



# 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\*

*Sandilands* has aesthetic value as an example of a distinctive Australian colonial-era vernacular Victorian Georgian rural homestead with pitched roof and long, low verandahs. The well maintained gardens provide a picturesque setting for the house and enhance its aesthetic qualities. (Criterion 1.1)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The place is significant in the development of Western Australia, as it is indicative of patterns of early settlement in the region and the colony/state. (Criterion 2.1)

*Sandilands* has been extended many times; its growth documents historical changes, and the economic resourcefulness of the first European settlers in the Busselton area. (Criterion 2.1)

The place has been closely associated for over one hundred and twenty years with the Bussell and Willmott families who were significant in the European settlement of the region and its subsequent history. Its historical significance is enhanced by the collection of family photographs and local historic items assembled by the Willmotts since 1950. (Criterion 2.2)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

*Sandilands* has research and teaching value because the fabric of the place includes a range of different building technologies on the one site. (Criterion 3.1)

### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Sandilands* contributes to the community's sense of place because it is among the oldest extant structures in the region, and has remained for

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\* 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.

over a century in the ownership and occupation of collateral descendants of the family which built it. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

The original 'inn' section of *Sandilands* remains largely intact and is thus rare in the district as a surviving example of an 1840s building. (Criterion 5.1)

*Sandilands* has been extended many times and its growth documents changing social conditions and ways of life no longer practised. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

In its exterior and interior forms, variety of materials and history of repeated extension and adaptation, *Sandilands* is representative of 1840s rural homestead buildings which have remained in use since their construction. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

The house is in good condition, but there was some loss of cultural heritage significance from the 1955 demolition of a timber dairy. The house was empty in the period 1926-1930 and became semi-derelict, but was sympathetically renovated by the Willmott family and has been well maintained ever since.

There has been some termite activity in the north wall of room 10 which damaged lining material but left the wattles intact. Some external surfaces are showing signs of distress. Render to chimneys is wearing or cracking off and the brick work is being eroded. Some of the stone walls, where exposed to the weather, are beginning to show signs of erosion. Bargeboards, fascias and gutters appear to be missing from the kitchen block, thus exposing roof timbers to the weather.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Sandilands* has a very high level of integrity. Although the first section of the house was intended as an inn, it soon became a private residence and has remained used as such ever since. Its occupation by members of the same extended family and the collection of family photographs and local historic items assembled by the Willmotts since 1950 reinforce its significance.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

The place has a high level of authenticity. Most of the original and subsequent fabric of *Sandilands* survives, and the place is a clear expression of its own growth and use.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation has been compiled by the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage, Curtin University. The documentary evidence has been compiled by Donna Houston, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Dr John Stephens, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Sandilands* was built by Charles Bussell in the 1840s and was originally intended as an inn. There are very few written or pictorial documents concerning the property.

The European settlement of the Vasse region began with the arrival of the Bussell, Molloy and Turner families on the *Warrior* at the Swan River in March 1830. Due to the unavailability of land for the size grants that each of these families were seeking near the Swan, the settlers were encouraged to take up land at Augusta which had received favourable reports from Stirling. The settlers arrived at Augusta on 3 May 1830 and were immediately faced with difficulties. They experienced problems with clearing the heavily timbered land and since their only means of communication was via irregular ship services, they often found themselves lacking in essential supplies. Early in 1833, John Bussell set out on foot from Augusta in search of better land, it was on this expedition that he found a cow grazing on the banks of the Vasse River and believing it to be one which had strayed from his Augusta property, subsequently named the spot *Cattle Chosen*. The land at the Vasse provided good pasture with its relatively open land which was probably the result of fire-stick farming that was practised by local Nyungars.<sup>1</sup> In late 1833 John Bussell transferred his land grant at Augusta to the Vasse and in 1834 settled in the district with his family at *Cattle Chosen*. The Bussells were accompanied by several other families that had originally settled in Augusta and transferred their land grants to the Vasse. These included the Turner family, George Layman (who settled at Wonnerup along the Sabina River), Elijah Dawson (Marybrook) Colonel John Molloy (Fairlawn) and Henry and James Chapman (Inlet Park).

*Sandilands* was built in the 1840s by Charles Bussell, a younger brother of John Garret Bussell, and was originally intended to be used as a wayside inn, as the road to Bunbury used to pass by the property. This plan was never fully realised as Charles died at a comparatively young age and the property was bought by Frances Cookworthy, a step daughter of John Garret Bussell, in 1856. Frances later married her first cousin, Joseph Cookworthy. The original house was constructed in wattle and daub, and was a modest six room building which is believed to be the third house built in Busselton.<sup>2</sup> Frances Cookworthy made extensive additions to the property including the limestone kitchen (a separate structure at the back of the original homestead) and a dairy shed (adjacent to the house) which

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<sup>1</sup> Collard, L. *A Nyungar Interpretation of Ellensbrook and Wonnerup Homesteads* Edith Cowan University, Perth, 1994, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Oldham, R. 'A House of History' in *West Australian* 19 November 1966, p. 22.

was removed in 1955.<sup>3</sup> Other extensions made to the house during this time were the addition of several bedrooms, the limestone extension to the living area and the bay window in the master bedroom which displays the Cookworthy crest. These cannot be dated precisely due to the lack of documentary records. A bungalow was added off the living room.

