



## 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.

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Wayne Moredoundt, Historian, and Palassis Architects, in October 2003, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

#### PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 4.6 Remembering significant phases in the development settlements, towns and cities

#### HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 107 Settlements
- 302 Rural industry and market gardening
- 602 Early settlers

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Stirk Cottage* is a fine example of a vernacular Victorian Georgian cottage exhibiting unforced symmetry, quaint proportions and simple detailing and construction. (Criterion 1.1)

*Stirk Cottage* has landmark quality as an entrance statement into the town of Kalamunda. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Stirk Cottage* is closely connected with the settlement of the Kalamunda district, being the first building constructed in what became the town of Kalamunda. (Criterion 2.2)

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

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from J. Ramsay, *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, AGPS, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to O. Richards, *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

*Stirk Cottage* is closely associated with early European settlers of the district, the Stirk family, and particularly Frederick Stirk (1853-1931) and Elizabeth Stirk (1854-1951). After building the house in 1881, the Stirk family lived there until the mid-1890s. They also owned the *Stirk Cottage* land until 1933. (Criterion 2.3)

*Stirk Cottage* is associated with Charles Henry Brooks, who opened the first general store in the district in the barn adjacent to the house in 1896. (Criterion 2.3)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

*Stirk Cottage* has value as a teaching site for demonstrating 1880s building techniques and modern restoration methods, including those used to construct the two-roomed 'core', compared with the later sun-dried clay block method. It also has value as a teaching site for pioneer history. (Criterion 3.1)

### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Stirk Cottage* is highly valued by the community for its historical connection to the first years of settlement of the district. This is evident in the prominent place it occupies in various published histories of the district and in its continuing use as a local history museum. This is also evident in the naming of nearby streets as Headingly Road, Elizabeth Street and Stirk Street, names associated with the Stirk family. (Criterion 4.1)

*Stirk Cottage* is highly valued for its contribution to the sense of place of the community. Its presence in the Kalamunda town setting has been maintained through community involvement and activism over nearly fifty years. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

*Stirk Cottage* is a rare extant metropolitan example of a vernacular three-roomed cottage constructed in the 1880s from mud-brick and jarrah, with extensions constructed from sun-dried clay blocks utilising clay found locally. (Criterion 5.1)

*Stirk Cottage* is rare as an extant example of the earliest pioneer settlement of the district. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Stirk Cottage* is representative of vernacular design and building techniques in the Victorian Georgian style of architecture. (Criterion 6.1)

*Stirk Cottage* is representative of the way of life of the early settlers, who built simple domestic structures using materials found locally, in designs that could be easily extended to accommodate changing needs. (Criterion 6.2)

### 12.3 CONDITION

*Stirk Cottage* is in good condition relative to its age and has generally been well maintained. The corrugated iron roof has provided valuable protection for the sheoak and jarrah roof shingles underneath, and provided further protection for the interior.

Repairs have been carried out to the rotting timbers at ground level in the walls, and termite damaged roof timbers and shingles have been replaced (1983-84). Borer damage to the original timber framing, evident on the western corners of the building, appears to have been halted. Considerable excavation has also been carried out at the front of the building to prevent surface water running under the cottage. This appears to be the reason for the construction of the raised brick entry platform.

The downpipes are leaking and are in need of repair to prevent water damage to the building fabric. Similarly, the leadlight window on the south elevation is broken and boarded over, and should be repaired.

### 12.4 INTEGRITY

*Stirk Cottage* has a moderate-high level of integrity. The original intent of the simple, two-roomed cottage has evolved with two stages of additions, consistent with its use as a residence. The building was in continual use as a residence until the 1960s when the Shire of Kalamunda bought it as a public park.

In 1970 the Kalamunda & Districts Historical Society opened the cottage to the public as a museum. *Stirk Cottage* continues to be used successfully as a museum, showcasing local history and artifacts.

### 12.5 AUTHENTICITY

*Stirk Cottage* has a moderate-high level of authenticity. Despite its age, it has had relatively few alterations and is largely as constructed. Alterations to the building appear to have been limited to only two extensions, the first being the early addition of the clay block bedroom wing to the east of the living room, and the other, the addition of a lean-to to the south wall, which is no longer extant. The immediate setting of *Stirk Cottage* has been altered considerably however, with hard surfaces and modest landscaping replacing the former semi-rural surroundings. *Stirk Cottage* retains neither outbuildings nor a rural setting and the authenticity of the building is diminished considerably by these changes.

