



CONSERVATION STUDY FOR

THE GULF HUT (CIRCUITTS HUT)

KOSCIUSKO NATIONAL PARK



PREPARED FOR THE
NSW NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BY DAVID SCOTT

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THE GULF HUT (CIRCUITT'S HUT) CONSERVATION STUDY

National Parks & Wildlife Service Reference: Circuit's Hut (L 14)
Historic Place
Murrumbidgee Plain Management Unit (D2, 5.3.2)
AMG ref 524 347 (Tantangara 1:25 000 CMA sheet)

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1.1 PREFACE

The Gulf Hut, otherwise known as Circuit's Hut, is located near Tantangara Dam in the northern part of the Kosciusko National Park, approximately 30km northeast of Kiandra. The current hut is situated on the west side of Gulf Plain, whilst the sites of earlier buildings lie scattered around the Plain, one of many plains in the area which were favoured by early pastoralists and utilised for grazing up to the formation of the Park in 1969.

The hut is one of nearly 100 shelter huts within Kosciusko National Park, managed for its historic and shelter values. This conservation study has been prepared for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in order to guide future conservation of the site.

1.2 STUDY AIMS & FORMAT

This conservation study has been prepared for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in order to guide future conservation of the site, consistent with the *Burra Charter* and the National Parks & Wildlife Act (1974).

The aims of the study are:

- provide a record of historical & documentary evidence on the site,
- to assess the cultural significance & prepare a statement of significance for the site,
- to recommend appropriate policies and actions to conserve the site based on its significance and usage.

The study is divided into two distinct parts. The first identifies the cultural significance of the site and the second sets forth a conservation policy and implementation strategy for the site based on the findings of the cultural significance.

The study was prepared in accordance with a number of guides including J.S.Kerr's *The Conservation Plan* (1990) and the *Australian ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance* (the *Burra Charter*), together with values tables and guidelines as used by the Australian Heritage Commission.

1.3 SOME DEFINITIONS

- Circuit's* name used to describe the existing hut in the Kosciusko National Park Plan of Management (1988) presumably based on post-war snow lease maps which adopted the name from one of the owners of the run from the early 20th century - Mr George Circuit. Apart from being incorrectly spelt, this name is really a misnomer - Mr Circuit did not frequent the property, whilst ownership of the property was in the company name Uabba Limited - of which Mr Circuit was a director.
- Circuit's* correct spelling; used throughout this report & proposed for adoption by NPWS.
- The Gulf* name given to the narrow ravine through which the Murrumbidgee River flows between Currango & Gulf Plains; where in the 1950s the river was contained by the Tantangara Dam. More widely used as an abbreviation of *The Gulf Run* (property) or *Gulf Plain*. Name is believed to originate with early exploration & settlement of the area in the 1830s & 1840s; subsequently adopted when naming the adjacent plain, pastoral holding (run) and hut.
- The Gulf Hut* name used widely by local communities to describe both the current hut and earlier huts at the site. Name was taken from the 19th century name for the pastoral holding - *The Gulf Run*.
- Doosies, Fells* supposedly alternate names for the existing hut listed in *Huts of the High Country*. Names not heard of or upheld by local families, therefore cannot be supported

