



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

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

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The place is significant for its association with European settlement and the establishment of farming in the Wanneroo district. It is one of the earliest remaining mid-nineteenth century pioneer homes in the district of Wanneroo. (Criterion 2.1)

Cockman House is significant in demonstrating the way of life of a small landholding farmer in the colony in the mid-nineteenth century. (Criterion 2.2)

Cockman House is significant for its associations with James Cockman, one of the first settlers in the colony, and his descendants, who owned the property from 1852 to 1988. Cockman first built a cottage on the property in 1852, which was replaced with the present cottage in 1860. The first house later became vermin infested and was burnt down. (Criterion 2.3)

The cottage is an example of an improvised rural cottage extant within metropolitan Perth. Its plan form is repeated in many other cottages in the district and the State. The characteristics which are to be found in other such cottages are; the central core under a steeply pitched hip roof with three interconnected rooms divided by walls reaching to the level of the roof springing; the addition of ancillary rooms under a rare lean-to and the use of materials taken from the immediate locality. (Criterion 2.4)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The place has the potential to contribute to the wider understanding of the history of human occupation of the district through its function as a teaching site. (Criterion 3.2)

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Cockman House is highly valued by the community for cultural educational and social reasons having attracted local government funding in its

restoration and much voluntary effort from the local community. (Criterion 4.1)

The place contributes to the community's sense of place since it is one of only a few pioneer buildings in the district. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

It is a rare example of an improvised mid-nineteenth century rural cottage extant in the metropolitan area of Perth. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The place is representative of a mid-nineteenth century rural farmhouse in the metropolitan area. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The place is fully restored, retaining much original fabric. Electric lighting and smoke alarms have been introduced and new toilets and fences have been built.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The place has a high degree of integrity. The original intention of the place is preserved in the interpretation of the place as a nineteenth century farm house. Being in the management of the City of Wanneroo, the significant values are sustainable in the long term.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The place has a high degree of authenticity as much of the original fabric has been preserved and the restoration work has attempted to reproduce the nineteenth century ambience.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by John Pidgeon, Architect, from material contained in the National Trust files and the City of Wanneroo Municipal Inventory. Further research and referencing of sources in the documentary evidence has been carried out by Natasha Georgiou BA.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Cockman House is a single-storey stone walled and corrugated iron roofed domestic house built by James Cockman in 1860.

The first recorded exploring expedition to Wanneroo was undertaken by John Butler in 1834. Because of its distance from Perth and the rough journey to get there, the area remained for most of the nineteenth century almost in its virgin state. From the late 1830s to the 1870s only a few hardy pioneer families cleared small areas of bushland, mainly near the lakes, to grow vegetables and graze livestock. In 1872 there were an estimated sixty families living off the land.¹

James Cockman (b.1809 in London), of Gloucestershire, was approached by George Leake, a merchant, to travel to the new Swan River Colony free of charge, on condition that he worked for him as his indentured servant. They arrived on the *Calista* on 5 August 1829, in the first year of the Colony's settlement. James was only twenty years of age and, within a year of his arrival, he married seventeen year old Mary Ann Roper, who had arrived on the *Atwick* on 19 October 1829. Their wedding on 15 March 1830, at which the Reverend J.B. Wittenoom officiated, was the first Anglican ceremony in the colony. The couple were to have seven children over the years, all of whom were baptised by Wittenoom.²

On November 26 1830, James Cockman's indenture to George Leake was cancelled by mutual consent. From 1830 to the early 1840s Cockman purchased various town lots in Fremantle, and Perth, the most notable being Perth Town Lot V29, on William Street, in 1835.³ He was mainly employed as a thatcher and upholsterer in Perth, but he also intermittently worked as a labourer on various building sites in the colony, including St. Georges Cathedral, the old Government House and the Barracks.⁴ He was a man of renowned strength and large physique as he weighed 22 stone.⁵ He also had a lively personality and even once made a public apology for disturbing a Perth Chapel service while he was drunk.⁶

The Cockman family in 1844 encountered George Shenton, who had arrived on the 'Cygnet' in 1833, and this meeting was to change the direction of their lives. Shenton had purchased 640 acres in the Lakes District, now in the Wanneroo shire, and amongst that land was Location 103, which had

¹ City of Wanneroo, Wanneroo: *City of Growth*, (Wanneroo, 1990), p. 1.

² Statham Pamela, *Dictionary of Western Australians*, V.1. (Nedlands 1979).

³ *Memorials* 1/904 & 15/526.

⁴ Daniel Guy & Cockman Margaret, *Wanneroo*, (Wanneroo, 1979) p. 5.

⁵ Statham Pamela, *Dictionary of Western Australians*.

⁶ *Perth Gazette*, 21.4.1838.

originally been granted to Samuel Moore in 1842.⁷ Soon after acquiring the land, Shenton asked James Cockman and his son John to accompany him on a trip to his new property. Shenton made an agreement with Cockman that when he raised sufficient money he could purchase a portion of the lake land, and meanwhile he was given permission to build a family home on the property on condition that he worked for Shenton for a wage.

