



## 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.

#### PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 7.2.3 Working to promote civil liberties
- 7.2.4 Forming political associations
- 8.10.2 Creating visual arts
- 8.13 Living in cities and suburbs

#### HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 307 Intellectual activities, arts and crafts
- 401 Government and politics
- 407 Cultural activities
- 604 Innovators
- 605 Famous and infamous people

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

Although denuded of some of its architectural detail the house section of the *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* retains many of the characteristics of a Victorian Rustic Gothic style house and does so in a manner which allows it to be a fine, distinctive remnant of the style. The gallery section of *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* is a utilitarian resolution of the requirements of the brief and while not a distinctive design, it does contain the brightly lit and elegantly simple space of the gallery at the lower or ground floor level. (Criterion 1.1)

Both elements of *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* are a la mode design solutions, rather than being particularly creative, relative to the time of their construction. (Criterion 1.2)

With its distinctive landscape setting, comprising a deep front set back and leafy gardens, its imposing architecture and prominent location, the house section of

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from 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.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* has a minor landmark quality in the context of Malcolm Street. This type of setting has become uncommon in Malcolm Street. (Criterion 1.3)

The house element of *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)*, constructed in 1893, is a remnant of a former streetscape. It once played a strong and integral role, in a late nineteenth and early twentieth century streetscape. The streetscape is now fragmented and the house is one of a small number of elements in the street, which contributes to its aesthetic qualities. (Criterion 1.4)

## **11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE**

The house element of *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* is indicative of the move of the wealthy citizens of Perth away from the commercial city centre and the beginning of the trend towards the development of substantial homes to the west of the city. It is evidence of the dynamic nature of the city. (Criterion 2.1)

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* is significant for the construction of the two storey house in 1893, for James Cowan and Edith Cowan, although they had a previous residence on the site from 1883. It is also significant for the construction of the major additions to the place in 1958 for Josiah and Rose Skinner, for the Skinner Gallery. The construction of a purpose designed and built, privately run art gallery in particular was an innovation. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is significant for its close association with Edith Cowan, the first woman member of an Australian parliament, and her husband, James Cowan, for whom the place was constructed, and who resided there at various times; and with Rose and Josiah Skinner, for whom the additional building was constructed in 1958, and who established the Skinner Gallery there, which was a leader in encouraging and promoting modern Australian art in the late 1950s and 1960s. The Skinner Gallery was one of the first purpose designed and built, privately run art galleries in Australia and the first in Western Australia. Further, the place is associated with prominent Perth architect, R. J. Ferguson, who has conducted his practice in various locations on the site since the 1960s. (Criterion 2.3)

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* is significant for having been designed by Robert Thompson McMaster, who designed a number of villas around Kings Park as well as commercial buildings in a Federation style, including the Central Arcade from Murray Street to Wellington Street, United Service Hotel in St George's Terrace, Ozone Hotel in Adelaide Terrace, Smith's Chambers in Barrack Street, and the *Broken Hill Hotel at Victoria Park*. (Criterion 2.3)

## **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

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## **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* has been valued by the community for its association with Edith Cowan, the first woman to be a Member of Parliament in Western Australia. It is valued also for the Skinner Gallery, which

was established there by Josiah and Rose Skinner in the 1960s, as one of the leading galleries in Australia, encouraging Australian artists, a number of whom became leading figures in the art world in the latter part of the twentieth century, and as the first privately run art gallery in Western Australia. In its brief life as the Skinner Gallery and Leonardo's Coffee Lounge, the place was a significant point of social and cultural focus for Perth and the State. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.3)

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* contributes to the community's sense of place as one of the first houses to be constructed in Malcolm Street, and as a well-known landmark in West Perth. To the arts community, Skinner Gallery played a significant role in the history of the growth and development of a number of major Western Australian artists. (Criterion 4.2)

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* has associations with Krantz and Sheldon Architects who drew the plans for the gallery in 1958, and R. J. Ferguson, a prominent Perth architect and long term tenant of the building since the 1960s. (Criterion 4.3)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.2 RARITY**

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### **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* is a fine example of a Victorian Rustic Gothic house, although a good deal of detail has been lost. The losses include the verandahs, the grand main entry and some interior detail. The gallery section is representative of utilitarian Post War International style architecture. This space is a good, if modest example, of International style art gallery space. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* has two component parts. The house portion retains substantial portions of its original construction. Verandahs have been removed and some sections of the house have been modified. The main entry has been extensively modified. The masonry has been painted over resulting in a loss of detail. The brick quoining and stonework, for example, are barely distinguishable. Cumulative maintenance has obscured the original details of the place and some elements have been removed. The place is generally in very good condition. The gallery section in the 1958 building has had little maintenance on it, but due to its comparatively recent origin, this has not been detrimental. The ground floor has been refurbished for the Goddard de Fiddes Contemporary Art. The upper floors have had minor upgrades and are in good condition. The interiors are in good condition and the exteriors are in fair to good condition.

#### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The house element of *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* has been used for office accommodation since 1958, but the alterations to accommodate this requirement were relatively modest. The legibility of the house remains readily apparent and the present office use is reasonably benign. The integrity of the house element remains moderate. The gallery element (1958) has been partly restored to its original use in recent times and the remaining sections are used for offices. Both uses are compatible and allow the original intent of the place to be read reasonably well. The integrity of this section of the building is moderate to high.

#### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

The house section of *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* has been stripped of its verandahs and the external elements of the grand main entrance have been lost. Paint has obscured much detail of the exterior materials. Much of the interior detail has been altered, but important elements such as the basic room geometry, major finishes, staircase, and fireplaces are intact. The main stair has minor modifications at the upper landing level. The house retains a moderate to high degree of authenticity. The gallery has been altered in a number of ways, but is significantly intact and therefore retains a moderate to high degree of authenticity. The gallery office spaces have been retained as offices and therefore retain a high degree of authenticity. The restaurant at second floor level has been stripped out and converted into offices, and therefore retains a low degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Robin Chinnery, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Philip Griffiths, Architect with amendments and/or additions by the State Heritage Office and the Register Committee.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* is a house (1893) in a style approaching the Victorian Rustic Gothic style, and additions (1958) in the Post-War International style. It is a two storey brick, limestone and iron house built for James and Edith Cowan in 1893; with three storey additions, comprising a purpose designed art gallery, formerly the Skinner Gallery, and offices, by Krantz & Sheldon, Architects, in 1958, constructed for Josiah and Rose Skinner by Messrs. E. Allwood and Son.<sup>1</sup>

Arrowsmith's plan of the town site of Perth, published in 1833, includes Section L, with 'Rd. from the Great Lakes' extending from the western most point of St. Georges Terrace.<sup>2</sup> Lots at Location L were accessed from the 'Rd. from Fremantle', this section of which was renamed Mount Street on Assistant Surveyor Hillman's Plan of the Town of Perth, published in 1838.<sup>3</sup> In the 1840s, 'Mount-Street was all black sand, no road, no houses'.<sup>4</sup> The first house in Mount Street was built for William Knight in 1851, and named Mount House (demolished 1960).<sup>5</sup> The Knights were among the colony's well known and affluent citizens, and the area in which Mount House was located became a prestigious residential area in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

By 1855, the 'Rd. from the Great Lakes' had been rerouted to meet Hay Street at the western end of the town of Perth, and St. Georges Terrace terminated at its western end at the intersection with Mount Street.<sup>6</sup> The Pensioner Barracks were constructed at the western end of St. Georges Terrace in 1863-1867.<sup>7</sup> In 1871, land at Mount Eliza was set aside for public use.<sup>8</sup> By 1877 a rifle range had been established there, with access via the western extension of Malcolm Street, which is shown on the 1877 plan of the City of Perth, located to the south of the

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- <sup>1</sup> City of Perth Rate Books, West Ward 1896-97, and South Ward, 1898; Specifications of Additions to 31 Malcolm Street, June 1958; and R. J. Ferguson with Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, site visit 18 November 1998
  - <sup>2</sup> Plan of the town site of Perth (J. Arrowsmith, London 1833) in Seddon, George, and Ravine, David, *A City and Its Setting: Images of Perth, Western Australia* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1986) p. 100
  - <sup>3</sup> Plan of the town of Perth (J. Arrowsmith, London 1838) in Seddon, George, and Ravine, David op. cit., p. 100
  - <sup>4</sup> Roe, Mrs. J. B., 'Some Old Time Memories' in *Early Days*, Western Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings Vol. 1, Pt. 1, pp. 4-6
  - <sup>5</sup> Seddon, George, and Ravine, David op. cit., p. 278
  - <sup>6</sup> Perth town site in 1855, Margaret Pitt Morison Research Collection in Seddon, George, and Ravine, David op. cit., p. 120
  - <sup>7</sup> Plan of City of Perth, 1877 in Seddon, George, and Ravine, David op. cit., p. 278
  - <sup>8</sup> Seddon, George, and Ravine, David, *A City and Its Setting*, p. 119

Barracks and parallel to Mount Street.<sup>9</sup> As the City of Perth gradually expanded to the east, north and west in the 1870s and 1880s, there was more development in the vicinity of Mount and Malcolm Streets. In 1872, Mrs. Edward Millett noted that on the slope of Mount Eliza 'are built some of the best houses in Perth, and the view from them is so fine...'.<sup>10</sup>

Following the opening of the Fremantle-Guildford Railway in 1881, development and redevelopment in the vicinity of Perth Railway Station and the rail facilities led to a shift westward in the residential areas of Perth. In the 1880s, West Perth was laid out, 'continuing a slow transfer of power and wealth from the original base around Government House in the east end of town'.<sup>11</sup> Mount Street and Malcolm Street were further developed in the 1880s and early 1890s, as this process continued. The area was considered a desirable residential area by the wealthy elite of the City of Perth as the inner city was consolidated into the CBD.

James Cowan (1848-1937), police magistrate at Perth (1870-75), clerk of the Legislative Council (1875-79), Registrar and Master of the Supreme Court (1879-90), senior police magistrate and magistrate of the Local Court at Perth, Resident Magistrate and Chairman of the Licensing Court of the Swan district from 1890, was a prominent and well known member of Perth society in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>12</sup>

James Cowan's wife, Edith Dircksey Cowan (née Brown, 1861-1932), social worker and politician, was the first woman elected to an Australian parliament. She was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia in 1921 for the seat of West Perth, following legislation passed in 1920 to allow women enter parliament.<sup>13</sup> Edith married James Cowan in 1879,<sup>14</sup> and they had four daughters and a son between 1880 and 1891. Edith became actively involved in voluntary organisations and community service in Perth in the 1890s.<sup>15</sup>

From 1891, she worked with the Ministering Children's League; and from 1894, with the House of Mercy for unmarried mothers (Alexandra Home for Women).<sup>16</sup> She served as the first secretary of the Karrakatta Women's Club (1894), and was later elected its vice-president and president.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Plan of City of Perth, 1877 in Seddon, George, and Ravine, David op. cit., p. 120

<sup>10</sup> Millett, Mrs. Edward, *An Australian Parsonage, or, The Settler and the Savage in Western Australia* (E. Stanford, London, 1872) in Seddon, George, and Ravine, David op. cit., p. 143

<sup>11</sup> Seddon, George, and Ravine, David, *A City and Its Setting*, p. 119

<sup>12</sup> Battye, J. S., *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia* (Cyclopedia Co., Perth, 1912-13) pp. 367-68. Note: There are some errors in Battye re Cowan, in particular the year of his marriage to Edith Dircksey Brown is given as 1876, rather than 1879; and Battye states that Cowan was the first to build in Mount Street, rather than Malcolm Street. The confusion may have arisen as at the time at which Cowan purchased Lot L50, the lot was recorded in the Rate Book as Mount Street, as the original lots faced Mount Street on the south and extended north to the future Malcolm Street.