The house was inherited by Maggie Willmott (John Garret Bussell's grand-daughter) on the death of Frances Cookworthy in 1928. She took up residence there in 1930 after the house had been vacant for several years.<sup>4</sup> Electric lighting was installed at this time and the homestead boasted seventeen rooms. The current owners, Mr and Mrs James Willmott took up *Sandilands* in 1949, and Mrs. Willmott added extensively to the gardens when reticulated water was laid on to the property. Mr and Mrs Willmott have made further additions to the house including a glass covered walkway which joins the two sections of the house in 1994. *Sandilands* has an extensive collection of historical photographs, chinaware and silver collected over the years by Mrs Willmott.

### 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Sandilands* is located in Busselton near the Vasse Estuary on a tract of farm land that was once part of the original Bussell estate. The house was built in a number of stages with materials ranging from wattle and daub to stone.

*Sandilands* is located in working farmland and is approached via a gravel track leading off Ford Road Busselton. The house is set in verdant and well tended garden surroundings and framed with many mature trees. The house is composed of two main structures with a small carport immediately adjacent to the east.

This rambling and organic house is composed of two distinct structures joined by a glazed walkway (room 8 - see floorplan). The northern block, laid out with rooms running on an east-west axis, contains the oldest section of the building, and the southern block is laid out in a square plan form with a loft above the main rooms. The southern block is also called the 'kitchen block'.

Although composed of an organic arrangement of rooms and various materials, the northern block appears quite coherent under a corrugated steel roof and a long verandah. The roof to the northern block has been recently sheeted in red colourbond corrugated steel conforming to the original roof pitch and hip roof form. The roof breaks to a lower pitch at the verandah. Documentary evidence suggests that the roof was originally thatch, then shingles before being covered with corrugated iron.<sup>5</sup> Chimneys servicing rooms 16, 13/14 and 15 are in brick and appear to be intact although render is breaking down on the chimney to room 13/14. As can be seen in fig. 2 external walls to the block are composed of three different constructions - wattle and daub, timber stud and stone. It is probable that the wattle and daub section is the oldest of this block (see Internal Layout for further discussion). Differing materials across the face

<sup>3</sup> See article by Ray Oldham HCWA file PD 0394, and interview with the present owner.

<sup>4</sup> Cullen, D. 'Yesterday is Sandilands' in *West Australian* 20 October 1951 & Stallwood, J 'Sandilands' 2014.

<sup>5</sup> From an interview with Mrs T Willmott, the present owner's mother, cited in Cullen, D. 'Yesterday is Sandilands', in *West Australian* 20 October 1951.

of the north elevation have been unified by cladding with matchboard which is protected by the verandah. A clear delineation between differing types of matchboard can be seen at the junction of rooms 13 and 14. Large timber posts with a decorative chamfer support the verandah. The underside of the verandah roof is lined with butt jointed timber planks. Posts are irregularly spaced which may reflect stages of construction.<sup>6</sup>

Room 17 is clad externally in weatherboard - possibly over a wattle and daub wall structure. The remaining external wall construction is stone rubble and was probably part of the extensions carried out by Frances Cookworthy after she took possession of the property in 1856.<sup>7</sup> Room 11 appears to be a more recent timber framed enclosure. All windows are constructed of timber and are of varying ages and sizes. Most are casement sash and appear to be original to the structure they serve. The window to room 16 (used as a bedroom) is a projecting bay window with the Cookworthy crest displayed in coloured glass.

The southern block (kitchen block), comprising six rooms and a verandah, is connected to the north block by a recently constructed glazed walkway which replaces a previous connecting structure.<sup>8</sup> This block is a square form in stone rubble masonry with a massive central chimney rising through a loft space. The loft was used to store travelling boxes and other items. Access to the loft is by a timber stair on the north face to a door in the stone gable end. A similar door punctures the gable end on the north. The gable roof over this block is clad in the same red colorbond corrugated steel material as the north block. Timber shingles can be clearly seen on the underside of this roof. These shingles have been cut with a circular saw and it is possible they were supplied by H. J. Yelverton's timber mill.<sup>9</sup> The verandah (4) to the west is of recent construction. Openings in the external walls all appear to date from the time of original construction. Windows and doors are all timber and of varying ages. Windows to room 1 appear to be recent although probably replacing older frames.