Repairs and maintenance carried out to the building itself since the 1970s and 1980s appear to be sympathetic and have not adversely affected the authenticity of the remaining significant fabric.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Wayne Moredoundt, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Palassis Architects.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Stirk Cottage* is situated at 18 Kalamunda Road, Kalamunda, and comprises a single-storey Victorian Georgian style building constructed in 1881 by the Stirk family from mud-brick and jarrah, with a bedroom extension to the east constructed later from sun-dried clay block.

The first stimulus for settlement in the area which is now the Shire of Kalamunda was provided by the rich jarrah forests of the Darling Range. In 1864, Benjamin Mason acquired a license to cut timber over an area of approximately 260 hectares in what is now the locality of Carmel. By 1871, Mason's timber concession had expanded to 40,000 hectares, subject to the construction of a tramway from the Darling Range to the Cannington Landing on the Canning River. In partnership with Francis Bird, Mason had the tramway completed by January 1872, but there were, from the outset, problems with the reliability of the system. These difficulties combined with strong competition from other mills in the Range to bring about the closure of Mason's Mill in 1882.<sup>1</sup>

By this time, two other groups of settlers had established properties in this part of the Darling Range, having moved out from Guildford in search of cheap but fertile land. In 1873, William Mead acquired a 16 hectare lot in the south east corner of what is now the locality of Gooseberry Hill. In addition to a small orchard, Mead also grazed sheep on his land. The Stirk family moved onto a 4 hectare allotment at the top of the scarp in 1881. Situated on the track from the old timber mill down to Guildford (now Kalamunda Road), this was fertile land, well suited for market gardening.<sup>2</sup>

Frederick Stirk, his wife Elizabeth, and their young daughter, Mary Hannah, left their Yorkshire home in 1875 to emigrate to Western Australia. Soon after their arrival in Fremantle on the barque *Daylight*, in 1876, Frederick Stirk, who was a bricklayer by trade, secured work with W.T. Loton at Guildford. It was while in the service of Loton that Stirk became a competent axeman, a vocation which he later followed. It was while the Stirk family was living at Guildford, that their son Robert was born (1876). Later, the family moved to Upper Swan, where Jane (1878) and Elizabeth (1880) were born.<sup>3</sup>

In the course of his travels through the bush in the Darling Ranges near Guildford, in order to locate suitable timber for trading purposes, Stirk, and his companion, Faul, blazed the track to what is now Kalamunda. There, Frederick Stirk was so impressed with the beauty and apparent fertility of the surrounding country that he decided to settle his family there. For that

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<sup>1</sup> Philip J. Bonser, 'Kalamunda: The Evolution of a Suburban Settlement', M. Arch. Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1980, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Western Mail*, 8 October 1931, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Western Mail*, 8 October 1931, p. 45.

purpose he acquired almost 15 acres of land at (what was then called) Second Gully, which he named Headlingley Hill. With their family settled on this land- initially in a tent- Frederick and Elizabeth Stirk began clearing the block for a house site and space for crops.<sup>4</sup>

The difficulty of the work of clearing the densely wooded land, and the impressive vigour in this endeavour demonstrated by Elizabeth Stirk, was remarked on by observers:

In pioneering their property it can be safely said that Mrs Stirk shared equally with her husband in the performance of the strenuous and laborious work necessary in the conversion of the virgin country where they settled; and old identities of the district can confirm the fact that few men in the district in the early days could outlast her on the other end of a crosscut saw pushed by her. She was equally capable with the axe, and worked side by side with her husband in falling and cutting timber ... When the Stirks first settled at the second gully, the whole area between Guildford and there was covered with heavy timber and thick, almost impenetrable bush, through which tracks were cut, in which job Mrs Stirk shared ... Space does not permit the repetition of the many strenuous and interesting episodes in the life of this splendid type of womanhood ...<sup>5</sup>

