



# 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 \*

*Wollaston House* has aesthetic value as a residence of a classically derived design that employs Victorian Regency elements. (Criterion 1.1)

Located on a corner lot, *Wollaston House* is an imposing and familiar part of the streetscape and is a local landmark. (Criterion 1.3)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Wollaston House* is important for its early date of construction (c. 1840s). (Criterion 2.1)

*Wollaston House* is associated with Dr Henry Wollaston, son of the Reverend John Ramsden Wollaston of Picton and Albany, with Harbour Master John Morley, with the explorer Peter Egerton-Warburton, a member of a well known Albany family, and with lighthouse keepers and carriers, father and son, George Charles Powney and George Thomas Powney. (Criterion 2.3)

*Wollaston House* is illustrative of the innovative use of available materials. (Criterion 2.4)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

-----

### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Wollaston House* contributes to the community's sense of place as it is a familiar item in an important streetscape. (Criterion 4.2)

---

\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*Wollaston House* displays a rare construction history having been built with brick imported as a ship's ballast and relocated to the present site in the middle of the last century. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Wollaston House* is representative of the conditions faced in the early years of the colony when locally manufactured construction materials were rare. The importation of building materials, and the later transfer and re-use at another site illustrates the way of life for early settlers. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Wollaston House* is in good condition and has been well cared for by successive owners and interested members of the local community. Recent alterations have upgraded some of the fabric and finishes.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Wollaston House* has high integrity. The place has served a residential function since construction and is presently used as a holiday home by the current owners.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

Little is known about the form of the house built for Morley from which the fabric of *Wollaston House* is said to have been derived, nor the exact form of the house in an original state in the present location. Some of the fabric and construction detailing is consistent with a building constructed in the last century. Recent alterations have extended the form of the building. *Wollaston House* has moderate authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Ham-Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Katrina Chisholm, Graduate Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Wollaston House* is a two-storey brick and iron residence of predominantly Victorian Regency style, originally constructed for John Lawrence Morley, but incomplete at the time of his death in 1840. The place was purchased by Dr Henry Wollaston and moved to its present site c.1850.

In 1827, in order to lay claim to the western half of Australia for Britain and prevent French claims on the area, a penal outpost of NSW was established at King George Sound. In March 1831, the region was proclaimed as part of the Swan River Colony and the convicts and troops were evacuated. Land in the area was made available to free settlers and the following month, the *Sulphur* brought the Resident Magistrate, Dr Alexander Collie, and the first of the settlers, among them Digory Sergeant Geake and John Lawrence Morley, together with their wives.<sup>1</sup>

Morley, a former seaman for the East India Company was appointed Assistant Government Commissariat Officer. He built the house now known as Patrick Taylor Cottage. In 1835, he sold this house to Patrick Taylor and returned to India where he disposed of his land holdings there, returning to Albany in May 1835, with twelve Indian craftsmen and builders. He then took up the position of Harbour Master and Pilot in King George Sound.<sup>2</sup>

John Morley instructed his Indian labourers to build *Wollaston House* for his family, which by then included a daughter, born in 1837. The house was sited on a beachside lot at Point King.<sup>3</sup> But on 6 March 1840, John Morley drowned when his boat overturned after leaving John Hassell's vessel *China*, in the Harbour. Hugh Spencer, eldest son of Resident Magistrate Edward Spencer, also drowned in the accident.<sup>4</sup>

*Wollaston House* stood empty and incomplete during the 1840s. During this period, St John's Anglican Church was constructed and in July 1848, Reverend John Ramsden Wollaston was appointed Albany's first Anglican clergyman. Rev Wollaston had arrived in Western Australia in 1841. He took up farm land at Picton, near Bunbury. When the Picton Church was built he was appointed chaplain for the area and in 1848, was appointed to Albany. His son, Dr Henry Newton Wollaston arrived in Western Australia in April 1843, after completing his medical training in England. In 1845, he married Susannah Sewell. They had one son, Henry, born in 1846. Dr Wollaston was

---

<sup>1</sup> Garden, Donald S. *Albany: A Panorama of the Sound from 1827* Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1977, pp. 36-42.

