



**HERITAGE  
COUNCIL**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## **REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION**

### **11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

#### **PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)**

- 3.4 Utilising natural resources
- 3.5.1 Grazing stock
- 3.16 Struggling with remoteness, hardship and failure
- 3.9 Farming for commercial profit

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

- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying
- 602 Early settlers
- 603 Local heroes and battlers

#### **11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history**

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* demonstrates the later nineteenth and early twentieth century period of development in the south-west of the State, when the region was expanding due to Government incentives designed to entice people to take up land.

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* demonstrates the diversification and adaptation of rural enterprises in the south-west from the late nineteenth century to the current day.

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* demonstrates the Government policies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which allowed settlers to clear large areas of land so that rural enterprise could be established.

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* demonstrates the resourcefulness and adaptability of pioneer settlers in the south-west of the State during the nineteenth and early twentieth century due to their reliance on local resources.

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* demonstrates how frontier settlers erected their first homes using materials that were readily available in their locality. As the settler

became established this home was expanded and then later abandoned when other, more refined materials, became available to construct a new, larger dwelling.

**11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage**

*Rockbridge Upper Warren* is a rare example of a modest hand-split timber slab hut with shingled roof erected in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* demonstrates the practices and hardships of rural farming life in the south-west of the State during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which no longer exist.

**11(c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Western Australia's history;**

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is a good example of a modest timber slab hut residence erected in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and can contribute knowledge of the construction methods used to erect slab huts during this period.

The archaeology of *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* has the potential to reveal information relating to daily life and farming practices in the south-west during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;**

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is a good representative example of the practice of constructing timber slab huts in the south-west of the State where timber was prolific and people sourced material directly from the natural environment.

**11(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;**

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is valued by the community for its association with the Mottram family and its demonstration of the development of the area throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**11(f)<sup>1</sup> Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;**

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<sup>1</sup> For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

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

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* has aesthetic value as a modest timber slab hut situated in a rural setting surrounded of open farmland and remnant forest overlooking a tributary of the Warren River.

**11(g) Any special association it may have with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in Western Australia's history;**

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* continues to be associated with the Mottram family, who are notable for their contribution to the establishment of the south-west area.

**12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**12.1 CONDITION**

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is in good condition overall. The place has been maintained to facilitate its use as a museum. The roof is in fair condition. Many of the timber shingles are in poor condition and, although appear to be in place, are warped in areas and allow partial light ingress. There is however no sign of water damage internally at the site. The galvanised iron capping on the roof is slightly rusted.

The concrete floor slab is in good condition as is the timber structure overall.

Some of the timber cladding and framing is original and has aged well. The owners treat the timber regularly for pests and it is finished with a mixture of sump oil and diesel.

The granite stone Bread Oven is in a ruinous condition.

**12.2 INTEGRITY**

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* has a moderate degree of integrity. Although not used as a residence since the mid-twentieth century, the place currently functions as a private family museum. The place continues to be associated, used and maintained by the Mottram family.

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* has a high degree of integrity as an archaeological site due to its ability to demonstrate construction techniques used to construct slab huts from the nineteenth century.

**12.3 AUTHENTICITY**

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* comprises a moderate degree of authenticity as a substantial portion of the original fabric has been replaced. The use of traditional materials and methods of construction to replace original fabric has ensured the reconstruction of the place was as sympathetic to original as possible.

The western portion of the structure, comprising some of the main support and roof beams, stone fireplace, and portions of the slab walls, are original fabric. Some timbers were re-purposed where possible and have been incorporated into the newer eastern portion of the building.

The original granite stone Bread Oven is original, but in a ruinous condition.

The extant timber post and rail Fence is a reconstruction of the original fence.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation and physical evidence for this place was completed by staff at the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, in May 2018, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council's Register Committee.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* comprises a largely reconstructed two-roomed timber slab Hut with a shingle roof, (c.1870;1918), stone Bread Oven, and reconstructed timber post and rail Fence, situated in a rural setting and adjacent to a tributary of the Warren River. The place is within a 105ha portion of privately owned land to the south-east of Rockbridge Road in Upper Warren on a large tract of cleared land, which is surrounded by Karri, Jarrah, and Marri forest.

