



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

Chiverton House Complex, prominently located on the Nokanena Brook and on the main road into Northampton (from the south), creates a visual impact in the streetscape and has a landmark quality. (Criterion 1.3)

The buildings are aesthetically homogenous and contribute to the streetscape definition of the perimeter of the town. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The buildings that comprise *Chiverton House Complex*, express different stages in the human occupation and evolution of the Northampton locality. (Criterion 2.1)

Chiverton House Complex has a strong historical association with Captain Samuel Mitchell, who distinguished himself in the mining industry, in commercial enterprise, and in civic duties throughout the district of Northampton. (Criterion 2.3)

Chiverton House Complex depicts the evolution of an homestead over nearly one hundred years and demonstrates the progressive adaptation to the changing economic and social circumstances of the district. (Criterion 2.4)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Chiverton House Complex has the potential to teach us about the development of rural homesteads in Western Australia. (Criterion 3.1)

Chiverton House Complex is a demonstration of the development of early European occupation of the Northampton District. (Criterion 3.2)

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Chiverton House Complex contributes to the community's sense of place as a long standing reminder of the European establishment, growth and development of the Northampton region. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Chiverton House Complex, as a residence which is imposing in its scale and detailing, is rare due to the largely unaltered extent of the original fabric. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The buildings that comprise *Chiverton House Complex* demonstrate a range of activities by European settlers that were integral in the establishment and development of the Northampton district. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Since 1968, Shire of Northampton and the Northampton Historical Society have undertaken repairs and restoration works with conservation advice. In 1994/95, conservation works were carried out to the place that improved site drainage and, replaced floor beams and boards in the kitchen cellar. Overall, *Chiverton House Complex* is in sound condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The buildings are substantially intact and largely retain the original form and materials used in their construction. Despite various differing uses over time, including that of a local museum, the place has retained a high degree of integrity as a series of functional buildings. The current use of the cottage as a caretaker's residence returns that building to its original function and the furnishing and presentation of the rooms of *Chiverton House* and the store to be representative of the era in which they were first occupied, is compatible with the original intention of the place as a residence and homestead. *Chiverton House Complex* has a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The fabric of the place is substantially original and the continuing conservation of the place, since 1968, has ensured that much of the original fabric is sound and capable of restoration. *Chiverton House Complex* has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Chiverton House Complex comprises a number of farm buildings, that were constructed at different times. There is uncertainty as to when the different buildings were completed. Taylor and Suba in their *Conservation Plan: Chiverton House Complex* for the Northampton Historical Society Inc. Property Management Committee, in February 1994, identified in seven distinct stages, of construction:³²

1. Building 'a' - the cottage (c.1865)
2. Building 'b' - the store (c.1876)
3. Building 'c' - *Chiverton House* (c.1883)
4. Building 'd' - the assay and saddlery building (c.1890)
5. Building 'e' - the butcher building (c.1895) now demolished
6. Building 'f' - machinery/car coverage (c.1988)
7. Building 'g' - Bicentennial machinery coverage (1988)³³

Although this assessment covers the site as a whole, the focus is on the main buildings (a, b, c), rather than the outbuildings.³⁴

Chiverton House Complex is on Northampton Town Allotment 130, the title deed to which was originally granted on 18 April 1866, to Mr George White an ex-convict who was a wheelwright. The Lot was purchased by White in September 1865; however, the deed was not registered until the following year.³⁵ George White was born in England c.1824. He was deported to Western Australia as a convict in 1851, and gained his ticket-of-leave in December 1852, and his conditional pardon in September 1859, before becoming a freeman in 1864. White moved to the Northampton district, then known as 'The Mines', circa 1860, and was one of the first to purchase land in the townsite. He built a small cottage (building a) from local granite, some time between 1865 and 1875.³⁶

On 18 December 1875, Lot 130 was transferred to Charles Crowther of Geraldton, Merchant, and Captain Samuel Mitchell of Northampton, Mining Engineer.³⁷ It is not clear whether White, or Crowther and Mitchell built the store, (building b) adjacent to the cottage, circa 1876. It is feasible that White may have built the store to operate his business from, although the building

³² Refer to the site plan contained in Taylor, J. and Suba, T. *Conservation Plan: Chiverton House Complex* (for the Northampton Historical Society Inc. Property Management Committee, February 1994); The dates of construction provided by Taylor and Suba are of an approximate nature and should more accurate information come to light, the documentation will be amended accordingly.

³³ Taylor, and Suba, p. 48.

³⁴ Buildings c, d and e are of secondary importance. Please refer to physical evidence section.

³⁵ Lands and Survey records, SDUR/W4/484, cited in Taylor and Suba, p.8.

³⁶ Taylor and Suba, p. 7; Suba, T. *Chiverton House, Northampton* (for HCWA, 1992) p.8. Suba states: 'However, it is widely held by local residents that the original worker's cottage was built from local stone either by Mr. George White, an ex-convict, or by ticket-of-leave men working in the district.'