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

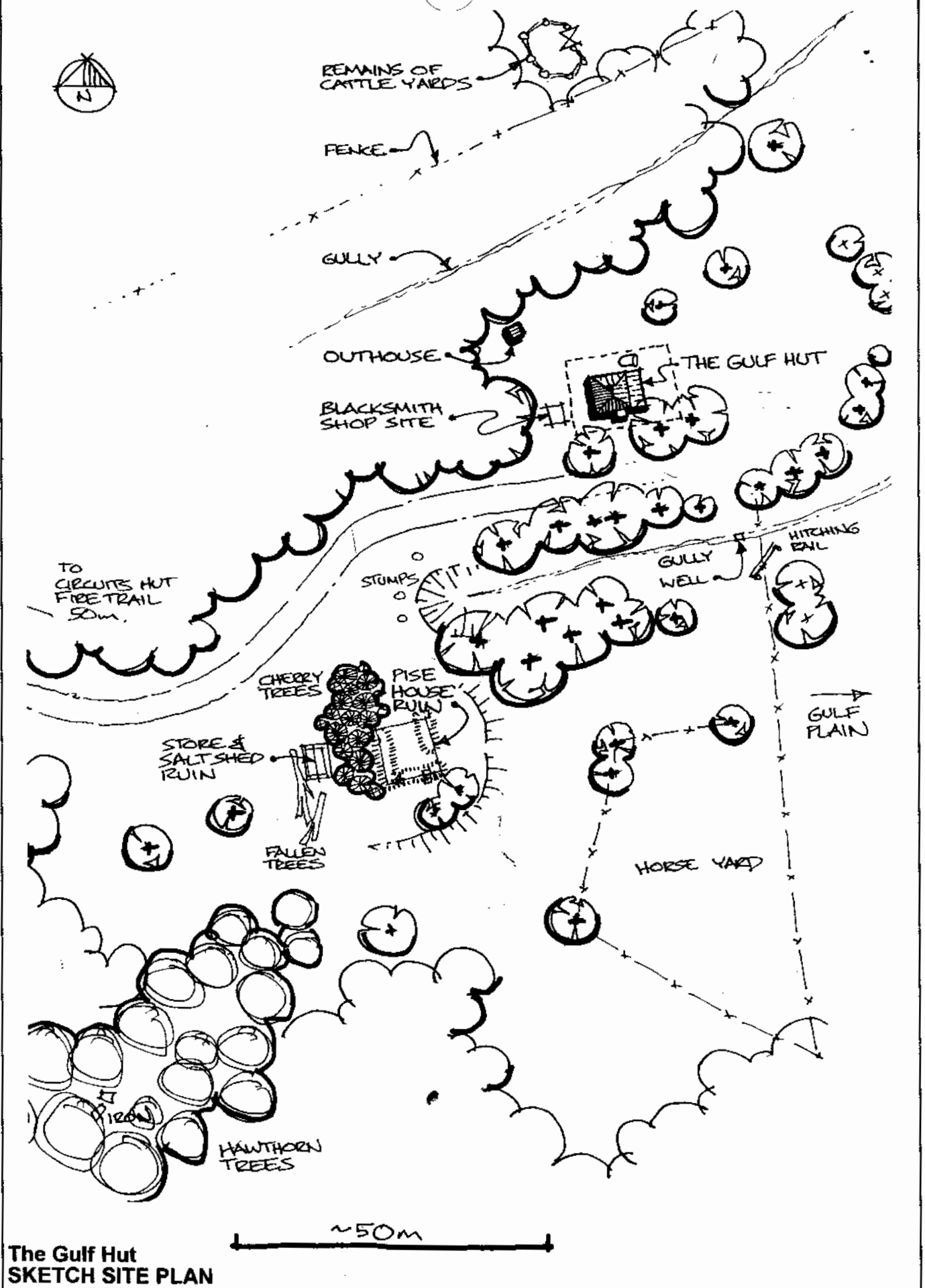
Acknowledgment is made to Alan West, Daphne Bell (nee West), Leslie Oldfield and Mike Sutton for their kind assistance with the project. Staff of the ANU Archive of Business & Labour, National Library of Australia, and State Library of NSW (including the Mitchell Library) also provided assistance.

1.5 AUTHORSHIP

This report was prepared by David Scott, a conservation architect based in Canberra, on contract to NPWS over the period February-June 1994. Historical notes previously compiled by M Pearson were incorporated substantially verbatim to reduce the research component of the project, so research emphasis could be placed on the investigation and compilation of scattered file material covering the works programmes.

The project was managed from NPWS Tumut District office, by ranger Lynette Evans. Review of the draft was undertaken by Tumut District staff and head office Cultural Heritage Services Division staff including Miriam Stacy and Geoff Ashley.