<sup>13</sup> Nairn, Bede, & Serle, Geoffrey, (eds.) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 8, 1897-1939 (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981), pp. 123-24

<sup>14</sup> 'Our City Letter,' *Victorian Express*, 19 November 1879, p. 3

<sup>15</sup> Nairn & Serle, op. cit., p. 123

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

In a period in which few public offices were open to or held by women, she served on the North Fremantle Board of Education, and was a staunch advocate of state education.<sup>18</sup> In 1906, she was a foundation member of the Children's Protection Society, which was instrumental in the legislation for the State Children's Act (1907); and in 1915, she was one of the first women appointed to the bench of the Children's Court established under the Act.<sup>19</sup>

An initiator of the Women's Service Guild (1909), of which she was vice-president to 1917, she was prominent in the guild's fundraising, public meetings and lobbying of the government, which led in 1916, to the establishment of King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, serving as secretary of its advisory board.<sup>20</sup> She played an active part in the Western Australian National Council of Women, serving as president (1913-1921) and vice president to her death in 1932.<sup>21</sup> She was also a foundation member of Co-Freemasonry in this State (1916); and the first woman member of the Anglican Social Questions Committee from 1916, and a co-opted member of the Synod from 1920.<sup>22</sup> Her war work during World War I earned her an O.B.E. in 1920.<sup>23</sup> One of the first women appointed as a Justice of the Peace (1920), she was a keen advocate of the appointment of women to similar positions.<sup>24</sup>

Following his marriage to Edith in 1879, Cowan offered for sale his substantial landholdings on Pier Street, Howick (later Hay) Street, and elsewhere.<sup>25</sup> In 1882, Perth Town Lots L48, L49, and L50, Malcolm Street were recorded in the Perth Rate Books as a 'Dwelling Lot', with an annual value of £12, owned by Daniel Lang, Servant.<sup>26</sup> James Cowan, Registrar, purchased Lots L49 and L50 on 10 July 1882,<sup>27</sup> although Cowan sold Lot L49 in August 1882.<sup>28</sup> In 1883, a residence was erected on Lot L50, then described as being on Mount Street,<sup>29</sup> but the nature of this building is unknown.<sup>30</sup> The Cowans, with their son and daughter, took up residence at the place in 1883, and their second daughter was born there in the same year.<sup>31</sup>

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- 18 Ibid.
  - 19 Ibid.
  - 20 Ibid.
  - 21 *ibid*, pp. 123-124
  - 22 *ibid*, p. 124
  - 23 Ibid.
  - 24 Ibid.
  - 25 'Classified Advertising,' *West Australian*, 26 October 1880, p. 2
  - 26 Perth Rate Book, 1882. note: These lots were recorded in the Rate Books as Malcolm Street, in this year, as Mount Street for 1883-88, and as Mount and Malcolm Streets for 1889-92
  - 27 Certificate of Title Perth Building Lots L49 and L50, Vol. 9 Fol. 65, 10 July 1883; and Perth Rate Book, 1883, p. 6
  - 28 Certificate of Title Perth Building Lots L49 and L50 Vol. 9 Fol. 65, 4 August 1882
  - 29 'Classified Advertising,' *West Australian*, 2 January 1889, p. 3
  - 30 City of Perth Rate Book 1883, p. 6. note: The place was recorded as 'Vacant Ground', with 'house' inserted. Malcolm Street was recorded in the West Ward to 1898, and thereafter South Ward.
  - 31 Cowan, Peter, *A Unique Position: A Biography of Edith Dircksey Cowan, 1861-1932* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1978) p. 51

In 1884, James Cowan was recorded as the owner and occupier of 'house and grounds' at Perth Town Lots L49 and L50, with annual values of £60 and £70.<sup>32</sup> Two more daughters were born at the place in 1885 and 1891.<sup>33</sup> Edith's daughter from 1885 was described as being born at 'Bayview, Perth',<sup>34</sup> and it is probable Bayview was the name of the first Cowan residence on Lot L50. In 1891, part of Lot L50 was sold to William Alexander, 'H.M. Servant', where a substantial house was constructed for him in 1891-92.<sup>35</sup>

By 1892, they were residing, temporarily, in Aberdeen Street while their new house was constructed,<sup>36</sup> and in April 1893 they were living in Cottesloe.<sup>37</sup> The 1883 property on Lot L50 was almost certainly demolished, therefore, by September 1892. It is certain that the Cowans were living at their new residence at 31 Malcolm Street by July 1893, when Edith advertised for a 'housemaid to assist with children'.<sup>38</sup> The new building was designed by Robert Thompson McMaster, and tenders for the erection of a 'two-storey villa residence' were called in August 1892.<sup>39</sup>

McMaster (1865-1915) designed a number of villas around Kings Park as well as commercial buildings in a Federation style, including the Central Arcade from Murray Street to Wellington Street, United Service Hotel in St George's Terrace, Ozone Hotel in Adelaide Terrace, Smith's Chambers in Barrack Street, and the *Broken Hill Hotel* at Victoria Park (RHP). He was also mayor of Victoria Park and McMaster Street there is named in his honour.<sup>40</sup>

