



HERITAGE
COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Permanent Entry

1. **Data Base No.** 2907
2. **Name.** *Atwell* (1898)
3. **Description of elements included in this entry.** *Atwell* (house) and the land on which it stands, being Lot 115 on P 18473, comprised in C/T 1931/885.
4. **Local Government Area.** City of Fremantle
5. **Location.** 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle
6. **Owner.** J.B. and J.W.S. Dethridge.
7. **Statement of Significance of Place (Assessment in Detail)**

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Atwell is a large late-nineteenth century domestic villa, built to house the family of Henry Atwell, a prominent Fremantle businessman.

Henry Atwell acquired Fremantle Lot 761, situated on the western side of Mary Street (renamed Solomon Street in 1951-52) from James Lilly in 1897. The first building on the lot was recorded in the following year, 1898, as an eight roomed dwelling occupied and owned by Henry Atwell, who was described as a 'house proprietor'.¹

Atwell, born in England in 1831, was convicted of 'uttering forged papers' in 1856 and transported to Western Australia aboard the *Merchantman* in 1863. Given his ticket-of-leave shortly after arrival and a conditional pardon in 1866, Atwell worked as a sawyer and firewood contractor, and later as a manager of Pearse Brothers' slaughterhouse and meat works. Between 1864 and 1889 Atwell was instrumental in employing 55 men as woodcutters, boatmen, labourers, quarrymen, masons and carpenters, thus making an important contribution to the local economy. Also involved in marine salvage, Atwell bought the salvage rights to the merchant ship *Macedon*, which had sunk off Fremantle. The ship's bell was salvaged and is now displayed in the Fremantle Maritime Museum.

¹ Shaw, B., Richards, O., McAllister, P. *et. al.* *Report for the Heritage Council of W.A.: Warwick, 79 Solomon Street Fremantle; Atwell, 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle; Bundi Kudja, 96 Hampton Road, Fremantle.* (HCWA 1992) p32

Previously married in England, Henry Atwell remarried in 1870. His new wife, Sarah Phoebe Pusey born in 1851, was the daughter of William Pusey, a member of the local Police force. The Atwells had ten children and their property remained a family home from the time of its construction until its purchase for nurses' quarters in 1958, at a recorded cost of £13,500/0/0.² After Henry's death, Sarah Atwell built the Atwell Arcade, off Fremantle High Street, in his memory.³

The house that Atwell built was not as grand as some of its neighbours, but was nevertheless a substantial family home. It is unusual in that it is one of four large villas constructed in Mary Street, an eastern part of Fremantle.⁴ All four villas are on elevated lots, which command substantial views over Fremantle, and as far as Rottneest and Carnac Islands. All four villas belonged to prominent members of the Fremantle community: William Letchford (Lot 734), John Bateman (Lot 759), Henry Atwell (Lot 761), and Charles Hudson (Lot 762). A map of the area, dating from 1913, shows the properties as being amongst the largest in the area. Large houses surrounded by a significant amount of grounds, which ensured their views, surrounded by relatively small houses on small lots.⁵

In 1900 Atwell acquired from the Lemon family the vacant Lot 760, which bounded his property on the northern side, and from 1902/3 onwards the property description for Lot 761 was described as 'dwelling and stables' and 'dwelling sheds and lot'.

After 1908/9 the owner and occupant of the property was recorded as Sarah Phoebe Atwell, Henry Atwell's widow. Ownership then passed to two of Atwell's daughters, Amy and Ada Ethel, until 1958 when the property was acquired by the Fremantle Hospital for use as nurses' quarters. Although the property was later divided into flats Amy Atwell remained an occupant until 1964.⁶ The name *Atwell* was adopted for the house in 1964.⁷

The property was classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) in April, 1990. The place has also been entered into the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Atwell is situated on a steeply sloping block and is at the highest point on the site, to take advantage of the views and for easy access to the street. The character of Solomon Street is typically that of single storey houses built close to the street

² Shaw, B., Richards, O., McAllister, P. et. al. *Report for the Heritage Council of W.A.: Warwick, 79 Solomon Street Fremantle; Atwell, 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle; Bundi Kudja ,96 Hampton Road, Fremantle.* (HCWA 1992) p32

³ The arcade was designed by Harold Boas, a prominent Perth architect.