³⁷ Certificate of Title, Vol. 1., Fol. 18. Crowther and Mitchell were business partners.

seems more substantial that he would have required, and thus it is more likely to have been built by Crowther and Mitchell for their commercial enterprises or as an extension to the cottage before the larger house was built a few years later.³⁸ Mitchell is quoted by Suba as writing (in 1911) that he and his family ‘...came to reside in town, occupying the old building, recently renovated and now used by the WA Bank’.³⁹ This refers to the cottage which was later leased by the Bank of Western Australia. *Chiverton House* (building c) was constructed, circa 1883, following the financial success bought on by the Wheal Ellen and Babra Mines in the early 1880s.

Captain Samuel Mitchell arrived in Western Australia aboard the *Zephyr* in November 1867. He was brought out from Cornwall by the Geraldine Mining Company to be Manager of the Geraldine Lead mine on the Murchison. He held the position for nearly seven years, after which time the price of lead fell considerably and the Geraldine Mining Company closed the mine.⁴⁰ Mitchell was, thus, forced to resign in 1875. Shortly afterwards Mitchell and Crowther opened up the Wheal Ellen Lead Mine and subsequently opened the Baddera Lead Mine, seven miles from Northampton.⁴¹ At these mines, Mitchell incorporated new technology to treat previously disregarded carbonate ores of lead. The treatment yielded good percentages of profitable lead and increased the potential of the mineral wealth in the State by making carbonate ores of lead keenly sought after.⁴² Although successful for a time, the fluctuations of the lead market forced Mitchell to retire from mining and he established a successful store in Northampton and an assay office and a stock and station agency.⁴³

Mitchell also played an important social role in the town, promoting and advancing the district as a whole, in the process distinguishing himself as a local community leader. He was Chairman of the Northampton Roads Board for fifteen years, Warden of the Murchison goldfield at Cue for some time, founded the Northampton Brass Band and Northampton Rifles Volunteer Corp. Prior to the introduction of responsible government in Western Australia, Mitchell won the seat of Geraldton, though with the granting of responsible government he did not recontest the seat. In 1897, he stood for one of the Murchison seats and was returned to the Legislative Assembly unopposed.⁴⁴

Following Crowther's death, in 1894, probate of his will was granted to the West Australian Trustee Executor and Agency Company Limited. Mitchell later wrote, ‘His [Crowther's] will was worded in such a way that everything had to be sold, leaving me with only my household furniture. Thus I had practically to begin life afresh.’⁴⁵ He duly purchased *Chiverton House* and continued to live there and operate his stock and station agency from the store. In December 1907, part of lot 130 was transferred to the Western Australian Bank which opened a sub-branch in the cottage in 1908.⁴⁶ Samuel

³⁸ Taylor and Suba, p. 48.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Suba, circa p. 5.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.* circa p. 6.

⁴³ *ibid.*; Battye Library Pictorial Collection, Acc 6035P Photograph is dated c.1910.

⁴⁴ *ibid.* circa p. 7.

⁴⁵ Mitchell, S. *Looking Backwards: reminiscences of 42 years* (F. C. Towler, Geraldton, 1911), p.25

⁴⁶ Certificate of Title, Vol. 1., Fol. 18; Certificate of Title, Vol. 410., Fol. 181.

Mitchell died, in July 1912, and was buried in the Gwalia Cemetery. Earlier that year, the portion of the lot owned by the Western Australian Bank was transferred to Samuel's son, Lees Franklin Mitchell, although the bank continued to use the premises. In 1915, the Western Australian Bank was converted into a full branch and the bank moved premises to another location within Northampton.⁴⁷

The property was then occupied by the Mitchell family until 1945, when Lees Franklin's son, Frank Mitchell, died and the property passed out of Mitchell ownership. Subsequent owners used the place as a farm and as a saddlery. Little was done to maintain the property and the Northampton Shire Council condemned the building on two separate occasions.⁴⁸ On 22 November 1968, Lot 130, along with the *Chiverton House Complex* and its outbuildings, was officially transferred to the Shire of Northampton. A year later on 23 August 1969, the *Chiverton House Complex* was opened to the public as a museum, operated by the Northampton Historical Society.⁴⁹ This use continues today. A caretaker occupies the cottage and the remainder of the buildings, including the store and *Chiverton House*, are used by the museum.

The site also contains a stables and assay building, and parts of a building. The building contained stables in the time of a former ownership and were demolished although parts of the former structure are incorporated in a 1988 building. In 1988, two new buildings to house the machinery collected by the museum were constructed at the rear of property as part of the Bicentennial activities. (see physical evidence for more details)

In 1994/95, the Lotteries Commission allocated \$6,400 to the Northampton Historical Society towards work on *Chiverton House* to improve site drainage and replace floor beams and boards in the kitchen cellar.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Chiverton House Complex is prominently located on Lot 130, immediately south of the Northampton Town Centre. It is set, with its outbuildings, on a large sloping site on the south bank of the Nokanena Brook. *Chiverton House* (building c) forms the core of the complex with the adjoining store (building b), cottage (building a) and outbuildings. The complex is contained within a stone walled compound which bounds the south, east, north and part of the western side of the site. At some time, part of the wall on the south-west corner has been demolished.