Whilst Frederick Stirk was engaged in the timber-getting trade and working on fencing and other contracts far away from the family home until such time as the property could provide a living from agricultural work, Elizabeth Stirk established a dairy herd and conducted the business practically unaided. At the same time, she raised a growing family. At Headlingley Hill were born Harriet (1883), Edith Ann (1885), Henry (1889), Lily (1891), and Eve (1893). Elizabeth Stirk purchased necessary supplies in Guildford, travelling on horseback with the current baby on her knee. The other children were locked up in the house during her absence, under the care of the older children, and guarded by a faithful kangaroo dog. On more than one occasion, when the return journey was made from Guildford, Elizabeth Stirk led the horse, fully laden with stores, and carried the baby over the journey on foot. Supplies were augmented by milk from goats kept for this purpose, and meat from kangaroos and wallabies that were hunted nearby.<sup>6</sup>

The Stirk family house, which is the present *Stirk Cottage*, was built in three stages, utilizing materials which were available on or near the site, as lack of transport to the area meant that nothing else was obtainable. First was what is now called the living room, in the centre of the house, followed by the kitchen. The walls of both these rooms were made by filling in between the wooden framework of the house (the trunks of young jarrah trees) with smaller lengths of jarrah (saplings) woven together. Over this, clay was applied, forming walls that were crude but long-lasting. The bedroom was the last addition, built at the other end of the cottage to the kitchen. Here the Stirks used a different building material for the walls; sun-dried bricks made from clay found on the property. In order to provide extra sleeping space

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<sup>4</sup> *Western Mail*, 8 October 1931, p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> *Western Mail*, 8 October 1931, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> 'Stirk Cottage: The First Home in Kalamunda', pamphlet produced by the Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society, n.d.; *Western Mail*, 8 October 1931, p. 45..

with the growing family, a lean-to sleep-out was later added on the southern wall, with a doorway from the adjoining kitchen.<sup>7</sup>

The roof of the cottage was supported on rafters of split timber, trimmed with an adze, and covered with sheoak (*casuarina*) shingles, many of which are still visible in the kitchen and living room. As these deteriorated over time, they were replaced with jarrah shingles. Corrugated iron sheeting was later put over the whole roof, and has been retained to preserve the old roof structure. Bricks for the chimney were made from clay obtained from a pit on the block, while the camber bar for the living room fireplace was the blade of a cross-cut saw. Single frames, which pivoted on central pins and were covered with calico sacking or oiled canvas served as windows. Originally the floors were likely to have been of earthen material, with floor boards added later. In the bedroom, there was a hessian partition, and a ceiling of hessian to protect the beds from dust blown through the shingles.<sup>8</sup>

While Stirk, Mead and others had realized the agricultural potential of this part of the Darling Range, the problem of access and communication continued to impede the further development of the Kalamunda District. By the mid-1880s, new rail lines were linking outlying parts of Perth to the capital and its port. With the opening of the Guildford-Perth-Fremantle line in 1886, suburban settlements were established around railway stations along the route. Soon afterwards, the railway network was extended to York via Chidlow Wells.<sup>9</sup>

A beneficiary of this improvement in the transport of goods and people was the timber industry, which grew rapidly now that the railway provided a more efficient link from mills to the sea ports. To take advantage of this situation, Edward Keane, engineer and manager of the Midland Railway Company, proposed the construction of a rail line down the escarpment, linking the abandoned Mason-Bird Mill to Midland (and so on to Fremantle). Keane's proposal, for exclusive rights to cut timber over the previous Mason-Bird concession, subject to the construction of a railway, was approved by the State Government. As part of the arrangement with the State Government, Keane's zig-zag railway was to carry the public and the general freight of the area. This agreement was to continue in force until the end of 1899, at which time the Government would have the right to purchase the line.<sup>10</sup>

By the end of July 1891, the railway was completed. The course of the line was through Bushmead to the foot of the Hills at Maida Vale, then up the escarpment in three zig-zag stages to Gooseberry Hill. From there, it ran to Stirk's Landing (near to Stirk Cottage), Guppy's Siding, Twelve Mile Siding, Heidelberg, Green's Landing, Monument Hill and Pickering Brook to Canning Mills. Although Canning Mills, with a population of around 400,

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<sup>7</sup> 'Stirk Cottage: The First Home in Kalamunda'.

<sup>8</sup> 'Stirk Cottage: The First Home in Kalamunda'; 'Stirk Cottage: Kalamunda Road, Kalamunda', information sheet compiled by members of the Kalamunda and District Historical Society, 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Bonser, 'Kalamunda', pp. 19-20.

