



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.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.22 Lodging people
- 5.4 Working in offices
- 8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 306 Domestic activities
- 308 Commercial & service industries
- 311 Hospitality industry & tourism

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Pymont displays significant and distinctive aesthetic qualities in the masonry detailing and contrasting delicate wrought iron work. The Jacobean curvilinear gable end is a dominant element in the composition and introduces characteristics of the Victorian Tudor style to the place. (Criterion 1.1)

Pymont presents a picturesque composition of design elements and is an unusually sophisticated structure for its period of construction in a regional centre of Western Australia. (Criterion 1.2)

Pymont has landmark value through its elevated situation overlooking the city centre, which is enhanced by the aesthetic design qualities of the building and the formal and well-maintained garden setting. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Pymont was possibly constructed in the 1870s during the second major period of Albany's development. (Criterion 2.2)

Pymont was most likely constructed for William Gillam in the 1870s. The place was later associated with surveyor William Angove; Mrs S. E. McPherson's boarding school for ladies (1892-1900); prominent Albany department store owner Thomas Henry Barnett (1911-1946), who is believed

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R. and Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

to have established topiary gardens (not extant); and, with the Country Women's Association who operated a club and hostel from the premises from 1954 to 1966. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Pymont is highly valued by the local and wider community for its associations with the early history and settlement of Albany. (Criterion 4.1)

Pymont contributes to the local community's sense of place as an interesting and substantial early building on an elevated site overlooking the city centre, as evidenced by its inclusion in the Albany Municipal Inventory. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Pymont displays a rare degree of design sophistication for a building constructed before the 1880s in a regional centre of Western Australia. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Pymont is broadly representative of the Victorian Tudor style with picturesque qualities dominated by a curvilinear parapeted gable of Jacobean origin. (Criterion 6.1)

Pymont represents an adaptation of function where a style of living accommodation appropriate for a residence in the nineteenth century has been modified to suit greater public accessibility, having been modified for use as a function centre in the late twentieth century. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Pymont is in very good condition with the building fabric and garden setting well maintained at the current time. The place fell into disrepair in the 1970s but was restored and in later decades has been modified to suit a change in function.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Pymont has moderate integrity. The function of the place has evolved through different forms of residential accommodation to a spare parts store, public function facility and now provides tenanted office space. A former residential function is partly discernible but unlikely to be restored given the location of the place close to the commercial centre of the city, and the greatly enlarged floor area.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Pymont has moderate authenticity. Whilst the addition of the Function Centre has enlarged the floor area and volume of the place considerably, the addition is substantially obscured from the principal address, and is clearly distinguishable from the early fabric. There has been some loss of original

fabric, particularly in the removal of the verandah on the east elevation and alterations to internal planning, some of which are reversible.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

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

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Pymont is a stone and iron residence constructed possibly in the 1870s or 1880s in Victorian Tudor style. *Pymont* has alternatively been a residence (date of construction to 1891), school (1892-1899), residence (1900-1953), hostel (1954-1966), bulk-store (1967-1980), reception centre (1994-1999) and offices (since 1999). In the 1980s, the place underwent considerable renovation and refurbishment as part of a Bicentennial project.

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, known as Frederick Town, was established at King George Sound. In 1831, the convicts and troops were evacuated, and land in the area made available to free settlers. The townsite was named Albany in January 1832. Albany developed as a trading and servicing post for whaling vessels and ships travelling from England via the Cape, and was the mail port for Western Australia until 1900. Development of the hinterland was slow but by 1850, most of the suitable pastoral land had been taken up in large holdings.¹

In 1852, Thomas Meadows Gillam acquired Suburban Lot 41, and later acquired the adjoining Lot 42, which had originally been granted to John Howson.² Local history claims that *Pymont* was built by Gillam in 1858.³ If this is so, the place, with its Jacobean curved gable and arched doorways, is a particularly sophisticated residence for regional Western Australia in the 1850s. In *Western Towns and Buildings*, Margaret Pitt Morrison comments on the variety of domestic buildings in Western Australia in the mid-19th century:

...from large, single-storeyed verandahed structures such as the Residence at Albany (1864)... to buildings of two or more storeys of greater sophistication and fineness of proportion and detail, as for example, 'Mount House', in Perth (1850).⁴

This sophistication, however, seems to be found only in Perth and Fremantle during this period in Western Australia, and is reminiscent of designs in South Australia at the time.

