



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES – ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Westbrook Homestead is an excellent example of a simple Victorian Georgian residence that was designed to take into account the hot Australian climate. The balanced proportions of the building, the line of the roof and the symmetrical form of the chimneys all lend *Westbrook Homestead* a simple elegance that is enhanced by its sylvan setting. (Criterion 1.1)

Westbrook Homestead is situated on a flat open site with mature trees (mainly fruit trees) scattered about the house. The views from the house are of open paddocks with grazing sheep. (Criterion 1.1)

The detached kitchen is a fine example of vernacular architecture. (Criterion 1.1)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Westbrook Homestead is associated with the historical development of Busselton, particularly the period of consolidation when the community had to survive the initial struggle of establishing farms in an unknown land and interacting with the local Aboriginal community. These interactions often saw gross misunderstandings on both sides. At the time Dawson purchased the 'Westbrook' property, the community had weathered hard times and was expanding outwards, permitting the settlers to move away from the confines of the initial settlement. (Criterion 2.1)

The design of *Westbrook Homestead* shows the growing awareness of the early settlers to design for the climate rather than continue to use design styles which were more appropriate for a colder climate. *Westbrook Homestead* shows the move towards an 'Australian' style of architecture. Its surrounding verandahs served not only as a cooling device but were essential for the protection of soft brickwork during winter rains. (Criteria 2.2 & 2.4)

The detached kitchen is an important remnant of the historical evolution of the Australian house. (Criterion 2.2)

Westbrook Homestead is closely associated with Elijah Dawson who was one of the first settlers in the Busselton area. Dawson was a valuable assistant not only

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. A *Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

to Captain Molloy, but also to the Bussell family. He assisted both families in the establishment of their properties at the Vasse, before establishing his own farms at Wonnerup and then *Westbrook Homestead*. He was an important figure in the local community, holding the post of Constable for over ten years. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Westbrook Homestead has the potential to yield valuable archaeological evidence that could provide detailed information about how early settlers lived and farmed in the Busselton area during the second half of the 19th century. This evidence may exist beneath the floorboards of the building itself, in the immediate vicinity of the building and around the remainder of the property. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Westbrook Homestead contributes to the Busselton community's sense of place as it is recognised as an important component of the area's historical development. The place embodies the past endeavours of early settlers in overcoming hardships and consolidating their properties, thus enabling the community to move forward into economic prosperity. This feeling is enhanced by the place's association with Elijah Dawson who is considered to be an important early settler. The property was also the home of Michael Dawson and was associated with John Lloyd. It is one of the better cared for places in the area and people have a high regard for the property. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The degree to which *Westbrook Homestead* has retained its high level of integrity and authenticity is unusual in a building of this age. Very few buildings of this vintage have survived in the Busselton district with this level of integrity and authenticity. Kitchens were often built away from the main house as they so often had a tendency to burn down. Many of these kitchens have not survived as they have burnt down or they have been demolished once an interior kitchen was installed. The survival of the detached kitchen is therefore considered to be unusual in the district. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Westbrook Homestead is representative of the dwellings erected by the early settlers in the Busselton district during the 1850s and 1860s. These buildings display a growing awareness of the extremes of the Australian climate, through the use of verandahs, and should be considered as the prototypes of an Australian style of architecture rather than merely copies of buildings which the settlers had known in the United Kingdom. (Criterion 6.2)

Detached kitchens were commonly constructed by early settlers to lessen the chance of losing their main residence to fire. The materials used in the construction of these kitchens varied widely, but were usually materials which were readily available to the settler. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Westbrook Homestead is in excellent condition considering its age and has obviously been well cared for. There is evidence of cracking in some areas, however these do not appear to be moving.

The original slab kitchen is in poor condition and requires some maintenance.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The building was originally designed to be used as a farm residence and it continues to be used for this purpose. *Westbrook Homestead* has retained a high degree of integrity.

The detached kitchen has retained its original plan, although at present (1999) it is not being used. It is considered to have a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Westbrook Homestead has retained a high percentage of original fabric including lathe and plaster ceilings, interior walls, window and door joinery and their associated furniture. Some of the window panes are thought to be original. The replacement of the verandah posts and floor and the new roof cladding in no way detracts from the authenticity of the place as they represent the ongoing care that has been bestowed on the building.