Curtilage Defined As Entire Area Shown



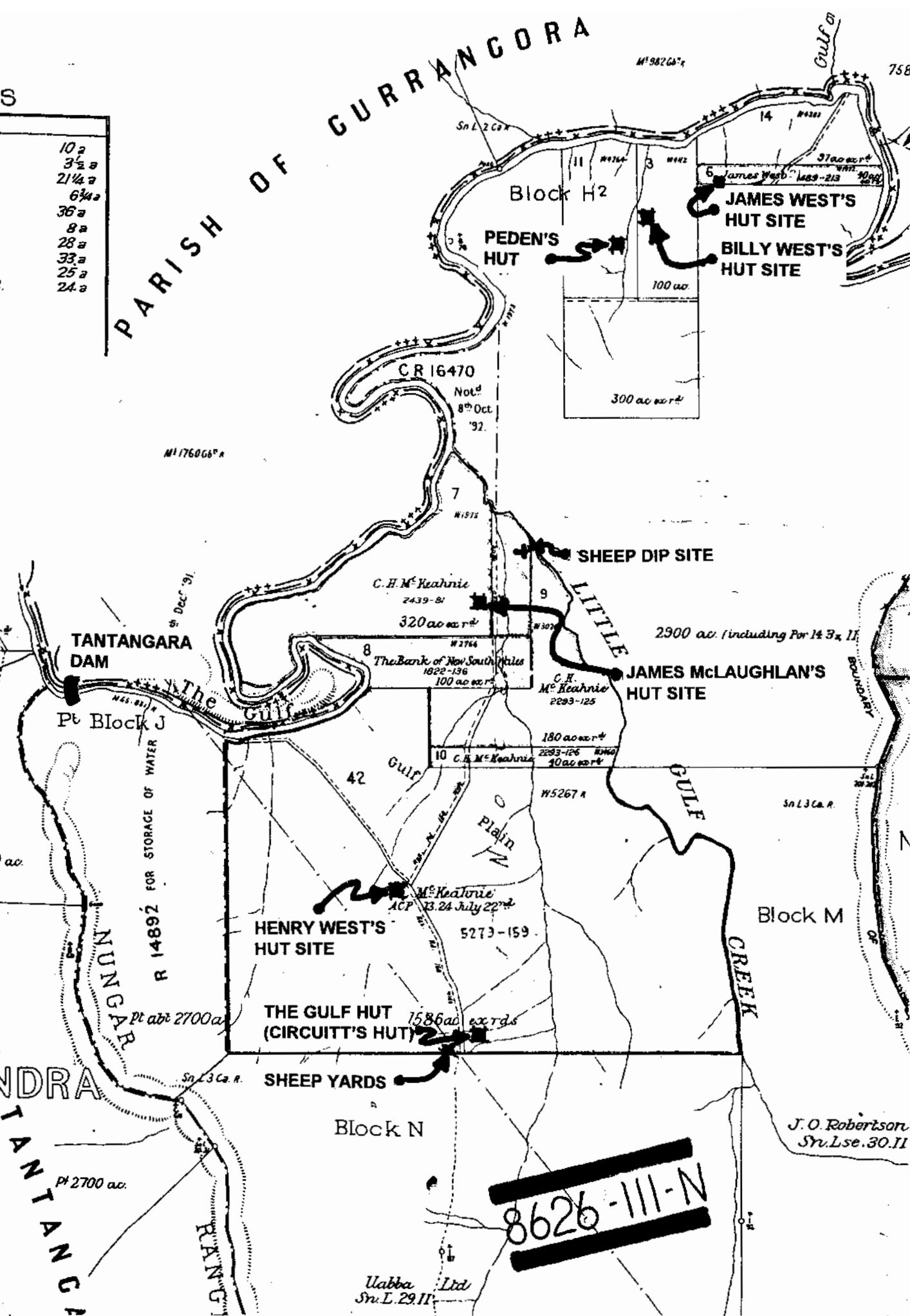
The Gulf Hut
SKETCH SITE PLAN

PERMITS

10a
3 1/2 a
2 1/4 a
6 3/4 a
36 a
8 a
28 a
33 a
25 a
24 a

PARISH OF GURRANGORA

PARISH OF TANTANGARA



Extract from latest edition of Gabramatta Parish map (Department of Lands)

THE GULF HUT (CIRCUIT'S HUT) CONSERVATION STUDY
David Scott for NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service

November 1995

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In developing a statement of the cultural significance of The Gulf Hut a historical assessment of the site was compiled based on analysis of documentary and physical evidence. In accordance with the *Burra Charter*, the cultural significance statement was developed without reference to management issues or implications, which are examined later in Conservation Policy analysis (Section 4).

2.2 ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTARY & ORAL EVIDENCE

2.2.1 Henry West on the High Plains

The high plains at the northern end of the Snowy Mountains were being grazed by squatters from the late 1830s. By the mid 19th century the high plains had been carved up into large pastoral lease holdings or 'runs', including Cooleman, Currangorambla East/West/South, Tantangara and The Gulf. These holdings, were often of the order of 20,000 - 30,000 acres, typically available on an annual lease⁽¹⁾.

In 1854 Henry & Jane West took up a selection at Gabramatta, 10km east of The Gulf⁽²⁾. The selection, a small plot of freehold for a homestead, was the lease to the *Gabramatta Run* which extended over nearly the entire remainder of the parish, and at this time is believed to have incorporated The Gulf Plain⁽¹⁾. Thus commenced a long association between the West family and The Gulf Plain. *Gabramatta* has remained the family home to this day⁽¹⁾, just east of the Kosciusko National Park boundary.