A drawing of the house at 31 Malcolm Street in 1895 shows the two-storey brick dwelling, with steps leading from the porch at the main entrance to the house on the east, and with verandahs at the front on the northwest, and at the rear on the southeast, with two water closets, one at the front at the eastern end of the verandah, and the other at the rear, at the southwest corner of the house.<sup>41</sup> A water tank is located adjacent to the rear of the house, with a windmill on trestles in the rear yard to the south of the house, and stables at the rear of the lot on the southwest.<sup>42</sup>

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32 City of Perth Rate Book 1884, p. 6

33 Cowan, Peter, *A Unique Position: A Biography of Edith Dircksey Cowan, 1861-1932* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1978) p. 51

34 'Family Notices,' *Daily News*, 11 June 1885, p. 3

35 Certificate of Title Perth Building Lots L49 and L50 Vol. 9 Fol. 65. 8 December 1891; and City of Perth Rate Books 1885-92, p. 6. Note: In 1892, only Alexander was recorded as the owner of Perth Town Lot L50; in 1893, Cowan was inserted, and both were recorded as owners of houses and grounds at Lot L50.

36 'Advertising,' *Daily News*, 24 September 1892, p. 3

37 'Advertising,' *Daily News*, 17 April 1893, p. 1

38 'Advertising,' *Daily News*, 20 July 1893, p. 3

39 'Classified Advertising,' *West Australian*, 30 August 1892, p. 8

40 Taylor, John J., 'Robert Thompson McMaster (1865-1915)', *Western Australian Architect Biographies*, [www.architecture.com.au](http://www.architecture.com.au), accessed 8 August 2016

41 Surveyor's Field book 2153, 1895. PROWA Cons. 3464 WAS 84 Item 15, p. 43

42 Ibid.



Perhaps the new residence was not suitable for the Cowans, or they may have just wished to live by the coast, since by November 1896 they were once again living in Cottesloe, on Avonmore Terrace.<sup>43</sup> From 1896, 31 Malcolm Street was rented to tenants: Mrs. Mary Hinckley, widow, in 1896 and 1897, and, in 1898, to Peter Ullbrick; it was also the address of the Merne Club in these years.<sup>44</sup>

Mount Eliza, Reserve 1729A, gazetted as a public park in 1890, was developed from 1895, firstly as Perth Park, and from 1901, renamed The King's Park.<sup>45</sup> With the Gold Boom of the 1890s, land values nearby in 'fashionable West Perth', increased dramatically.<sup>46</sup> With the impact of the boom, the annual value of 31 Malcolm Street increased from £63 in 1895 to £90 in 1897, with the capital value of £2,000, values which were maintained until the early 1900s, when the economic downturn in Western Australia saw the values decline to £85 and £1,200 respectively.<sup>47</sup>

In 1899, the house at 31 Malcolm Street was again rented to a tenant, Mrs. Wilbur, widow, and during this tenancy the place was recorded in use as a Boarding House.<sup>48</sup> James and Edith Cowan reoccupied it for a short period in 1899, before it was re-let to Mrs. Wilbur in 1900.<sup>49</sup> The increased population due to the Gold Boom had led to heavy demand for accommodation, and the House at 31 Malcolm Street was one of a number of larger homes in Perth, which were put to use as boarding houses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The place continued to be rented to tenants from 1900 to 1909, including Charles Alfred Richard Hill, civil servant, and Emily Bertram, milliner (1901); Mrs. Fletcher, widow (1902); James Woolcott Walker, grazier (1902-05); Susannah Retallack Braddock (1906); and Florence Edith Sinclair (1906-08), who kept it as a boarding house, as did the next tenant, Laura Finey (1908).<sup>50</sup>

The Cowans remained at Avonmore Terrace, Cottesloe, until after May 1911,<sup>51</sup> when they relocated back to 31 Malcolm Street, West Perth.<sup>52</sup> James Cowan retired from the Bench in November 1914, at a time when Edith was becoming increasingly involved in work for the war effort, following the outbreak of World War I in August 1914.<sup>53</sup>

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- 43 'Classified Advertising,' *West Australian*, 4 November 1896, p. 8; City of Perth Rate Books 1893-1896; Cowan, Peter, *A Unique Position*, p. 86
  - 44 City of Perth Rate Books 1896-1898; and Wise's Post Office Directory 1897, p. 238, and 1898, p. 239
  - 45 Erickson, Dr. Dorothy and Taylor, Robyn, 'A Thematic History of Kings Park and Botanic Garden Perth, Western Australia' (Commissioned by Kings Park and Botanic Garden through the Department of Contract and Management Services, 1997), pp. 81-82
  - 46 Stannage, C. T., *The People of Perth: A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City* (Perth City Council, Perth, 1979) p. 224
  - 47 City of Perth Rate Books 1895-1905
  - 48 Wise's Post Office Directory 1899, p. 246
  - 49 City of Perth Rate Books 1899-1900. Note: Mrs. Wilbert, per Wise's Post Office Directory 1899, p. 246
  - 50 City of Perth Rate Books 1900-1909; Wise's Post Office Directory 1905, p. 389
  - 51 'Advertising,' *West Australian*, 19 May 1911, p. 8
  - 52 Post Office Directory, 1912
  - 53 Cowan, Peter op. cit., p. 133, and p. 146

During the next four years, as Edith served as Chairman of the Soldiers' Welcome Committee, and Vice President and then the first Chairman of the Soldiers' Institute, and one of the three Trustees, due to its central location in West Perth, the house at 31 Malcolm Street often accommodated friends who were engaged in the same work.<sup>54</sup> Throughout this period, Edith Cowan continued to be active in her other social work, and her home provided her with a central base for this work. In 1920, she was awarded an O.B.E. for her participation in the war effort.<sup>55</sup> Between 1911 and 1919, the place was closely associated with Edith Cowan and the most important period of her work.

