



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*

The Knowle is a restrained, symmetrical building designed using classical proportions and an elegance of detail. The corrugated iron roof is gently draped across the broad verandah that has simple, square posts and timber balustrading. Latticework valances create a sense of partial enclosure to the lower level beneath the balconies and also clearly differentiate the ground and first floors. The stonework is stuccoed and ashlar lined, with windows of slender construction set into its mass. It is a building that exhibits deliberate restraint of expression, befitting its position as the Comptroller General's residence. The first additions to *The Knowle* on its southern side were executed in an almost matching style and appear stylistically compatible. Differences in the interior design are amongst the few signs that this section is of a later design. Subsequent additions followed suite until after the First World War. Post World War One additions, encroaching walkways, development and landscaping detract from its visual appeal. Additions to the east are built hard against *The Knowle* and obscure much of the eastern elevation. (Criterion 1.1)

The Knowle is a demonstration at a grand scale of the style of architecture termed 'Victorian Regency'. The style was a common expression for the residential elements of the Prison, especially for the more important houses located along The Terrace. As this style was a form of opposition to what was seen as the dominant excesses of the Victorian era, it required simplicity and order. *The Knowle* is characteristic of this sentiment and accordingly it exhibits accomplished design and is constructed with the use of well-established techniques, which were used elsewhere in the Convict Establishment. The value that the building exhibits most clearly is a passion for competence, rather than experimentation or a direct aim of artistic expression. (Criterion 1.2)

* 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.

The Knowle was sited with a clear intention to visually dominate the small colonial town of Fremantle. From its site it was possible to both oversee the area under Henderson's control and be a landmark in the Colony, exhibiting the power and consequence of the office of Comptroller General. The difficulty in preparing the site for *The Knowle* and its gardens was surpassed by the value of building in the most prominent location in Fremantle. (Criterion 1.3)

The Knowle was an important building when first erected both for the Convict Establishment and for Fremantle. It established in stone the hierarchy of the prison bureaucracy, placing the Comptroller General firmly at the head of the others in the system. The houses along The Terrace and the modest warder's cottages confirmed the complete hierarchy. *The Knowle* also exhibited, in conjunction with the other prison buildings, the power of the British Empire. The changing use of the building after the departure of Henderson is indicative of the pragmatism of the prison administrators and the increasing unwillingness of the British Government from 1868 when transportation of convicts to Western Australia ceased, to fund further building. After 1886, when the Colonial Government took charge of the Convict Establishment and its entire works, it too was financially unable to treat *The Knowle* as a priority, and the building fell into some disrepair. It was finally rescued from this state when the Forrest Government decided to turn it into the Fremantle Hospital. The immediate changes brought about for the adaptation of the place for hospital purposes showed a respect for the original design. Planning and elevation treatments followed the principles set down in the original design, the major exception being the addition of the broad verandahs which are now a strong visual characteristic of the place. (Criterion 1.3)

The construction of modern hospital buildings around *The Knowle* has considerably diminished the range of uninterrupted views to the building, but it remains visible from Fremantle Oval to the North, and Alma Street to the South. There is also an obscured view from Hampton Road at the foot of the Fremantle Prison. The newer hospital buildings have reduced the landmark qualities of the building and recent landscaping has also diminished the exposure of the place. Despite this, its role as a major component of the Fremantle Prison precinct remains conspicuous. (Criterion 1.4)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

The construction of *The Knowle* occurred as part of a milestone in the development of Fremantle and the Swan River Colony. Prior to the arrival of Henderson and the Imperial Convicts, the Colony had experienced insubstantial growth and two decades of setbacks that were to forestall the growth and stability of the Colony. (Criterion 2.1)

The Knowle has significance as the first part of the Fremantle Hospital. The building formed the basis for the later development of the Hospital and the planning and growth of the Hospital was ordered about *The Knowle*. More recent development has not followed this pattern and many of the elements of the hospital that were so closely and physically

linked to the place have been removed and replaced with other buildings to cater for the growth and development of a large hospital. (Criterion 2.1)

The Knowle is closely linked with the arrival of Imperial Convicts in Western Australia as the residence of Henderson and with the development and maturing of the City of Fremantle, as indicated by its success in having the place converted into a hospital. (Criterion 2.2)

