

Report on a Survey of Heritage Sites on Former Methodist Missions in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

Volume Two

Peter Forrest December 1990

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4.04 *Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island)*

This island exhibits the largest aggregation of sites of significance. Several informants spoke of Elcho Island as the "showpiece" of Methodist missionary endeavour in the region. Although much of the former mission precinct is in dilapidated condition, it is still possible to imagine the impression **this area must have made on visitors during its "heyday"**.

Reference is made to the attached map.

The historic area is located between the present church, the seafront, and Shepherdson College. These structures were all built in the period between the second commencement of missionary work on the island in 1943 and 1972, and thus they represent what were probably the years of most active missionary work in the region. (see map key for listing of individual sites).

The whole precinct powerfully evokes the mission years. It's carefully considered buildings contrast starkly with much of the later profligate and unsuitable building of the post 1972 period. Skilful use was made in the precinct of humble materials (local timber, and fibro), while the form of the buildings generally honestly indicates their function. The whole complex illustrates the need for self-containment and self-sufficiency in the mission period. The area evidences the genesis of Galiwin'ku, and shows its progression from the mission period to "Welfare" to self-management. The whole area is very much the work of the outstanding missionary Harold Shepherdson, who lived on the Island for almost 40 years. The area is now fondly regarded by many local people as evidence of the "old days".

It is suggested that the precinct has National significance because of its historical associations, its exemplification of resourcefulness in a remote situation, and its townscape quality.

Recommendations - nominate the precinct to the Register of the National Estate; initiate dialogue with the Galiwin'ku community with a view to securing a more caring attitude and the commencement of conservation programs.

Galiwin'ku informants - George Dangumbu, David Djalangi.

Key to Galiwin'ku Map – Historic Precinct

1	Lay missionary house c. 1942
2	Shepherdson house site (now George's yard)
3	Old (mission period) house
4	Old (mission period) house
5	Old (mission period) house
6	Old (mission period) house
7	Old (mission period) house
8	Old (mission period) house
9	Old (mission period) house
10	Site of former mission house, now demolished and replace with Logan home
11	Old (mission period) house
12	Old (mission period) house
13	Old (mission period) house
14	Former hospital, now empty. Constructed by a voluntary work party from south
15A	Saw mill
15	Plumber's shop
16	Civil works shed
17	Plumber's workshop - late mission period
18	Old power-house
19	Old power-house workshop
20	Cabinet making shop
21	Old shop
22	Old (first) hospital
23	Dispensary
24	Old engineer's shop
25	Mechanic's shop
26	First store and rations depot
26A	Kitchen for children, later sewing centre, then cabinet making shop
27	Sawmill, later first school, now outstation resource centre
28	Second church site
29	Third (present) church site
30	First church site - original building was of cypress pine and coconut fronds
31	Community and Council offices
32	Recreation Hall
33	Aboriginal meeting house
34	Freshwater spring, originally equipped with well and windmill
35	Well and windmill
36	Boat landing area
37	Alternative boat landing
38	Fruit and produce store
39	Meat and fish cool room
40	Shepherdson aircraft hangar - airstrip behind
41	Furniture making shop
42	Second store

