sup> In 1989 Cyclone Orson damaged the homestead and Hamersley Iron partially rebuilt the front homestead building.

In 1929, using station labour, Leslie built new yards next to the shearing shed for a cost of 601 pounds, three shillings and 20 pence.<sup>9</sup>

In March 1945 a severe cyclone caused extensive damage to Karratha, Mardie and Balmoral Stations. At Karratha, the wool shed and yards were destroyed just six weeks before shearing season.<sup>10</sup> The wool shed was rebuilt as a 10-stand shed in time for shearing at a time when materials were in short supply following World War Two.

Labour costs increased for stations following the 1946 Pilbara strike by Aboriginal people, who were seeking fair pay and conditions after generations of Aboriginal people working on stations for very little or no pay and in poor conditions. Many Aboriginal people 'walked off' Pilbara stations at this time, although some Aboriginal families remained on the stations in the 1950s and 1960s. The Cosmos family continued living at Karratha Station in a tin house, which Audrey Cosmos remembered was 'very hot during summer, very cold during winter.'<sup>11</sup>

During the 1950s, Pilbara pastoral stations struggled despite an increase in the wool price in 1950, which gave some assistance to the industry. By 1956, station owners sought assistance for their economic plight from government. The Northern Rehabilitation Committee was established and delegates Bill Leslie from Karratha Station, Frank Thomson from Pardoo Station and Lang Hancock from Mulga Downs Station, went to Canberra seeking tax incentives and investment rebates to encourage pastoralists to stay in the region. The delegation did not have success. This was followed by a severe depression in the wool and beef industry in the 1960s which devastated the Pilbara pastoral industry.

In 1960, as pastoral stations declined, the iron ore export embargo was lifted which opened up the Pilbara for mining prospects. The Western Australian government soon announced permits for the exploration and development of iron ore deposits. By 1965, the company Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd established port facilities at Dampier and the Tom Price to Dampier railway was completed in 1966, with town sites being established at Tom Price and Dampier.

The Leslies continued to operate Karratha Station until 1966, when Hamersley Iron purchased the station. In 1970 a portion of the lease, about 20,000 acres, was resumed by the Government to establish the town of Karratha, named after the station. As Karratha grows, evidence of the station is incorporated into the town suburbs, such as Peg's Well and Millar's Well.

In an oral history interview with Normana Leslie, she described her first impressions of the country when she arrived in 1934 from Melbourne;

'It was the most beautiful sight looking down on those plains and away in the distance the line of light, blue light and purple coloured hills...My first impression (of the homestead) ...was how wonderful! ... there was a most beautiful garden...it was like coming into an oasis.'<sup>12</sup>

The name 'Karratha' is thought to be derived from an Aboriginal word meaning 'good country' or 'soft earth'.

### Archaeology

There are extensive remains of the use of the head station, 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 numbers 8, 9, 18, 23, 24, 25). Archaeological deposits around the hill base date from the nineteenth century (largely comprised of glass and ceramics). Archaeological deposits associated with the use of the Aboriginal camp also exist. Across the station there would be remains of pastoral activities and historical uses, including Aboriginal.

### SIGNIFICANCE

#### Historic theme (s)

1. DEMOGRAPHIC SETTLEMENT AND MOBILITY
  - 104 Land allocation
  - 106 Workers (including Aboriginal)
  - 110 Resource exploitation and depletion
  - 113 Natural disasters
3. OCCUPATIONS
  - 301 Grazing, pastoralism & dairying
  - 303 Mining (including mineral processing)
5. OUTSIDE INFLUENCES
  - 504 Depression and boom
6. PEOPLE
  - 601 Aboriginal people
  - 602 Early settlers

#### Statement of Significance:

This pastoral precinct is of historical and social significance as one of the earliest in the Shire of Roebourne (1865). The head station buildings and structures are representative of various periods over this time. The precinct is set within a striking landscape of rounded hilly granite outcrops with views across the coastal plain towards the Burrup Peninsula.

The group displays a rich diversity of architectural forms and methods of construction.

The station complex bears witness to the mode of life and working of the station over the years leading to the transition from sheep to cattle raising and mining resources, including the mining of Dampier Salt.