Henry Alfred West migrated to Australia from England during the late 1830s. A ships' captain, he was offered prime land on Brickfield Hill where Anthony Hordern was to establish an estate. Henry declined, the prospect of a life in agriculture "*spent growing potatoes*" was enough to drive him out to the fringes of the colony in search of pastoral land.⁽¹⁾

West squatted on the plains at the northern end of the Snowy Mountains including Currango(rambla) and The Gulf, and by 1846 had acquired a lease on Cooleman Plain. In the same year he married Jane Power, daughter of Major Power of the 50th Regiment of Royal Marines, and brought her back to Cooleman where they built a home of slab walls & a shingle roof. The plains were one of the most isolated parts of the colony, supplies had to be brought in from Goulburn, over 300km away. Their lifestyle was rudimentary and the couple used a hand-mill to grind wheat. Great blizzards struck the plains and on one occasion some of their cattle died in snowdrifts 6m deep.⁽²⁾

At differing times during the early years, the Wests resided at *Brindabella* and *Currangorambla*. In 1854, Jane was employed at Currangorambla Homestead, possibly in a slab & bark house near the current site of Old Currango Homestead⁽²⁾, prior to taking up their selection at Garamatta.

Henry & Jane West had 13 children including 9 sons⁽¹⁾, several of whom would later be involved with the Gulf.

2.2.2 Leases and Selection at The Gulf

At some stage of the mid 19th century Henry West constructed a slab hut on The Gulf Plain, on the creek 1km north of the existing hut⁽¹⁾. It is unclear as to whether this occurred during the 1840s, prior to selection at Gabramatta, or in subsequent years when Henry had the Gabramatta Run - which may have included The Gulf Plain until the late 1860s.

During the mid 19th century one of the main trails in to the Kiandra goldfields, and on to Tumut, passed the southern end of Gulf Plain. The trail came from Rock Forest across Nungar Plain, climbed Nungar Ridge at about the site of the existing Schofield's Hut, descended to Kelly's Plain, passed Tantangara Homestead (*Witses Hut*) on Blanket Plain, and arrived at Kiandra via Wild Horse Plain. The trail was used frequently by miners en route to the goldfield and stockmen passing out onto the leases.⁽¹⁺³⁾

Henry West appears to have lost control of Gulf Plain by 1866, when The Gulf Run of 9,600 acres is declared vacant⁽¹⁹⁾. There is much conjecture over the exact boundaries of The Gulf Run, whether it was centred on Gulf

Plain & Nungar Plain or centred on Kelly's Plain (site of existing Tantangara Reservoir). It appears likely that the boundaries changed frequently as acreage was lost or won from the neighbouring runs of Gabramatta in the east and Tantangara in the west. It is even possible that Gulf Plain remained a part of the Garamatta Run until 1885; the first parish map (c1900) shows The Gulf Plain as part of the 1885 Pastoral Holding Number 499 known as 'Tantangara or The Gulph'.

By 1876 W.E.Stanbridge & J.McGaw had acquired The Gulf Run, which had expanded to 30,000 acres⁽²⁰⁾ - 3 times the size of The Gulf Plain! They remained in occupation until 1883⁽²¹⁾, when Stephen White acquired the run, and from which point it is always referred to as the *Tantangara or The Gulf Run*⁽²³⁾. In 1885 the run, now stated as 20,000 acres, had passed to Samuel McCaughey who was running 18,500 sheep on it⁽²³⁾. After 1885 the run was regazetted as Pastoral Holding Number 499 of 24,700 acres, with half being available by lease and half via an annual license. McCaughey retained possession of both lease & license till at least 1889⁽⁴⁾, and may have been the last owner of the run as it was broken up into smaller lease parcels in 1896⁽³⁾. McCaughey was a large landholder from the Urana district in the western Riverina, where in 1889 he was occupying a further 92,000 acres including stations at *Coonong, Coree, Euabolong, Goolgumbra* and *Singorambra*⁽⁴⁾. The 1899 Pastoral Directory lists McCaughey as owner of the *Currangorambla* (sic) and *Tantangera* (sic) Runs (33,000 sheep combined).⁽⁵⁾

From the late 1870s The Gulf Plain was opened up to selectors and the West family was at the forefront of this land acquisition. James West selected portion 6, on the bank of the Murrumbidgee east of the existing Peden's Hut, in August 1876⁽³⁾. Here he built a small hut, probably of vertical slab construction, and a set of yards. This site is currently defined by a clump of cherry trees planted during his occupation.⁽¹⁾

James McLaughlan followed with the acquisition of portions 7 & 8, on the Murrumbidgee at the junction with Little Gulf Creek, in October 1877 and May 1880 respectively. McLaughlan established a slab⁽¹⁾ hut and large set of yards on portion 7, of which there is no evidence remaining.

During 1890-91, the elderly Henry West joined in with the acquisition of portions 3 & 11, on the Murrumbidgee at the site of the existing Peden's Hut. Another of Henry's sons, Billy West, appears to have taken over the management of this land for he constructed a slab house & large set of yards on the east side of the creek, 150m north of where Peden's is now located. One feature of the yards was a gate that pivoted on the recessed bottom of a rum bottle. Billy was involved in sawmilling and would eventually operate several mills in the area including Alpine Creek, where he eventually went into partnership with brother James. Materials from the ruin of his house would later be salvaged & used to construct Peden's Hut⁽¹⁾, although the remains of the chimney stones are still evident.