Chiverton House, the cottage and the store are built in the Victorian Georgian style⁵⁰ of stone wall construction with a high pitched roof (originally covered in sheoak shingles), and a unifying veranda to the external facades supported by simple wooden posts, a decorative valance, and a simple star baluster. The fenestration is lively with quoined openings and decorative keystone shaped motifs at the architrave. The front door has a particularly fine, floral emblem as a decorative element. The valance was removed at some point after 1929

⁴⁷ Certificate of Title Vol. 410., Fol. 181.

⁴⁸ Suba, circa p. 9.

⁴⁹ Certificate of Title, Vol. 410., Fol. 181. It should be noted that the Northampton Historical Society also use the building as their headquarters.

⁵⁰ Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* (Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 42-45.

and the original sheoak shingles have been replaced by corrugated iron, although there is still evidence of the shingles in some areas. Although the three component buildings were built over an extended period of time (c.1865 -c.1883) the external form of the house retained similar proportions to that of the earlier buildings giving an aesthetic unity to the complex.

The cottage has two main rooms under a hipped roof, and another (the kitchen) at the rear under a skillion roof. At some stage one room was extended to the south. This may have taken place when Mitchell occupied the house, while building *Chiverton House* or later, as Suba suggests, when the Western Australian Bank took the cottage over.⁵¹ Later additions (the store *Chiverton House*) to the cottage occurred on the northern side and were slightly to the fore and rear of the cottage, causing a setback. The cottage can be easily distinguished from the other two buildings and is an independent building, although unified with a veranda and having a similar high pitched roof structure.

The store is built at the side of the cottage with separate walls side by side. It comprises two front rooms which are unified into one, facing the street and with doors to the front veranda, and two rear doors. It is completely separate from the cottage and there is no adjoining door. It has a steeply pitched roof, now covered with corrugated iron and, unlike the cottage and *Chiverton House*, does not have lined ceilings.⁵²

Chiverton House is a substantial residence of seven main rooms, built to the north of the store, and sharing a common wall with the store. There is a connecting door from the back of the store to a narrow passage behind the front rooms of the house. The main entrance to the house is on the western facade with double doors that open into a long entrance hallway with a decorative arch one third of the way along. Rooms open from the hallway to the north and south of the hallway. The rooms on the northern facade have french doors which open to the veranda on the northern facade, the veranda having been built as an addition and as an extension of the store. The roof line of the store, facing Hampton Road, was continued across to form the roof of house, thus avoiding a box gutter at the junction point. The store and the house share a common wall on the southern side.

The assay & saddlery building (building d) is also of stone wall construction with a brick chimney to the south room and timber framed lintels over the openings⁵³ and comprises three rooms, the most northerly of which has an apparatus mainly of brick construction, which is believed to have been for assay purposes while the southern room contains the remains of an oven/forge.⁵⁴ In 1915, the building was shown as being separated from the Mitchell family yard by a stone wall with a gate.⁵⁵ A gateway just north of the assay and stable (building d) in the east boundary wall previously allowed access to the well 'a'. A portion of this wall remains today. An accurate date of construction has not been determined, though it is possible that it was built in the 1890s to assist Mitchell with his assay activities.

⁵¹ Suba, circa p. 8.

⁵² photographs c45 to c48, in Taylor and Suba, pp. 41-43.

⁵³ For further details regarding information about the joinery, roof framing, floors etc., refer to Taylor and Suba, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 49. Also refer to photograph BW15, p.169. for details of the brick construction.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 157.

The butcher building (building e) was demolished by Sydney Francis, owner between 1949 and 1968, although part of the structure is incorporated, in part, in a new building, built in 1988 as part of the Bicentennial celebrations.⁵⁶ This building (building f) uses a portion of the butcher building (building e), on the west wall and a portion of the old boundary wall on the south side. In 1988, a new building (building g) was also constructed and remains of an earlier toilet structure are located in the area.⁵⁷

In 1994/5, Conservation works were carried out to the place under the guidance of Conservation Architects, Considine & Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd.

The works included: construction of a stone spoon drain; an underground drain from *Chiverton House* to the boundary fence; installation of a sump inside stone boundary wall with discharge under the wall; ground grading to disperse water away from the buildings, including from cellar steps to re-direct run off; external painting; and replacement of kitchen cellar floor beams and boards that had been white ant damaged.⁵⁸

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition

Palassis, K. 'Architectural Evaluation: Chiverton House Restoration' (for the Shire of Northampton, November 1992)

Suba, T. 'Chiverton House, Northampton' (for the Heritage Council of WA, November 1992)

Taylor, J. and Suba, T. 'Conservation Plan: Chiverton House Complex' (for the Northampton Historical Society Inc. Property Management Committee, February 1994)

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p. 47. information provided by Lyn Diepeveen, Northampton Historical Society.

⁵⁷ Refer to attached site plan.

⁵⁸ Schedule of Proposed Works, Shire of Northampton, 24 May 1995.