

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.

11. 1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Bridge House is a very good example of a Victorian Georgian style rural homestead in the style frequently employed on such buildings during the early days of the Swan River colony. The symmetrical facade with its unusual detail of concealed wings behind brick parapets and the dichromatic Flemish bond brickwork are elements of aesthetic value. (Criterion 1.1)

Bridge House and grounds is visually dominant within the immediate environment of Balladong Farm situated on high land on the banks of the Avon River. (Criterion 1.3)

Bridge House and grounds has strong visual links to the Balladong Farm buildings. In addition there are visual links from *Bridge House and grounds* to the buildings along Avon Terrace which form the Blandstown precinct. (Criterion 1.3)

Bridge House and grounds contributes to the aesthetic qualities of the landscape. The setting on the banks of the Avon River and the mature trees, especially the olives are visually appealing. The current garden layout retains elements of the original garden design, including a large number of early olive tree plantings from Bland's time. (Criterion 1.3)

Bridge House and grounds as the homestead to Balladong Farm, is an especially important component of the Balladong Farm precinct and also forms a significant part of the broader Blandstown precinct. (Criterion 1.4)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Bridge House and grounds demonstrates how successful colonialists and pastoralists of the time lived. (Criterion 2.1)

For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

Bridge House and grounds is significant due to its association with some of the first European settlers in Western Australia and the early colonial history of York. (Criterion 2.2)

Bridge House and grounds is associated with various exploratory expeditions, the most notable being the Henry Maxwell Lefroy Expedition of 1863 and Charles C. Hunt's Expedition of 1864, which used the house and stockyards for their departure and return venues. (Criterion 2.2)

Bridge House and grounds is associated with Stephen Stanley Parker and the Parker family, a prominent family in the York district and the State. Stephen Parker was a member of the York Agricultural Society and served on the York Board of Education and the York Road Board. He was also influential in State politics, as a Member of the Legislative Council and as a member of the Aborigines Protection Board. Two of Parker's sons formed what is now one of the Western Australia's largest legal firms. (Criterion 2.3)

Bridge House and grounds is associated with George Wansbrough, a York wheelwright and builder of the period. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

In a community which has high regard for its heritage, Bridge House and grounds is highly valued as an important component in the history of the district. The place has significance as the house of the Parkers, a prominent family in the district and is also valued by the community for its aesthetic qualities. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Bridge House and grounds is an excellent example of a rural homestead dating from the mid-1800s. Very few homesteads from this period, with such a high level of integrity and intactness, remain extant in the State . (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Bridge House and grounds, a good example of a homestead in the Victorian Georgian style, is representative of the architectural style commonly used for rural homesteads during the period. (Criterion 6.1)

Bridge House and grounds represents the way of life of successful early rural settlers in Western Australia and the York district. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The building appears to have been well maintained over its lifetime. The overall condition of the place is good, notwithstanding the deterioration of some fabric, finishes and plantings.

The exterior of the house is in the poorest condition. Pointing to brickwork is deteriorating in a number of locations and structural cracking requires attention. Both the front and rear verandahs are in poor condition. The rear verandah, poorly constructed in the first place, is pulling away from the building. It is in a dangerous condition at first floor level. Termites have infested some timbers and there are a number of timbers requiring treatment.

Most of the remaining fabric is in fair to good condition. The 1997/8 finishes to the interior are in very good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Bridge House and grounds has a high level of integrity.

While the house has retained its original use as a residence, the integrity of the grounds has been somewhat compromised due to subdivision from the rest of Balladong Farm. Nevertheless, the clear visual link between *Bridge House and grounds* and the farm buildings has been retained.

The long term viability or sustainablity of the values identified is high.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The authenticity of the place is moderate. Until the 1997/8 works programme commenced, the authenticity of Bridge House was high.

The general setting of the house remains authentic to the latter period of development. The olive trees are part of the original setting and the fence lines reflect the historic alignment, even though the fabric is replacement material.