The original plan of the building has been retained with only minimal changes. Considering the long history of the building it is unusual that the verandah has been retained to nearly its original extent with only the western side being enclosed. The enclosure of the western verandah and a portion of the rear verandah represent the continuing gentle development of the place and the changing needs of its occupants. This enclosure and the glass enclosure at the rear, could easily be removed at a later date if desired.

The interior of the detached kitchen has largely been re-clad with gyp rock sheets and a new corrugated galvanized steel shed has been attached to the southern side. However, these changes have not compromised the original fabric which remains largely intact. The detached kitchen is thought to have a high degree of authenticity.

Westbrook Homestead has retained a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Fiona Bush in April 1999, with amendments by Heritage Council officers and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Westbrook Homestead was constructed between 1863 and 1866 for the Dawson family. It is a single-storey brick and tile building with verandahs to all four sides. An old slab kitchen, constructed in the 1850s is located at the rear of the house.

Busselton was first settled by the Bussell family in 1834. The Bussells originally settled at Augusta, later moving to the Vasse when they discovered that this area had better farmland. By 1839, the majority of Augusta settlers had moved away, many settling at the Vasse. The Vasse settlement came to be known as Busselton, and the town was declared in 1839. The settlers' initial misunderstandings with local Aborigines restricted settlement to lands surrounding a central area occupied by the Bussells.¹

The settlers soon discovered that they could carry out an active trade with American whaling ships. In return for fresh produce, the whaling ships provided commodities unavailable to the settlers. By the 1850s, the settlement had grown, attracting tradesmen and a local whaling station was established near Dunsborough (Castle Rock). As the settlement grew, the Aboriginal population began to decline and hostilities decreased, permitting settlers to move further away from the initial settlement.²

Elijah Dawson arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1830 aboard the *Warrior*. Dawson had served with Captain John Molloy as a corporal during the Battle of Waterloo. When Molloy decided to emigrate, Dawson elected to follow him and signed on as an indentured servant for five years. Prior to leaving England he married Ann Wakeham.³

The Dawsons settled in Augusta with the Molloys and were considered to be trustworthy servants; Ann helped Georgiana with her household chores. In return for their loyalty, they were allocated a lot in Augusta and were given permission to use 14 acres on Molloy's allotment.⁴

When the Bussell family moved to the Vasse in 1834, Elijah went with the family as a hired hand.⁵ In 1835, Dawson's indenture to the Molloys (and the Bussells) expired and he returned to his family at Augusta. He was keen to acquire land on the Vasse and on 13 October 1836, he purchased suburban Lot 7 for £3, and settled there with his family.⁶

In 1837, a disagreement arose between the family and local Aborigines. The Dawsons sheltered temporarily with the Bussells.⁷ By 1838, Dawson had acquired a property in Wonnerup on which he built a house.

1 Jennings, R., *Busselton: '...outstation on the Vasse'*, Shire of Busselton, Busselton, 1983.

2 *ibid.*

3 *ibid.*, p. 66.

4 *ibid.*

5 *ibid.*, p. 77.

6 *ibid.* p. 101.

7 *ibid.*, p. 125.

While at Augusta, Dawson had been appointed Constable in 1835. However, once the settlement was abandoned this position was abolished and he was appointed Constable for Busselton, a position he held until 1848.⁸

Dawson purchased Sussex Location 12 (600 acres) from Thomas Turner on 20 April 1846 for £120 and named the property 'Westbrook Homestead'. However, a map drawn by H.M. Ommanney, dated 1839-44, clearly shows 'Dawson's 3rd House', *Westbrook Homestead*.⁹ The current owner of *Westbrook Homestead*, Mr D. Feutrill, relates that, according to family information, Turner assisted Dawson to acquire Sussex Location 12 by purchasing the property for him.¹⁰

Turner paid £600 for the property when he purchased it in 1843. His later re-sale to Dawson meant that he was out of pocket by £480, a sizeable sum in those days. Whatever occurred between the two men it seems apparent that Dawson was at least occupying the site in 1844. The house was apparently a wattle and daub structure with a thatched roof and nine rooms. There was also a cellar which was used for storage.¹¹