<sup>2</sup> *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians* Perth, UWA Press, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Note: Morley's landholdings are not recorded in the Lands & Surveys registers nor the Deeds of Memorial registers. The original site of *Wollaston House* comes from repeated references based, probably, on National Trust and Historical Society information. As well as town lots, most early landholders were also granted a beachside lot, a water frontage being desirable for ease of transport.

<sup>4</sup> Garden, D. S. op cit, p. 99; *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians* op cit.

at York, and then briefly at Picton, before arriving in Albany in 1848, where he was appointed Medical Attendant, and later Medical Officer to the Albany convict depot.

In November 1850, Dr Henry Wollaston was granted Albany Town Lot 61.<sup>5</sup> The story attached to this land is that it belonged to Digory Sergeant Geake who gave it to Dr Wollaston in payment of a medical bill.<sup>6</sup> However, this is not indicated in the records. Lot 61 was originally granted to Earl Richards in March 1832. He resigned the grant two years later and in April 1834, it was granted to John Purkis.<sup>7</sup> These are the only records of ownership until the land was granted to Dr Wollaston in 1850. Documented research into Digory Geake's land dealings through his personal papers, accounts of the time, and official records has failed to turn up any reference to Lot 61 despite detailing other land transactions.<sup>8</sup> This does not disprove the story, because not all land transactions were recorded and Dr Wollaston could have applied for the land after the event to secure his title, but it does make the claim almost impossible to substantiate.

Dr Wollaston also acquired John Morley's partly finished house. He had the place dismantled and transported by boat, or raft, to the bottom of Parade Street and rebuilt on Lot 61.<sup>9</sup> But he and his family did not occupy *Wollaston House* for long. In 1852, Dr Wollaston visited Victoria. On his return, he remained in Albany for only two weeks before leaving for Victoria again with his family. There, he gave up medicine, was ordained and served as a clergyman.<sup>10</sup>

In August 1853, Peter Egerton Warburton purchased *Wollaston House* for £450.<sup>11</sup> Peter Warburton was in Albany on a visit to his brother George Egerton Warburton, who was Superintendent of the Albany Convict Depot at the time. George Warburton and his family became pastoralists in the Albany district and were involved in local public affairs. Peter Warburton continued on to South Australia where he took up the post of Commissioner of Police, which he held from 1853 to 1867. He was later involved in exploration in South Australia and Western Australia.<sup>12</sup> It is not known who occupied *Wollaston House* for the 20 years of Peter Warburton's ownership, but in March 1873, the place was sold to George Charles Powney, 'with all house and buildings', for £105.<sup>13</sup>

Powney, whose occupation at the time was lighthouse keeper of Breaksea Island in King George Sound, arranged a mortgage of £70 to finance the purchase.<sup>14</sup> His occupation was later given as carrier, and from 1879 to 1884,

---

<sup>5</sup> Lands and Surveys Description Book, 608A, p. 31, 'Albany Town Lot 61, Grantee Henry Newton Wollaston, 11.11.50.'

<sup>6</sup> *The First Hundred Years: Albany* Albany Historical Society, n.d., p. 20; Wilson, H. H. & Wroth, Bruce *Albany Sketchbook* Adelaide, Rigby, 1975, p. 52; Memo from Roy Weston Real Estate Albany, 2 November 1995, in HCWA File 00020.

<sup>7</sup> Lands and Surveys, Albany Register, 426A & 427A.

<sup>8</sup> Hardie, Richard *Digory Sergeant Geake 1792-1867* 1968, unpublished typescript.

<sup>9</sup> *The First Hundred Years: Albany* op cit, p.20.

<sup>10</sup> *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians* op cit.

<sup>11</sup> Deed of Memorial, Vol. 5 No. 371, 10 August 1853.