<sup>10</sup> Bonser, 'Kalamunda', pp. 20-21.

was the centre of activity in this part of the Range, each of the sidings and landings represented settled landholdings.<sup>11</sup>

From these stop-over points and population centres, settlers took up land, particularly for orchards, and so the population within the Kalamunda area gradually increased. The large growth in the State's population between the mid-1890s and the middle of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also provided an impetus for the expansion of Kalamunda. Population increase created a high demand for agricultural produce and so a greater incentive for settlement in the Darling Range, an area now known for its productive soil.<sup>12</sup> The great drawback to settlement in the Kalamunda District was, however, the erratic nature of the rail service. As a result, most agricultural produce was transported to the city by cart, on a road which, for a quarter of its fifteen miles, was loose sand. This meant that the journey took about three or four hours in a light trap, a great handicap with perishable fruit.<sup>13</sup>

By the mid-1890s, the Stirk family, now with eleven members, had moved to a larger house of similar construction nearby in Lindsay Street - soon dubbed the 'overflow house'- and the original cottage was leased to Charles Henry Brooks, who opened the district's first general store in the nearby barn. Brooks also provided a daily cartage service to the Perth Markets in a horse-drawn cart for the local growers.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the Kalamunda settlers, in order to obtain improvements to the District's facilities, formed an agricultural society, the Darling Range Vine and Fruitgrowers' Association. In 1896, Premier Forrest approved, in principle, the creation of a separate Roads District for the Hills area, the Darling Range Road Board. The same year, the Association was also successful in obtaining government assistance for the upgrading of the track to Midland, and for the erection of an agricultural hall. This building, completed in 1898, became the nucleus for the small community.<sup>15</sup>

Hills settlers also wanted the State Government to exercise its option to take control of the zig-zag railway, and to have a town site gazetted for the District. The second of these requests was acceded to by the Government in December 1901 when the Governor set aside Crown land- the section of land numbered 48/3699, Location 397 on the Canning Hills- to form a town site at Stirk's Landing, Gooseberry Hill. This land had, in fact been selected by residents at a special meeting held some months earlier to discuss the matter.<sup>16</sup> The site chosen was central to most of the land already taken up by settlers, was adjacent to an established stop-over for the train, and close to the Agricultural Hall and the Government school, built in 1895, and at the site of the only Post Office to service the area. The chosen site was also

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11 Bonser, 'Kalmunda', p. 21.

12 Bonser, 'Kalmunda', p. 21.

13 P.G. Wicken, 'A Visit to Gooseberry Hill', *Journal of the Department of Agriculture of Western Australia*, Vol. 10, 1904, p. 398. Cited in Bonser, 'Kalmunda', pp. 21-22.

14 John Harper-Nelson, compiler and editor, *A Line on Kalamunda*, Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society, 1978, pp. 14-15.

15 John Slee, *Cala Munnda: A Home in the Forest: A History of Kalmunda*, Shire of Kalamunda, 1979, pp. 88-89. 100.

16 Slee, *Cala Munnda*, p. 111.

unsuitable for agricultural purposes, being on solid rock, and with no easily available source of water.<sup>17</sup>

In 1901, the town of Kalamunda was laid out with the road parallel to the rail line (Railway Road) designated as the main town street, and lots in its vicinity attracted most interest at the first auction in the area. Although not all the town lots were sold initially, all of those on Railway Road were acquired by businessmen for commercial use. Lots 20, 21 and 22 on Railway Road were purchased by a Midland publican, Harry Hummerston, who immediately set about the construction of what was the second brick building in the area (the first being the Agricultural Hall) to be operated as a hotel.<sup>18</sup> The bricks used in the construction of the hotel were made on the Stirk property, less than a quarter of a mile away.<sup>19</sup>

Around the same time, a local landowner, Archibald Sanderson, formed the Upper Darling Railway League, to lobby the Government to take over the railway. In a submission from this group to the Western Australian Premier, it was claimed that commercial enterprises along the line made the take-over an economically viable proposition, as cartage revenue for transport from the area to Midland for the previous year equated to the agreed take-over price from the Government, a sum of 20, 000 pounds. The Railway League also drew attention to the natural beauty of the area serviced by the line and its recreational potential for the people of Perth. Finally, towards the end of 1902, the Government agreed to purchase the rail line, with the matter concluded the following year.<sup>20</sup>

