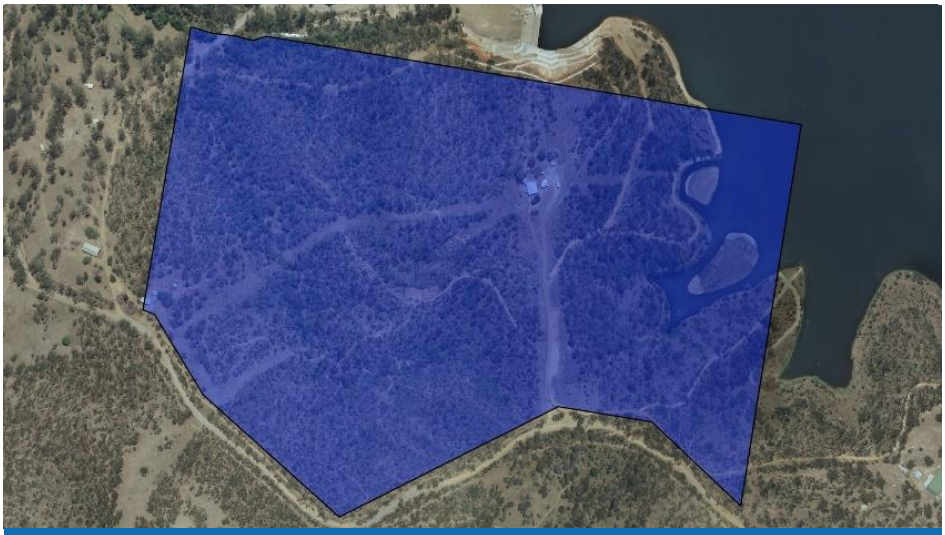
Local Heritage Places

Heritage Citation



Meteorology Station & Employees' Residence

Key details

Addresses	At 637 Lake Manchester Road, Lake Manchester, Queensland 4306
Type of place	Work residence, Research facility
Period	Federation 1890-1914, Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L1_RP31237; L1_RP31238; L149_S311960; L28_S311572
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 20 February 2004 Date of Citation — February 2015
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (C) Scientific; (H) Historical association

The employees' residence was likely built in 1912 or 1913 for workers on the Lake Manchester dam, known then as the Cabbage Tree Creek dam. Construction took place between 1912 and 1916, with further additions in the 1920s. The meteorology station was installed in 1917 and remains active. The employee's residence is one of

only three surviving buildings from the dam construction works, while the meteorology station is a rare surviving station, similar to ones installed in dam and reservoir sites around Brisbane.

History

Lake Manchester was formed in 1916 as a storage reservoir for emergency water supply to Brisbane. Three large reservoirs at Enoggera (1866), Gold Creek (1886) and Mount Crosby (1891) provided Brisbane's water supply, but a severe drought in 1902 had caused concern over the sufficiency of this supply. The Brisbane Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board began to search for locations for a new reservoir. A site on Cabbage Tree Creek was recommended by American consultant Allen Hazen in 1907, and selected by the Board in 1910. After a protracted tender process the contract was awarded to prominent Brisbane builder Arthur Midson, and construction works on a concrete dam began in 1912, with around seventy workers employed.

At that time there were very few facilities for the employees. Prior to the commencement of works, Cabbage Tree Creek had been a remote district with a small community of farmers and no local services. The area had been described in 1912 as a 'rugged and beautiful' area in which visitors could 'revel in nature's primeval grandeur.' A single road led to the proposed dam site, a stock route used by bullock drivers, and a 1912 trip was alleged to be the first time a car had been driven over the 'razor back' route from Kholo. The site of the future lake was used for agricultural activities, including cattle grazing and tree-felling, and was otherwise undeveloped.

As dam construction works began a Cabbage Tree Creek 'township' developed. The Water Board provided telephone and post office facilities for the area, and a public hall was opened in May 1913. Grocer Reginald Raymond established a store, and visiting merchants brought meat, vegetables, fruit and sly grog. Sport clubs were created and matches held against teams from the surrounding district. Nearby residents also attended games held at the works on Labour Day and Easter in 1914. By the time the dam was completed the 'township' also featured stables, a public hall with kitchen and dining room, sanitary conveniences and fowl houses.

Due to the isolation of the area many workers lived on site. Some employees were day labourers from the surrounding district who did not need on-site dwellings. Other workers lived in a camp on the construction site or adjacent land, and new workers who arrived were provided with cubicles and wire stretchers. The Water Board President EJ Manchester was later given credit for the provision of accommodation for the labourers.

