



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

Although the old cottage is picturesque, it has little specific aesthetic value.

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The Pensioner Guards were an identifiable social group within the Western Australian colonial community, at a time when it was necessary to have the forces of law and order visible in society. The *Pensioner Guard Cottage* has a high degree of historic significance as a demonstration of how, and where, Pensioner Guards lived. The cottage is moderately significant for its association with convict settlement in the Guildford area. (Criteria 2.1, 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

The *Pensioner Guard Cottage* is held in high esteem by the Bassendean community for its association with the history of the State's convict era. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

To the Heritage Council's knowledge, this cottage is the only extant Pensioner Guard cottage in the metropolitan area, and as such provides a significant example of a past lifestyle. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

12.3 CONDITION

With recent restoration work completed, the building is in sound condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The cottage's current use as a historical museum does not cut across the integrity of the place.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Although a number of the building elements of the original cottage have been replaced with new materials, including the metal ceilings and the damp course, the cottage still retains a moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Pensioner Guards were part of the British government's commitment to the West Australian colonists that free settlers would be sent out to dilute the convict presence. The guards were offered free passage to Western Australia for themselves and their families. They were employed as guards on the convict ships. Once in the colony their duties were not particularly onerous. Employment was offered to them in the Convict Establishment as warders, but their main purpose was to act as a disciplined body of men who could be called upon by the civil authorities to quell any disturbance. The first contingent arrived in the second ship, the *Hashemy*, November 1850.

The Pensioner Guards were soldiers who had fought in British armies, but were then on a pension.¹ They had either served a twenty year term, or they had been made redundant as British armies were reduced in number. The ages of the pensioners varied, but they were all meant to be strong, healthy and 'good specimens' of manhood, selected after they had applied for resettlement in the colony of Western Australia, by the half-pay officers in charge of pension distribution.

In Western Australia Pensioner Guards were settled on the fringes of towns, especially towns in which there was a convict depot. Their blocks of land varied in size between two and ten acres, and each block had a two roomed cottage (value £15) erected by convicts, or ticket-of-leave labourers. The land and house became the property of the guard and his family provided he stayed and worked the land for seven years. Successful groupings of small land owners from the military caste were formed at North Fremantle, and at York, Toodyay, Bunbury, Kojonup, Greenough Flats and Albany. The West Guildford settlement, with only four cottages which were not immediately occupied, was too small to qualify for

¹ The information found in the documentary and physical evidence sections is taken from a fully referenced, unpublished report prepared by Michal Bosworth for the Heritage Council of Western Australia, dated May 1991. The report includes relevant history, pictorial evidence and a section relating to site research.

inclusion in some of Capt. Bruce's reports. (West Guildford is now part of the suburb of Bassendean.)

By the time the Royal Engineers were withdrawn from the colony at the end of 1862, twenty one Pensioner Guard cottages had been built at North Fremantle, thirteen at York, eight at Toodyay, thirteen at Bunbury and four at West Guildford. This number does not take into account the cottages some guards erected for themselves, without the benefit of ticket-of-leave or convict labour.

The construction of the four cottages in West Guildford was supervised by Lieutenant Edmund DuCane, Royal Engineer, whose reports of his completed work are thorough. DuCane was responsible for the eastern settlements of Guildford, Toodyay and York. At the time of the construction of the cottages Guildford was a ticket-of-leave depot, rather than the convict outpost it was to later become. Therefore most of the labour used to construct the cottages was ticket-of-leave men, supervised by Sappers.

In August 1855 DuCane's half yearly report noted that Guildford had an average of 67 ticket-of-leave men at his disposal and they had been engaged in burning bricks for 12 Pensioner cottages, and sawing timber. (DuCane was also supervising construction at Toodyay and York.) It was originally planned to build 12 Pensioners' cottages at West Guildford, but only four were actually built. The cottages took several years to complete and were not occupied until the 1860s.²

In January 1856, DuCane recorded: No. 1 cottage - 'door and window frames made and the whole of the brickwork done, floor laid with bricks.' ; No. 2 cottage - 'door and window frames made and the brickwork completed up to the level of the window plate'; No. 3 cottage - 'door and window frames made and walls carried up to a height of 9 feet'. Apparently nothing had been done for cottage No. 4. In February 1857 DuCane recorded that the four cottages were complete, however, it is evident that in June there were was still work being carried out.