In 1831, Lieutenant Preston sailed around the southern coast in a whaleboat, then explored the area between Point D'Entrecasteaux and Augusta. The party eventually crossed the Warren and Donnelly Rivers. Despite this initial exploration, the area remained unexplored until after the official survey by Augustus C. Gregory in 1852.<sup>2</sup>

In 1850, new legislation in the Colony allowed the provision of pastoral leases for land more than two miles from the coast. At a cost of 10 shillings per 1,000 acres for eight years, many people were drawn to the prospect of taking advantage of the timber and areas of fertile soil in the Warren area.<sup>3</sup> During this period, several notable settlers took up locations in the area. Robert and Thomas Muir established themselves at Deeside (P1713 Deeside Homestead Group), where they erected a timber slab hut. In 1858, Frank Hall took up an adjoining lease,<sup>4</sup> and established himself at Manjimup House.

Frank Hall employed a stockman, John Mottram.<sup>5</sup> Mottram (b. 1839 d. 1912) was born in Tasmania then came to the Swan River Colony in 1840 with his parents Samuel – a Pensioner Guard- and Catherine on a ship called Runnymede.<sup>6</sup> In c.1860, John married Sarah Coote in Bunbury and they had several children, including David (b. 1876 d. 1965), John James (b. 1865 d. 1945), and William (b. 1867 d. 1947).<sup>7</sup>

In c.1860, Mottram and Hall ran into trouble with the law when it was alleged that Hall, Mottram, and James Guerin stole 12 head of cattle from the property of Gavin Forrest. However, the evidence heard by the jury was inconclusive and Guerin and Hall both received 15 years penal servitude with a recommendation for mercy<sup>8</sup> and Mottram received 10 years penal servitude with a recommendation for mercy for allegedly taking such orders from Hall as his employer.<sup>9</sup> By 1863, given the

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<sup>2</sup> Shire of Manjimup Municipal Heritage Inventory, prepared by Heritage Today, 2008, p. 8

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 9

<sup>4</sup> Jennings, Roger 'The History and Development of the Warren District of Western Australia, 1852-1911' Typescript in Battye Library, p.5

<sup>5</sup> Manjimup, New Gem of the South-West, Sunday Times, 5 December 1937, p. 46

<sup>6</sup> Email conversation between Daniel Holland and Margaret Mottram, 1 February 2019

<sup>7</sup> Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, Department of Justice, <http://www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au/>

<sup>8</sup> 'Recommendation to mercy' referred to cases heard by a jury where the accused was not innocent enough to be acquitted or guilty enough to be given the full penalty. These cases often resulted in reduced sentences.

<sup>9</sup> Friday, January 11, The Enquirer and Commercial News, 16 January 1861, p. 3

recommendation for mercy, Mottram received his ticket-of-leave as a colonial convict.

A newspaper account of a story told by Mottram's son William suggests that, in c.1862 a young John Mottram 'walked barefoot from Bridgetown to Manjimup, a distance of some 20 miles, his only garment being a far from adequate singlet to cover his nakedness...'.<sup>10</sup> It could be assumed that this incident may have been connected with Mottram's dealing with the law.

It is unclear where Mottram went immediately after his run in with the law but in 1864, Mottram applied for 40 acres of land in the Wellington district, adjacent to 'Mr Eddle's piece of land...', and his return address at this time was at Brookhampton.<sup>11</sup> Mottram was unsuccessful in his application for land, but worked for JG Thompson Brookhampton at the property between 1863 and 1865.<sup>12</sup>

By the 1870s there were many families who had established themselves in the Warren region. By this time John Mottram had several large leases of land in the area, including a portion of land where *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is located. The hut, comprising one room, was established as a mustering camp.<sup>13</sup> To the west of the slab hut is a bread oven, which may have been erected during this time. Today it is in a ruinous condition.<sup>14</sup>

The hut was constructed from local hardwood timbers. Being hand adzed, the processing of the trees was very labour intensive and time-consuming. The western room (currently set up as a kitchen), including the rubble stone chimney, are all that remain of the original hut.

Slab huts were common throughout the heavily timbered areas of Western Australia during the nineteenth century. Typically, trees were felled and slabs were processed using a hammer and wedge to split the timber. The advantages of this technique, although labour intensive, were that it could be done with minimal experience and the structure could be easily dismantled and re-erected. However, the downside was that without additional weather-proofing (e.g. mud and straw) the structures offered limited protection during major weather events.<sup>15</sup> As there were no foundations and the ends of the slabs were simply buried in the ground, the long term survival of these structures is limited without adequate maintenance. The overall form of slab dwellings varied substantially depending on the region and skill, however they all share one thing; they were erected using resources from the local environment and usually date to the initial establishment of an area before the arrival of more sophisticated technology that enabled timber to be milled, and therefore before more substantial dwellings (e.g. weatherboard, brick, stone, etc.) were erected.