Local resident, Ivan Bird, whose family owned Strawberry Farm for many years, conducted research into the history of *Pymont*. He believes the place was built by Thomas Gillam in 1858, financed by his brother-in-law John

¹ Garden, Donald S. *Albany: A Panorama of the Sound from 1827* Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 36-70.

² Land Grant enrolment no. 1190. No memorials regarding the transfer of ownership of Lot 42 have been located. The land first appears on Certificate of Title, Vol. 9 Fols. 58 & 62, 1 July 1882.

³ Bird, Ivan, 'Information collected on Pymont', Battye private archives, 5491A/6. The 1858 date that appears in publications on Albany's buildings, and on the Albany Historic Town Trail plaque attached to *Pymont*, is possibly based on Ivan Bird's research of the 1950s and 1960s.

⁴ Pitt Morrison, M. & White, J. (eds) *Western Towns and Buildings*, UWA Press, Perth, 1979, pp. 36-37.

McKail. Bird could show no documentary evidence of this but appears to have based it on his belief that this was the sort of thing John McKail did for family members. Not all Bird's informants agreed with his theory. Among his research is a letter from an unidentified member of the Bird family claiming that the original residence built by Thomas Gillam was falling down when purchased by William Angove in 1886, and that Angove built the existing *Pymont* in the late 1880s. Alfred Gillam, a grandson of Thomas Gillam, stated that he always believed *Pymont* was built by Thomas Barnett, a later owner of the place. This is particularly significant because if Thomas Gillam had built the place, Alfred's father would have grown up there and one could assume that Alfred would have some knowledge of that.⁵

Another Albany resident, Nathaniel William McKail (nephew of Thomas Gillam, born 1850), wrote a lengthy 'remembrance' of Albany's early years. He describes the town and its buildings street by street. In Norfolk Street (later incorporated into Serpentine Road) he noted blacksmith John Howson's modest home on Lot 42, and the Mechanic's Institute across the street (1853), but states that from that point there were no other houses in that section of town until several blocks north, where *Camfield House* (1858) was situated. Nathaniel McKail recounts the early history of each building in Albany, basically covering the 1850s and 1860s, the period he was growing up, but at no point does he mention *Pymont*. He does comment, however, on the 'ordinary architecture' of the town.⁶

Thomas Gillam may have built a house on his land, but it is doubtful that it was *Pymont*, or the *Pymont* that exists. It is more likely that *Pymont* was constructed in the 1870s, by William Gillam, Thomas' son. The theory that William Angove built *Pymont* in the late 1880s, also cannot be completely discounted. Angove is known to have built and sold houses, to the dismay of his wife who grew tired of moving every few years, but a sale notice of 1886 describing the residence tends to discount this theory.⁷

Thomas Meadows Gillam arrived in Albany in August 1833, on the *Jane*, from Hobart. He was 29 years old. He had originally travelled from England to Sydney, arriving there in 1829, as a free migrant and overseer on Major Rhodes' property in New South Wales. Thomas Gillam was a carpenter and shipwright by trade, and his first work in Albany was to construct a ship for Captain T. Symers.⁸ In 1841, he married Elisabeth Jenkins, daughter of a servant at Strawberry Farm. Two years previously, John McKail had married Elisabeth's sister, Henrietta.⁹

By 1844, Thomas Gillam held a slaughtering licence and was providing beef for ships calling at Albany for provisions. In 1864, he is recorded as being the agent for the Peninsular and Orient (P & O) shipping line.¹⁰ Thomas Gillam

5 Bird, Ivan, op cit.

6 McKail, Nathaniel William, 'Recollections of Albany', 1923, Battye private archives 1393A, pp. 39-46.

7 Ivan Bird, op cit. Recount of conversation between Mrs Angove and Mrs Francis Bird; HCWA assessment of *Hawthordene*, Angove's later residence, built 1892, sold 1896. Research into the 1880s rate books held at Albany Library's local history collection could explain Angove's involvement with the place, but although information on this has been requested none has been forthcoming to date.