2.2.3 Charles McKeahnie and a Pise House

Two daughters of Henry & Jane West married into the McKeahnie family. It is believed that Elizabeth, the wife of Charles Henry McKeahnie is one of these.⁽¹⁾

McKeahnie owned the *Booroombi Run* (later Booroomba) of 18,000 acres west of Tharwa. He was there by 1885⁽⁴⁾, possibly earlier, and Booroomba remained in his name until about 1925⁽⁶⁾. A.McKeahnie, presumably a relation, owned *Orroral*⁽²⁰⁾, then *Whit Whittal*⁽²³⁾ (part of KNP) and eventually *Cuppacumbalong Run* at Tharwa from around 1913 to 1920, running up to 36,000 sheep & 500 cattle⁽⁷⁾.

The relationship with the West family led to McKeahnie's involment in selection at The Gulf Plain. In November & December of 1884, he acquired portions 9 & 10 on Little Gulf Creek, and by 1887 had acquired portions 7 & 8 from James McLaughlan⁽³⁾. In 1884 he was granted 4 Conditional Purchase Leases (CPLs 477, 478, 479, 492) of 1586 acres on Little Gulf Creek, including Henry West's Hut and the future site of The Gulf Hut (Circuit's Hut).

A Pise House was constructed on CPL 492 near the site of the existing Gulf Hut towards the end of the 19th century⁽¹⁺¹⁴⁾, as McKeahnie owned the land from 1884 this study has credited him as being responsible for its construction although there remains slight possibility that the building was constructed before his acquisition.

The pise house was built on the treeline looking east across Gulf Plain and comprised 3 rooms, a kitchen & two bedrooms, plus verandahs front & rear. Roof was corrugated iron, and the floor was timber. Materials from the McLaughlan's Hut down on Gulf Plain Creek were salvaged and re-used to build a storage shed adjacent to the house; the walls of the shed were short as the vertical slabs from the old hut had rotten ends. A large set of timber cattle yards located approximately 400m southwest of the house is believed to have been constructed at this time.⁽¹⁾

The house was fitted with a telephone on the party line running Currango-Gulf-Rock Forest-Adaminaby (exchange).⁽¹⁾ Thomas Shanley was one of the tenderers who applied to McKeahnie to install the line - it is not known whether he actually undertook this work.⁽⁸⁾

The early parish map shows that the existing Circuitts Hut Fire Trail was gazetted as a road reserve early in the century. This route was probably used to bring in materials for the house.

In 1913 McKeahnie's 4 Conditional Purchase Leases were 4 amalgamated into portion 42, a freehold conditional purchase, although the final payment would not be cleared until 1941!⁽¹⁷⁾

In May 1908, McKeahnie had acquired the adjoining Scrub Lease 245 from Archibald Peden. This comprised 3600 acres extending from the south boundary of portion 42 to Nungar Creek.⁽³⁾

2.2.4 Uabba Ltd

In 1918, Uabba Limited acquired McKeahnie's freehold land at The Gulf, portions 7, 8, 9, & 10, plus Scrub Lease 245 from Charles McKeahnie.⁽²⁴⁾ Uabba adopted 'The Gulf' as the name for their property on Gulf Plain.

Uabba Limited comprised George Circuitt and Doctor ET Thring - always known as 'E.T.' The company was based near Lake Cargellico, 150km west of Forbes.⁽¹⁾ The property was named Uabba, or Uabbalong, whilst today the nearby town is known as Euabalong. Note that 'Euabalong' had been one of Samuel McCaughey's holdings in 1889.⁽⁴⁾

George Circuitt was a Scot, who reportedly learnt his trade as a jackeroo whilst employed by Frederick Campbell at Yarrowlumla.⁽⁹⁺¹³⁾ The Pastoral Directory lists a 'Circuitt & Co.' as owner of *Cuppacumbalong Run* in 1909 and 1911 - this might refer to George in an early enterprise.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Gulf was used only as a summer grazing pasture, the winters being too severe to maintain stock on the run without the risk of heavy losses. A mix of cattle and sheep would be brought up from lowland stations at the start of December and would be returned by the following May, prior to any heavy falls of snow.⁽¹⁾ Stock numbers at *The Gulf* prior to the Second World War were of the order of 3000-5000 sheep and 130-200 cattle.⁽¹¹⁾

