



# 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 Residency* is significant for the composition of the roof forms and the balance of the asymmetrical facade and detailing, producing a fine example of the Federation Queen Anne style of architecture. (Criterion 1.2)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*The Residency* is a product of the establishment of the judiciary in Northam and the subsequent emergence of Northam as the regional centre of the Avon Valley in the early 1900s. (Criterion 2.1)

The decision to erect *The Residency* in Northam rather than York or Toodyay was the cause of controversy both locally and regionally. The circumstances whereby *The Residency* came to be are unique, and represent a significant set of events in the history of the region and the judicial system. (Criterion 2.2)

*The Residency* demonstrates significant associations with W.D. Cowan and the Cowan family. It has been associated with all the Resident Magistrates based in Northam. (Criterion 2.3)

The place demonstrates associations with the Government Architect of the day, Hillson Beasley, and is a fine example of his residential design capabilities. (Criterion 2.4)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

*The Residency* demonstrates a way of life for rural Resident Magistrates and their families. (Criterion 3.2)

### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*The Residency* is socially significant as a place of cultural activities and exchange. The place is valued by the community as the home of the most senior Government official in the district. (Criterion 4.1)

*The Residency* contributes to the community's sense of place as it represents the presence of a Resident Magistrate in Northam. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

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### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*The Residency* demonstrates significant characteristics of the Queen Anne Federation style of architecture , and represents a fine example of the work of Hillson Beasley. *The Residency* reflects the social status and lifestyle of a Resident Magistrate. (Criterion 6.1)

*The Residency* represents a way of life for a particular class of person, and how their manner and standard of living has changed through time. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*The Residency* has been regularly maintained over the years, the condition of the place is particularly good, and little work can be identified as being necessary.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*The Residency* has been used continuously for the same purpose, and most adaptations and alterations have been a development of the functional requirements of the place. Alterations are generally in sympathy with the original fabric. The place demonstrates a high degree of integrity.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

*The Residency* demonstrates a high degree of authenticity despite many years of regular ad-hoc maintenance with marginal consideration to the heritage value of the place.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence was compiled by Laura Gray (B.Arch.) Conservation Professional, with some primary research undertaken by Gillian O'Mara, Archival Researcher. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*The Residency* is the home of the incumbent resident magistrate. It is located on a hill in West Northam, on the corner of Throssell and Habgood Streets, and may be the longest continuously lived in residency in Western Australia.

After the initial establishment of Northam as a centre in the Avon Valley in the 1830s and 40s, the town developed dramatically in the goldrush period of the 1890s as it evolved as a major railway and agricultural centre. Toodyay and York, to the north and south of Northam respectively, were overshadowed by the regional centre of Northam. The residential areas of Northam developed with specific characteristics to the west, east and north of the Northam town centre.

To the east, the Morrell's and Dempster's subdivision became known as 'Chinatown' or 'Sandtown', and was an area unpopular with Europeans.<sup>1</sup> In West Northam, the railway station and yards centred in the Gregory, Habgood and West Northam Station Estates, with many of the residents being railway and mill workers. West Northam developed as the 'working class' area in Northam.<sup>2</sup> The Leake Estate was developed on the northern side of the Avon River. Subdivided by George Leake's descendants, it became a 'middle class' suburb.<sup>3</sup>

Northam's 'Nob Hill' developed on the hill immediately east of the Northam town centre and evolved in the 1890s and 1900s as the prestigious area of the town.<sup>4</sup>

The difference in socio-economic demography between the east and west of Northam was also reflected in the political differences and subsequent power factors in Northam. The West Northam railway and mill workers formed an early stronghold in the labour political movement in Western Australia.<sup>5</sup>

The east and west differences were a significant local issue in 1903, in regard to the siting of the proposed resident magistrate's house.