8 *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, UWA Press, 1988. Ivan Bird claims that Thomas Gillam arrived in Albany in 1833, as a fifteen-year-old from Dorset, on the same ship that brought Resident Magistrate Sir Richard Spencer.

9 *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, UWA Press, 1988; Bird, Ivan, op cit.

10 *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, UWA Press, 1988.

and his wife had nine children, born between 1844 and 1863. His eldest child was William Jenkins Gillam. Both Thomas Gillam and his son William were members of the Albany Town Trust in the early 1870s. When Thomas died in 1874, Elisabeth Gillam took her younger children and moved to the Porongorups, where she leased land from her brother-in-law, John McKail, and farmed.¹¹

William Gillam inherited his father's Albany property, Suburban Lots 41 and 42, but whether *Pymont* was in existence at this time is uncertain.¹² William Gillam was a partner in John McKail & Co, and senior enough to sign the lease for their premises on Frederick Street between 1875 and 1880. He and McKail were both licensed auctioneers. In September 1883, William transferred the title of various landholdings, including Lots 41 and 42, to the National Bank of Australia as security for £22,000 owed to the bank by John McKail & Co. Less than twelve months later, on 19 June 1884, the company had traded out of its debt and the title to the properties was transferred back to Gillam.¹³

William Gillam married American born Adelaide Lyons and they had at least six children. As well as being a member of the Town Trust, William was Secretary of the Albany Turf Club, a member of the Albany Board of Education in 1871, Anglican Church treasurer, American consul, part owner in the whaling vessel *Islander* from 1873 to 1884, and the agent and local correspondent for the *Adelaide Advertiser*. He established a shipping and importing agency in New South Wales and, in 1887, moved east to Newcastle, where he remained.¹⁴

Before William Gillam moved east, he put *Pymont* up for sale. The sale notice that appeared in the *Albany Mail* on 23 October 1886 provides the earliest known documented date for the place. The notice stated:

For immediate sale, immediate occupation. PYRMONT HOUSE, containing three sitting rooms, five bedrooms, servants bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom THE WELL KNOWN RESIDENCE OF W. J. GILLAM, late of Messrs McKail & Coy, situated at the corner of York & Norfolk streets and standing in its own well laid out pleasure grounds of about three acres with good well of permanent water and all the appurtenances of a gentleman's residence. For price and further particulars, etc, Apply to R. Muir or F. Dymes, Stirling Tce Albany.¹⁵

Pymont was purchased by William Angove. Angove's name appears in the 1890 Albany rate books as the owner and occupier of the place and, although his name does not appear on the title, he is known to have resided at *Pymont* at this time.¹⁶ The description of *Pymont* given in the sale notice resembles the building that exists on the site in 2001, as well as bearing the same name. The name *Pymont* is of interest. The eighth child of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert was Leopold, first Duke of Albany and Earl of Clarence. In 1883, he married Princess Helena of Waldeck and *Pymont*.

11 *ibid*; Bird, Ivan, *op cit*.

12 *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, UWA Press, 1988; Certificates of Title Vol. 9 Fols. 58 & 62, 1 July 1882; Swain, Judith & Blight, *Joan Albany's Nineteenth Century Buildings, Western Australia* (rev ed) Albany Historical Society, 1988, pp. 29-30.

13 Certificates of Title Vol. 9 Fols. 58 & 62, 1 July 1882, 24 September 1883, 19 June 1884.

14 *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, UWA Press, 1988

15 *Albany Mail*, 23 October 1886, p.1. Norfolk Street was later incorporated into Serpentine Road.