F.H. Broomhall records that John Law Davis, a Pensioner Guard originally employed by the East India Co., was 26 years old when he arrived in Western Australia in 1853.³ In November 1857 he was appointed caretaker of the four cottages at Guildford which were still unoccupied. This suggests that he was the first tenant of the house on what was Lot 114. Broomhall died in 1870 leaving a widow and five children. Although the cottage did not pass to his widow, she arranged to live in it until her death in the 1890s.

The neighbouring block of land, lot 115, was sold in 1872 by its owner, Pensioner Guard Henry Chartres, who had also arrived in 1853. Following the sale Chartres returned to England. This evidence suggests that the Pensioner Guards in Guildford did not form a particular cohesive

² Bourke, M. *On the Swan: A History of the Swan District, Western Australia*, (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1987), pp. 189-190.

³ Broomhall, F.H. *The Veterans: a history of the Enrolled Pensioner Force in Western Australia, 1850-1880*, (Perth, 1989), pp. B73-B74

community. It is ironic that the new owner, John Picken, was an ex-convict.

An unnamed, undated National Trust report lists all the title changes to the *Pensioner Guard's Cottage*. The site changed hands in 1915 and members of the Growse family owned the place until 1939. Between 1915 and 1939 it is assumed that the adjoining house, which later became a boarding house, was erected. It is not known to what use the cottage was put during those years. Changes to the layout of the Pensioner's Cottage may date from this period, or from post-WWII years.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Although the external fabric of the cottage is largely unchanged, many of the architectural elements, including window frames and doors, have been altered.

Early records make no reference to the presence of either a damp course or a metal ceiling. It is highly unlikely they were part of the original building as both were reasonably new building materials at the time of construction. No doubt the cottage at West Guildford was damp from time to time, especially in years of flood. The first big flood after its completion was in 1862, but nowhere is it suggested that damp courses were a required part of buildings supervised by the Royal Engineers.

One result of the inclusion of a damp course appears to have been the raising of the floor. Nothing seems to remain of the original bricked floor, although bricks outside the back door might be part of the original construction.

The Royal Engineers insisted that the cottages were plastered, but it is not known whether walls were plastered inside and out. The finish on the exterior walls of the cottage appears to be of a much later date (20th century).

The exterior doors, which have been cut down in size, are unlikely to be original, although the south-western door and frames, where the bottom ledge of the frame is very worn, may be original. The windows are not original.

The chimney has been changed in shape inside the house. If it was built on the same scale as those in the warder's cottage, Fremantle, the opening would have been smaller and more suitable for cooking. This room would have been used as the kitchen.

Metal ceilings of the style in the cottage were reasonably common in 'boom-time' architecture in the eastern states of Australia from the late 1880s, and from 1890 they were made by Wunderlich. However, manufacture of metal ceilings was not attempted in Western Australia in these years, and the first record of imported pressed metal ceilings occurs in the *WA Statistical Register* (1901), where it is noted they came from the United Kingdom, Victoria, New South Wales and Singapore with a total value of £1,695. It is unlikely that the small cottage in West Guildford received one of the first shipments to the State and therefore the pressed metal ceiling is likely to be a later alteration.

All restoration work on the cottage has now been completed. A Charter of Agreement between Bassendean Town Council and Bassendean Historical Society Inc. has been drawn up with the intention to establish and furnish the cottage as a living museum relevant to its use and occupation as a Pensioner Guard dwelling.⁴

⁴ There is also a "Report on Archaeological Investigations at the Pensioner Guard Cottage, 1 Surrey Street, Bassendean", which was carried out on 13 - 14 April 1991, supervised by Martin Gibbs, Department of Archaeology, UWA, which would be useful for further research.

13.3 REFERENCES

RAIA, 'Architectural Evaluation: Pensioner Guard Cottage', (for the WA Heritage Committee, n.d.).

Bosworth, M., 'Pensioner Cottage, Bassendean: A Report for the Heritage Council', (May 1991).

Gibbs, M., 'Report on Archaeological Investigations at the Pensioner Guard Cottage, 1 Surrey Street, Bassendean', (April 1991).

National Trust Assessment Exposition.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.