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- 10 Birthday Revives Memory of Floods and 20-Mile Barefoot Walks, *Blackwood Times*, 25 July 1947, p. 8.  
11 Surveyor Correspondence, unregistered files, Wellington district, SDUR/M4 item 408, State Records Office of Western Australia  
12 Email conversation between Daniel Holland and Margaret Mottram, 1 February 2019  
13 Ibid  
14 Telephone conversation between David Mottram and Daniel Holland, 20 June 2018  
15 Lectures on Northern Queensland History, *Pioneer Homesteads of North Queensland*, Ray Summer, 1974, p. 47

The name of the property Rockbridge derives from the natural rocky crossing in a creek which was built up with gravel in later years to gain access to the other side of the property.<sup>16</sup>

By 1870, Mottram had established himself at Peppermint Grove in Balbarrup, approximately 16 km north of *Rockbridge, Upper Warren*.<sup>17</sup>

In 1893, the *Homestead Act* was passed, making it possible for potential settlers to select a free homestead farm, to a maximum of 160 acres, provided the selector resided there and improved it for a period of seven years. More land could be selected under Conditional Purchase. The Act encouraged a new wave of European settlers to the district.<sup>18</sup> *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* was also leased under this scheme, with Conditional purchase.<sup>19</sup>

A 1890s survey of the Nelson district shows that, in the area surrounding *Rockbridge, Upper Warren*, John Mottram owned or was leasing approximately 20,000 acres of land, with a very small portion under cultivation adjacent to Smith Brook and close to the area where *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is extant.<sup>20</sup> From this survey, no structures for any properties are shown, but it is likely that structures were erected on the site as someone needed to reside at the property in order to meet the conditions of 'Conditional Purchasing' of land.

In 1910 John's son David married Mabel Giblett and they had 6 children, including Cliff Mottram (b.1920) who would later own the property.<sup>21</sup>

In a 1912 newspaper article David, his brother John James, and a neighbour, requested the Roads Board upgrade the road to *Rockbridge, Upper Warren*.<sup>22</sup> By 1914, these roadworks were almost complete.<sup>23</sup> In 1919, the first certificate of title was issued for the land on which the place now stands,<sup>24</sup> indicating the land was now privately owned rather than leased.

The clearing of land was difficult in the south-west, owing to the large hardwood trees. From 1907, a ringbarking scheme was introduced by Premier James Mitchell to provide work to the unemployed;<sup>25</sup> and by 1908, approximately 6,000 acres of land had been ringbarked in the Warren area.<sup>26</sup>

From the early c.1900s, the clearing of the land at *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* was limited to a small area of land, approximately one to two acres, only big enough to

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16 Email conversation between Daniel Holland and Margaret Mottram, 1 February 2019

17 10 Pound Reward, Southern Times, Bunbury, 7 December 1892.

18 Crowley, F. K. *Australia's Western Third: A History of Western Australia from the first settlements to modern times* (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1960) p. 104.

19 South West Cattle Drives Oral History Project, interview between Clifford Mottram, David Mottram, and Bev Mottram, interviewed by John Ferrell, State Library of Western Australia, OH4080/3, 8 August 2013.

20 Nelson Sheet 3, State Records Office of Western Australia, Cons 4923 Item 506123.

21 Email conversation between Daniel Holland and Margaret Mottram, 1 February 2019

22 Warren Roads Board, *The Blackwood Times*, 23 January 1912, p. 3

23 Warren Roads Board, *Bunbury Herald*, 12 March 1914, p. 5

24 Certificate of Title Volume GC27 Folio 203, dated 10 December 1919, retrieved from Landgate

25 Shire of Manjimup Municipal Heritage inventory, prepared by Heritage Today, 2008, p. 204

26 The Warren Ringbarking, *The Blackwood Times*, 25 February 1908, p. 3

provide feed for one or two horses.<sup>27</sup> Most of the trees at *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* were cleared by ringbarking during this period.

