

LIVERINGA'S HERITAGE - A WINDOW ON TO THE PAST

On Easter Sunday 1996, Jim and Norma Anderson, the current caretakers of the homestead at Liveringa station, which is part of the holdings of the Anglo Australian Food Company and run by Bruce Gray out of Camballin, were delighted to be able to invite members of the Kimberley Society and their guests to join them for a day focussed on the construction and architecture of the buildings and their history.

Everyone enjoyed a sumptuous morning tea on arrival before Jim, a sprightly septuagenarian, guided the interested group through the many outbuildings surrounding the homestead, taking time to explain the many fascinating features and stories involved with each building.

First settled in 1881, Liveringa Station has survived periods of prosperity along with periods of downturn. Around 1886/1888 the first homestead, shearing shed, woolshed, store room and kitchen, took shape under John McLarty, first manager of the Kimberley Pastoral Company Limited. Situated on a high knoll overlooking a beautiful tree lined billabong, with the huge Fitzroy River flood plain to Mount Wynne in the far distance, this homestead sheltered many within its secure walls. It even played host as a polling station for the election of the members of the Senate and House of Representatives in 1901.

Made out of bush timbers and corrugated iron, the original homestead was demolished in 1908 as the present one took shape under the third manager, Percy Rose. The following notes, taken from his diaries, tell some of the story:

1902 Tuesday Feb 4 "Bates laying wool room floor"

Friday Feb 7 "Bates still laying wool room floor and Lethbridge and Kilpatrick raising and carting flooring stones - Smith making wool bins - Lovegrove camped here"

1904 Friday Jan 8 "Stewart Stone working on store building - Bullocky Ned Kangaroo Sambo and Willie getting out stone etc to start inner foundations. Speed squaring stone and Fahey cutting timber with boys"

Saturday Jan 9 "Stewart Stone working on store building - Bullocky Ned Kangaroo Sambo and Willie getting stone and starting oven and fireplace"

As Liveringa homestead began to take shape, the outer walls, which were eighteen inches thick, were built from Permian Age sandstone, quarried in the area, and termed by the geologists as being "young rock - only 320 million years old". In the 1940s at the end of an intensive water boring programme, the station possessed 52

bores servicing stock as well as a 96 km frontage to the Fitzroy River, 1290 kms of fencing, 480 kms of roads, and 57 paddocks. At this stage of the station's history, the land was still running sheep, and, in the year 1942, a total of 83,000 sheep produced a quality 1500 bales of wool. A 16 stand shearing shed still exists today and, in the same area, are the shearers quarters, kitchen and recreation room along with a number of other station requirements such as workshops, saddle room, store room, cool room, meat room, dairy room and power house. The tree-lined billabong located some 150 metres away is part of the Uralla Creek and has never been known to go dry.

Amongst those who visited Liveringa were Pam Masters, Peter O'Dwyer, Bruce Gray, Henry and June Gooch, Else Archer and daughter Susan from South Hedland, Margaret Heseltine, Brian and Carmel Moore, Chris, Jenny & Mrs Kloss and grandchildren, Janice Kent-McKenzie, Gwyneth White, Fiona Grierson, Janet Lankester and Perpetua Hobcroft from Broome, and Jenny Bryant from Perth. Old photos of mule-mounted stockmen, water boring plants, grinding cutters, and donkey power from the wool era (1930-1950s) enthralled the visitors, along with the startling photo of the giant salt water croc caught in the nearby Lulugui billabong after it had lunched on a local Aboriginal.

June Gooch, a daughter of Kim Rose, Manager of Liveringa from 1930 to 1961, had married husband Henry on the lawns of the homestead and was delighted to be able to revisit the old place. She had many wonderful tales to tell of growing up in such a delightful environment, and the footprints of young June and her siblings are imprinted forever in the concrete around a swimming pool was built in August 1950 specifically to keep everyone out of the dangerous waters of the billabong.

Carol-Ann Jones