16 Albany Rate Books, 1890; Bird, Ivan, *op cit*; Certificate of Title Vol. 9, Fol. 58.

Other German names that appear in Albany are Hanover (Bay), Munster (Hill) and Brunswick (Road).¹⁷

In 1892, *Pymont* was purchased by merchant Robert Andrew Muir, together with the adjoining Lot 42.¹⁸ The place was vacant at the time of purchase, Angove and his family having moved to their newly built home, *Hawthorndene* in Seymour Street. Muir leased out *Pymont* to Mrs S. E. McPherson, who conducted a 'high class boarding school for ladies' in the place.¹⁹ Mrs N. W. McKail was an assistant teacher at *Pymont* for some years. Some of the Albany girls who attended the school were Edith and Eileen McKenzie, Vera Barnett, Vera Bermain, Maud McKail and Muriel Uglow. The school also took in young boys, among them Jack Troode, Jack Winzar, and Lance Bird. In 1896, when Mary Augusta Bird married Cue solicitor Felix Cole, their wedding reception was held at *Pymont*.²⁰

The owner of *Pymont*, Robert Muir, had taken over his father's merchant business, A. Muir & Sons, in 1884.²¹ Following Robert Muir's death in 1904, title to *Pymont* was transferred to his wife Mary White Muir.²² The place continued to be leased out. In 1911, Suburban Lots 41 and 42 were subdivided. The subdivision created a number of oddly shaped lots. *Pymont* was situated on Lot 2 of Suburban Lot 41. George James Hill, acquired a significant portion of Lot 41, while *Pymont* was purchased by Thomas Hinton Barnett together with a triangular piece of Lot 42 which adjoined it and on which *Pymont* tennis courts were claimed to have been situated. The *Pymont* landholding comprised 3,958 sq metres of land, fronting Serpentine Road and with a right-of-way at the rear.²³

Thomas Barnett was in partnership with his brother, Edward Charles Barnett, and John McWhirter in the firm of E. Barnett & Co, an Albany department store with branches in Denmark and Hopetoun. The Barnetts had arrived in Victoria from England in 1854, when Edward was a young boy and probably before Thomas was born. Edward and Thomas Barnett had moved to Western Australia in 1881, where Edward ran a store in Jarrahdale until 1887. Thomas married Margaret Barry in Jarrahdale in 1884, and they had four children. In Albany, Edward Barnett was active in public life, being the MLA for the district from 1905 to 1909, but Thomas appears to have lived a quiet life.²⁴ At *Pymont*, he developed a formal topiary garden and kept peacocks.²⁵ A photograph of *Pymont*, dated c.1920, shows a relatively bare

17 Bird, Ivan, op cit.

18 Certificates of Title Vol. 9 Fols. 58 & 62, 19 January 1892; Swain, Judith & Blight, Joan, op cit, pp. 29-30.

19 Swain, Judith & Blight, Joan *Albany's Nineteenth Century Buildings, Western Australia* (rev ed) Albany Historical Society, 1988, pp. 29-30; Albany Rate Books, 1892-1899; Bird, Ivan, 'Information collected on Pymont', Battye private archives, 5491A/6. Ivan Bird refers to Mrs McPherson as Aunt McPherson, but where she fits in the Bird family could not be ascertained.

20 Bird, Ivan, op cit.

21 *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, UWA Press, 1988.

22 Certificates of Title Vol. 9 Fols. 58 & 62, 8 August 1904, 24 November 1904, 4 May 1905.

23 Certificates of Title Vol. 489 Fols. 95 & 96, 25 May 1911, 12 September 1911; Vol. 496 Fol. 26, 16 August 1911; Land Survey Diagram 3292, approved 9 August 1911; Swain, Judith & Blight, Joan, op cit.

24 *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, UWA Press, 1988.