By 1919, the hut was used to house David Mottram and his family of six, until a larger house could be built.<sup>28</sup>

From this time, *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* was established as a pastoral enterprise, which ran dairy cattle (Guernsey/Shorthorn) and sheep (Romney Marsh). At its most productive, the farm was milking up to 130 cows per day. The milk was being transported to a butter factory in Manjimup and cream was processed on site with a cream truck collecting the product several times a week.<sup>29</sup> The dairy industry in the State during the early twentieth century boomed as settlers in the south west associated with the Group Settlement Scheme and private enterprises around the metropolitan area supplied dairy products to the various distribution centres; by c.1930, in a single year, upwards of 1,000 applications had been received to distribute milk.<sup>30</sup>

By c.1926, a new, grander farmhouse had been erected by David Mottram to the north of the original slab hut. The family moved into the new house and the slab hut was used to accommodate workers employed on the farm.<sup>31</sup>

Most of the leaseholders and land owners in the Warren area during this period were pastoralists, raising dairy cattle and sheep. However, it was difficult to provide animals with grazing material that was of sufficient quantity and quality throughout the year. The pastoralists were informed by local Aboriginal people of seasonal ground-cover between the coast and inland areas. David, his father, and brothers used two main tracks to graze their cattle, ranging between approximately 120 km and 160 km. During the trips, they would camp at various locations, such as Brown's Well, Shannon Yards, 'Mye River' Hut, Codd Plain, Plains Hut, and Lake Hut, and the cattle were free to graze on the seasonal grasses and groundcovers.<sup>32</sup> The tracks that were formed by the Mottram family and other local pastoralists as a result of this grazing remain in the landscape today as bitumen roads, including Wheatley Coast Road and South West Highway.

However, the dairy industry in the State during this time was faced with several challenges. In 1925, a Royal Commission was held to investigate the prevalence of illness from the distribution of unpasteurized milk. By 1932, the *Milk Act* was introduced to better regulate the industry. Although the pasteurization of milk was not enforced until the 1960s, the desire for pasteurized milk following the royal commission increased. This process raised costs for farmers and not all could afford to incorporate it into their already stretched budgets. Also from 1929, the global economic Depression led to the fall of dairy product prices. Between 1929 and 1932, the price of butterfat in the State had fallen from 1s.8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. lb to 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. lb, leading to poor returns for farmers who relied solely on the dairy industry.<sup>33</sup> Those

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27 South West Cattle Drives Oral History Project, interview between Clifford Mottram, David Mottram, and Bev Mottram, interviewed by John Ferrell, State Library of Western Australia, OH4080/3, 8 August 2013.

28 Email conversation between Daniel Holland and Margaret Mottram, 1 February 2019

29 Ibid

30 Cullity, Maurice, *A History of Dairying in Western Australia* (Nedlands, WA: 1979), pp. 224-226

31 Telephone discussion between Daniel Holland and David Mottram, 1 May 2018

32 South West Cattle Drives Oral History Project, interview between Clifford Mottram, David Mottram, and Bev Mottram, interviewed by John Ferrell, State Library of Western Australia, OH4080/3, 8 August 2013.

33 Low Butterfat Prices- Farmers becoming restive, *The West Australian*, 13 December 1932, p. 6



that had settled in the Warren area, including the Mottrams, who relied primarily on dairy products, were forced to diversify or be at risk of losing their properties.

Since the early twentieth century in Western Australia, the trapping of possums in the south had been a method of employment for those out of work. The 'Possum Season' would open for a few months towards the end of the year and people were allowed to trap the animals to sell. Between August and December 1915, approximately 52,000 possums were trapped;<sup>34</sup> with a dozen possum skins at this time making upwards of 4s 6d. However, from c.1920, the practice was banned due to the rapid decline in possum numbers associated with the hunting from prior years.<sup>35</sup> David Mottram supplemented his income by selling wallaby and possum skins despite possum trapping being banned during the period, as these were still sold on the black market.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the economic downturn, the properties in the south-west were also faced with major pest problems. *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* was hampered by dingoes attacking sheep, large rabbit numbers, and difficulty controlling bracken fern at a time when land clearing was done manually.<sup>37</sup> Towards and following the mid-twentieth century, these pests eventually began to subside with the introduction of Myxomatosis, *Gastrolobium spp.* and *Oxylobium spp.* derived poison (1080), and motorised tractors.<sup>38</sup>

In 1965, David Mottram died and the property was purchased by his son, Cliff.<sup>39</sup> After this time it is believed that the slab hut deteriorated. Following its use as a family and workers residence, it was used as a storage shed and pigsty.<sup>40</sup> The later use in particular is likely to have greatly contributed to the structure's deterioration.

