

Heritage Citation



Public Hall and Caretaker's Cottage

Key details

Also known as	Edwin Corlass' residence
Addresses	At 667 Lake Manchester Road, Lake Manchester, Queensland 4306
Type of place	Cottage, House, Hall
Period	Federation 1890-1914
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

Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
People/associations	Arthur Midson (Builder)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (C) Scientific; (D) Representative; (H) Historical association

The public hall and caretaker's cottage at Lake Manchester were built in 1912, in preparation for the construction of a new dam. The dam, sited on what was then called Cabbage Tree Creek, was intended to help improve Brisbane's water supply following droughts and concerns about water shortages. Well-known local contractor Arthur Midson was granted the contract for the dam works, estimated to cost £150,000. The timber hall and caretaker's cottage provided accommodation and recreation for construction workers and the caretaker during the four years it took to complete the dam. Associated with the nearby dam wall and suspension bridge, and the meteorology station and employee's residence, these buildings are significant for their contribution towards an understanding of the history of water supply to Brisbane in the early twentieth century and for their part in providing places of recreational resort and accommodation.

History

Water supply to Brisbane residents in the nineteenth century was the responsibility of the Brisbane Board of Waterworks. The Board, in conjunction with the Brisbane Municipal Council, constructed three large reservoirs at Enoggera (1866), Gold Creek (1886) and Mount Crosby (1891), as well as a number of service reservoirs to provide supply. However, population growth and a severe drought in 1902 caused concern over the adequacy of stored water in the early twentieth century. After a commissioned report and surveys, the Board decided in 1910 to construct a new reservoir across Cabbage Tree Creek, upstream of Mount Crosby. Contractor Arthur Midson was employed to construct the concrete dam, and began work with around seventy workers in 1912.

Cabbage Tree Creek was then a remote district with a small community of farmers and no local services. The area was described in 1912 as a 'rugged and beautiful' area in which visitors could 'revel in nature's primeval grandeur.' A stock route used by bullock drivers was the only road to the proposed dam site, 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, but was otherwise undeveloped.

Because of the isolation of the area, accommodation had to be provided for the seventy or more employees who commenced work on the dam in mid-1912. A number of workers were day labourers from the surrounding districts, but many lived on site, in temporary residences or camps on the construction site or adjacent land. In July 1911 the Board's Engineer for Water Supply, John Kemp, allotted £1,000 for a caretaker's cottage and other outbuildings in his preliminary cost estimates, while Board President EJ Manchester included accommodation as a fundamental expense for the project.

The Board also decided to appoint a supervising officer to reside on site. The Board's Engineer of Works was in charge of the dam's construction but was unable to remain on site. Supervising visits from the Board were also

impractical: the remote reservoir site was 30 kilometres from Brisbane and the 'razor back' or 'switch back' road made access particularly challenging. Accordingly, in November 1912 Victorian engineer Edwin Corlass was offered the position. His residence appears to have been constructed in late 1912 or early 1913, when he was listed on the supplementary electoral roll at Cabbage Tree Creek. Corlass brought with him his wife and five daughters, who also appear to have lived on site.

Additionally, provision was made for the workers' recreation. There were very few facilities for workers or their families, some of whom also resided on the construction site. Liquor licences were refused for the area, so other forms of entertainment had to be found. A Recreation Hall was opened in May 1913 by Corlass, in the absence of dam contractor Arthur Midson. It was one of the first structures on the dam site; legal disputes over the land resumptions had held up progress, and the work to that point had mainly been limited to land clearing. 'The hall, which is a substantial building, was nicely decorated for the occasion,' noted a contemporary report. A social and dance held to celebrate the opening was attended by construction workers and representatives of surrounding districts.

The hall proved a useful centre for the workers' down-time. More dances and socials were held there through 1913 and 1914, with free entry for women. Single men had their meals in the hall's large dining room. A cricket club formed in October 1913 used the building for fundraising activities and to host visiting teams, as did the Cabbage Tree Wanderers football team and a rifle shooting team. The wider community also made use of the hall, planning sports days, Labour Day events and Easter celebrations in 1914.

As well as providing an entertainment base for workers, the hall was used to host visiting groups. The Cabbage Tree Creek Dam works provided sufficient attraction for the Institute of Engineers to visit in 1914, and Board President EJ Manchester hosted representatives of the Water Board on occasional trips to the works. The hall was situated atop a hill overlooking the dam site, with long verandas on two sides. After refreshments inside, visitors could enjoy the view until blasting work recommenced.

Construction of the dam was completed in 1916, and a 'sumptuous dinner' was held in the hall as part of the opening celebrations. 'Dam town' was quickly shut down following a typhoid outbreak, and most of the residential quarters were removed, though the Corlass residence remained on site to become the caretaker's cottage.

Reserve caretaker James Leonard took up his situation in early 1917. In April that year Leonard was also appointed ranger of the reserve for the protection and preservation of native birds, when the lake and surrounding land were reserved for water and camping, and a bird sanctuary. Leonard and wife Bertha were listed in electoral rolls at Cabbage Tree from 1919. They had several young children, one of whom later took over Leonard's caretaking role. Through the 1920s and 1930s he took groups on the lake in the Water Board's motor launch. Positive reports of the caretaker's work were given when the Moreton Shire Council visited in 1926, emphasising 'the neatly-kept grounds, the well-cared for roads, and protective stone-formations in the bed of the creek'.

The public hall was also retained on site, and was called into service as the dam became a popular tourist attraction. Tours were organised for Board members and official parties to view additional works that were undertaken in the 1920s. Other groups followed suit, holding outings and functions at the dam. The dam was located within distance for a day trip from Brisbane, and the RACQ began to recommend it as a tour for drivers from the late 1920s. With permission from the board and site caretaker, the hall would be opened for refreshments, either catered by a group or allowing groups to use the 'spacious dining hall, kitchen and bath rooms'.

In 1922 Cabbage Tree Creek Dam was renamed Lake Manchester, in honour of the Board president EJ Manchester. Despite this, the area was referred to as Cabbage Tree in the electoral rolls to the 1940s. The site

continues to be used as a picnic and recreation area as part of the Brisbane Forest Park and is not used as a water supply except for the picnic area.

Description

The hall stands at the top of a ridge above the picnic area and is a rectangular gabled building with verandahs on each long side. Seven doors open onto the north verandah and six on the other side. The central room is a meeting room and the east end contained smaller rooms. A kitchen with a cast iron wood stove is at the west end. The interior is lined with original tongue and grooved board and there were several cast ceiling roses in situ. The outside has been reclad in fibro and Hardiplank, one end enclosed and a new iron roof added. The original stumps have been replaced by concrete ones.¹

The house is a typical early twentieth century timber and tin transverse cable cottage.

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 the first buildings to be constructed on the site of the Cabbage Tree Creek dam for the accommodation and recreation of workers.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as the first buildings to be constructed on the site of the Cabbage Tree Creek dam for the accommodation and

recreation of workers.

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 site may yield archaeological artefacts.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as an early twentieth century timber hall.

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

as a hall and cottage constructed for dam workers and also utilised by the early local community for recreation and community events.

References

1. National Trust of Queensland citation, Lake Manchester Area including dam wall, suspension bridge, pipeline and hall, 2003
2. Buchanan Architects, *Extended Ipswich Heritage Study*, Ipswich City Council, 1997
3. Brisbane City Council City Design, *Lake Manchester Suspension Bridge Conservation Asset Study and Recommendations*, 2005
4. National Library of Australia, Trove newspapers, *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser, Queenslander, The Week, Telegraph, Brisbane Courier*

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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