The Cowans, with their daughters Dircksey and Helen, continued to reside at 31 Malcolm Street until 1919, when the place was sold to Samuel James Phillips.<sup>56</sup> By August 1919, the Cowans had moved down the road to 71 Malcolm Street, West Perth, where they were to reside for the rest of their lives.<sup>57</sup> Born in Perth in 1855, Phillips had managed his father's property at Irwin before acquiring large pastoral leases at Mingenew and Yandanooka.<sup>58</sup> He was a member of the Irwin Road Board, of which he was Chairman in 1883, appointed a JP in 1885, and MLC for Irwin in 1890.<sup>59</sup> He resided at the place only briefly before his death on 21 June 1920, when it was transferred to his executors, who sold it to Lillian Mary Healey on 4 March 1921.<sup>60</sup>

Lillian Mary Healey owned and occupied 31 Malcolm Street from 1920, and divided the place into two flats; whilst she occupied the lower level, the first floor flat was rented to tenants.<sup>61</sup> The Title was transferred to Lilian Mary Healey and Frances Mabel Healey as joint tenants on 16 November 1929, but within 12 months the Title reverted to Lilian, following the death of Frances on 4 August 1930.<sup>62</sup> Albert M. Corbett occupied the second flat for many years.<sup>63</sup> Following World War Two, in the late 1940s and 1950s, many of the other large old homes in Malcolm and Mount Streets, West Perth were converted to flats and non-conforming offices.<sup>64</sup>

After Lilian Mary Healey's death on 17 September 1944, the place remained in the ownership of her Estate, and was occupied by tenants in the early 1950s,

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54      ibid, p. 149

55      ibid, p. 146

56      Certificate of Title Perth Town Lots L49 and L50. Vol. 9 Fol., 65. 22 January 1919; City of Perth Rate Books 1909-1919

57      'Public Opinion,' *Daily News*, 6 August 1919, p. 4; Johns, Fred, *Who's Who in Australia 1927-8* (Hassell Press, Adelaide, 1927) p. 60

58      Erickson, R. (ed.), *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre-1829-1888* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1987-88) p. 2482

59      Erickson, R. (Ed.) op. cit., p. 2482

60      Erickson, R. (Ed.) op. cit., p. 2482; and Certificate of Title Perth portion of Perth Town Lot L50 Vol. 703 Fol. 3 4 March 1921. Note: Healey is sometimes recorded as Healy.

61      City of Perth Rate Books 1920-1944.

62      Certificate of Title portion of Perth Town Lot L50 Vol. 703 Fol. 3 16 November 1929 and 2 October 1931.

63      City of Perth Rate Books 1920-1944; and *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1937-38, p. 44.

64      City of Perth Malcolm Street October 1947-March 1979, File 311/ 81; and Mount Street 8 March 1944-21 November 1969, File 63/ 71.

including Amy Johnson in the flat formerly occupied by Lilian Mary Healey, with Miss Gwen Corbett, and later Bert Mullineux in the second flat.<sup>65</sup>

A Metropolitan Sewerage plan of Malcolm Street in 1953, shows four steps leading from the street to a gravelled area at either side and in front of the building; four steps lead rise to the main entrance; a verandah extends along the recessed section of the front, with a brick w. c. built one end; another w. c. is located at the rear of the building by the rear stairs; and the rear verandah is extant.<sup>66</sup>

On 25 January 1955, the house at 31 Malcolm Street was transferred to Josiah James Skinner, Business Manager, Rose Skinner, Married Woman, John Cumming Skinner, Farmer, and Joyce Halleen, Married Woman, all of 40 Mount Street, Perth, as tenants in common.<sup>67</sup> The two flats at House at 31 Malcolm Street were converted to offices, some of which were occupied by the owners, and the remainder were leased to tenants.

Josiah (Joe) Skinner, developer and promoter, and his wife, Rose, applied to the City of Perth for approval of additions to 31 Malcolm Street in May 1958. The proposed art centre was to be '... an entirely altruistic venture, having for its aim the fostering of the arts in Western Australia and assistance to artists.'<sup>68</sup>

The initial application for the plans by Krantz & Sheldon, Architects, to designs by Josiah Skinner, was not approved as construction of a building on the boundary of the lot was considered 'most undesirable'.<sup>69</sup>

In June 1958, Architects Krantz & Sheldon drew modified plans for additions to the house at 31 Malcolm Street, which were approved by the Perth City Council.<sup>59</sup> Built by Messrs. E. Allwood & Son, the three storey building was joined to the original house by an arched entry on the north of the older building to join the two buildings, in fulfillment of the requirement of the Perth City Council that it should be one building.<sup>70</sup> The new three storey building was purpose designed for an art gallery, with exhibition spaces on two floors, '... studio spaces for art classes, rooms for other cultural activities and a meeting centre for artists and musical societies', and a restaurant and coffee shop, Leonardo's Coffee Lounge, on the top floor.<sup>71</sup> Parquetry flooring was a feature; it remains extant under the present carpets at the upper levels, and has been restored at

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<sup>65</sup> Certificate of Title portion of Perth Town Lot L50 Vol. 703 Fol. 3 19 February 1945; and City of Perth Rate Books 1951-1953.

<sup>66</sup> Metropolitan Sewerage Sheet 11 & 11A, November 1953. PROWA Cons. 4156.

<sup>67</sup> Certificate of Title portion of Perth Town Lot L50, Vol. 1177 Fol. 570, 25 January 1955.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Rose Skinner to Mr. Green, Perth City Council, 25 May 1958. City of Perth File 311/ 81 Box 336 October 1947-May 1979.

<sup>69</sup> R. J. Ferguson with Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, site visit, 18 November 1998. City Building Surveyor's Department, 7 May 1958, City of Perth Malcolm Street Buildings, October 1947-May 1979. File 311/ 81.