The general arrangement of the main elements of the house are authentic, notwithstanding changes to the verandahs and adjustments to external

openings. The fabric of the original house is largely authentic, with the exception of the 1997/8 new partitioning on the upper floor and new ceilings throughout (apart from the hall). The basement retains a high degree of The 1890s additions to the eastern and western sides have authenticity. retained external authenticity, but have undergone significant internal changes.

Much of the 1997/8 changes are reversible and elements removed for these works could be reconstructed if desired, although this would not affect the degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Heritage and Conservation Professionals. Some physical evidence, particularly that relating to the 1997/8 works programme, has been supplied by Considine and Griffiths, Architects.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Bridge House and grounds is situated on the Avon River at the southern end of the York townsite. Bridge House, a two-storey brick building with corrugated iron roof and stone cellar, is situated in grounds of 1.62 hectares (approximately 4 acres) and was originally the homestead of Balladong Farm. Local builder, George Wansbrough, constructed Bridge House for Stephen Stanley Parker in 1860.

After York was opened for selection in 1830, the district became one the colony's leading primary producing centres. The first settlers, a party of sixteen, arrived in 1831 from the Swan River settlement with the task of establishing a Government Farm. In 1832, Revett. H. Bland and Arthur Trimmer leased the farm in two sections - Trimmer to the north and Bland to the south. John H. Monger bought Trimmer's lease in 1839 and established himself as a publican and merchant. Others settled and built in these two hamlets, which came to be known as Mongerstown and Blandstown. Stephen Henry Parker purchased Bland's land, Balladong Farm, in 1848.

Stephen Stanley Parker was born in Kent, England in 1817 and came to Western Australia with his parents, Stephen and Susanna, and siblings in 1830. After initially settling at Guildford, the family moved to the York district in March 1836, after being granted a selection of 2,400 acres on the Avon River. They built a large house called 'Northbourne' on their property, twelve and a half miles south of the York townsite. By 1842, Stephen Stanley Parker and his brother, John, had established themselves on a property known as 'Cold Harbour' south of York on the Avon. Parker relinquished his interest in 'Cold Harbour' to purchase Balladong Farm in 1848.

When Parker and his wife, Elizabeth, moved to Balladong Farm they initially lived in a simple, two-roomed mud brick house which had been built by Bland.³ During the 1850s, Parker developed the property into a very successful farm.⁴ He built stone stables and a granary, and employed many ticket of leave men, all of which reflected the size and importance of the farm during the prosperous years of pastoralism and transportation of convicts.⁵

Bland's lease ran along the Avon River near the brook now called Bland's Brook and later in 1832 was granted 1,000 acres as a reward for his service in settling the district. Barbara Sewel, *The House of the Northbourne Parkers: Pioneers of Western Australia 1830-1983*, Goomalling, 1983, p. 21.

² 'Blandstown Precinct' in *Traces of the Past: National Trust Register of the Built Heritage of Western Australia*, CD-ROM, UWA, 1997.

This cottage, which was surrounded by olive trees for protection against the summer heat, has recently been reconstructed.

⁴ Sewel., op. cit., p. 70.

ibid

In 1858, Parker had a large steam flour mill erected near the stables and he began a flour milling business, based on the family's experience of flour milling in Guildford prior to moving to York.⁶ The flour mill was a boon to the local community as it meant that wheat could be milled at York instead of having to be transported for processing at Guildford or Perth.⁷

In 1860, by which time the Parkers had nine children, Parker had Bridge House built by George Wansbrough, a local builder.8 The kiln bricks for the house were purchased from Duckham's brick yard at the northern end of York, and the timbers were imported. The building had a granite cellar. homestead of Balladong Farm, Bridge House was a 'stately homestead, which graced the locality, (and) evidenced the success and wealth Parker experienced as a pastoralist and grazier.'9 Further improvements were made to Balladong Farm at the same time, including fencing the property with 'raspberry jam wood'. 10 After Parker built York's first butcher shop on the property, 'Balladong Farm gradually became the hub of Blandstown'. 11