By 1898, the growth of the Northam district had outstripped that of York and Toodyay, each of which had a resident magistrate. As a result, Northam was given a separate magistracy. John Adam, Resident Magistrate in Newcastle (Toodyay) since 1885, took up the appointment 1898, becoming Northam's

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<sup>1</sup> Garden, D.S. *Northam An Avon Valley History* Northam Shire Council & Hesperian Press 1991, p.150.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p.151.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* p.173.

first Resident Magistrate, only to retire in 1900 due to ill health. He died in 1901.<sup>6</sup> FR Barlee took over the position when Adams retired.

In August 1902, the Government reunited the York, Toodyay and Northam residencies, and after considerable controversy, the York Resident Magistrate, William Dyer Cowan, was appointed to the position of Resident Magistrate for the entire area in February 1903,<sup>7</sup> with Barlee (of Northam) and the Newcastle incumbent magistrate retired from duty.<sup>8</sup>

The position of Stipendiary Magistrate was constituted as being the Licensing Magistrate and Coroner for the Northam and York districts, and Magistrate of Local Courts in Northam, York, Pingelly, Beverley, and Newcastle (Toodyay), in addition to being the Treasury paymaster.<sup>9</sup>

The situation was inconvenient as the Magistrate was required to reside in York since there was no official Magistrate's residence in Northam.

A bitter battle ensued between the towns of York and Northam, over the Residency and the subsequent prestige of becoming the leading town in the Avon district.<sup>10</sup>

In 1903 the Parliament provided an estimate of £1500 in the budget for the provision of Resident Magistrate's quarters in Northam.<sup>11</sup> The York lobby failed in an attempt to cancel the budget provision.<sup>12</sup>

The allocated site for the residence in East Northam was objected to by the Magistrate W.D. Cowan, who recommended a site high on the hill in West Northam, overlooking the town. A bitter debate between the east and west political and class factions ensued over the privilege of having the Resident Magistrate's quarters in their area.

The matter of the Magistrate's Northam residence was raised in Parliament in July 1903, and said to be under consideration.<sup>13</sup> The funds allocation subsequently lapsed during the protracted arguments over the site, and the Magistrate continued to reside in York, despite the far greater volume of court business being conducted in Northam.<sup>14</sup>

The situation was not resolved until the end of 1907 when, in an all-night sitting of Parliament, a sum of £1000 (£500 less than the 1903 agreed amount) was voted, for the construction of the Resident Magistrate's quarters in Northam. The Public Works Department determined to proceed with the construction without further consideration of the east-west dispute, in the need to establish a proper administration of justice in Northam.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Erickson, R. *Old Toodyay and Newcastle* Toodyay Shire Council 1974. p. 339.

<sup>7</sup> Votes and Proceedings of Parliament 3rd session 7th Parliament 1910-11 Volume 1 Public Service List 1910 p.481.

<sup>8</sup> Garden, D.S. Op. cit. p.164.

<sup>9</sup> Votes and Proceedings of Parliament 3rd session 7th Parliament 1910-11 Volume 1 Public service List 1910. pp. 481.

<sup>10</sup> *The West Australian* 30 December 1903 p.3.

<sup>11</sup> Garden, D.S. Op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid* p.164.

<sup>13</sup> Parliamentary debates 1903-04 Volume 23.

<sup>14</sup> Garden, D.S. Op. cit. p.165.

<sup>15</sup> *The Northam Advertiser* 14 December 1907 p.2.

From May through to September 1908, plans were prepared in the PWD Office under the direction of the Principal Architect, Hillson Beasley.<sup>16</sup> It was anticipated that the construction of the Residency would commence in 1908, at a cost of £1,140, with the successful tenderer being Mr D.F. Macdonald, a local builder.<sup>17</sup> The plans included an interior bathroom in a central position in the house, and a servant's bedroom. After construction had commenced, changes were made to the floor plan of the house, involving the addition of another bedroom, and the relocation of the servant's room.<sup>18</sup>

By January 1909, the residency had been constructed on the site in West Northam, as chosen by the Magistrate W.D. Cowan, and was complete, but unoccupied.<sup>19</sup> The final cost of the construction was £1414-3-1.<sup>20</sup>