<sup>12</sup> *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians* op cit.

<sup>13</sup> Deed of Memorial, Vol. 7 No. 1021, 18 March 1873.

<sup>14</sup> Deed of Memorial, Vol. 7 No. 1022, 18 March 1873.

Mrs Powney was listed as a house owner and boarding house keeper.<sup>15</sup> George Charles Powney died intestate in 1889, and his widow was granted right of dower until her own death in 1902/3, when ownership of *Wollaston House* was transferred to their son George Thomas Powney, an assistant lighthouse keeper and then 42 years of age.<sup>16</sup> George Thomas Powney occupied *Wollaston House* until 1904, when he took up farm land at Cranbrook. *Wollaston House* was later occupied by his sister, Sarah, and her husband Edward Brown.<sup>17</sup>

There were two houses on Albany Town Lot 61 by 1900, and three by 1910.<sup>18</sup> In 1908, George Thomas Powney raised a £500 mortgage on *Wollaston House* from Mt Barker farmer, William Herbert.<sup>19</sup> This may have been for the construction of the third house. *Wollaston House* continued to be rented out. An entry in an Albany Historical Society Publication states that the place was a maternity hospital for many years, but this does not appear to have been the case.<sup>20</sup>

Powney farmed at Cranbrook until the mid 1930s, and is listed as being the owner of three houses and Lot 61. His brother, Richard Digory Powney, also farmed at Cranbrook for many years.<sup>21</sup> A new Certificate of Title issued 20 January 1926, lists George Thomas Powney as a retired carrier.<sup>22</sup> By 1938 he had retired from farming and was living in Albany, and in 1940 is listed as residing in Cuthbert Street, at Lot 61.<sup>23</sup> He appears to have been both a farmer and a carrier, or carter, possibly following his father in the latter line of work, as he appears to have done with lighthouse keeping earlier in his life.

On Powney's death in December 1942, *Wollaston House* passed to Alfred Powney Brown, probably a nephew, son of his sister, Sarah. The place

---

<sup>15</sup> *Herald West Australian Almanac & Directory 1879-1884.*

<sup>16</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title Vol. 33, Fol. 171. (See supporting material in HCWA File 00020)

<sup>17</sup> Albany Town Council, Rate Books 1900-1910. Note: The address for Lot 61 is given as Cuthbert Street in the rate books, a practice followed by the electoral rolls.

<sup>18</sup> Albany Town Council, Rate Books, op cit.

<sup>19</sup> DOLA Certificate Vol. 32 Fol. 171; *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians* op cit. Note: George Charles Powney was married to Mary Geake, daughter of Digory Geake's brother and heir, Thomas, who arrived in Western Australia some twenty years later than Digory, and went to Albany in 1860. Another daughter, Elizabeth, married John James Herbert, so William Herbert was most likely a close relative of George Thomas Powney. After William Herbert's death in 1912, the mortgage was held by William Geake Herbert and Digory John Thomas Herbert, both farmers.

<sup>20</sup> *The First Hundred Years: Albany* op cit, p.20; Telephone conversation by Irene Ham-Sauman with Noel Inglis, 10 March 1998, Memo, HCWA File 00020. Note: Research in post office directories, telephone directories, electoral rolls and rate books have shown no evidence that the place ever operated as a maternity hospital, and Noel Inglis of the Albany Historical Society has also strongly refuted such a claim. The two sentence paragraph in the Society's publication which contains the information about the maternity hospital also contains four other errors of fact about *Wollaston House* and probably eluded the editing process.

<sup>21</sup> Legislative Council Rolls, South-east division, 1912-1940. Note: There is an entry for George Powney, carter, of Cuthbert Street on the Provisional Lists for 1912, together with entries for George Thomas and Richard Digory at Cranbrook. This appears to be a double entry for George Thomas and does not appear on any subsequent electoral rolls.