The existing brick building, *Westbrook Homestead*, was constructed shortly after the first cottage. The wattle and daub building was then used for storage and a kitchen was located there.¹² The family prospered, raising cattle, cultivating crops and planting three acres of vines. One vine remains from this vineyard, on the northern side of the detached kitchen. The wine made from these grapes was apparently sold to Charles Keyser, an American who had established a timber mill (Wilgamup) about five miles from *Westbrook Homestead*.¹³

The wattle and daub structure apparently burnt down sometime during the 1850s or 1860s and a new kitchen was constructed behind the brick building. According to Mr D.E. Feutrill, Elijah Dawson (junior) told his grandfather that the kitchen was constructed immediately after the demise of the wattle and daub building as the family were without a kitchen.¹⁴ The slabs used in the construction of the building are all pit-sawn and probably came from Keyser's mill. In 1856, Yelverton also established a mill in the area and initially cut timber with pit saws. By the end of 1859, he had obtained a steam engine and circular saws.¹⁵

The timber used in the construction of the house is also pit sawn, indicating it was cut prior to 1859. This places the construction of *Westbrook Homestead* in the late 1850s or early 1860s. Mr D.E. Feutrill believes the house took a number of years to construct, as he has noted that many of its bricks are of varying colours, indicating different firing times.¹⁶ Brian Feutrill, the current occupant of *Westbrook Homestead*, related that the bricks used in the construction of the house had been made on the property.¹⁷

A photograph held by the Feutrills shows the Dawson family posing outside the brick building with Captain Molloy. Molloy often visited Elijah Dawson, particularly

8 *ibid.*, p. 284.

9 Hasluck, A., *Portrait with Background: a life of Georgiana Molloy*, Oxford Univ. Press, Melbourne, 1955.

10 Mr D. E. Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush, 7 September 1998.

11 Hasluck, A., 'Two Dawson families of Augusta and Busselton', in W.A.H.S Journal, Vol 14, Pt.4, 1952, p.65 and Mr D. E. Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush, 7 September 1998

12 *ibid.*

13 Mr D. E. Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush, 7 September 1998.

14 *ibid.*

15 Hocking, Planning and Architecture, 'Busselton Municipal Inventory', August 1996, p.5.

16 Mr D. E. Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush, 7 September 1998.

17 Brian Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush during inspection of the property, 15 July 1998.

on the anniversary of Waterloo Day.¹⁸ Dawson died in 1885, survived by five children. His son Elijah took over the property.¹⁹

The house design shows the trend that was beginning to appear in West Australian architecture during the 1850s/1860s. This trend saw the move away from the transplanted English cottage, that the settlers were most familiar, to a building with verandahs, indicating the settlers' growing awareness of the need to adapt to their new country rather than the other way around.²⁰

The construction of a detached kitchen was also common at this time. Settlers soon learnt that kitchen fires could readily spread to the rest of the dwelling. Therefore to avoid losing their principle residence it was practicable to build a kitchen separate from the main house.

The Dawsons sold *Westbrook Homestead* to William Dias Taylor in December 1906. Most of the negotiations were carried out by Mrs Emily Taylor because Mr Taylor had returned to NSW to dispose of his property in that state in order to finance the purchase of the *Westbrook Homestead* property.²¹ Prior to the transfer, the roof was re-clad with corrugated galvanised iron and the main roof rafters, which had begun to spread, were realigned.²² Strengthening of the roof, some wallpapering, and the replacement of a set of windows on the back verandah by French doors and the building of a new dairy was undertaken by Faulkingham and Sons in 1938.²³ More extensive work was carried out on the roof in 1957 when it, and the verandah were completely removed to enable the walls to be tied back together. All of the roof timbers were returned to their original locations, as were the verandah timbers. The roof was re-clad with clay tiles due to the prohibitive cost of installing shingles. Under- floor ventilation was installed to the verandah foundations and a new timber floor installed.²⁴

As part of the extensive repairs to the roof, Taylor also enclosed the western verandah creating two additional rooms to the side of the house with a laundry towards the rear.