<sup>70</sup> Specifications of Additions to 31 Malcolm Street, June 1958; and R. J. Ferguson with Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, site visit 18 November 1998.

<sup>71</sup> Letter from Rose Skinner to Henry Froudust, 5 July 1958, in "The Festival of Perth" in Erickson, Dorothy 'History of the Visual Arts in Western Australia' in Draft, November 1998.

the ground level.<sup>72</sup> On completion of the work, the Skinner Gallery was opened in October 1958.<sup>73</sup>

The original two storey building at *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* was tenanted in 1958, with the Town Planning Board occupying the main portion, and in the front portion the Country Publicity Co., which subsequently relocated to the garage at the rear of the building, after it was converted to offices.<sup>74</sup> R. J. Ferguson, a prominent Perth architect, was a later tenant of this building from the 1960s.<sup>75</sup>

The Skinner Gallery was reputed to be the first commercial gallery in Australia, and a major promoter of Western Australian and Australian artists. In the late 1950s and 1960s, it was the major venue associated with the annual Festival of Perth in promoting the visual arts, bringing national and international artists to this State.<sup>76</sup> It became one of the top three galleries in Australia, introducing new artists, many of whom became well known in Australian art, and in this role was very informative and instructive on the arts in Western Australia.<sup>77</sup> Among these artists were painters Robert Juniper, Geoffrey Allen, and Bryant McDiven; potters John Fawcett and Francis Kotai and Heather McSwain; weaver Marie Miller; fabric printer Ida Ott-Nielsen; and those nationally prominent including Fred Williams and Ray Crooke. Rose Skinner was a strong promoter, 'one of the most vital of the national dealers', and her patronage ensured success.<sup>78</sup>

Under Perth City Council By-law No.65, which came into effect in 1962, the land at *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* was classified as Zone 2, Residential Flats; however, as the place was in continued use as offices, art gallery, coffee shop and restaurant, the lawfully established non-conforming use was acknowledged.<sup>79</sup>

In October 1974, R. J. Ferguson & Assoc., Architects, drew plans for a building connection at first floor level between the two buildings at *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* and renovation.<sup>80</sup> The latter included removal of two doors in the earlier building, and the fitting of a new door with a steel frame in the

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<sup>72</sup> Site visit by Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, 18 November 1998.

<sup>73</sup> The Skinner Gallery occupied the ground and first floors of the building. The first floor kitchen as used for openings and the other three spaces on the first floor were used for display and storage purposes. The house basement as used for uncrating art works and further storage. The ground floor space was arranged according to the needs of the time and was rented out as offices. R. J. Ferguson, correspondence to HCWA dated 19 April 1999, HCWA file P3847.

<sup>74</sup> City of Perth Malcolm Street Buildings October 1947-May 1979, correspondence, 1958. File 311/ 81.

<sup>75</sup> R. J. Ferguson with Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, site visit, 18 November 1998.

<sup>76</sup> 'The Festival of Perth' in Erickson, Dorothy 'History of the Visual Arts in Western Australia' Draft, November 1998.

<sup>77</sup> Dorothy Erickson, telephone conversation with Robin Chinnery, 19 November 1998

<sup>78</sup> 'The Festival of Perth' in Erickson, Dorothy 'History of the Visual Arts in Western Australia' Draft, November 1998.

<sup>79</sup> Letter from Town Clerk to Manager, R. J. Ferguson & Associates, 7 August 1975. Perth City Council Malcolm Street Buildings, October 1947-March 1979, File 311/ 81.

<sup>80</sup> R. J. Ferguson & Co., First Floor Plan Building Connection and Renovation 31 Malcolm St. Perth, 8 October 1974.

passage.<sup>81</sup> In the newer building, some changes were made to the fittings and partitioning; 'a/c' was removed and windows glazed; and a new lobby constructed.<sup>82</sup>

In August 1975, the application of R. J. Ferguson for Skinner & Co. for approval to construct a covered walkway between the two buildings at *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* at the first floor level was approved by Perth City Council, and the building licence issued for the work.<sup>83</sup> The Skinner Gallery closed in 1976.<sup>84</sup>

On 26 October 1978, *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* was transferred to Kardinya Projects Pty. Ltd. of 200 St. Georges Terrace.<sup>85</sup> In January 1979, the company sought preliminary approval from Perth City Council to re-develop the place, with a proposal to erect an office building at the site.<sup>86</sup> The Council advised that such a proposal would not be supported, as it was 'firm in its policy that this area of the City should be retained as a residential precinct.'<sup>87</sup> The buildings continued to be leased as offices to various tenants, including R. J. Ferguson & Associates Pty. Ltd., Architects.<sup>88</sup>

In mid-1981, the place was sold to Newmills Pty. Ltd. of 31 Malcolm Street, Perth for \$420,000, and transferred on 20 August 1981.<sup>89</sup> R. J. Ferguson & Associates Pty. Ltd. continued in occupation of the top floor of the Skinner's building, whilst some of the other tenancies were subject to change.<sup>90</sup>

In 1981, plans by R. J. Ferguson & Associates Pty. Ltd., Architects, for additions and alterations to the grounds of *Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* were implemented. The existing retaining wall to St. Georges Terrace was built up, brick paving was laid, the old garage was removed, and the grounds landscaped.<sup>91</sup> Sometime after 1981, an external timber staircase with water closet under one landing, at the south-west corner of the House, was demolished for safety reasons.<sup>92</sup>

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81        *ibid.*

82        *Ibid.*

83        31 Malcolm Street, Covered way connecting existing buildings. City of Perth Approvals Licence 1233/75; and MRPA 10/ 3388.

84        *The West Australian*, 16 April 1976, p. 23.