In 1903, C.H. Brooks, who had run Kalamunda's first store from the Stirk property, moved to premises he had built in Canning Road in the newly surveyed townsite. In 1910, Frederick Stirk covenanted with the Crown to 'not do or suffer any act or thing on the land ... whereby the use and enjoyment ... of the land ... and the spring thereon shall or may be in any way injured disturbed or prejudiced'.<sup>21</sup>

From 1903, when C.H. Brooks vacated the Stirk Farm land, *Stirk Cottage* was let to a variety of tenants. From 1927 to 1933, three school teachers shared the cottage for a rent of 14 shillings a week. For this amount, they received a fully furnished house, as well as milk, cream, firewood and afternoon teas.<sup>22</sup>

Frederick Stirk died in 1931 and, in August 1933, the *Stirk Cottage* land was purchased by Francis James Roberts, dairyman, then of Suburban Road, South Perth.<sup>23</sup> Roberts built a house using asbestos cement sheeting for his own use, and let *Stirk Cottage* to a variety of tenants.<sup>24</sup> On 16 June 1944, Francis James Roberts died, and on 28 July 1944, probate of his will

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17 Bonser, 'Kalamunda', p. 26.

18 *Swan Express*, 2 November 1901.

19 *Swan Express*, 8 February 1902.

20 Bonser, 'Kalamunda', p. 31.

21 Application 576/1909, 26 July 1910, Certificate of Title Volume 1034 Folio 773.

22 *West Advertiser*, 25 July 1984, p. 12.

23 Certificate of Title Volume 1034 Folio 773, 28 August 1933.

24 *West Advertiser*, 25 July 1984, p. 12.



was granted to Elsie Roberts (widow) and Ivy Winifred Roberts (single woman) both of Gardner Street Como. Title to the *Stirk Cottage* land was transferred to them on 17 January 1946.<sup>25</sup>

Towards the end of 1949, the Darling Range Road Board purchased, from Elsie Roberts and Ivy Winifred Roberts, part of Stirk's original holding, including *Stirk Cottage*, for recreational purposes.<sup>26</sup> By 1956, the cottage had become somewhat dilapidated and there were moves to have it demolished. However, the objections of local people, who realized its historic value, prevailed and the Road Board sought the advice of local history enthusiasts on its restoration. Subsequently, restoration work was carried out by local volunteers. In 1967, *Stirk Cottage* was leased to a local potter, L. Tucker, who carried out further renovations on the building. After the Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society was formed in 1969, Kalamunda Shire Council (which had replaced the Darling Range Road Board as the local government authority) proposed that the Society take over the care and management of *Stirk Cottage*, after further restoration and renovation work had been carried out, and open it as a museum.<sup>27</sup>

By 1980, it was realised that in spite of the restoration work carried out already, major renovation work would need to be undertaken if *Stirk Cottage* was to survive. The building was particularly affected by termite damage to timbers and rising damp which threatened the structural integrity of the walls. By 1983, the Kalamunda Shire Council- with financial assistance from the Western Australian Heritage Committee, the Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society, and local people- had initiated the process of restoration. Rotting timbers at ground level were replaced, as were termite-damaged roof timbers and shingles (with corrugated iron). Considerable excavation was necessary at the front of the cottage, with hard surfaces replacing soft soil and drainage installed, to prevent rain water run-off from causing further damage to the building. The renovated *Stirk Cottage* was reopened to the public on 4 June 1984, with historically appropriate furnishings in place.<sup>28</sup>

Since 1984, *Stirk Cottage* has continued to function as a local history museum, owned by the Shire of Kalamunda, and managed by the Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society. In 2004, this situation continues.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Stirk Cottage* comprises a single-storey Victorian Georgian style building constructed in 1881 by Frederick and Elizabeth Stirk as the first residence in what became the town of Kalamunda, and originally situated on a fourteen-acre horticultural and dairying estate.

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<sup>25</sup> Application 129/1946; Certificate of Title Volume 1034 Folio 773.

<sup>26</sup> Transfer 14432/1949 (23 September 1949), Certificate of Title Volume 1034 Folio 773.

<sup>27</sup> Harper-Nelson, *A Line on Kalamunda*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> *West Advertiser*, 25 July 1984, p. 12.