By c.1980, the place was in an almost ruinous state. However, this allowed Cliff and his son, David, to observe the construction methods that would have otherwise been hidden. The historical importance and significance of the place to the Mottram family was realised and it was decided to restore the slab hut to its original state.<sup>41</sup>

From 1985 to c.1990s, Cliff and David, as well as a local contractor called Graham Robinson, restored the place. Where possible, original timber was used. Where new timber needed to be used, material was sourced from the property and hand-worked with the aim of sympathetically restoring the place to its former state.<sup>42</sup> The extant timber post and rail Fence is a reconstruction of the original fence, which replaced the post and wire fence.

In 2009, the property was transferred to its current owner, Cliff's son David.<sup>43</sup>

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34 Possum Trapping- The government embargo, *The West Australian*, 8 January 1920, p. 4

35 Possum Trapping- Helping the unemployed, *Sunday Times*, 31 January 1915, p. 5

36 South West Cattle Drives Oral History Project, interview between Clifford Mottram, David Mottram, and Bev Mottram, interviewed by John Ferrell, State Library of Western Australia, OH4080/3, 8 August 2013

37 South West Cattle Drives Oral History Project, interview between Clifford Mottram, David Mottram, and Bev Mottram, interviewed by John Ferrell, State Library of Western Australia, OH4080/3, 8 August 2013

38 Ibid

39 Certificate of Title Volume 1115 Folio 344, dated 14 December 1948, retrieved from Landgate

40 Telephone conversation between Daniel Holland and David Mottram, 1 May 2018

41 Ibid

42 Ibid

43 Certificate of Title Volume 2003 Folio 489, dated 29 April 2009, retrieved from Landgate

In c.2014, the original dirt floor was replaced with concrete to prevent future moisture damage. A timber foundation was built and the structure lifted to enable the concrete to be laid.<sup>44</sup>

In 2018 the place was still being maintained by the Mottram family and is in use as a family museum, housing artefacts and items found on the Mottram properties. There are plans for continued restoration and conservation of the place, which includes reconstructing the original outside stone Bread Oven.<sup>45</sup>

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* comprises a largely reconstructed two-roomed timber slab Hut (c.1870;1918) with a timber shingle roof, stone Bread Oven, and a reconstructed timber post and rail Fence, situated in a rural setting and adjacent to a tributary of the Warren River.

The place is within a 105ha portion of privately owned land to the south-east of Rockbridge Road in Upper Warren. A twentieth century residence, currently (2018) occupied by the Mottram family, is located to the north-west. Other adjacent elements include a timber out-house to the west, a small timber and corrugated iron shed to the north-west, four large Peppermint trees (*Agonis flexuosa*) to the north and west, two large agricultural storage sheds, and a small dam to the north-east of the place. The place is on a large tract of cleared land, which is surrounded by Karri, Jarrah, and Marri forest.

The hut is located to the south of Rockbridge Road, two residences occupied by the Mottram family are located to the north-west of the Hut. Four large Peppermint trees are located outside the bounding timber post fence, to the north and west, as well as two large agricultural storage sheds. *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is a well maintained timber frame and clad hut, measuring approximately 4.5m wide x 11m long x 3.9m high. The long faces are oriented to the north and south.

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is timber framed hut clad with vertical timber slabs with a hipped roof covered in timber shingles. The vertical timber slabs and the shingles have been hand hewn. The roof is capped with galvanised iron which appears in fair condition, with some rusting visible. The frame comprises regularly spaced square timber posts infilled with butt jointed timber slabs, which are nailed to a timber top and bottom rail. Internally timber battens are fixed vertically over the gaps between the slabs. Slabs vary from approximately 200-400mm in width, and extend the full height of the Hut.

The roof structure is comprised of a central ridge beam, rafters and rafter ties, this is exposed internally. Some light can be seen coming through gaps in the timber shingles however there is no evidence of water ingress in the hut. A square galvanised iron gutter runs either side of the chimney, no downpipes are present.