This house is likely to have been one of several temporary residences constructed for the dam workers. It stands on a hill above the dam wall, an ideal position for overseeing the works. Oddly it does not appear to have been the residence of engineering supervisor Edwin Corlass, whose residence later became the caretaker's cottage. Nor did it house contractor Arthur Midson, who lived in rented accommodation in Ipswich during the construction works. It may even have been used as accommodation for visiting Board members, as its high elevation made it ideal for viewing but not accessing the work site.

The residence was probably constructed in 1913. Disputes over land ownership held up works, initially restricting labourers to tree-felling and the erection of telephone poles. Arthur Midson advertised in local newspapers for 'first-class labourers' in April 1913 and 'first-class Carpenters' in July. Cabbage Tree Creek labourers were listed as residing in the area on supplementary electoral rolls from 1913, suggesting the accommodation buildings were probably constructed around the same time. A visiting representative of the Australian Workers' Union

reported on conditions in 1914. Three ‘boarding-houses’ were present on the site by May, while sleeping accommodation was noted in July 1914 as being provided, though ‘bad’.

Work on the Cabbage Tree Creek Dam was extended beyond the predicted completion date of 1915. World War I caused labour shortages when a large number of dam workers enlisted, including Midson’s son, an engineer at the dam. Material shortages followed, though Midson reassured the public that the dam had an ample store of cement from Japan. The safety of the dam construction site was another issue. More than one worker was injured during the works, and at least two died after falling from the dam wall. Most of the dam workers were members of the Australian Workers’ Union and about 130 workers held a brief strike at the end of July 1915, agitating for better pay. Work resumed in early August.

Most of the workers’ dwellings were removed at the completion of the works in 1916, after a typhoid outbreak at the site. Only this residence and the nearby caretaker’s cottage and public hall remained, making these buildings rare surviving examples of the township associated with the dam construction works. A pumping station and electrical plant were added from 1925-7, but most of the work took place near the confluence of Cabbage Tree Creek and the Brisbane River, rather than at the dam site. These buildings were later removed.

The meteorology station was installed in early 1917 not far from the employees’ residence. The station was under the control of the Commonwealth Meteorological Branch, which had been responsible for weather records and weather stations since the Meteorology Act of 1906. In Queensland, the Branch was assisted by a Brisbane branch office, official stations and volunteers, to whom free rain gauges were issued in exchange for monthly reports. Recordings were reported to the bureau and readings from official stations were published in newspapers.

The Water Board had taken rainfall measurements during construction, amid mounting concerns over the amount of rain the dam site received. The official instalment date for this equipment is January 1917.

The station installed at Lake Manchester consisted of a standard eight inch (200mm) capacity rain gauge. Similar weather measuring instruments were installed at the Enoggera, Mt Crosby and Gold Creek reservoirs shortly after their respective openings. The Lake Manchester rain gauge helped to confirm the unfortunate shortcoming of this choice of reservoir site: the lake was in a rain shadow, consistently recording smaller rainfall totals than the other reservoirs. A pluviograph measuring rainfall intensity was installed in 1961, but removed in 1987. Of the reservoir weather stations only Mt Crosby and Lake Manchester remain active; and of these only the equipment at Lake Manchester appears to be original.

This property is a significant landmark of the area and demonstrates the type of housing provided for employees of the Brisbane City Council in the early twentieth century. The key-operated rain gauge is of particular technological interest.

Description

The house is a circa 1910 lowset timber house with several outbuildings and rain gauge stations. The house has been re-clad in asbestos cement, and has a single hipped corrugated iron roof extending in unbroken pitch across verandahs on three sides. One of the two rain gauges is an early scientific hand-wound (by key) rain gauge with calibrated chart. The House Plan is generally intact externally and internally and is in slightly deteriorated condition.[1]

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014.* It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as accommodation specifically constructed for workers employed on the Cabbage Tree Creek Dam, with the meteorology station installed when the dam was complete.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as the only surviving remnants of the structures built to house the workforce employed on the project.

Scientific

CRITERION C

The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the city's or local area's history

as the grounds have the potential to yield archaeological evidence of the early twentieth century construction tools and methods.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of

importance in the city's or local area's history

for its association with the workers who constructed the Cabbage Tree Creek dam.

References

1. Buchanan Architects, *Extended Ipswich Heritage Study,* Ipswich City Council, 1997
2. National Trust of Queensland citation, Lake Manchester Area including dam wall, suspension bridge, pipeline and hall, 2003
3. Brisbane City Council City Design, *Lake Manchester Suspension Bridge*
4. *Conservation Asset Study and Recommendations*, 2005
5. Brisbane City Council, *Mount Crosby Waterworks Heritage Study, Appendix A: Inventory of Significant Items*, 1992
6. *The Brisbane Courier, The Queenslander, Queensland Times*
7. Gardner, J., 'Stormy Weather: a History of Research in the Bureau of Meteorology', in Federation and Meteorology, 2001, http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/fam/0735.html

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