W.D. Cowan was the first magistrate to occupy *The Residency*. Cowan was the son of Walkinshaw Cowan who had been the private secretary to Governor Hutt, the second Governor of the Swan River Colony. In 1848, W. Cowan senior was made the Native Protector of York, and Justice of the Peace. He relocated to "Grassdale" (York) with his family (five children), and after seven more children, including William Dyer in 1854, Cowan was made a Magistrate. When Walkinshaw Cowan retired in 1898, William Dwyer Cowan succeeded to his father's position as Magistrate of York, after entering the Government Service in 1870. By 1910, when the Residency moved to Northam, W.D. Cowan had six children and William Halley (Jim) was born after they moved to the residency in Northam in 1910.<sup>21</sup>

Jim Cowan was in the inaugural graduation of students from Muresk Agricultural College in 1930, and took over his brother Clarence's farm east of Narembeen, at Mt Walker in 1933. The eldest of Jim Cowan's family of twelve is Halley Cowan, the current President of the Narembeen Shire Council, and his second son is Hendy Cowan, the Leader of the National Party of Western Australia, and Deputy Premier.<sup>22</sup>

In 1937, under the Direction of PWD Principal Architect A.E. Clare, a WC and back verandah enclosure were added at the rear of the servant's room.<sup>23</sup>

In 1948, the original washhouse and coach-house were demolished, and a new laundry and woodshed were constructed. Plans noted the re-flooring of the front verandah and enclosed verandah on the west side. Rabbit proof fences were shown as being in place on the eastern and southern boundaries, where six feet high closed picket fences had been shown on the Block Plan dated 16 May 1908. The west boundary also had a six feet high closed picket fence, while the Habgood St frontage had a four feet six inch high open picket fence. The 1948 Plans also proposed a new open picket fence along the north

<sup>16</sup> State Archives No. 1647 PWD plan set 13775.

<sup>17</sup> *Government Gazette* 26 June 1908, p.1738; *The Northam Advertiser* 8 July 1908, p.2 (the newspaper gives the spelling as 'McDonald').

<sup>18</sup> State Archives No. 1647 PWD plan set 13775. Undated plan. 'Variation to contract'.

<sup>19</sup> *The Northam Advertiser* 9 January 1909 p.2.

<sup>20</sup> Votes and Proceedings of Parliament 1st session 8th Parliament 1911-12, Volume 1 Department of Public Works Annual Statement p.46.

<sup>21</sup> Bristow, I. *Seedtime & Harvest A History of the Narembeen District*. Shire of Narembeen 1988.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid* pp.103-104.

<sup>23</sup> State Archives No. 1647 PWD plan set 13775 Plan dated 28 April 1937.

boundary. This plan indicated that the site had been reduced by half with the removal of an equal sized block on the south along the Throssell St frontage.<sup>24</sup>

In 1961, some repairs and renovations were drawn.<sup>25</sup> In 1965, under the direction of W.L. Green, PWD Principal Architect, the bathroom was modernised with a WC installed, and the scullery included a laundry facility in addition to the kitchen preparation area.<sup>26</sup>

*The Residency* has been in continual occupancy by the Resident Magistrate of Northam, since W.D. Cowan took up residence in 1909-1910.

W.D. Cowan 1910-1918??

	1919-1924
F.M.I. Read	1924-1926
	1927
F.M.I. Read	1928-1944
F.E.A. Bateman	1944-1945
K.H. Parker	1945-1953
K.H. Hogg	1956-1961
Malley	1961- ??
D.J. O'Dea	1967-1968
R. Iddison	1968-1973
P.M. Buck	1973-1975
F.C. Robbins	1975-1979
G.N. Calder	1983-1993
P.G. Malone	1993-1995
F. Cullen	1996 current <sup>27</sup>

*The Residency* may be the longest continuously lived in residency in Western Australia but this can only be confirmed by further research.

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<sup>24</sup> State Archives No. 1647 PWD plan set 13775 Plan dated 1948.

<sup>25</sup> State Archives No. 1647 PWD plan set 13775 Plan dated 20 December 1961.

<sup>26</sup> State Archives No. 1647 PWD plan set 13775 Plan dated 14 September 1965.