Uabba Ltd employed 'Herc' (Hercules) West to manage *The Gulf Run*. Herc, son of James West and a grandson of Henry West, was living on Henry's old property *Gabramatta*. In the early years Herc spent a lot of time up on the run, living in the old pise house. Leo Russell and Thomas O'Neill worked as stockmen at *The Gulf* up to the 1940s. Following his marriage to Valerie Norris in 1929, Herc spent less time living on the run; *Gabramatta-Gulf* & return was an easy day's ride, whilst the stockmen camped on site.⁽¹⁾

Until about 1925, *The Gulf* was operated in conjunction with *Uabba* at Lake Cargellico, the stock having to be droved the 450 km each way. Past this time *The Gulf* was operated with *Dangelong*, southeast of Cooma, reducing the travelling distance to around 100 km.⁽¹⁺¹²⁾ *Dangelong Homestead* is an early Monaro homestead built with convict labour. It was managed by Thomas Shanley, a step-brother to Herc West.⁽¹⁾

In 1928 Scrub Lease 245 expired, but was reacquired by Uabba as Snow Lease 29/11 which appears to have carried over to 1943⁽³⁾, when the formation of the Kosciusko State Park brought changes to the lease system.

2.2.5 Ghosts in the Night

One of the more famous stories surrounding *The Gulf* is that of the ghost of Bevan Gavin (spelling uncertain). In *Huts of the High Country* the ghost is misquoted as being Jimmy Gavel; unfortunate for poor Jimmy who was still alive some 50 years after the events - which appear to have occurred in the 1920s. Gavin was a shepherd on one of the leases on Gulf Plain.⁽¹⁾

From *Huts of the High Country*:

"Tom Taylor told me the story ... One blizzarding day on the way home from shopping at Adaminaby he had missed his hut and wandered on to Circuitt's. The weather remained foul and after eating all his food he shot his horse. This was more an act of kindness, however, for some time later the intact body was found with three bullet holes in the head. Old Gavin was found dead in the snowdrifts of *The Gulf* with a bottle of rum still sitting beside him in the snow.

"He had a long waist-length beard which was cut off and nailed to the mantelpiece of the old hut. When Tom Taylor visited the place later he thought someone had cut off a billy goats beard to make a shaving brush and not liking hairs near his tucker shoved it in an old tobacco tin. That night the door suddenly flew open and Tom Shanley, his mate, said 'Its old Gavin coming back for his beard!'

The above account includes considerable embellishment - consistent with a Tom Taylor yarn.

Herc West's version of events states that Gavin had apparently been returning from a binge in Adaminaby, probably intoxicated, had become lost in a blizzard and perished. His body was found at the point Gulf Plain Creek flows into the Murrumbidgee River. Herc was one of the men involved in recovering the body; apparently one of the team cut off the beard and pinned it to the back of the door in the pise house (the weatherboard hut was yet to be built).⁽¹⁾

Apparently the door on the old pise house always had a poor fitting latch and was prone to opening by itself in the wind. Rumour has it that the door would still open even if it had been securely wired shut as Gavin's ghost returned each night in search of his beard. The stockmen were a fairly superstitious lot; it worried them enough that they would prefer to camp outside than sleep in the house; so Herc slept alone inside.⁽¹⁾

Eventually Herc tossed the beard on the fire during a cleanup of the hut.⁽¹⁾

Another death had occurred many years earlier at *The Gulf*. A stockman named Chippendale, possibly associated with the Chippendale family from Naas and employed by Henry West at Gabramatta, had set off to return home to the Murray along the trail to Kiandra when bad weather set in. Sometime later, James West was riding up on Nungar Ridge with another stockman when they spotted a boot sticking out from under a log. The boot was of a unique design which the men easily recognised as belonging to Chippendale. James dismounted and extracted the boot from under the log, only to find that a section of leg as far as the hip was still attached. His companion took fright and bolted. It is believed that Chippendale had perished in the storm, possibly having crawled under the log for shelter, and his body had later been set upon by dingoes.⁽¹⁾

2.2.6 Construction of a Weatherboard Cottage at The Gulf

In 1937 Herc West supervised the construction of the existing cottage close to the pise house. The cottage was of weatherboard construction with a unique gambrel roof form, and concrete foundation walls were used in lieu of timber stumps. The eastern wall featured an open verandah without a floor. The cottage was lined throughout with dressed softwood lining boards and had a chimney of concrete & stone and concrete blocks which appear to have been precast on site. The completed building was painted a tan colour. The cottage was built by Mr Lance McDonald of Cooma at a cost of £243 (refer contract specification in Appendix B).