Despite the organic nature of *Sandilands*, the architectural style of building might best be described as Colonial Vernacular in the Victorian Georgian style.<sup>10</sup> The choice of this category is principally supported on the north elevation through the use of a broken back roof shape and long low verandah supported on heavy squat posts. The building (north and south blocks) has a very high degree of intactness and is unified through roof material and walling material.

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<sup>6</sup> The union jack railing is shown in an early photographs (Battye 1954B/6) and more recently (1951) as having been removed.

<sup>7</sup> This stonework is evident in a photo dated 1895 (Battye 1954B/6).

<sup>8</sup> The original glass walkway is reported to have fallen down in 1907. Conversation with the owner, Mrs Wilmott, 23 June 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Conversation with the owner, Mrs Wilmott, 23 June 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Hocking, I. and Bush, F. 'Influences on Architectural Styles and Building Materials in the South West and Great Southern Regions of Western Australia', Hocking Planning and Architecture, Perth, 1995. For early building in Western Australia *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* has very limited application and offers no direction for identifying buildings in the South-West region of Western Australia.

The layout of *Sandilands* is in two distinct blocks. The northern block contains rooms grouped on an east west axis. Fig. 2 shows the location of these rooms and the probable wall construction. Documentary evidence suggests that the first building was intended as a wayside inn. There is conflicting evidence as to whether this enterprise was realised although one account states that the four rooms leading off the tap room were extant (in 1966).<sup>11</sup> As far as can be ascertained, wattle and daub construction extends through rooms 15, 16, 17 and 14 and to one wall of room 10 (see fig. 2). Whatever the original use of the wattle and daub building, its probable extent may have been only rooms 15, 16, 17 and 14. Frances Cookworthy made extensive additions to the original wattle and daub construction in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This probably included extending room 15 in stone and continuing this stone wall across the south elevation of this block and down the east elevation. Given the low pitch of the roof in room 10 and a lower floor level to adjacent rooms it is probable that this room was a verandah eventually enclosed by the Cookworthy stone wall. Additions carried out during the Cookworthy residency also include the south or kitchen block in the same stone construction and possibly at the same time as the additions to the north block. Rooms to the north block are basically intact and show the growth of the building as it adapted to various requirements as a working farmhouse. Room 16 clearly shows the extent of original material which includes a bay window and a vaulted matchboard ceiling in a mansard profile. The mansard vaulting also occurs in rooms 15, 14 and room 13. However, the original ceiling material in room 15 has been recently (c. 1994) overlaid with pine T&G board.<sup>12</sup> Of particular interest are the door openings in room 15 which have simple but distinctive architraves. Fireplace mantles in rooms 16, 14 and 13 are good examples of simple but elegant timber joinery and are basically intact.

The south or kitchen block is composed of six rooms in which the larger rooms 6 and 2 form the central core. The walls of this core rise approximately one metre above the ceiling level into the loft space to take the roof rafters and give the loft headroom. Rooms 1, 5 and 7 have matchboard ceilings pitched under the roof slope. Room 2 has flat matchboard ceilings underside of the loft floor. It also has exposed beams with the underside of the loft floor providing a ceiling lining. The ceiling to room 3 is unlined but shows rafters and the underside of original timber shingles. All internal walls with the exception of rooms 3 and 7 have been smooth rendered. Openings and joinery appear to be intact. Timber mantles for rooms 2 and 6 are large simple constructions - both frame large fireplace openings. The fireplace opening in Room 2, which is the kitchen, contains a large, modern timber-fired cooking range. A distinctive feature of the room is the rough Tudor style arched opening from room 2 to room 3. This opening is unframed and unlike any other in the block - pointing to the possibility of a later construction date. A

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<sup>11</sup> Oldham, R. A. 'House of History' in *West Australian* 19 November 1966, p. 22. The 'tap room' refers to the original function of the large main room of the old pub part of the house; the former tap room is now the main living room.

<sup>12</sup> It is probable that the original lining was overlaid with the new. Conversation with the owner, Mrs Wilmott, 23 June 1997.

particular feature of this building is the thick stone walls which average about 300mm throughout and give the structure a very substantial feeling.

*Sandilands'* continued use as a working home and the efforts of the owners clearly contribute to its present security. However, continued maintenance of the property is likely to be a serious issue for the future especially in the light of ageing materials and costs associated with persistent repair and maintenance.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

Cullen, D. 'Yesterday is *Sandilands*' *The West Australian* 20 October 1951.

National Trust assessment of *Sandilands*, National Trust of Australia (WA) 11 June 1973.

### **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

*Sandilands* is not extensively documented; the exact sequence of its multi-stage growth is difficult to determine from non-intrusive inspection, and precise dates for some elements may be impossible to establish. Detailed study of the fabric including the services of an historical archaeologist would be required to clarify the processes of its development.