Around 1920, a dairy was constructed on the property, to the south of the residence. A McDonald milking machine was installed and the dairy was fitted out with stalls laid down in a herringbone pattern. D.E. Feutrill considers that this type of dairy was the first one of its kind to be constructed in the state.²⁵

The dairy was located approximately 25 metres to the south of the residence. The structure, which was formed from two small sheds placed together to form an 'L' shape, was constructed from vertical timber slabs set into timber top and bottom plates. The slabs were split by hand. The slabs were held in place at the top with battens nailed on either side of the slabs. The top and bottom of each slab was roughly chamfered to fit into the groove formed by the battens. The battens were roughly quartered bush poles. It is unclear how the slabs were fitted into the bottom plate as the plate had rolled outwards and boards ran down the length

18 Jennings, R., op. cit., p.292. The photograph was taken before 1867, as Molloy died in that year. This indicates a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the house.

19 Erickson, R., *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre 1829 - 1888*, Vol. II, UWA Press, Perth, 1988, p.789

20 Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter A *Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* North Ryde NSW, Angus & Robertson 1989.

21 Letter from D. E. Feutrill to HCWA dated 6 January, 1999, HCWA File P 5372.

22 *ibid.*

23 *ibid.*

24 Mr D. E. Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush, 7 September 1998.

25 Information obtained from Mr. D.E. Feutrill on 13 January 1999.

of the bottom plates to hold the slabs in place. Large bush posts were located at the corners of the building and also in the middle of the longer section.

The timber roof rafters had been roughly squared with an adze, while the bottom rafter ties were bush poles. The timber purlins, which were one continuous length, had also been roughly squared with an adze. Both sections were covered with individual gable roofs clad with corrugated galvanised iron.²⁶ The gable section of the walls had been filled with slabs.

The dairy had a dirt floor in both sections. The smaller section originally housed the engine that operated the milking machinery. The eastern wall of this section was clad with flat sheets of galvanised iron. These sheets were not original.

The longer section of the 'L' was where the cows were milked. The dairy had twelve cow stalls, six to each side. The stalls were apparently constructed at an angle, forming a herringbone pattern. The stall dividers had been removed and the original location of the stalls could only be seen in the timbers located on each side of the shed. All of those timbers had been adzed.

The pipes which ran down the length of the shed and took the milk to a central storage point were simply slung between timber brackets attached to the bottom tie of the roof rafters.²⁷

The dairy was only used for a short period as it was found that the milking machine gave the cows mastitis and during the 1930s the dirt floor was considered to be unhygienic. A new dairy was constructed in 1938.²⁸

Taylor sold the property to his nephew, Mr D.E. Feutrill in 1964. The Feutrill family carried out further alterations, the most important being construction of a kitchen in 1968 at the rear of the house. The detached kitchen had continued in operation until c.1957 when Taylor added a new kitchen onto the rear of the house. This kitchen was removed by the Feutrills and the new one installed in its place. At a later stage they also upgraded the old laundry, changing it to a toilet and bathroom and adding a laundry onto the southern end of the new bathroom.²⁹

During Mr and Mrs D. Feutrill's occupancy, their son Brian occupied the detached kitchen, using the room next to the kitchen as a bedroom (1980s). Around 1978 the corrugated galvanized steel shed was added onto the southern side of the kitchen.

Westbrook Homestead was classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) in February 1999, and listed on the Shire of Busselton's Municipal Inventory in September 2006.

In November 2006, the former Dairy was destroyed beyond repair by a storm.

Mr D. Feutrill's son and daughter-in-law, Brian and Robyn Feutrill, currently occupy *Westbrook Homestead*. During the inspection of the house, Robyn Feutrill related that many of the windows had retained their original panes of glass.³⁰

26 The CGI bears the brand name 'Emu Best, Wolverhampton Corrugated Iron Co. Ltd.', with a picture of an emu in the centre.

27 In November 2006, the Old Dairy was destroyed by a storm. The description here is retained for information purposes only and does not form part of the revised (2007) curtilage for the place.

28 *ibid.*

29 Mr D. E. Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush, 7 September 1998.

30 Robyn Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush during inspection of the property on 15 July 1998.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Westbrook Homestead is a simple Victorian Georgian building, constructed of soft-fired bricks, laid using English bond coursing, with a verandah to all four sides. The hip and verandah roofs are covered with terracotta marseilles tiles. It was constructed as the Dawson family's residence and continues to be used as a residence.