Over the next few years Cockman travelled from Perth to the Lakes District, where he cleared the land and made fences for Shenton. He also started to build a wattle and daub dwelling for his family, known as the "little place".⁸ In 1851, the entire family moved from Perth to the new house in the Lakes District. The Cockman family, through hard manual work which had improved Shenton's land holding, and the sale of their Fremantle property, finally accumulated enough money to pay the £100 for the land they occupied. The purchase of Location 103, of 45 acres on the foreshore of Walluburnup Swamp, was finalised on June 25 1858 between Shenton and Cockman.⁹

The family then began to build a bigger house to live in. For the next couple of years, with the help of his son John, he quarried limestone, mainly by hand, from the outcrops on the eastern side of the lake. All the timbers for rafters, weatherboard for the roof, joinery for the doors and windows, and the floorboards were prepared in one of Shenton's saw pits. While they were building the house, they also ran a dairy farm and a market garden.¹⁰ In 1860, the five room house, with eighteen inch thick limestone walls and shingled roof, was finally completed. The first house later became vermin infested and was burnt down.¹¹

Cockman House became known throughout the colony for the hospitality and refuge it offered to visiting priests, drovers, farmers and itinerant travellers.¹² The first Road Board meeting in 1871 was also held there.¹³ By 1876 all of James and Mary Ann's seven children were married and had moved away from home, with the exception of their youngest child Samuel. James Cockman died on 3 July 1877, but Mary Ann continued to live in the house with Samuel and his wife Emma Jane Edwards, formerly of Gingin, for another 24 years. In his will James had left all his land to his wife and Samuel when he died.¹⁴ In 1901, at the age of 94, Mary Ann died and left the property to Samuel and his family of 13 children. On 19 June 1937 Samuel died intestate but his property was granted to his wife Emma Jane two months later.¹⁵

The property remained in the Cockman family for the next fifty years, until in December 1987, the Wanneroo City Council resolved to purchase Lot 103 for

⁷ Ogle Nathaniel, *The Colony of Western Australia*, (London, 1977), Appendix 14.
⁸ City of Wanneroo, *Report of the Inventory of Heritage Places*, (Wanneroo, 1994) p. 20.
⁹ *Memorial*, 6/436A
¹⁰ City of Wanneroo, *Report of the Inventory of Heritage Places*, p. 20.
¹¹ *ibid.*
¹² National Trust Files.
¹³ Information from Margaret Cockman.
¹⁴ *Memorial*, 8/89.
¹⁵ *Memorial*, 21/233.

\$62,000.¹⁶ The following year the Council engaged the firm *ArchitTECTti* to prepare documentation for the restoration of *Cockman House*. The tender of John Chapman for stages one and two of the restoration was accepted by the Council on 22 October 1988. The restoration process involved replacing flooring, corrugated iron roof sheeting and flashing, front verandah posts, replacement and refixing of windows and door frames, re-constructing the limestone wall in bedroom 3, landscaping, lime washing external and internal rendered limestone, and upgrading the plumbing, drainage, and electrical systems. This work and the restoration of the furniture and fittings was completed in April 1989 and the official opening of Cockman House took place on 28 April 1989.¹⁷

The house is presently owned by Wanneroo Council and used as a public pioneer museum.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Cockman House stands in open bushland on an approximately 1 ha. site enclosed by a link mesh fence. In the north corner of the site is a small car park reached by an unsealed curving road leading off Ocean Reef Road. Foot paths lead from the car park, past a timber clad toilet block, not part of this assessment, to the house. The house faces north-east and is on ground gently sloping from the front of the house towards the back. Behind the house, to the south-west are a wind mill, a corrugated iron circular tank raised some 2 metres above ground on a timber stand, an outside earth closet and various props such as a well with winch and bucket.

The house consists of a central core measuring 13.5 x 5.5 metres and covered with a steeply pitched hip roof. To the front, north-east side the roof continues down to form a lean-to over a narrow, concrete paved verandah. To the rear, south-west, side of the central core is a lean-to roof of flatter pitch covering the kitchen and a bed room. To the rear of these rooms the lean-to roof continues on a slightly lower plain to cover a rear verandah and bathroom.

The hip roof over the central core is supported on rafters, in turn supporting weatherboard sarking. The weatherboards, which were originally clad with sheoak shingles are now covered with zinc-alum corrugated iron sheeting. The walls are of stone some 500mm in thickness, roughly rendered internally and externally and lime washed. The central core has no ceiling and is divided into three rooms, of roughly equal size, by stone dividing walls which extend to wall plate height leaving open gaps between the tops of the dividing walls and the exposed rafters and weatherboard sarking of the roof. The centre room has a window and door in the front wall and a fireplace and mantle and door leading into the kitchen at the back wall. Each of the end rooms are furnished as bed rooms and have one window looking onto the front verandah. The windows are multi-paned double casements. The floors of the three rooms of the central core are of approximately 150mm wide but jointed jarrah boards.

¹⁶ *Certificate of Title*, Vol. 1788, Folio. 681.

¹⁷ City of Wanneroo Municipal Inventory.

The floor level of the kitchen and a third bedroom to the rear of the central core steps down 270mm. In these rooms the walls are of stone similar to those of the central core, ceiling consists of exposed rafters and weatherboard sarking on the slope of the lean-to roof and the floor is of 200mm wide but jointed boards. At the south end of the kitchen is a wood burning stove in a brick surround with a brick chimney over.

The floor level to the lean-to at the rear of the kitchen steps down a further 510mm. Under this lean-to is a verandah behind the kitchen and a bath room behind the third bed room. These areas have no ceiling and the underside of the corrugated iron is visible above the roughly constructed rafters. The verandah is supported on a variety of miss-shaped posts and a sagging verandah beam at the outer edge, while the external walls of the bath room are lined with horizontally fixed timber boards on exposed timber studs with an external cladding of fibre-cement weatherboarding to achieve a water proof finish.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Files

City of Wanneroo Municipal Inventory