*Stirk Cottage* is situated on the north side of Kalamunda Road on the approach to Kalamunda, and is located in the southwest corner of the Stirk Park reserve. Stirk Park reserve is located in the block bounded by Elizabeth Street and Headingly Road and comprises expansive grassed picnic areas, interspersed with a variety of mature trees. The Kalamunda lawn bowls grounds are also located in the southwest corner of the park, east of *Stirk Cottage*. To the north of *Stirk Cottage* is the Kalamunda Club, a single-storey brick and tile building. These three places are connected by means of a central bituminized parking area with access off Kalamunda Road. A concrete footpath extends east along Kalamunda Road from the bitumen driveway. The south side of Kalamunda Road comprises mostly single-storey residential development. Deciduous street trees line both sides of Kalamunda Road, although none are planted directly in front of *Stirk Cottage*.

*Stirk Cottage* is set back approximately 8 metres from Kalamunda Road, on a lower terrace formed by a retaining wall parallel to the road. The retaining wall is constructed with local laterite stone and features a narrow stair connecting the grassed road reserve with the rear (south) garden of *Stirk Cottage*. The garden features a range of shrubs and flowers, and a low timber trellis for roses. To the front of *Stirk Cottage* is a raised brick and laterite stone platform that extends along the entire length of the north elevation. This platform features a timber arbor for grapevines, located directly in front of the main entry door, and defines the main point of access to the building. In front of the platform is another timber trellis for climbing plants. Mature trees (various *sp.*) are located north and northwest of *Stirk Cottage* and form a visual barrier between *Stirk Cottage* and Kalamunda Road, and also *Stirk Cottage* and the Kalamunda Club.

*Stirk Cottage* is a single-storey Victorian Georgian style building comprising a two-roomed 'core' constructed from mud-brick and jarrah (using a wattle and daub method of construction), with a bedroom extension to the east constructed from sun-dried clay blocks. The building has a rectangular plan, one room deep, and a medium-pitched hipped roof. The exterior of the cottage has been rendered and painted, and a corrugated iron roof is laid over the early timber shingled roof. The original wall framing timbers are still evident on the western corners of the cottage, and also at the junction between the 'core' and the bedroom extension. The four elevations are simple and unadorned, the north (front) elevation comprises three timber-framed awning windows and the timber entry door to the living room. The south (Kalamunda Road) elevation has two timber doors, one to the living room and one to the kitchen, and one vertically proportioned leadlight window to the living room. Of the east and west elevations, only the east elevation has a window opening.

The interior of *Stirk Cottage* comprises three main spaces, namely the kitchen (to the west), the living room (the central space) and the bedroom (to the east). The bedroom is further divided into two by a timber-framed hessian partition. The interior spaces are characterised by small proportions, white plastered and painted walls, exposed timber ceilings, and timber floors. The ceiling in the kitchen is painted white while the

ceiling in the bedroom is lined with hessian, apparently to protect the beds from dust blown through the shingles. Wide timber floorboards (approximately 130mm wide and butt-jointed) are found throughout the place, and these have been painted dark brown. The patina and wear of the timber suggests that the floorboards are early.

A range of timber-framed windows and doors of various sizes are found throughout *Stirk Cottage*. Most of the windows are awning windows with glass infill and simple fabric curtains on the inside. The south wall of the living room has a non-original timber-framed lead-light window that has some broken panes and has been partially boarded over. There are no internal doors to *Stirk Cottage*, only timber-framed openings. These open off the living room into both the kitchen and the bedroom wing. Doors are located on the south and north elevations only.

The living room and the kitchen both have open fireplaces that are plastered and painted white and have simple timber mantles. The kitchen fireplace is quite prominent, with a wide threshold and a deep cavity for cooking. It projects considerably into the kitchen space and forms a small alcove on its south side which acts as a storage area, as well as providing access to a timber-framed lined and ledged door opening to the outside. The fireplace in the living room is less pronounced, and both fireplaces and their surrounds appear to be original.

The kitchen is furnished with a collection of furniture and artifacts that form part of an interpretative display. Farm equipment and home-wares cover the table, fill the shelves and hang from the walls. Similarly, both the living room and the bedrooms have a range of artifacts associated with early settlement, including hand-made quilts, bedding and crafts. The provenance of the artifacts is unclear.