25 *First Settlement Heritage Trail*, Perth, WA Heritage Commission, 1988, p. 17.

site, but the photograph may have been taken earlier, as there is nothing to indicate the date.²⁶

When Thomas Barnett died in 1946, title to *Pymont* passed to Leonard Barnett. Following Leonard's death in 1950, *Pymont* was acquired by the Country Women's Association (CWA).²⁷

We have purchased a fine building at Albany, "Pymont", which has been opened as a Hostel and Club for members. We feel that this will be a great boon to our countrywomen who need a rest or who are waiting to go into hospital.²⁸

Pymont was referred to by the CWA as the Pymont Club. A Committee looked after the functioning and upkeep on the building with the ongoing issue of raising funds for furniture, bedding and other equipment, and for repairs and maintenance. Donations toward the upkeep of the place were also provided by other CWA branches. Guests' needs were attended to by a resident Matron/housekeeper. The CWA provided a number of seaside holiday homes in Western Australia, but *Pymont* was the first club, and during its years of operation, the only club. The difference between the seaside homes and the club appears to have been the service provided at the latter, which was something between a family hotel and a boarding house.

A report on *Pymont* was included in each *Official Annual* of the CWA from 1955 to 1966. In 1955, it is noted that:

We have had approximately 140 guests since last October and all have seemed well satisfied with the accommodation and speak very highly of Mrs. Disbury, our Matron. Our bathrooms have been completed and sewerage also. A telephone has been installed and more new beds... our next improvement will be the hot water system.²⁹

In 1956:

Pymont is now functioning very successfully under the management of Mrs. Disbury, and during the summer months was full of guests. Several expectant mothers have stayed there whilst waiting for their babies.

The tariff is £2/10/- per week per bed, and 10/- per night for casuals. The guests have the use of the gas stove and can cook their own meals if they wish. The sewerage and bathrooms are a great boon and cost over £600 to install.

The bedrooms all have lino on the floors, much to their improvement... The fire-place in the big room has been made into an open one and is very comfortable.

This summer there have been visitors from England, Scotland, America and all over the Eastern States, as well as Western Australia staying at Pymont and all agree it is a home from home and fulfilling a long-felt want.³⁰

In 1957:

The hall and long passage have been painted cream, which is a big improvement after the dark walls. One bed-room that was painted required considerable preparation as it had been previously covered with paper. The

26 Photograph c.1920, Batty 3927B.

27 Certificate of Title Vol.496 Fol. 26, 18 October 1944, 25 September 1950, 10 November 1953.

28 Country Women's Association, *Official Annual*, 1954, p. [4].

29 Country Women's Association, *Official Annual*, 1955, p. 33.

30 *ibid*, 1956, p. 35.

club is indebted to Mrs. Howe and Mrs. Barnesby for this work, including the painting of the hall, passage and all outside woodwork.

Gas heaters have been installed in both bathrooms and a shower curtain and frame have been put up... The front lawns have again been top-dressed and will be a big improvement.³¹

In 1958, the Albany branch of the CWA occupied the 'big room' at *Pymont* while the new CWA offices were under construction next door on Lot 42. A new housekeeper, Mrs Martin, was appointed:

With the change of housekeeper, the Committee changed the tariff, which is now £5/5/- for permanents. Casuals £6. Bed and breakfast and dinner at night and all meals supplied at weekends...

Mrs Martin's husband, who has arrived from England and who is a landscape gardener, has promised to keep the grounds and building in order, already he has done a considerable amount of work, and the grounds are taking on a cared-for appearance.³²

In 1959:

The Club has been functioning very satisfactorily... All through the winter there was a steady flow of guests.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin have been carrying out more improvements. They have scraped the paper off the walls of the big front bedrooms and painted them... also the first bedroom on the right of the passage and are preparing to paint the waiting mothers' room. Mr. Martin has built new stone steps at back door.³³

Mrs Ogg replaced Mrs Martin as housekeeper in 1960, and a fourpenny 'slot phone' was installed as the Committee felt this would be more economical.³⁴

In 1961:

The Club has been under the careful guidance of Mrs. Ogg, ably assisted by Mr. Ogg... We have had four permanents (School Teachers) and guests coming and going steadily throughout the year. Christmas, Easter and August holidays were very busy periods... Florescent lighting was installed in lounge and dining room.³⁵