85        Certificate of Title portion of Perth Town Lot L50. Vol. 1177 Fol. 570. 26 October 1978.

86        Letter from G. O. Edwards, Town Clerk, City of Perth to Manager, Kardinya Projects Pty. Ltd., 23 February 1972. City of Perth Malcolm Street Buildings October 1947-March 1979, File 311/ 81.

87        *ibid.*

88        All verandahs had been removed prior to Ferguson & Associates occupying the double garage and laundry building at the rear of the house. R. J. Ferguson, correspondence to HCWA dated 19 April 1999, HCWA file P3847.

89        Handwritten notes, R. J. Ferguson & Associates Pty. Ltd., 9 June 1981; and Certificate of Title portion of Perth Town Lot L50. Vol. 1177 Fol. 570. 20 August 1981.

90        Handwritten notes, R. J. Ferguson & Associates Pty. Ltd., 9 June 1981; and R. J.

91        R. J. Ferguson & Associates Pty. Ltd., Architects, Additions & Alterations to 31 Malcolm St. Perth, August 1981.

92        R. J. Ferguson, correspondence to HCWA dated 19 April 1999, HCWA file P3847.

In 1998, the ground floor of the Skinner building (1958) was restored and refurbished, during which the corner copper fireplace was removed, and the current tenant, Goddard de Fiddes Contemporary Art, took up occupation of the place.<sup>93</sup> Other alterations were undertaken at this time to achieve large display surfaces, a storeroom and kitchen.<sup>94</sup> R. J. Ferguson & Associates Pty. Ltd., Architects, continue to occupy the second floor as offices, whilst the first floor is used primarily for storage. The original building (1893) is occupied as offices by tenants, Warner Music Australia.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* is a house (1893) in a style approaching the Victorian Rustic Gothic style, and additions (1958) in the Post-War International style. It is a two storey brick, limestone and iron house, with three storey additions, comprising a purpose designed art gallery and offices.

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* is located on the south side of Malcolm Street, a short distance west of the Mitchell Freeway. Malcolm Street is a two-way pair road, which is set on a steep gradient, with a broad footpath with Urbanstone unit pavers. There are Queensland Box trees (*Lephostemon conferta*) planted at about twenty metre intervals in the pavement. The house is the more visually prominent of the two buildings, because it is set closest to the front boundary. Without its verandahs, the house does not make a large visually complex impact upon the streetscape, but rather contributes to it in a restrained manner. It is striking as an isolated element of its time, the more remarkable as the one clearly pre-Federation building in the street.

The house and gallery buildings are set well back from the front boundary. The area between the street pavement and the buildings has been landscaped in a number of stages. All of the work to the gardens is a product of the Skinner Gallery era and several later modifications. The trees in the rear garden may pre-date 1958. There is a limestone wall along the front boundary, interrupted by the pedestrian entrance to the gallery on the eastern boundary and the vehicular access at the western boundary. There is a low limestone wall at the front boundary. The forecourt, apart from the formal entrance to the gallery, is paved for parking with brick pavers. The rear or western side of the building is treated with brick paving, and trees located on the adjoining properties shade the paved area. There is one large London Plane tree (*Platanus x acerfolia*) in the rear carpark. There are young shade trees planted in the front carpark. The entrance to the gallery is set well below the street pavement level. The route to the entry from the street is paved with brick pavers and paving slabs in a grid and infill pattern, with soft landscaping to either side. The descent from the street to the entrance is made in easy stages.

Malcolm Street is a strip of mixed urban development, with buildings created through an extensive period of activity in the early part of the twentieth century and subsequently in the post-World War Two period, including to the present day.

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<sup>93</sup> R. J. Ferguson with Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, site visit, 18 November 1998.

<sup>94</sup> R. J. Ferguson, correspondence to HCWA dated 19 April 1999, HCWA file P3847.

Buildings from the late nineteenth century are diminishing in number and are being replaced by larger multi-unit residential buildings.

*Edith Cowan's House & Skinner Gallery (fmr)* complex divides into two separate sections, the former residence and the art gallery and office building.

The house is set well back from the property boundary and well down the slope off Malcolm Street. It is an asymmetrically planned two-storey house, constructed of brick and stone and a Colorbond custom orb hip and gabled roof. The style is approaching the Victorian Rustic Gothic style, but is much simplified in its form. This simplification has been stripped back still further by the removal of the grand main entrance, decorative details and verandahs. The masonry elements have been painted over with the result that further detail has been lost.

The front of the house is constructed of limestone with brick quoins and is arranged in four bays. The leading bay, with its single storey bay window, is a gabled element with a scalloped fascia board, an oculus gable vent, and a single French window leading onto a polygonal balconette, which uses the oculus motif for its balustrade treatment. The balconette then becomes a bay window at the ground floor level. The centre window to the bay window arrangement has been removed to make a front door for the tenants of the house and a light framed awning has been fixed over this new entry. The string course under the balconette balustrade then runs across the entire front of the house and its remaining three bays. It would appear that this was the flashing string for a verandah roof, though there is no other evidence of a verandah on the walls. The sewerage drawings indicate the extent of the verandahs. The second and third bays are similar, but are simply flat wall planes with double hung sash windows and a four panel door. The roof over these two bays is a hipped roof, which links through to the gabled roof of the thrust bay at the eastern end. The last or western bay is set lower than the adjacent bays, with a parapet capping in lieu of the hipped roof of its neighbours.

The eastern elevation was the main entry elevation of the house, prior to the construction of the gallery in 1958, and once had a sweeping staircase to the entry. This elevation is similar to the present front elevation to Malcolm Street, but has a full height bay window arrangement, to the south of the entry door. The entry has a two pane and two panel door set in a side and awning light surround, which has stained glass leadlights. The rear elevation is constructed of English bond brickwork, and has French windows, which once led out onto verandahs that overlooked the Swan River. The ends of the joists have been left in the wall of the ground floor section of the verandah. Openings to the ground floor and cellar have been modified, where there is evidence of a pair of windows having been joined to make a single larger opening.