The Knowle has strong associations with Henderson, who designed and directed its construction, and then lived there with his family during his tenure in the Colony. It is closely associated with those who converted it to Fremantle Hospital; Rosenthal, who was to have national importance as both a soldier and architect, and also Eales who had a long career in Western Australia with many distinguished buildings to his name. The place is also closely associated with the then Mayor of Fremantle, William F. Samson, and Dr. James Hope who successfully lobbied for the place to become a hospital. (Criterion 2.3)

The Knowle is important because beneath the accretions of hospital use, it is a largely intact example of some of the finest workmanship in the Colony in the 1850s in terms of residential architecture. It is the first residence built in Fremantle that could compare to the houses of people of equivalent standing to the Comptroller General, in both the Eastern States and England, in terms of size and detail. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Due to the intact and original nature of much of its fabric, *The Knowle* has the potential to contribute to an understanding of the design and construction of mid nineteenth century houses and construction techniques employed in Western Australia more generally. *The Knowle* may be employed as the benchmark by which to compare other buildings of the period. Also of scientific value is the fact that *The Knowle* was constructed using convict labour from stone quarried by the convicts at the prison. Its links with Fremantle Prison are important in this respect. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The Knowle is significant as a demonstration of the standard of accommodation for the Comptroller General of the Convict Establishment and of a house which operated with the use of servants in the mid nineteenth century. While Fremantle Prison has more extensive convict buildings and there are other cottages providing evidence of housing from the transportation period, *The Knowle* provides a clear demonstration of class difference and the role of the Comptroller General. (Criterion 4.1)

The place is highly valued by the local community and the wider community for its associations with the early years of Fremantle Hospital. It was the first Government Hospital in Fremantle, although not the first health care facility. As Fremantle Hospital, *The Knowle* has played a crucial role in tending the health of the community. It has always been supported by donations from the community and thus has a special role in the history of Fremantle. The City of Fremantle has recorded the building

on its register of heritage buildings and the Fremantle Library maintains a file on the building in the local history collection. (Criterion 4.1)

As part of a regional hospital complex, *The Knowle* has played a significant part in meeting the health requirements of its community. It has also demonstrable historical significance because of its long association with the Convict Establishment (1850-1888), later Fremantle Prison (1888-1991). It is part of a large collection of historic places in Fremantle that contribute to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

The significance of the place to the wider community of Western Australia is further evidenced by the listing of the place by the Heritage Council in April 1992, the National Trust of Australia (WA) in May 1992, the Australian Heritage Commission in May 1995 and inclusion in the City of Fremantle's draft Municipal Inventory.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

The Knowle is unique in being the only residence built for a Comptroller General in Western Australia. It retains much historic fabric and is also one of only a few examples of work in Western Australia by Rosenthal. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The Knowle demonstrates the principal characteristics of a large scale Victorian Regency house by colonial standards. It has clear massing and restrained detail. The proportions are classical and are carried throughout the entire building. Many of the building materials are common for the style, such as the draped corrugated iron roof and the stuccoed stonework. It also has details only found in the best examples, such as wrought iron balustrades and elegant fenestration. (Criterion 6.1)

The place is also indicative of the social class system in Australia in the mid nineteenth century, in that a social divide within the house is physically enforced across its central corridor, wherein the large graceful rooms facing the ocean to the West were for Henderson and his family, while the smaller rooms to the East were for the servants and ticket of leave workers. *The Knowle* is also surviving physical evidence of the difference between the power of Britain, as represented by the Comptroller General, and of her colonies. The building is also a principal remnant of the convict system in Western Australia and the Convict Establishment in Fremantle in particular. (Criterion 6.2)

The place is important for the way in which it demonstrates its adaptation and extension for use as Fremantle's Government Hospital. In the pre World War One period of development, it demonstrates a basic respect for the original concept and the capacity of the original buildings to accept change. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The Knowle is in sufficiently good condition to represent all its values in a legible way. Maintenance has been very poor with respect to the integrity of the landscape and the gardens that have been allowed to encroach upon the building to the extent that there is much water damage to the interior and exterior of the building around the base of the walls. Roofing and rainwater goods are nearing the end of their serviceable life and local areas of wall are in poor condition due to ingress of damp. Termite activity has caused damage to joinery. Some services installations have been poorly conceived historically with a resulting loss of fabric, typically window elements. However, the additional works have been purely additive, that is, little of the original building has been removed. However, several room divisions have been removed and some material has been introduced to cover dampness. It will be possible to successfully remove the accretions to reveal the original fabric. The original structure of the

building is sound, due to the quality of the construction, and will not require additional support.