Despite its age, *Stirk Cottage* has had relatively few alterations and is largely as constructed. Alterations to the building appear to have been limited to only two extensions, the first being the early addition of the clay block bedroom wing to the east of the living room, and the other, the addition of a lean-to to the south wall, which is no longer extant. The immediate setting of *Stirk Cottage* has been altered considerably however, with hard surfaces and modest landscaping replacing the former semi-rural surroundings.

*Stirk Cottage* is generally in good condition and appears to have a regular maintenance program, although this was only implemented in the 1970s and 1980s following considerable dilapidation of the place. The adaptation of the place to a public museum, open only one day of the week, is a compatible use for the place and ensures continued care.

### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

*Stirk Cottage*, comprising a single-storey Victorian Georgian style building constructed in 1881 from mud-brick and jarrah (using a wattle and daub method of construction), with a bedroom extension to the east constructed from sun-dried clay blocks, may be compared to a number of other similar

structures, dating from the same time period, and of the same style and/or construction method.

The HCWA database reveals 69 other individual buildings constructed during the Victorian period (between 1840 and 1890) using wattle and daub, or earth construction techniques; of these 20 are entered on the State Register. Five of these places have been selected in terms of their similarities to *Stirk Cottage*; Sandilands (HCWA Place No. 00394), Golden Valley Homestead (HCWA Place No. 00707), Ferndale (HCWA Place No. 00702), Abbey Farm (HCWA Place No. 00426), and Eliza's Cottage (HCWA Place No. 02868).

Sandilands comprises a single-storey 1840s wattle and daub rural homestead in a vernacular Victorian Georgian style, extended in limestone and timber. According to the HCWA documentation, Sandilands may be compared to *Stirk Cottage* in terms of condition, but has a higher degree of integrity and authenticity. Sandilands is entered on the State Register of Heritage Places, is classified by the National Trust, is listed on the Register of the National Estate, and is also included on the Shire of Busselton's Municipal Inventory, and Town Planning Scheme.

Golden Valley Homestead comprises a single-storey rendered mud-brick and corrugated iron homestead in the Victorian Georgian style, constructed in Balingup in the 1880s. According to the HCWA documentation, Golden Valley Homestead has lesser authenticity than *Stirk Cottage* and is in worse condition, but has a higher level of integrity. It is entered on the State Register of Heritage Places, is classified by the National Trust and is on the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup Municipal Inventory.

Ferndale (1859; 1930s; 1950s; 1970s) comprises a single-storey mud-brick and corrugated iron Victorian Georgian homestead with related outbuildings in a rural setting. According to HCWA documentation, Ferndale has higher authenticity and integrity than *Stirk Cottage* but is in worse condition. Ferndale is entered on the State Register of Heritage Places, is classified by the National Trust, and is on the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup Municipal Inventory.

Abbey Farm (1864; c. 1870s) consists of two adjacent single-storey farmhouses, the original farmhouse comprising two rooms with timber construction and a shingled roof, and the second house constructed with brick and iron in the Victorian Georgian style. According to HCWA documentation, Abbey Farm may be compared to *Stirk Cottage* in terms of condition and authenticity, but has a higher level of integrity. Abbey Farm is entered on the State Register of Heritage Places, it is classified by the National Trust, is listed on the Register of the National Trust, and is included on the Shire of Busselton's Municipal Inventory.

Eliza's Cottage (c. 1840s; 1870s; 1988) comprises a simple Victorian Georgian homestead in a rural setting, constructed of rammed earth with later additions in soft-fired bricks. According to HCWA documentation, Eliza's Cottage has a higher level of integrity and authenticity than *Stirk Cottage*, and is in similar condition. Eliza's Cottage is entered on the State Register of Heritage Places, is classified by the National Trust, is listed on

the Register of the National Estate, and is included on the Shire of York's Municipal Inventory.

*Stirk Cottage* is a representative example of a Victorian Georgian dwelling, constructed using vernacular building methods and materials, by early European settlers when they first moved onto their land. Relatively few changes have occurred to the fabric of the cottage itself, which makes it a rare extant example of a vernacular three-roomed building constructed in the 1880s, but unlike many of these other comparative works, it retains neither outbuildings nor its original rural setting.

#### **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

No key references.

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Invasive physical investigation may assist in determining the construction date of the clay-block extension to the original two-roomed cottage.