A rubble granite stone chimney extends from the west façade and is in good condition.

There are two entries into the hut, both are on the north façade, one opening into each room. The doors are ledged and braced timber, the hardware is also timber. The hut has two rooms, one a bedroom and the other a kitchen. The rooms are

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<sup>44</sup> Telephone conversation between Daniel Holland and David Mottram, 1 May 2018

<sup>45</sup> Telephone conversation between Daniel Holland and David Mottram, 20 June 2018

divided by an internal timber slab wall, with a timber-framed door opening between the rooms. The room to the east has a bed and dressing table, as well as old family photographs. Dividing this room, there is an old curtain rod, which is attached to the underside of timber beam.

A ruinous granite stone Bread Oven is located at the base of a mature tree to the west of the Hut, just beyond the fence.

The room to the west has the open fireplace, cabinetry, a dining table and artefacts, including an old butter churn that was once used in the kitchen by the family.

Two double casement windows are also located on the north façade, their timber frames are painted white. The window fixings are simple steel drop bolts, which fit into recesses in the timber sill. Three windows of the same type and size are present on the south façade.

The west section of the hut has retained a greater proportion of original fabric. The window and door framing in this portion of the hut use original timbers which can be identified from the more recent timber. Some original timber has been retained in the east section, but this portion is largely new fabric installed in the recent reconstruction.

The hut sits on a concrete slab floor, this is the interior floor finish.

There is a small three sided timber shelter located to the north-west, within the timber post boundary. A small timber outhouse with a gable roof also sits within the fence boundary. These two structures were later additions.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Slab huts were common throughout the heavily timbered areas of Western Australia during the nineteenth century and often represent the initial stages of the establishment of a new and/or remote location given the ease for which these types of structures can be erected. The decline of the erection of slab huts in the early twentieth century can be attributed to the increase in the availability of other building materials, due in part to the expansion of transportation routes (e.g. railway) across the State, which makes timber slab huts constructed in this later period less common. The lifetime of these structures is limited, given their construction of natural material, without adequate maintenance and often the materials used in reconstruction or conservation works to these types of vernacular building are not completely sympathetic to the original building due to difficulties and costs in sourcing hand-worked timber.

There are a total of 40 places in the Historic Heritage database comprising timber slab construction, either wholly or in part, with 12 entered in the State Register of Heritage Places. Not all of these slab huts are comparable due to their scale, form, or use of other types of material (e.g. corrugated iron). The most comparable places, due to the use of vertically laid timber slabs and lack of any exterior weatherproofing and for their location in an original setting include P3478 Harwood's Cottage in the *Slab Cottage Group*, Quindalup (1860), P116 *Glenbourne Homestead, Margaret River* (1888), P3089 *Slab Hut, Boyanup Farm* (1880), P9012 *Levi Wallis Cottage, Walliston* (1915), and P4536 *Alverstoke, Brunswick* (1840).

The nature of timber slab huts, being their often basic construction methods and use of natural timbers, means that regular maintenance and replacement of material is necessary to prevent complete loss of structures over time. Most replacement of materials in these structures involve the use of sympathetic materials, but, due to costs or lack of skills, not often are those materials sourced directly from the local environment and worked in a traditional way. An example can be seen at *Glenbourne Homestead, Margaret River*. This place has undergone extensive restoration and reconstruction, before which it was in a ruinous state. Although these works were considered sympathetic to the original building, traditionally worked timbers weren't used and this place no longer includes a timber shingled roof. *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* may be a benchmark site for which other timber slab huts can be compared in context of the use of locally sourced and traditionally worked materials.

*Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is a rare example of a timber slab hut. Only one of the above places had a construction date during the twentieth century (P9012 *Levi Wallis Cottage* (1915)). However, P9012 *Levi Wallis Cottage* (1915) is constructed using sawn, rather than hewn, timbers. There is only one other timber slab constructed place entered in the Historic Heritage database, but not entered in the Register, with a construction date in the twentieth century, being P4952 *Ellis House, Augusta* (1912). However, neither of these places are directly comparable to *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* for their construction materials, setting, historical association, or scale. *Rockbridge, Upper Warren* is also the only slab hut in the State that includes a hand-split timber shingled roof.

#### **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

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#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Archaeological investigation is likely to reveal information relating to the original occupation period of the site, particularly prior to the place's use as a workers' residence (pre.1926).