In 1962:

The two bathrooms have been painted... the painting of the kitchen and lining to ceiling was also carried out... Florescent lighting was installed in the large bedroom... We have had five single teachers in residence this year, which has helped us considerably through the quiet season and helped to alleviate the shortage of accommodation for single school teachers.³⁶

In 1963, the debt of £7,500, which had been incurred in the purchase and setting up of the place, was paid off and *Pymont* was catering for an average of thirty guests each month. There were plans to build single rooms as guests sometimes had to share the larger bedrooms. A manageress and housemaid were employed and in 1964, extra staff were engaged when the place was fully booked from December 20th to the end of March. A Garden Fete was held in the grounds of *Pymont* in January, to raise funds for major repairs,

31 *ibid*, 1957, p. 67.

32 *ibid*, 1958, pp. 65 & 67.

33 *ibid*, 1959, pp. 68-69.

34 *ibid*, 1960, p. 78

35 *ibid*, 1961, p. 69.

36 *ibid*, 1962, pp. 77-78.

including new roof cladding. In 1965, there were eight permanent boarders and an average of 24 other guests each month.³⁷

In 1966, the Pymont Club closed:

Members of the "Pymont" Committee have met each month in the lounge room... This year, the committee members have had, what could possibly be termed "an up in the air feeling", owing to Pymont being on the market, as a result of a postal vote of branches - the majority favouring the sale of Pymont. Application has been made to the Town of Albany to have the location gazetted as a business area, because as such the land would be more valuable....

The weekly tariff for adults and children over 12 years, has also been increased to £8/10/-. Dinner, bed and breakfast £1/10/- and bed and breakfast (one day only) £1/2/6.³⁸

The Country Women's Association could no longer afford to maintain *Pymont*. The funds from the sale of the place were used to extend the CWA Seaside Flats at Albany. The idea of a club had not been abandoned, however, and a new facility was immediately planned, to be situated in Perth.³⁹

Pymont was purchased in 1967 by Barnesby Motors, who used it as a bulk spare parts store.⁴⁰ The purchase may have been partly a result of Mrs Barnesby's active association with the CWA, as her name appears a number of times in reports on the place in the organisations' *Official Annual*. In 1981, *Pymont* was purchased by Robert and Lucy Winlow. The place was in an extremely run down condition. The Winlows embarked on a massive restoration programme, adding some touches of their own, such as the wrought iron in the front fence, which came from the Wesley Church in Perth.⁴¹ Financial assistance in the restoration was provided by the State and Federal Governments as a 1988 Bicentennial project. A plaque on the front fence commemorates this fact:

Albany Historic Town Trail

PYRMONT

Pymont was built in 1858 by Thomas Meadow Gillam, a shipwright and trader. It was later used as a school until the property was bought by prominent merchant Edward Barnett.

The Dutch Cape Colony gables, fine cast-iron verandah railings & bay windows are distinctive architectural features of the building.

An Australian Bicentennial project with financial assistance from the State & Commonwealth governments.

This inscription is in error, as the later owner and occupier of *Pymont* was Edward's brother, the not so prominent Thomas Henry Barnett.⁴² The restoration of *Pymont* led to the opening of the place as a reception centre and restaurant. On 11 November 1994, the place was officially opened by Premier Richard Court.⁴³

37 *ibid*, 1963, p. 82; 1964, p. 86; 1965, p. 89.

38 *ibid*, 1966, p. 87.

39 *ibid*, 1967, p. 16.

40 Swain, Judith & Blight, Joan, *op cit*; Certificate of Title Vol.1194 Fol. 980, 8 May 1967

41 Swain, Judith & Blight, Joan, *op cit*; Austin, Tom *The Streets of Old Perth*, Perth, St George's Books, 1988, p. 111.