### ASSOCIATIONS

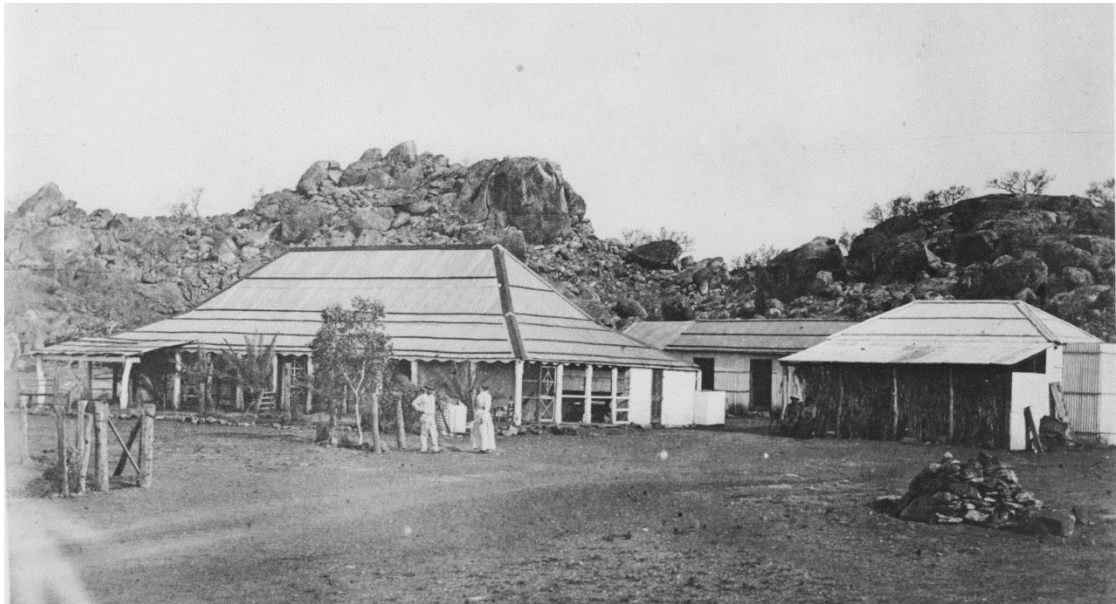
Architect/Designer (1)

Other Associated Person(s)	Dr Baynton The Withnells William and Normana Leslie Tish Lees (daughter of William and Normana Leslie) The Cosmos family
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**OTHER**  
**Other References**

Karratha Station 1934-1950, Collection of Photographs, BA1883, Battye Library  
Karratha Station records 1929-1967 including account books, diaries and record books. MN 750, Battye Library

MHI 1996	Site assessed, Place Name Record created
MHI Review 2012	Entry updated



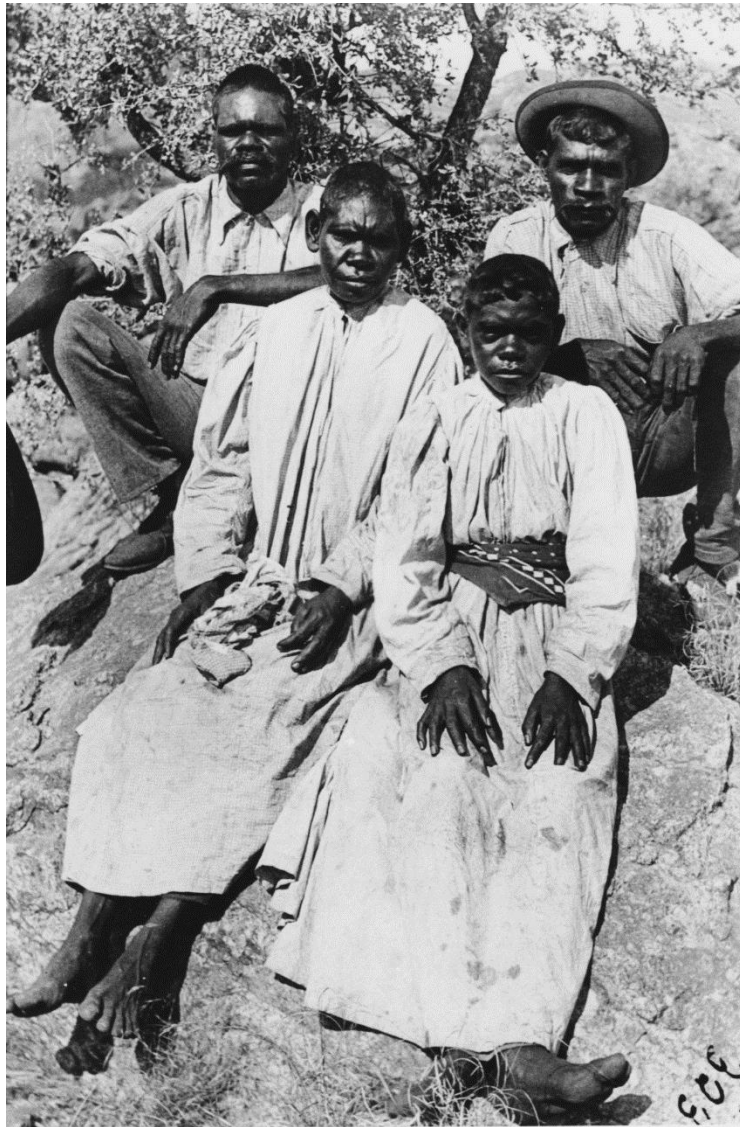
**Original Karratha Station homestead, built 1872, destroyed 1873 (cyclone)  
Courtesy Shire of Roebourne Local History Office, 2005.778**