The building is surrounded by open farmland that is used for sheep grazing. North of the house are a number of old fruit trees, while at the rear of the house is a very old fig tree. South and east of the house are more recent farm buildings. At the rear of the house (south side) is an old slab kitchen with a shed attached to its southern side.

The exterior of the building features soft brick walls on an ironstone foundation. The wide verandah roof is supported on timber posts and has a timber floor. A scalloped timber valance below the line of the main roof probably belongs to the period when the roof was covered with shingles. Two plain brick chimneystacks are located at either end of the roof.

The front of the house faces north and the main door is flanked by two windows on the western side and one window on the eastern side. The four-panel front door has a fanlight of coloured glass and the original rim lock is still in situ. Brick arches have been used for the window and door openings.

The western verandah area has been enclosed with vertical timber boards at the front and asbestos cement sheets on the side. This enclosure has resulted in three rooms with an extension at the rear containing a toilet and bathroom.

The internal plan features a passage that runs from the front door to the back door. Rooms open off this passage: two rooms on the eastern side and a large front room on the western side with a smaller rear room. A further room is located behind the large front room and accessed by the large western front room or via the rear verandah.

All of the windows are timber with double hung sashes of six panes. The timber frames are held together with pegs. All of the ceilings are lathe and plaster (with the exception of the ceilings in the enclosed verandah area, bathroom, toilet, laundry and kitchen which is plaster board). The interior walls have all been plastered. Every room is fitted with simple skirting boards. The windows and doors have retained their original fittings, such as rim locks to the internal and external doors.

The front smaller, eastern room (room 1) is currently used as a bedroom and has a simple timber mantle piece. The fireplace is still operational. Behind this room is another room of similar size (room 3). This room is currently used as a spare room. Across the passage from room 1 is the large front room (room 2) which is used as a lounge. This room also has an operational fireplace with a slightly more ornate timber mantle piece than that found in room 1.

A door in the south-west corner of room 1 allows access to room 4 which is used as an office and lounge area. This room also opens onto one of the rooms in the former verandah area. French door on the southern side of room 4 lead out into what used to be the rear verandah, but is now a small area providing access to either the kitchen at the rear, or the bathroom, toilet and laundry. On the eastern side of room 4 is a small bedroom (room 5).

The kitchen is fitted with modern fittings and benches. The western portion of the rear verandah area has been enclosed with glass partitions.

The original detached kitchen is located close to the rear wall of the new kitchen. It is constructed from vertical timber slabs. The roof form is hipped on the eastern side with a gable on the western side. The gable end is clad with weatherboards. The roof is covered with corrugated galvanised iron. Planted near the front of the kitchen is a very old vine that appears to date from the Dawson family's original plantings. The white-grape vine is thought to have come from South America.³¹

The interior of the kitchen is divided into two rooms; the larger eastern room was apparently the kitchen area as it has a large open fireplace constructed from brick, on the western side. There is a small fixed window in the eastern wall. Access to a smaller room on the western side is via a low door set on the south side of the fireplace wall. This room contains a very small fixed window added in 1980. The interior walls of the building are mainly lined with gyp rock, although some sections of the smaller room have retained their original wattle and daub lining. Both rooms are poorly illuminated with natural light.

The kitchen is no longer (in 1999) in use and lies idle.

On the southern side of the kitchen is a corrugated galvanized steel shed that shares a portion of the kitchen's southern wall.

The building is in remarkably good condition considering its age. Some cracks were noted in the western corridor wall at the southern end. These cracks apparently appeared shortly after the Meckering earthquake (1968) and there has been no further movement.³²

The exterior east wall of room 3 has a high salt content, which is apparently due to the past storage of salt sacks against this wall. Brian Feutrill commented that it is very difficult to get paint to stay on this wall.³³

The detached kitchen is in poor condition. Some of the slabs have become loose and it is highly likely that the slabs are in danger of being eaten away at their base. In the interior, the gyp rock sheets have fallen away in several places and the wattle and daub sections are suffering from similar problems.

13. 3 REFERENCES

No key references.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

³¹ Mr D. E. Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush, 7 September 1998.

³² Brian Feutrill, conversation with Fiona Bush during inspection of the property, 15 July 1998.

³³ *ibid.*