<sup>27</sup> Information provided by Magistrate Cullen 27/10/96.

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*The Residency* is located on a rise in West Northam. It occupies a corner location, but addresses Habgood Street, with the former tennis courts and orchards along the Throssell Street boundary. The entry to the property is on the north corner of the Habgood St frontage. The cottage garden provides an appropriate setting to *The Residency*. Mature plantings on the property include a Carob tree, a Morton Bay fig tree, and two Salmon Gum trees.

Throssell Street is the southern most boundary of the residential area of Northam. Between the Throssell St boundary and the residence are remains of the net posts of the tennis court, and some fruit trees are evidence of the orchard which ran along the Throssell Street frontage. The West Northam Primary School is located on the north side of *The Residency*, and the school boundary abuts the west of *The Residency* property.

On the west boundary, the laundry building is extant, and a more recent double carport is situated on the rear of the site on the north side.

*The Residency* is a brick and corrugated iron construction rendered in the Federation Queen Anne style of architecture.<sup>28</sup> The building is asymmetrical. A faceted bay protrudes on the south side of the front, and a verandah spans across the 'front' public rooms, with the entry door on the south side. The timber verandah posts and valance are simply detailed, with a gentle curved line and small circular holes. The verandah has a concrete floor which has replaced the original timber construction.

The roof geometry is complex, with a separate roof formed for the front encircling verandah, a central spire rising from the centre above the faceted bay, and a central bracketed gable detail on the faceted frontage. A bracketed gable with roughcast infill and timber screen is featured on the west facade. The remainder of the roof forms a simple hipped gambrel. Tall chimneys protrude from the roof.

The red face brick work is broken by rendered string courses at window sill and head levels on all but the rear elevation. There is no evidence of the north verandah having been enclosed.

Aluminium security screens have been fitted to the exterior of all the windows and doors in the place.

The 'front' rooms comprise the hall, drawing room with the faceted bay, and the dining room. Each of those rooms have French doors onto the verandah. The rooms are interconnected by a set of full height timber folding doors (detailed in the plans), and each room has a fireplace and jarrah mantelpiece. The jarrah mantelpieces and folding doors have been painted white. Both of the rooms have twelve inch skirting boards, c.1960s light fittings and art deco style cornices. Similarly, the hall has art deco designed cornices. The original leadlights are in place in the front door and sidelights although the fanlight is now set with frosted glass. The hall transition into 'private' spaces is delineated by an elaborate plaster moulded archway, and the passage is at right angles to the hall.

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<sup>28</sup> Apperley, R., Irving, R., Reynolds. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*. Angus & Robertson. NSW 1989, pp.132-135.

A large bedroom on the north side has the same cornices and light fittings as the two front rooms, and a door has been introduced for access to an ensuite bathroom. There is a large fireplace and mantelpiece in this room. On the south side, two bedrooms of a smaller scale and more modest detail are evident. Ceiling roses are in place, each of different design, and each room has a corner fireplace. The second of the two rooms has picture rails still in place. The bathroom on the north side has been altered to form a small bathroom and the ensuite to the main bedroom. This bathroom has a large lined skylight through to the roof covering, with a flywire screen level with the ceiling height. Evidence of the original dado line still remains.

The kitchen is fitted with cupboard and benches encircling the room. The fireplace has been retained. The door to the pantry has been infilled, and the original scullery is now the laundry. The third bedroom on the south side has a door accessing the former servant's room which still has an original corner shelf bracket (wardrobe) and the ripple iron ceiling lining on the rake of the roof, as does the scullery, pantry and back porch. The back door and sidelights have contemporary stained glass windows fitted.

The passage is wide, and the original floorboards are exposed.

The external WC remains insitu, and the laundry building functions as a storage shed.

The carport posts and beams are detailed in the same manner as the home verandah.

*The Residency* is structurally sound and regularly maintained. Security is a significant issue, as is fire safety, and egress from the building. A Conservation Plan should be prepared to ensure that appropriate maintenance and repairs are undertaken with full consideration of the heritage value of the place, and to ensure the future conservation of *The Residency*.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

No key references.