Wansbrough completed Bridge House in March 1860. Both a builder and a wheelwright, Wansbrough served his apprenticeship in Perth. He returned to York in 1852, where his family had settled 21 years earlier, to assist his brother in cutting the roof of the first Wesley Church. He soon established his own business and in 1860, moved his trade to his newly constructed house in Avon Terrace in the centre of Blandstown. The Wansbrough house, a simple singlestorey house, has similarities in construction and design to Bridge House, the most notable of which is the parapet at the southern end of the front facade.¹²

In 1861, Parker's Bridge was constructed over the Avon on Redmile Road at the site of an existing ford.¹³ The York convict barracks were located on the eastern side of the bridge. Redmile House, was located on the northern side of Redmile Road, opposite Bridge House and grounds. Redmile House had a gallon licence and a shop and Parker availed his premises and stockyards as the departure and return venue for various exploratory expeditions. The most notable of these were the Henry Maxwell Lefroy Expedition of 1863 and Charles C. Hunt's Expedition of 1864.

Parker was very active in public affairs and devoted much of his life to the advancement of the York district. He was a long time member of the York Agricultural Society and in 1861, he served on the York Board of Education. Governor Weld appointed him a Justice of the Peace in the 1860s and he served on the York Road Board from its inception in 1871 until 1882, including eight years as its Chairman. Parker was also influential in State politics and was a Member of the Legislative Council from July 1876 to 1885. He was also a member of the Aborigines Protection Board and both Stephen and Elizabeth were very active members of the Anglican community in York.

Western Mail, 5 March 1904, p.15.

These original farm buildings no longer exist in their original form or siting.

Sewel, op. cit.; Rica Erickson(ed), The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians, pre-1829 -1888, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1988, p. 2416.

Sewel, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁰ Sewel, op. cit., p. 71.

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¹² Deas, Greg and Colett, David, Blandstown, UWA 1972. 13

The bridge was pulled down in the late 1960s.

In his later years, Stephen was a diocesan trustee of the Church of England in Perth. ¹⁴ In 1882, he retired to 325 Adelaide Terrace, Perth to a house similar in design to *Bridge House*. ¹⁵

In the 1890s, Balladong House, a large Victorian style, brick house with encircling verandahs, was built to the west of *Bridge House* for a member of the Parker family. ¹⁶ Further improvements were made to Balladong Farm at the same time, including the two-storey brick and shingle granary and adjoining stone-walled stable block. The adjacent shearing shed, dating from the 1870s, was constructed in timber. ¹⁷

Stephen and Elizabeth Parker had six daughters and six sons.¹⁸ Four of the sons, including Stephen Stanley Parker jnr., stayed on the land and two 'made their mark on the State's legal history.'¹⁹ Members of the Parker family continued to live at *Bridge House* until the death of Annie Christina Parker, the widow of John William Parker, in the early 1960s.

It has been suggested that *Bridge House* was used as a hospital around the time of World War One.²⁰ The partitioning of the upstairs rooms probably occurred during this time. Apart from that brief period, the house has always been used as a residence. Balladong Farm has been subdivided into Balladong Farm, *Bridge House and grounds*, and Balladong House all on separate land titles.

Following the death of Annie Christina Parker, *Bridge House and grounds* was sold to Hilda May Barrett-Lennard of York on 5 February 1962. The following year, Daisy Ellen Hall Pierce and Pearl Edna Floyed, retired Salvation Army officers, and Olive Irene Haynes purchased the property.²¹. They made *Bridge House and grounds* their home and continued to maintain the house and grounds. Following their deaths, *Bridge House and grounds* was sold.