12.4 INTEGRITY

While *The Knowle* has not been used as a private residence since 1867, it remains in use by Fremantle Hospital and remains located within the hospital curtilage. It is likely to continue to form a permanent part of the hospital's building resources. The building has low integrity in terms of its original purpose but high integrity in relation to its adaptive use. The building could sustain continued use within the hospital as an administrative building. It is likely to remain in use for administrative purposes, but could also be used for recreational and interpretive purposes. The opportunity to sustain existing heritage values remains high.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The Knowle has suffered the loss of a number of its outbuildings and its relationship to the site is quite different from the original concept, but these losses do not impinge on the overall authenticity of the remaining fabric. Notwithstanding the replacement of some doors, windows and roof sheeting, the remaining built elements of *The Knowle* retain a high degree of authenticity. The planning and the majority of the fabric are the original materials. Both Henderson and Rosenthal/Eales wings are intact and their relationship has been largely undisturbed. The existing fabric is evidence of a number of historic overlays, with each retaining a high degree of authenticity relative to its time. Encroaching buildings, walkways and landscaping detract from the authenticity of the setting with respect to Henderson's original concept and the early stages of the Fremantle Hospital.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Considine and Griffiths Architects: 'The Knowle, Fremantle Hospital, Conservation Plan' (prepared for Fremantle Hospital and Health Service, February 1999).

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the documentary evidence refer to:

'The Knowle: a Conservation Study for the Fremantle Hospital by the Building Management Authority of WA' (prepared by BMA in association with Michael Bosworth, 1991).

Considine and Griffiths Architects: 'The Knowle, Fremantle Hospital, Conservation Plan' (prepared for Fremantle Hospital and Health Service, Revised, February 1999).

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the physical evidence refer to:

'The Knowle: a Conservation Study for the Fremantle Hospital by the Building Management Authority of WA' (prepared by BMA in association with Michael Bosworth, 1991).

Considine and Griffiths Architects: 'The Knowle, Fremantle Hospital, Conservation Plan' (prepared for Fremantle Hospital and Health Service, Revised, February 1999).

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The Knowle is similar in size to Henry Reveley's Government House building, which was demolished in the 1860s. However, it shares few of that building's architectural characteristics. The entire Government House property of approximately 11 acres and including the government garden, council chamber, a dispensary, garden seed room, stables, commissariat offices, messengers' room and fencing was valued in 1834 at a little under £500, whereas *The Knowle* was built in 1852 at a cost of £920-8s-3d. In 1852, a house for a Principal Warder was estimated at £52-14s-10d, less than 6% of *The Knowle's* cost.

Many of the materials and construction techniques used in *The Knowle* were common to residential architecture in the colony, especially in Fremantle where building quality limestone was plentiful. However, the building has many distinguishing features including its capacious spaces, large internal volumes, its large scale and high cost. The planning of the principal residence undertaken by Henderson reflects the planning of the gatehouse at the Prison and the original openings would have been designed with the same patterns as those used on the Prison Terrace houses, since these were all of a standard proportion, pattern and manufacture. Like its counterparts on The Terrace, *The Knowle* was built without verandahs, and like its counterparts, verandahs were added in the late part of the nineteenth century as a concession to the climate. The

building retains a high degree of authenticity, and is the only residence of its period of that size, quality of construction and finish to be built in the Swan River Colony.

13.4 REFERENCES

'The Knowle: a Conservation Study for the Fremantle Hospital by the Building Management Authority of WA' (prepared by BMA in association with Michael Bosworth, 1991).

Considine and Griffiths Architects: 'The Knowle, Fremantle Hospital, Conservation Plan' (prepared for Fremantle Hospital and Health Service, Revised, February 1999).

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

The documentary research carried out as a part of the Conservation Plan should be augmented by further research to assist in the conservation and interpretation of the place. The precise sequence of the loss of fabric to the original house outbuildings is not well documented. No material was located which would indicate how the place appeared externally during Henderson's period of residence and its appearance has only been deduced from the plans provided from the 1895 survey and the appearance of other residential buildings associated with the Fremantle Prison Terrace. Photographs from the 1860s give an indication of the exterior aesthetics of *The Knowle*.

Areas that could be further investigated include potential archaeological scatters associated with the immediate area of *The Knowle*. The areas of the cookhouse east of the house and dining room south east of the house and yards have been built over and excavated since their demolition, but these sites may still contain deposits. Care should be taken when further works are carried out in these areas and archaeological investigation would be advisable.