⁴ Shaw, B., Richards, O., McAllister, P. et. al. *Report for the Heritage Council of W.A.: Warwick, 79 Solomon Street Fremantle; Atwell, 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle; Bundi Kudja ,96 Hampton Road, Fremantle.* (HCWA 1992) p14

⁵ Public Work Dept. Drawings No. 13017- 22/2/1913 and No. 2226 - circa 1913.

⁶ Fremantle Ratebooks, Minutes of Hospital Board of Management

⁷ Heritage Committee Assessment 25th May 1992. p 1.

boundary. The building is single storey at the front, and as the ground slopes to the west, double storey at the back.

The house is of a simple rectangular form, and built of limestone block with red brick quoining to the door and window openings. This use of materials was typical for the more substantial houses in Fremantle at the turn of the century. The lower section of the house has been rendered more recently. The original windows throughout are double hung. The steeply pitched roof is of corrugated iron sheeting, with four corbelled chimneys.

The rear elevation of the building is of limestone and brick and includes a substantial timber verandah. The verandah is supported on chamfered posts with decorative fretwork. The eastern side of the verandah has been concreted, with posts supported on concrete blocks, while on the southern side the verandah has 'fibro' panelled infill. The northern side remains open.

The front entry is reached along a short diagonal path from Solomon Street. The original path is likely to have been straight; the pergola arch at the gate being a later addition, possibly from the period when the property was acquired by the Fremantle Hospital Board. The house has a fine, six panelled, front door with side lights and a fanlight.

The interior is substantially intact. Rooms lead off a central corridor - a floor plan typical for houses of this era - with the more formal rooms towards the front. A corbelled archway half way down the passage has swing doors, which are unusual, but probably original. Although the rear section of the house has been altered to provide new service areas, the basic limestone structure of the original kitchen and scullery remain.

As well as the villa, which occupies the upper portion of the lot, there is a laundry located on the south boundary close to the rear of the villa, with a bitumen driveway running alongside the south boundary. From the evidence of early plans, dated 1908 to 1913, it is known that there were several out-buildings on the lot to the rear of the villa. There were two weatherboard structures which were probably stables and a wash-house, a stone walled closet (or cesspit) and a glass house, probably for ornamental plants. There was also a galvanised iron shed on Lot 760 which extended across the full length of the rear boundary, which may also have been stables, possibly associated with a livery business. The present laundry building, on the south boundary, behind *Atwell*, appears to be one of the original out-buildings and the only one still extant. Although the original weatherboard walls have been replaced with modern concrete block, the original roof form remains.

Grounds to the rear of the house have been terraced and levelled since the 1960's to provide tennis courts for the use of the nurses residing in the property. This work entailed the construction of various limestone, brick and blockwork masonry retaining walls, steps, paths and a small tennis pavilion.

There is a substantial limestone wall extending the entire length of the north and west boundaries of Lot 760. The wall dates from the earliest period of development on the site, possibly c.1900, or earlier.⁸

The overall appearance of the building has been marred by the addition of a two-storey brick extension at the north west corner, and a fibro-cement sleepout to the south elevation.

For further information regarding the physical evidence associated with the property and information concerning the current condition of the place, refer to the Conservation Plan : Shaw, B., Richards, O., McAllister, P. *et. al.* *Report for the Heritage Council of W.A.: Warwick, 79 Solomon Street Fremantle; Atwell, 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle; Bundi Kudja, 96 Hampton Road, Fremantle.* (HCWA 1992)

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

1. AESTHETIC VALUE

Atwell is a fine example of a late-nineteenth century grand domestic villa in Fremantle. The significance is increased by the high level of original detailing remaining.