The cottage contained two bedrooms, a kitchen and a large pantry/store which housed a meat safe. Large lockers were used to store personal gear and bedding when the building was not in use during the winter. A steel water tank collected rainwater from the roof. The telephone was relocated to the cottage from the old pise house.⁽¹⁾

The new cottage faced east to catch the morning sun - a common practice with alpine huts, however the design is unusual in having a long north wall which is devoid of windows. This could either be a reflection of the building's use only during the summer months - when catching the sun for warmth was not an issue, or it could be a reflection that the building was a standard design (ie: project home) suited to narrow residential blocks and had not been altered to suit the site at *The Gulf*.

The cottage was surrounded with a fence to keep stock out; located about 10' (3m) from the front but closer to the sides & rear.⁽¹⁾

An outhouse was located to some distance behind the cottage. The existing outhouse is believed to be a replacement constructed by either the SMA or NPWS.⁽¹⁾

A Blacksmiths Shop was constructed at the same time or soon after. This was a small lean-to of slabs & iron, located about 4m from the western door on the cottage.⁽¹⁾

The pise house remained habitable for many years. Mike Sutton & party spent a night there in 1946 when heavy snow forced them to retreat from the high country. From a camp in the Bag Hut (south of Currango) they rode through a blizzard to Smith's Hut at Kellys Plain, then through waist-deep snow to The Gulf Hut, across Nungar and down to Rock Forest⁽¹⁴⁾.

Herc West kept the weatherboard cottage locked-up for his own use whilst leaving the pise house open to shelter passers-by.⁽¹⁾

The Storage Shed adjacent to the pise house was still in use through the post-war years. At one time it housed a sulky, although it was more widely used to store rock salt for the stock or tins of drench. Several of the old

drench tins were damaged and leaking arsenic over the floor; a mob of sheep got in one day and there was "dead sheep all over the place!"⁽¹⁾

2.2.7 Post-war Activity

Following the Second World War, Uabba Ltd lost possession of its leases on Gulf Plain although it would continue to run stock on several thousand acres of freehold land covering all of the plain between the Murrumbidgee River and the cottage. In 1943 Herc West acquired snow lease J10, 1380 acres immediately south of the cottage on the east side of the fire trail.⁽¹⁵⁾

Stock continued to be brought up from *Dangelong* each summer; now it was primarily sheep, numbering 2200-4900 depending on season.⁽¹⁶⁾

The smaller holding removed the need to employ stockmen on the run. From the late 1940s Herc West was undertaking the bulk of the work alone, with assistance from his children Alan, Daphne & Neville during school holidays. The work on the lease provided a release for the children who spent most of the year at boarding school. Whilst the other boarders would be heading home to Sydney to spend a week at the Royal Easter Show, the West children "were bound for *The Gulf* to spend our time picking flies out of sheep!"⁽¹⁾

The cottage was generally used for only short periods at a time - odd weekends and 1-2 weeks during the holidays. The family home at Gabramatta was only a few hours ride away, so supplies were readily obtainable during long stays.⁽¹⁾

The children also assisted with drenching. In the yards southwest of the house, sheep were packed into a race - 120 at a time - for drenching. Daphne recalls drenching 3000 in a single day prior to riding down to Gabramatta to drench the sheep there on the following day.⁽¹⁾

In quieter times, the telephone party line provided entertainment for the children. They could listen in to groups of "mainly old women" living in homesteads across the high plains chatting endlessly whilst husbands were off on stock work. The line was disconnected and the batteries were placed in storage each time they left the cottage. The number for *The Gulf* Hut was 4-5-U.⁽¹⁾

2.2.8 Final Years of Grazing

In February 1954 ownership of both *The Gulf* and *Dangelong* transferred from Uabba Ltd to The Scottish Australian Company⁽¹⁷⁾. There was minimal change to the management of these properties - they continued to be operated in conjunction with one another and Herc West remained manager of *The Gulf*⁽¹⁾.

The change in ownership appears to have been part of a widespread takeover of Uabba Ltd by the Scottish Australian Company which included the *Uabba Run* at Lake Carjellico. This property was later owned by the Australian Estates Company (c1967)⁽¹⁸⁾ although the Circuit family remained there until recent years⁽¹⁾.

The pise house deteriorated to a ruinous condition through the early 1950s. At some time in the mid 1950s, Herc West salvaged what materials he could for use back at Gabramatta, leaving the building shell to collapse.⁽¹⁾

During the early 1950s, surveyors from the Snowy Mountains Authority (SMA) used to camp in and around the cottage whilst doing mapping & hydrology work for the Tantangara Dam project. The camp included up to 40 tents surrounding the cottage. The SMA enclosed one end of the verandah with iron to form a woodstore and an enclosed space for a kerosene refrigerator.⁽¹⁾ A refrigerator remains present in one of the back rooms, possibly dating from this period.