42 Photograph c.1920, Battye 3927B.

43 Swain, Judith & Blight, Joan, *op cit*.

A plaque beside the front door reads:

Pymont House
Officially opened by
The Hon. Richard Court MLA
Premier of Western Australia
11.11.94

The refurbished *Pymont* was purchased by Fiorino Daniele, Terse Pty Ltd and Egyptian Holdings Pty Ltd. Egyptian Holdings later transferred its share of the property to the other two owners.⁴⁴ Fiorino Daniele had plans drawn up by various architects for extensions to *Pymont* comprising the addition of a large function room and garden court at the rear. Additions were carried out, but not to any of the original plans.⁴⁵ Since 1999, *Pymont* has been occupied as offices. A business sign at the front of the place lists the tenants but also gives a slightly different date of construction for *Pymont*:

Pymont built 1857
Great Southern Development Commission
Western Australian Tourism Commission
Harley Heddewick & Webber Pty Ltd

In July 2001, the tenants listed on the business sign continue to occupy *Pymont*.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Pymont House comprises a residence constructed c.1870s with a substantial extension to the building, c. 1995 at the rear. It is predominantly a single storey building which is being used as tenanted office space in July 2001.

The place is located between the commercial and residential districts of the city and is just west of the termination of York Street, a principal commercial street of Albany which runs down to Princess Royal Harbour. The building is set back from Serpentine Road, on the north side, with a large and formal, but low, landscaped garden at the front of the property bordered by a fence with masonry piers and iron balustrade at the footpath. It is understood the iron balustrade once formed the fence at the *Wesley Church*, at the corner of William and Hay streets in central Perth.⁴⁶ There are multiple angled carparking bays around the front side boundaries and further parking within the irregularly defined lot at the rear.

The original, rectangular portion of the building extends across the block in a east-west orientation while the square plan form of the c. 1995 alteration adjoins the original building at the north-east corner. The roof is composed of a number of hipped forms clad with corrugated sheet metal, and a relatively low pitched pyramid, with four-sided glazed highlight, covering the square plan form at the rear. Rendered masonry chimneys rise high above the roof forming large scale skyline features. The two portions are very distinct elements in scale, construction material and method, and stylistic expression. The earlier portion is representative of the Victorian Tudor style of architecture with the front elevation dominated by a parapeted Dutch gable reminiscent of the Jacobean or Stuart periods. The later portion is

44 Certificate of Title Vol. 1361 Fol. 305, 5 June 1981, 1 February 1994 & 20 October 1994; Swain, Judith & Blight, Joan, op cit, pp. 29-30.

45 Various plans in HCWA file 0044; physical evidence.

46 The fence at *Pymont House* matches that photographed at the Wesley Church in the 1930s as featured in the book, Austen, Tom *The Streets of Old Perth*, St George Books, Perth, 1988, p. 111.

representative of late twentieth century architecture but otherwise displays few style characteristics.

The original wall construction of *Pymont House* consists of squared, uncoursed rubble accentuated with rendered quoins, plinth, mouldings and gable. The parapeted gable end is a major feature of the front elevation comprising a window bay which extends slightly forward of the building line and the curvilinear skyline forms of the parapet above. Stucco mouldings in the parapet and around the two semi-circular headed windows have been highlighted with a dark paint for effect. Additional decorative features include the chiselled, vermiculite surface of selected stone elements in the composition. The name of the building has been stencilled in the rendered band above the windows.

A verandah stretches across the front elevation from the gable end and wraps around the south-west corner of the building. The verandah has a concave roof, separate from the main roof, and is supported on widely spaced, paired timber posts with wrought iron panels in the balustrade and frieze⁴⁷. Rolled clear plastic screens have been suspended under the verandah eaves, obscuring the filigree ironwork, while the underside of the verandah roof is lined with timber boards. There is remaining physical evidence to indicate that a similar verandah once existed on the east elevation abutting the polygonal bay window that protrudes from the rear of the east elevation. A more simple rectangular form, which is likely to have been constructed after the original section, projects from the rear of the west elevation. Here the masonry walls have been rendered and construction detailing is less elaborate, but the form is drawn as existing on plans prepared for the Function Centre addition in the mid 1990s.