The place was purchased by Jane and Stephen Hamersley in 1997. They had designs prepared by Bruce Thomspon in 1997 and converted the interior of the house to suit modern living requirements. The principal rooms were left more or less intact. The north and south wings were altered extensively under Thompson's plan.

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Sewel, op. cit., p. 71. Stephen and Elizabeth are commemorated by a brass plaque in the Holy Trinity Anglican Church at York.

Western Mail, 5 March 1904, p. 15. This house is no longer extant.

National Trust, Assessment form.

ibid

A further three children died in infancy. Erickson, op. cit., p. 2416.

¹⁹ Sewel, op. cit., p. 71.

²⁰ Conversation with Shirley Lutze, York, 9 July 1997.

Certificate of Title Vol. 1105 Folio 166.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Bridge House is a two-storey brick Victorian Georgian homestead located in the area formerly known as Blandstown on the outskirts of York. The house was constructed as the homestead for Balladong Farm; however, it has been subdivided off from the main property in more recent times.

Physical Description Of The Setting

Bridge House and grounds is located on Redmile Road which runs at right angles to Avon Terrace, the main thoroughfare through the town of York. It is located at the southern end of York in the area formerly known as Blandstown. The remains of Parker's Bridge, which crossed the Avon River at the northern corner of the property is still evident.

Nearby buildings include Balladong House, which is situated west of the entry from Redmile Road, and the various Balladong Farm buildings directly to the rear (south) of *Bridge House and grounds*. The Balladong Farm buildings include a large brick granary, stone stables, a timber shearing shed, a small timber farm structure and the reconstructed thatched mud brick cottage.

There are strong visual links from *Bridge House and grounds* to the Balladong buildings, particularly the farm buildings. In addition, the buildings along Avon Terrace, which form the Blandstown precinct, can be seen from Bridge House and grounds across the farm pastures to the south-west. Bland Brook runs through Blandstown into the Avon River. It meanders through the paddocks of Balladong Farm and along the front of Bridge House.

Physical Description Of The Site

Bridge House and grounds is situated on a 1.62 hectare (approximately 4 acre) parcel of land which runs north-west to south-east from Redmile Road, York. Entry is from Redmile Road along a right-of-way which also provides access to Balladong House and continues to Balladong Farm. A round-about is situated on the right of way next to the entry to Bridge House and grounds. A short gravel driveway runs from the right of way to the front of the house.

The building is located close to the south-west side boundary and towards the rear south-east boundary. It is situated on high ground on the banks of the Avon River which forms the north-eastern boundary. The grounds also slope gently to Bland Brook which runs along the north-western boundary parallel to Redmile Road. The property is fenced with timber posts and wire fencing along the south-east and south-west boundaries.

The grounds have been extensively landscaped. The most notable plantings are the mature olive trees which have been planted close to the house on both sides. Mature olive trees and some deciduous trees are situated to the front of the house at a distance that allows an open garden area in front of the house. There are a number of other trees and shrubs and more recently the grounds closer to Blands Creek have been planted with a variety of Australian native plants. There is a well on the south-western side of the house near the entry to the property.

Description of the Building

Bridge House is a two-storey brick building with verandahs to the front and rear. The building is symmetrical in plan and elevation with single storey wings on both sides of the building. There is a stone cellar. The building is a good example of a rural homestead in the 'Victorian Georgian' style.²²

Bridge House has local stone footings and plinth with brick footings to the verandahs. The walls are Flemish bond brickwork which is dichromatic to the front elevation. The walls to the rear sections of both wings are English bond brick work with a weatherboard ante-room to the rear of the north-eastern wing. The external doors are timber framed panel doors with a fanlight above the entry door. The French doors to the front and rear upstairs verandahs have eight glazed panes. The doors to the rear of the side wings are ledged and braced. All the doors to the verandahs, except the central front entry and rear doors, have timber framed flyscreens. The windows to the central two storey section of the building are double hung with six pane sashes and have externally fixed timber framed flyscreens. The windows to the side wings are eight pane casements. The roof is clad with shorts of sheet corrugated iron with galvanised iron ogee profile gutters and round downpipes. There are three corbelled chimneys.