In September 1956 *The Gulf* was again sold, this time to Mervyn Mansfield⁽¹⁷⁾, and Herc West retired at Gabramatta. Mervyn was a local grazier with a property at the Six Mile, now mostly covered by the waters of Lake Eucumbene at Anglers Reach.⁽¹⁾

Mervyn continued to run stock at *The Gulf* only in the summer months, usually a mix of cattle and sheep. He had no family but a Swedish housekeeper, Joanne Lobel (spelling uncertain), a strong & fiery woman he used to incite regularly. On occasion she would accompany him up to *The Gulf* and assist in some of the work, including branding - for which she had an appropriate aptitude! Mike Sutton and Alan West, who had the snowlease at Peden's Hut, used to assist Mervyn with some stock work and drenching.⁽¹⁾

There was an increasing influx of tourists into *The Gulf* during the 1960s including bushwalkers, horse riders and people in four-wheel drives. Occasionally Mervyn would lead tourists out on horse trail rides, however most o

the people would come in and camp (uninvited!) around the buildings. Mervyn was fairly accommodating, bearing in mind *The Gulf* was freehold land rather than a lease, but occasionally he would get his own back on the visitors. One evening, a large group came in and established a camp around the cottage; it was the day before drenching. The following morning several of the visitors were watching the lead up work with interest. Mervyn soon had all of them assigned tasks and sat back on a post. When Mike Sutton casually inquired of Mervyn what work he was going to do now that the visitors appeared to be doing everything, received the laconic reply "I'm gonna sit on this fencepost and tell them all what to do!"⁽¹⁾

2.2.9 NPWS Acquisition & Management

In May 1967 the freehold land at *The Gulf*, including the cottage and previous hut sites, was surrendered to the Crown for inclusion within the Kosciusko National Park⁽¹⁷⁾. In 1969 all grazing ceased on the high plains within the Kosciusko National Park. Gabramatta Plain remains the highest area outside of the National Park still used for grazing.

The Gulf area is widely used by fishermen, horseriders and bushwalkers. Public vehicle access is not permitted beyond the Tantangara Dam Road although some illegal vehicle access occurs along the Circuitts Hut Fire Trail.

The cottage is in good condition, partly due to the quality of the construction being better than other buildings in the area. The chimney has developed a pronounced lean although according to Daphne-bell the chimney has always leant to some extent. The cottage is left open for interpretation and public shelter purposes. The site appears to be especially popular with horse riders, particularly locals from the Gabramatta & Yaouk areas.

2.3 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE - DESCRIPTION OF SITE ELEMENTS

2.3.1 Site Definition

The Site consists primarily of two intact buildings (weatherboard cottage & iron outhouse) the ruins or sites of three other buildings (McKeahnie's Pise House, Salt Shed & Blacksmith Shop) and three sets of yards (cattle-, sheep-, & horse yards). Associated cultural landscape features include evidence of fencelines, gateposts, introduced plantings and the old telephone 'party' line. The majority of site elements are associated with the pastoral use of the Site.

The Site curtilage is contained within the treeline below (east of) the Circuitts Hut Fire Trail, a non-contiguous group of elements broken up by belts of snowgums, roughly stretching from a sprawling clump of Hawthorns 100m south of the existing hut to the horse yards 100m north of the hut. Refer Site Plan, p.4 .

The sites of several buildings associated with the early settlement of the plain are located close to The Gulf Hut; these are briefly described in 2.3.9 .

2.3.2 Environment

The site is located in the northern part of the Kosciusko National Park, in an area generally known as the *high plains* or *northern plains*. Gulf Plain, one of the smaller plains, is a frost hollow, a naturally occurring grassy plain devoid of trees. The Murrumbidgee River, which drains most of the high plains, forms the northern boundary to the plain whilst on other sides are steep ridges of eucalypt (predominantly snowgum) woodland. Some clearing of the surrounding hills is likely to have occurred up to as late as 1930, however the exact extent is not known and there is considerable regeneration following the cessation of grazing.

Occurring at an elevation of around 1250m, Gulf Plain is below what is generally accepted to be the 'snowline', however the Site is still subject to frequent winter snowfalls although it would be unusual for the snow to remain on the ground for more than a few days.

Gulf Plain together with adjacent Nungar Plain are the closest plains to private pastoral land - in this case Gabramatta Plain. The proximity of the private land is reflected in management pressures for the control of feral animals, bushfire hazard reduction measures and an increased use of the area by horse riders.

The existing hut is located on the edge of the trees on the west side of the plain. The site was obviously chosen for climactic reasons, being protected from cold southerly & westerly winds whilst catching the morning sun, and prior to the eucalypt regeneration around the hut would have offered a commanding view of stock pastured on the plain.