**Shearers quarters, Karratha Station, 1930s  
Courtesy Shire of Roebourne Local History Office, 2005.723**



Sheep in the shearing pens on Karratha station, 1933  
Courtesy Shire of Roebourne Local History Office, 2005.727



Aboriginal workers, Karratha Station, 1900  
Courtesy Shire of Roebourne Local History Office, 2005.1220



## KARRATHA HEAD STATION (2012)

1. Aboriginal camp (floors visible)
2. House base (concrete floor)
3. Generator shed (modern)
4. Shearing shed (converted to stables: wooden frame and CI walls and roof) with remnants of yards to south
5. Storage shed attached to shearing shed (CI walls and roof with wooden frame; concrete floor)
6. Overseer's residence (modern, not visited)
7. Worker's quarters (CI walls and roof; internal brick walls; concrete floor)
8. Stone building (converted to internal brick laundry: CI roof; walls rendered except original stone)
9. Wall footings of stone building (originally part of building 8)
10. Footing of worker's mess (concrete wall footings)
11. Work shops (metal and wooden frame; CI walls and roof; concrete floor)
12. Complex: hut (CI walls and roof; concrete floor); 2 open vehicle sheds (CI roof)
13. Shed (used as stables in past: wooden and metal framed; CI walls and roof; concrete floor)
14. Building (2 rooms and 2 verandahs: concrete floor, walls, verandah posts; metal roof)
15. Metal prefabricated building (relatively modern)
16. Garage (modern: metal roof)
17. Quarters (CI roof and walls; wooden frame; concrete floor) with awning
18. Stone building (possible coolroom, now cyclone shelter: CI roof; stone walls painted white; cement floor)
19. Saltroom (CI roof; railway sleeper frame; brick walls)
20. Workshop (CI roof; CI walls; pipe and railway sleeper frame; concrete floor)
21. Homestead (CI roof; brick construction; original metal verandah posts)
22. Residence (CI roof; panel walls; concrete floors; use of original metal verandah posts)
23. Stone wall housing cast iron heater (presumably building remnant)
24. Wall footings (stone) of structure (min. 29 x 15m); Toilet (CI walls and roof); Microwave tower
25. Ruin: stone walled structure 3 x 2 m.
26. Earlier tree-lined entrance and metal gate
27. Water tank
28. Hanger (modern)
29. To north: stock yards and race track location





**Workers' quarters at Karratha Station, 2012**



**Saltroom at Karratha Station, 2012**



Residence (Plan: Building number 14) 2012

<sup>1</sup> E.T. Hooley (Bucolic) 2004, '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, p 26-28

<sup>2</sup> *Unpublished History of Mardie Station*, personal correspondence with Peter Gifford.

<sup>3</sup> E.T. Hooley (Bucolic) 2004

<sup>4</sup> E.T. Hooley (Bucolic) 2004

<sup>5</sup> Karratha Station Inspector's Report on Classification of Pastoral Leases 220/102, Inspection on 9 Dec 1921.

<sup>6</sup> Karratha Station Inspector's Report.

<sup>7</sup> Paterson, A. 2006, 'Towards a historical archaeology of Western Australia's Northwest', *Australian Historical Archaeology*, 24, p 103

<sup>8</sup> Lees, T. 2010, *Lonely for my Land: Tales of Karratha Station and the Nor' West*, Sid Harta Publications, Glen Waverley Victoria, p 7.

<sup>9</sup> Lacy, J. 2002, *Off-Shears: the story of Shearing Sheds in Western Australia*, Black Swan Press, Curtin University of Technology, Bentley, p 45-46

<sup>10</sup> Lacy, J. 2002, p 45-46

<sup>11</sup> Oral History with Audrey Cosmos, Interviewed by Susan Hanson, Roebourne, 1 December 2009, archived at AIATSIS.

<sup>12</sup> Oral History Normana Leslie OH2579, 1990, Batty Library