The verandahs have timber posts with chamfered corners and timber balustrades. The ground floor front verandah extends to the front of the wings and is supported by painted circular steel posts. The rear upstairs verandah has a small timber framed flywire room at the north-east end and has asbestos lining on timber framing to either end.

Internally the building comprises a central section consisting of the ground floor, first floor and the cellar. At ground and first floor levels there are large rooms on either side of the central passage and staircase. At first floor level these rooms have been partitioned with stud walls. Each of the single-storey wings comprises two original rooms. There are some stud partitions of recent origin in the central room of the south-western wing. There are some additions to the two wings including one room to the rear of the south-west wing and a larger room and ante-room to the rear of the north-east wing.

Note: The room numbers used in the following description of the internal fabric are based on the numbers given to the rooms in the attached floor plans of *Bridge House* (Appendix B).

Ground Floor

Rooms 1, 2 and 3 are the main ground floor rooms and entry hall, with 6' tongue and groove timber floor throughout. The perimeter 10" reed moulded skirtings have been removed, repaired and refixed. The walls are solid Flemish bond construction, finished in lime plasters which have been repaired on a number of occasions. These have been painted with calsomine and overcoated with other paints. The ceiling throughout these rooms is plasterboard finish on a furring channel system, replacing the original lathe and plaster ceiling. Modern reproduction cornices have been added. However, the soffit in Room 2 (the hall) retains its lathe and plaster ceiling, to which a modern cornice has been added.

Apperly, Irving & Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 42-45.

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The fireplace in the centre of the eastern wall in Room 1 is without its mantle, and the fireplace in Room 3 appears to have undergone a number of alterations and is in the process of being refurbished. A new door has been inserted in the southern end of the western wall of Room 3. The internal doors are Oregon four panel types; the windows 6 pane double hung sashes. The timber stair in Room 2 is a simple element, with timber treads and risers with a wreathed timber handrail fixed to turned timber newels. There is evidence of a dado line on the walls in Room 2.

Rooms 4/5, part of the 1890s additions, and Room 6, a later addition, have been modified by the 1997/8 works programme. The dividing wall between Rooms 4 and 5 has been removed to form a large kitchen, and an opening has been made in the northern wall of Room 6 to make a connection with Room 5. The timber floor has been removed and replaced with concrete throughout. The original window remains in the north wall; the window in the west walls of Rooms 4 and 6 have been removed to make French doors. The gyprock ceiling in Room 4/5 covers the original sarking boards for the shingle roof. The original door to the verandah in Room 6 has been blocked off and windows have been introduced on the south wall on each side of the chimney. The early range in this room retains its hearth, and there is a bread oven to the west of the range.

Rooms 7, the most northerly of the western section of the 1890s additions, is of the same construction as its eastern counterpart, with a concrete replacement floor. Plasterboard ceilings with new plaster cornices cover the sarking boards on this side of the house also. An original fireplace in the south east corner remains.

In the 1997/8 works programme, former Room 8 has been redivided with stud partitions to form a walk-in robe, en-suite bathroom and bathroom. Surface finished have been modified throughout.

The timber floor in Room 9 has also been replaced with concrete and the ceiling has been replaced with a Hardiflex or Versilux finish. The walls are rendered with a soft pug, with a tin lime setting coat, and finished with calsomine, overlaid with subsequent finishes.

First Floor

Rooms 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 are on the first floor and are reached by the timber staircase from the entry hallway. The doors on the first floor are four panel Oregon, with eight pane and one panel doors leading onto the front or northern verandah. The top of the stairs matches the lower flight and appears not to have been altered. Room 10 is the stair landing and like the ground floor Rooms 1, 2 and 3, has 6" reed moulded timber skirtings and similar wall treatments. The ceiling is replacement plasterboard, with modern replica plaster cornices.

Rooms 11 and 12 are bedrooms. The dividing wall is a 1997/8 addition and is slightly different in location to an earlier wall; evidence suggests that Rooms 11 and 12 may have originally been a single room. They have timber floorboards with a rectangular vinyl sheet located centrally in each room. The walls are rendered and painted with timber skirtings. The ceilings have been replaced, but the original four panel doors and six pane double hung sand window remain in Room 11. In Room 12, the window was removed when the

verandah was extended, and replaced with a ten pane and single panel set of French doors. The fireplace in the eastern wall of Room 11 has a simple surround; there is no fireplace in Room 12.

Rooms 13 and 14 are mirrors of Rooms 11 and 12. Room 13 remains true to the original symmetry, and also has a section of early linoleum on the floor. Room 14 has been rearranged to achieve modern accommodation standards. The original window and door remain in place.

Cellar

The cellar retains its original plan form, with what appears to be an additional room at the northern end of the stair corridor. The cellar consists of two large rooms, a central passageway and small store that appears to have been created by making a brick dividing wall in the corridor. The cellar can be reached by stairs from the rear verandah and from under the central staircase. The walls are random rubble granite, which has been limewashed. This is the original construction and possibly the original finish. The floors are brick and compacted earth. The cellar is well ventilated with barred window openings beneath the front verandah and open timber slat double doors to the external entry.

There is evidence to indicate that the building has been rewired. Internal plumbing appears to date from approximately the 1950s.

Alterations To The Fabric Of The Place

As a result of the 1997/8 works programme, there has been much change to the interior fabric and finishes. The programme has left the main construction of the walls, the majority of the opening treatments to the exterior, the main stair and verandahs intact. The changes have focussed on changes to the floor construction in the 1890s additions and finishes throughout.

The main changes to the exterior consist of the loss of the shingle roof to a corrugated galvanised iron roof, replacement of the fabric of both verandahs, and the removal of a lean-to room on the southern elevation. The verandah posts have been replaced with steel posts and the floors re-timbered and fibro sheeting added to the skillion gables of the rear verandah.

The basement remains substantially intact, while alterations to the ground floor, apart from the three central principal rooms, has been extensive. Ceilings throughout, with the exception of the hall, have been replaced or covered by plasterboard. The 1890s additions have undergone the most change, with the removal of walls, new openings created, alteration of windows to doors and timber floors replaced with concrete. The rooms in both extensions have been re-planned to serve modern functions.

The first floor has undergone fewer alterations, although the 1997/8 arrangement to the western side of the house is quite different to the original layout and produces modern utility rooms and wet areas out of the original spaces.

Appearance And Condition Of The Building

The building appears to have been well maintained over its lifetime. The overall condition of the place is good, notwithstanding the deterioration of some fabric, finishes and plantings.

The exterior of the house is in the poorest condition. Pointing to brickwork is deteriorating in a number of locations; areas of cement render repairs are causing the brickwork to deteriorate. Structural cracking requires attention, and should be examined by an engineer. The silting up of the floor space under the verandahs traps stormwater and has the potential to cause run off into the basement, which is somewhat fragile. Cleaning out of the floor cavity should be done under the supervision of an archaeologist, as scatters of material are likely to be found.

Both the front and rear verandahs are in poor condition. The rear verandah, poorly constructed in the first place, is pulling away from the building. It is in a dangerous condition at first floor level. Termites have infested some timbers and there are a number of timbers requiring treatment.

Most of the remaining fabric is in fair to good condition. The 1997/8 finishes to the interior are in very good condition.

13.3 REFERENCES

Considine and Griffiths, 'DRAFT Bridge House and Grounds Conservation Plan', 1998.

National Trust of Australia (WA.) Built Environment Committee, 'Balladong Farm Group', Assessment Exposition, 1 April 1985.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