The house plan is arranged in two parts, the living rooms to the eastern end of the house and the service rooms to the west. There are four living rooms on each floor and two service rooms. The original front entrance is located at the center of the eastern end of the plan and has an entry hall, from which the first two rooms are entered. The hall has lath and plaster ceiling, deep cornices and a ceiling rose and this decorative theme flows through the whole of the ground floor and

the major rooms of the first floor. The hall is divided from the stair by engaged piers with cornice capitals and an arch with a run architrave. The stair leading to the first floor is made of timber with turned newels, a moulded handrail, and turned balusters. The stair to the basement is located under the first flight of the main stair and is screened from the ground floor by timber paneling.

The main rooms to the ground floor have 4 panel doors, deep moulded skirtings, plastered walls, lath and plaster ceilings and ceiling roses. These rooms have fireplaces, most of which retain their surrounds. It would appear that some floorboards have been replaced with particle board as a base for carpeting. The rooms to the first floor follow the pattern of those on the ground floor, except that the smaller rooms have lath and plaster ceilings without cornices. The western end of the stair at the first floor has been modified to eliminate the need for negotiating two flights of stairs when passing from the western to the eastern side of the first floor, where there is a small difference in floor levels. In the original arrangement, this movement required descending to a common landing and then moving back up to either level of the first floor. Modern toilets have been introduced at both ground and first floor levels. Both floors have been fitted out with carpet and modern furniture. The south east room at first floor level has been isolated from the remainder of the house and has a link to the adjacent gallery building.

The basement has a granolithic floor and painted limestone walls. The soffit of the ground floor above has been covered with suspended ceilings in most of the basement area. The area has been fitted out with dry partitions.

Most of the fabric of the house is authentic, well maintained and in good condition. The masonry walls do not have cavities and in a number of locations, notably on the southern and western sides, this has given rise to the ingress of moisture.

The second building is the three storey Post-War International style art gallery and office accommodation building. The second floor level was originally a coffee lounge and restaurant, but is now an architect's studio and office space. This building is set still further into the site and therefore further down the slope which falls away from Malcolm Street. The approach to the entrance is via a gentle stepped and ramped landscape, through shady plantings. The building has salmon pink stretcher bond brick walls, shallow fascias, no gutters and a very shallow pitched fibrous cement roof. The entrance elevation is made up of timber framed joinery, laid out in geometric patterns, with this glazed screen arrangement set in front of the structure of upstand concrete beams, which carry the first and second floors. There is an arched wall between the house and gallery at ground floor level, together with a glazed link at the first floor level of the house, which is the second floor level of the gallery. The eastern elevation has minor window openings, and the southern elevation has a range of windows which take advantage of the views to the south over the Swan River. Windows to the west are arranged in sets of three with fixed centre panes and pairs of awning lights either side. The western wall has a number of air conditioning units attached to its ground floor level and one of the windows has a unit set into it.



The entry has a mosaic tile floor and a staircase which leads to the upper floors. The stair landings have timber parquet flooring. The open tread staircase has steel carriages and timber treads with steel balusters and a timber handrail. The walls are face brickwork.

The ground floor is a simple rectangular space with blackbutt timber flooring laid over the concrete slab, with face brickwork walls, some of which have been clad with Gyprock and others simply painted. A store and workroom has been created on the eastern side of the room with Gyprock partition walls. The soffit of the gallery is the concrete floor slab to the first floor, to which the lighting has been attached.

The first floor is partitioned off as a series of offices and stores, together with a kitchen and toilets. The parquet flooring extends from the lobby part way into the accommodation area, though the latter section has been carpeted over, and then the remainder of the floor is concrete with a carpet finish. The floor plan is compartmented with partition walls; however, the layout is little changed from the form it took at the time of the completion of the building.

The second floor is an open plan office with services such as toilets located on the eastern wall. The studio, the former coffee lounge and restaurant, has a suspended mineral fibre tile ceiling with trougher light fittings, painted face brickwork walls, and a carpeted floor, with wall mounted air conditioning units on the west wall. There are no traces of its former use.

Each of the areas of the building has undergone a small amount of change and the fabric as a whole would appear to be in reasonable condition.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The following places directly associated with Edith Cowan are on the State Register:

- P2232 *Edith Dirksey Cowan Memorial*, Kings Park Rd (RHP 20/8/00) – first civic monument erected in Australia to honour an Australian woman
- P3726 *Glengarry Station Complex*, Moonyoonooka, (RHP 30/5/200) – birthplace of Edith Cowan

The statements of significance for the following places on the State Register acknowledge the work of Edith Cowan:

- P2438 *King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women* (RHP 16/4/92) – Edith Cowan was involved with the hospital from its inception and establishment at the former Industrial School on the site.
- P603 *Wearne Hostel*, Cottesloe (RHP 24/3/2000) – Edith Cowan was one of many eminent Western Australian Anglicans who supported the place's establishment as the Ministering Children's League Convalescent Home

Other notable recognition accorded to Edith Cowan has occurred in the following forms:

- The creation of Edith Cowan University (ECU) in 1991: Western Australia's newest university and also oldest education institution (as it has its origins in the 1902 establishment of Claremont Teacher's College). ECU is the only university in Australia named after a woman.
- An image of Edith Cowan featuring on the reverse side of the polymer \$50 note issued in October 1995.

There are a small number of other places on local heritage lists that are also associated with Edith Cowan.

#### **13. 4 KEY REFERENCES**

No key references

#### **13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further research may yield additional information with respect to plans, photographs and specifications.

Archaeological research should be carried out as opportunities arise with any works at the site. There is archaeological potential at the sites of the stables and the tank and windmill.