Atwell has significance as a landmark in the City of Fremantle due to its elevated site and orientation which enables it to be seen clearly from a distance.

Atwell has some significance as a surviving remnant of the late nineteenth century streetscape. Together with *Warwick* it is indicative of the preference of the professional and mercantile elite for elevated housing sites, which was typical of the period.

The adjacent limestone wall is significant for its contribution to the streetscape.

2. HISTORIC VALUE

Atwell is significant as an example of a grand home, exhibiting in its design the affluence which accompanied the gold boom of the 1890's.

Atwell has significance due to its long association with Henry Atwell, a convict expirée who later became a successful businessman. It represents the realisation of the social mobility seen as one of the redeeming features of transportation.

⁸ Shaw, B., Richards, O., McAllister, P. *et. al.* *Report for the Heritage Council of W.A.: Warwick, 79 Solomon Street Fremantle; Atwell, 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle; Bundi Kudja, 96 Hampton Road, Fremantle.* (HCWA 1992) p36

The place is also significant for its association with his wife, Sarah, who continued the business activity after his death and built Atwell Arcade in the centre of Fremantle in memory of him.

3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

4. SOCIAL VALUE

Atwell has social significance as the residence of a family - both the husband and the wife - who had a significant effect upon the economic and social life of the community of Fremantle, through their employment of people in the district and by the creation of a shopping arcade in the central Fremantle area.

Atwell has some social significance as a former nurse' quarters associated with Fremantle Hospital.

5. RARITY

Atwell and its neighbour *Warwick* are the only two remaining large late nineteenth century villas on large blocks, in Solomon Street.

The intact nature of the interior of the building is rare and increases the architectural integrity of the property.

6. REPRESENTATIVENESS

Atwell demonstrates the domestic life of the successful merchant at the turn of the century. The design and detail are representative of building techniques in Fremantle. The well located in the floor of the laundry is significant for its association with the lifestyle and activities conducted on the site.

CONDITION

For a full report on the condition of the place see conservation report: Shaw, B., Richards, O., McAllister, P. *et. al.* *Report for the Heritage Council of W.A.: Warwick, 79 Solomon Street Fremantle; Atwell, 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle; Bundi Kudja ,96 Hampton Road, Fremantle.* (HCWA 1992)

INTEGRITY

For a full report on the integrity of the place see conservation report: Shaw, B., Richards, O., McAllister, P. *et. al.* *Report for the Heritage Council of W.A.: Warwick, 79 Solomon Street Fremantle; Atwell, 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle; Bundi Kudja ,96 Hampton Road, Fremantle.* (HCWA 1992)

AUTHENTICITY

Although *Atwell* has been added to, and amended, the house is still substantially intact, with a high degree of original detail .

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Atwell has cultural significance for the following:

it is one of three remaining examples of substantial homes built by persons of high socio-economic status in an area where the majority of residences are historically smaller villas and cottages.

it is a fine example of a grand Fremantle stone villa, dating from the 1890's, with its detailing substantially intact.

it is a significant landmark in the City of Fremantle

its historic association with Henry Atwell, a convict expirée and later a prominent figure within the Fremantle business community, and his wife Sarah.

The design, orientation and the landscaping of the property are typical of the period and demonstrate the domestic life of a successful merchant at the turn of the century.

the limestone wall is significant for its townscape value and for its demonstration of construction and history

8. Register of Heritage Places

Interim Entry	24/03/1992
Permanent Entry	31/12/1993

9. Conservation Order

10. Heritage Agreement

11. References

Shaw, B., Richards, O., McAllister, P. *et. al.* *Report for the Heritage Council of W.A.: Warwick, 79 Solomon Street Fremantle; Atwell, 77 Solomon Street, Fremantle; Bundi Kudja, 96 Hampton Road, Fremantle.* (HCWA 1992)

Public Work Dept. Drawings No. 13017- 22/2/1913 and No. 2226 - circa 1913.

Fremantle Ratebooks, Minutes of Hospital Board of Management

National Trust Assessment Exposition

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet