



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

The symmetry, simplicity of form and handsome proportions of *Prospect Villa* are aesthetic characteristics of the Victorian Georgian style valued by the community. (Criterion 1.1)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Prospect Villa was built by James Chapman, one of Busselton's earliest settlers, and was the home of the Pries family, important figures in the town's history. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Prospect Villa is important to the local community for its aesthetic value and historical associations. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Prospect Villa, believed to be the oldest surviving house in Busselton, by nature of its style and age, is rare. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Prospect Villa is a good example of a two-storey Victorian Georgian residence. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Prospect Villa is in good condition, although the corrugated iron roof is showing signs of corrosion. The present owners have gone to considerable lengths to renovate the house in a manner sympathetic to the original.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Integrity of *Prospect Villa* is fair. What was a private residence is now a Bed and Breakfast, however, the original function of the building remains obvious.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity of *Prospect Villa* is moderate. The original shingled roof has been replaced with corrugated iron, the original timber verandah is now concrete and carpets have been applied to all the floors apart from the entry hall. Bathrooms and small kitchenettes have been inserted within the building fabric. However, these changes are minor.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Elise de Munck, B.A. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Prospect Villa is a symmetrical, two-storey building opposite Victoria Park in the townsite of Busselton. The house, which faces north towards the ocean on Busselton Town Lot 93, is believed to have been built by James Chapman about 1855, making it the oldest surviving town house in Busselton.¹

Chapman, with his younger brothers Henry and George and sister Ann, arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1830. The brothers were among the first settlers at Augusta. When fellow Augusta settlers J.G. Bussell and John Molloy found superior farming land on the Vasse River, the Chapmans joined them in taking up land there and moving to the new district in the late 1830s. They built and operated a flour mill at 'Inlet Park', where for many years the wheat produced by surrounding settlers was ground.² When Busselton, named after the Bussell family, became the townsite and port on Geographe Bay to serve the newly settled district, the Chapman brothers were among the first to take up townsite lots. Both Henry and James were members of the Busselton Town Trust during the 1850s.³

James Chapman acquired Busselton Town Lot 93 in 1855, and is thought to have built *Prospect Villa* soon afterwards. The walls were constructed of hand cut limestone blocks, the floors of pit sawn timber. Originally, the roof was shingled.⁴

In 1860, the property was purchased by Robert Pries, a storekeeper and agent.⁵ By 1866 Pries had added a single-storey Regency style shopfront on the east side of the building from which he carried out his business.⁶ The street on this side was subsequently named Pries Avenue. Pries was secretary of the Busselton Mechanics Institute in the 1870s and his eldest son, Arthur, was Busselton's Postmaster and Clerk to the Magistrate from 1874 to 1877.⁷ Robert Pries died in 1905, Arthur three years later, and eventually *Prospect Villa* passed to Robert's daughter, Mrs Amelia Richardson-Bunbury, a successful racehorse breeder. When she died aged 90 in 1956, the house was still furnished with much of the period furniture that the Pries family had brought out from England.⁸

¹ *Sunday Times* 15 April 1962; *Countryman* 24 January 1963, p.11; *West Australian* 10 September 1966; *The Architect*, Vol.2, No.105, September 1971, p.30; Worth, Bruce & Vines, *Freda Bunbury & Busselton Sketchbook* (Rigby Ltd, Sydney, 1975) p.46; *The Heritage of Western Australia, The Illustrated Register of the National Estate* (Macmillan Company of Australia Pty Ltd, South Melbourne, 1989) p.68.

² *West Australian* 10 September 1966.

³ 'Busselton Historical Society Newsletter', October 1993.

⁴ Donaldson Smith Architects 'Architectural Evaluation for the Western Australian Heritage Committee No.16.'

⁵ Erickson, *Rica Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914* Vol.3, p.688.

⁶ *West Australian* 10 September 1966.

⁷ Erickson, *Rica Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914* Vol.3, p.688.

⁸ *West Australian* 10 September 1966.

Purchased by Tom McCusker as an investment, the property was later sold to BP Australia Ltd.⁹ The front garden of *Prospect Villa* was cleared away to become a service station site on the corner of Albert Street and Pries Avenue. The house itself was classified by the National Trust (WA) in 1961 as a building of 'major importance to be preserved at all cost for its associations with pioneering families of the district and as a typical specimen of a home of the period.'¹⁰ The oil company spent \$4,000 restoring the historic house which was then leased to the Busselton Tourist Bureau in 1966 as offices and a local museum.¹¹

By April 1981 the building was in such a poor state of repair that the Busselton Shire Council was advised that it was unsafe and should not be occupied until repairs were carried out.¹² BP Australia Ltd was not prepared to outlay the estimated \$20,000 required to put the building into good condition and there were fears that the place would be demolished. However, the building was leased later that year to John Harders and Kevin and Kate Jennings who carried out the necessary renovations and utilised the building as a real estate office.¹³ Another function of the building was as a base for a Community Youth Support Scheme.¹⁴

Nevertheless, by April 1988, the building was once again facing an insecure future. It appeared likely that *Prospect Villa* would be demolished to make way for a larger service station. A local couple, Judy and Chris Murray, objected strongly. The oil company offered to subdivide and sell *Prospect Villa* to the Murrays who jumped at the opportunity. The Murrays undertook extensive renovations and opened the *Prospect Villa* as bed and breakfast accomodation in 1989.¹⁵

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Prospect Villa is a two-storey masonry building with a gabled and steeply pitched roof. It is located on Pries Avenue and is orientated so that the long axis runs east-west and at right angles to the street. Opposite *Prospect Villa*, to the east, is Victoria Park. To the south and west of *Prospect Villa* is a group of buildings that comprise the Paradise Motel. At the south side of *Prospect Villa* the space between *Prospect Villa* and the Paradise Motel is about five metres. A bitumen carpark to the west separates the Paradise Motel from *Prospect Villa*. Originally *Prospect Villa* addressed the road that is now Albert Street, about 50 metres to the north. A B.P. petrol station now occupies the corner site where the front garden used to be.

The fenestrated main north and south elevations of the Victorian Georgian *Prospect Villa* have been considerably obscured by the proximity of both The Paradise Motel and the B.P. petrol station. Only the east elevation is easily viewed by the general public. This elevation is only one room wide and has

⁹ *Busselton-Margaret Times* 9 November 1989, p.2.

¹⁰ *Sunday Times* 15 April 1962.

¹¹ *West Australian* 10 September 1966.

¹² *Busselton-Margaret Times* 2 April 1981, p.20.

¹³ *Busselton-Margaret Times* 24 September 1981, p.3.

¹⁴ *Busselton-Margaret Times* 9 November 1989, p.2.

¹⁵ *West Australian* 24 February 1990 and Murray, C.M. & J.A WA Heritage Conservation & Property Value Award entry, 27 October 1995.

no openings apart from one door on the ground floor. The appearance of *Prospect Villa* when viewed from this angle is somewhat stark and is exacerbated by the nearby forementioned buildings which have low aesthetic value. The symmetry and fine proportions of *Prospect Villa* can best be enjoyed by looking south-east from the first floor balcony of The Paradise Motel.

Prospect Villa was originally built as a four roomed residence. A shop was added to the eastern elevation in 1866 and subsequently demolished. A doorway in the eastern side of the eastern ground floor room is the only evidence of the extension. Around the turn of the century the western verandah was enclosed and a pressed metal ceiling added to the first floor eastern room. The timber floorboards of the verandah were replaced by concrete, probably in the 50s or 60s. The current owners have substantially renovated the place and added bathrooms. The doorway leading from the eastern ground floor room to the entry hall has been bricked in. The renovations have been done in a manner sympathetic to the original.

The present ground floor layout of *Prospect Villa* consists of two main rooms around which is a verandah to all four sides. The western verandah appears to have been enclosed with weatherboards at the turn of the century judging by a photograph displayed in *Prospect Villa*.

The small entry hall is located on the north and is reached by proceeding through the reproduction wrought iron gates, through the recently brick paved parking area, along the northern boundary of the property, turning left up the concrete steps, and crossing the concrete verandah.

To the right of the entry hall is a guest room, which has an ensuite bathroom to the west, under the western verandah. The room to the east of the entry hall is approached by a door in the east facade. This room has an ensuite bathroom. (Both of these rooms were unavailable for inspection at the time of this assessment.)

The remaining rooms on the ground floor are under the western verandah line and consist of a kitchen to the south and two bathrooms to the north. The two bathrooms serve the two upper floor guest rooms. These upper floor bedrooms are the same size as the lower floor guest rooms.

The construction of *Prospect Villa* is as follows. The walls consist externally of random rubble limestone, which has been rendered and painted. Incised into the mortar are fake bed joints, perpendes and keystoneing. Internally the walls are plastered. The timber floors and steep staircase are carpeted apart from the polished floorboards of the entry hall. The ceilings consist typically of plaster on lathe, although the eastern first floor room has a pressed metal ceiling dating from about the turn of the century. *Prospect Villa* has two chimneys, located in the centre of each gable. The fireplaces of the first floor rooms align with the fireplaces of the ground floor rooms. The original timber fireplace mantelpieces and surrounds are in good condition. Judging by the closely spaced battens on the verandah rafters, the corrugated iron roof was once shingled. The capitals of the timber verandah posts are more ornate on the northern and eastern elevations than the capitals of the southern verandah posts, presumably for reasons of economy.

Prospect Villa is built on land that slopes slightly from west to east. The floor level at the west side is about the same as the ground level, and at the east about 450 mm higher than ground level. A low original limestone wall supports the concrete verandah slab, which was built in recent times. The rooms within the western verandah enclosure are built as follows. The bathrooms to the west have tiled floors on a concrete slab. The original timber verandah floorboards are still in place in the kitchen and the utility room. The inside of the weatherboard walls and the cross walls are lined in plasterboard with the raking ceilings lined with timber boards.

13.3 REFERENCES

No key references.