<sup>22</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title Vol. 910, Fol. 66. (See supporting material in HCWA File 00020)

<sup>23</sup> Legislative Council Rolls, op cit, 1930-1940.

changed hands a few times before being purchased by retired farmer Cyril Ernest Ashe, in 1955.<sup>24</sup>

In 1963, Lot 61 was subdivided into Lots 5 and 6. Lot 5 was sold and Lot 6, containing *Wollaston House* and a small weatherboard house, was retained by Cyril Ashe. The following year title was registered jointly in the names of Cyril Ashe and his wife Jean.<sup>25</sup> The Ashe's did not reside at *Wollaston House* but rented the place out. In the early 1970s it was reported that Cyril Ashe

is giving it [*Wollaston House*] a face-lift. All the outside walls are to be coated with a revolutionary and expensive fibre-glass paint. The renovations within are to strengthen and preserve the woodwork.<sup>26</sup>

In 1980, Lot 6 was subdivided into Lot 11, on which *Wollaston House* is sited, and Lot 12 which contained the weatherboard house. Lot 12, which was strata titled, was sold.<sup>27</sup> *Wollaston House* was subsequently purchased by Donald Phillips in 1983, John and Shirley Pagh in 1994, and William and Barbara Van der Leest in 1995. The Van der Leest's used *Wollaston House* as a holiday home, but it is currently for sale for \$290,000.<sup>28</sup>

The place is also known locally as 'Stirling Castle' but the origin of this name has not been ascertained.

There have been many alterations and additions to *Wollaston House* over the years and any resemblance it might bear to the place John Morley originally built is open to conjecture. Pieces of old ship timbers have been identified in the original woodwork.<sup>29</sup> The bricks are considered to be a surviving example of those stowed on board ships as ballast.

The bricks used on *Wollaston's* are a very thoroughly fired yellow brick, containing a considerable amount of fine aggregate coke and shale fragments (the additions of either being unusual in this state last century). Several bricks removed during a recent alteration bore unlike stamped markings, possibly indicating distinct but materially related sources. Some of these markings, were, interestingly, of a sophisticated kind unusual when compared to the indigenous colonial specimens typical between 1840 and 1890.<sup>30</sup>

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Wollaston House* is a two-storey residential building situated on the north-east corner of Duke and Parade streets in Albany. The site has a moderate incline to the south and east and the house is set well back towards the north boundary with the southern rooms having views over the front garden towards Princess Royal Harbour. A free-standing shed and garage is located behind the house, close to the north and west boundaries. The single-storey,

---

<sup>24</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title Vol. 910, Fol. 66, op cit & Vol. 1271 Fol. 857. (See supporting material in HCWA File 00020)

<sup>25</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title Vol. 1273 Fol. 851. (See supporting material in HCWA File 00020)

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, H. H. & Wroth, Bruce *Albany Sketchbook* Adelaide, Rigby, 1975, p. 52.

<sup>27</sup> DOLA, Certificate of Title Vol 1581 Fol. 154 & Diagram 59758, 19 August 1980, HCWA File 00020.

<sup>28</sup> *Weekender Real Estate* September 11-17, 1997.

<sup>29</sup> Memo from Roy Weston Real Estate, Albany, 2 November 1995, HCWA File 0020.

<sup>30</sup> Boersma, Ian 'Construction Methods, Materials and Detailing of Vernacular Colonial Cottages in the South-west', unpublished student dissertation, Curtin University, 1995. Note: Do these bricks bear any similarities, I wonder, to the large quantity of yellow bricks found as ballast on the *Vergulde Draeck* wreck?

structure is constructed in English bond brick with a skillion, corrugated iron roof.

A picket fence encloses the grassed area in front of the house along Duke Street. This garden features some low shrubs and a dominant fig tree. A timber portico over the front gate defines the entry path to the main door. A brick wall extends part of the way along the west boundary providing some privacy and shelter to the kitchen garden courtyard which is separated from the house by a stone path. The area behind the path is grassed.