The Function Centre extension, now used as office space, has added considerable area and volume to the original building but because of the moderate fall across the site to the south-east, is largely concealed when the place is viewed from the entrance along Serpentine Road. Greater impact can be appreciated from the east where the two-storey elevation stands adjacent to an open carpark, at the rear of the site belonging to the Country Womens' Association, former owners of *Pymont House*. Although drawings for a function centre extension had been prepared by architects Donaldson Smith and Hooke, the current building shows considerable deviation from the architects' scheme.

Masonry walls of the rear section have been rendered and feature aluminium sliding windows. Service equipment is evident along the rear (north) elevation with entry via an open-rise timber staircase to a lattice balustraded balcony. The fall in the site has allowed additional floor space to be incorporated under the main floor level along the east side of the building with access to the lower level through a garage roller door under the balcony.

The principal entry to the building is located in the south elevation via concrete stairs leading up to the verandah. Immediately inside, a hallway divides the reception area and conference room on the east from the smaller office spaces on the west. A secondary entrance off the brick paved west verandah provides access to a separate tenancy within the original portion of the building. Interior finishes consist of plastered walls and ceilings and

⁴⁷ No manufacturers imprint was observed but the filigree balustrade matches that of Frosterly, a house at 2 Drummond Street, Carlton, Victoria, illustrated in Australian Council of National Trusts, *Historic Places*, Melbourne, Adrian Savvas Publishing, 1993, p. 106, and identified as no. 570 in the catalogue of A. C. Harley and Company of Adelaide.

carpeted timber floors. Notable features include elaborately moulded ceiling cornices, and architraves, high timber skirtings and timber surrounds to fireplaces. A low timber seat has been incorporated into the walls beneath the glazing of the polygonal bay window in the conference room. There is evidence of alterations to dividing walls where entrances between rooms have been created, closed or enlarged to suite varying office layouts. Offices created in the space between the original and new sections of the building occupy a former verandah area, with the now internal walls displaying characteristics of former exterior walls and having sloping, timber boarded ceilings.

The Function Centre addition has been constructed with carpeted concrete floor, plasterboard dividing walls and suspended ceilings. The large volume under the pyramid provides partitioned office space and receives ample natural daylight from the skylight above. Sanitary and kitchen facilities are located at the rear, along the north elevation, and accessed externally.

Apart from the verandah no longer extant on the east elevation, comparison with early photographs also shows a small gable once existed in the verandah roof above the entrance steps, and the west end of the verandah had lattice screens above the balustrading. Additional forms, believed to be for laundry and sanitary facilities also existed on the west verandah. A drawing prepared in 1996 indicates that these were to be removed in proposed work at the place and the fabric around this area confirms evidence of some alteration.

The building and surrounding landscaping is in very good condition and being well maintained.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Pyrmont is a fine example of a c.1870s residence displaying characteristics of Victorian Tudor style in its curvilinear Jacobean gable. Examples of this feature are relatively rare in Western Australia and particularly rare in regional areas of the State. Curvilinear gables and parapets are more commonly found in later structures built in Federation Anglo-Dutch or Arts and Crafts style.

The former Fremantle Boys' School (1854), now the Film and Television Institute, is an example selected by Apperly. It has a variety of curvilinear gables in what Apperly describes as a 'fanciful composition'. No architectural style is given in the Heritage Council database for this building.

Other examples of the Victorian Tudor style in Western Australia include the Convent of Mercy and School (fmr), York (c.1872-3); and, Hassell's Cottage (ruin), Toodyay (1854-1865). Neither of these have curvilinear gable features. Another residence, the Bungalow, 9 Dene Street, Mount Lawley is of much later construction (1930, no image sighted). The only other entry for this style on the Heritage Council database is a duplex pair, 45 & 47 Dugan Street, Kalgoorlie. This building, which has a battlemented parapet, is also used as offices.

13.4 REFERENCES

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further newspaper research, and research into the Albany rate books of the 1880s, may provide information which regarding who constructed the

building and who it was built for, and allow a more accurate dating of the place.