*Wollaston House* is constructed principally in painted, Flemish bond brickwork, laid on a stone plinth and is covered with a corrugated iron roof.<sup>31</sup> Timber cladding and decorative detailing also form a strong element in the overall composition. Whilst the present external colour scheme lends the building a degree of unity in appearance, analysis of the overall form suggests that the building has evolved through accretions, rather than displaying a clear expression of structure. This accumulation of forms and elements and lack of uniformity in construction and detailing prevents the application of a singular style label.

A principal feature of the composition is the strong expression of the gable ends. The two front gables of the south elevation exhibit an unusual, scalloped edge design in the barge board detail which is continued in the fascia board along the rest of the south elevation, but not apparent elsewhere. The weatherboard infill of the central gable over the balcony is stepped, with the recess supported by timber brackets. The balcony balustrade has a solid timber panel behind the railings. The same detail is used for the verandah immediately below although glazing encloses the verandah at ground floor. Another strong design feature is the quoining at the building corners and surrounds to window and door openings of the south elevation. This brickwork detail is also evident on the northern chimney.

There is little uniformity in window and door construction throughout the cottage, which displays a wide range of types and proportions. Variations also occur in the different levels of head and sill heights and construction details of lintels and surrounds. The windows generally have small panes divided by glazing bars and the external doors feature some glazed panels. The internal doors have wide openings but relatively low head-heights. Some of the door hardware is of interest as it displays manufacturers marks. The larger windows on the west and north elevations feature louvred shutters although these have a decorative rather than practical function. A ship's porthole has been inserted into the door to the cellar.

The internal layout incorporates a number of changes of level, adapting to the fall across the site. The main staircase giving access to the upper floor is located in the front entrance hall which is approached from Duke Street. To the east of the hall and set down by a few risers, is a bathroom. To the west, a corridor divides the two main living areas, both with separate sunrooms, and leads to the long kitchen, half a level above. A small dining room is located to the north of the kitchen. The verandah immediately outside the kitchen to the

---

<sup>31</sup> Documentary evidence states that some of the bricks were examined during recent alteration work at the house, c.1995, and display some interesting manufacturer's marks and chemical composition, but none were available at the time of the inspection for this assessment.

west, is enclosed with a lattice screen and gate to the garden. The sunroom north of the lounge is a small, rectangular enclosure of lightweight construction, which juts out from the main line of the building.

The first floor provides bedroom accommodation. The main room to the west extends across the cottage width and has raking, attic ceilings supported by a substantial timber post and beam, reminiscent of a ship's timbers. The balcony is accessed from this room. The second bedroom, set at a lower level, is a recent addition.

Internal surface finishes typically include timber floors and ceilings and plastered walls. The kitchen floor is brick paved with a paint finish and there are stone floors in the enclosed ground floor verandah and northern sunroom. The southern living room has a pressed metal ceiling and a fireplace with a timber surround. Fireplaces are also evident in ground floor living and kitchen areas with the flues obvious against the walls of the rooms above.

Recent documentary evidence shows that the house has been extended to the east, replacing a single level corrugated iron clad section.<sup>32</sup> The external brickwork in the south elevation of the extension has been laid to match the adjoining walls, although the stretcher bond brickwork at the rear is clearly distinguishable from the earlier work. The southern verandah enclosure was constructed at this time and a new gable parapet replaced the skillion roof of the verandah adjoining the kitchen. It is likely, the building was also re-roofed during this period of renovation and the good condition and bond of the southernmost chimney is indicative of new fabric. It is unclear when other alterations, such as the lightweight sunroom extension to the north, have been constructed. There are other clues in the fabric which suggest alterations, such as the evidence of a former door in the north wall of the dining room and another entry path to a separate or previous main entry, but it has not been possible to accurately identify dates for these changes.

*Wollaston House* is in good condition and well maintained by the owners who have been using the place as a holiday home but have recently placed the property on the market.

### **13. 3 REFERENCES**

No key references.

### **13. 4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

-----