



## 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.

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

*Penshurst* is significant for its landmark qualities, being prominently sited on Richmond Hill and visible from various vantage points along the Swan River including Cypress Hill in North Fremantle and Monument Hill in Mosman Park. (Criterion 1.3)

The house, *Penshurst*, is a substantial late Victorian dwelling which exhibits the exuberance of W.A.'s Gold Boom era. Its architectural form is particularly striking, having two multi-faceted bays at right angles to one another on the north-east corner, around which is wrapped a two storey verandah. The internal planning of the building is also unusual because of the arrangement of these bays. (Criterion 1.2)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Penshurst* has historic value for its relationship with shipping in Fremantle, particularly its connection with the firm of Symon, Hammond and Hubble. (Criterion 2.2)

A number of prominent personalities and families have at different times owned *Penshurst*, including the Hammond family, Phillip Collier M.L.A. and Oliver Strang. The Hammond family has shown an ongoing interest in the place, its significance to the family being in part attributed to the name of the place which is a link to the family's origins in England. (Criterion 2.3)

#### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

-----

#### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Because of its visual prominence and heritage character, *Penshurst* is a well known landmark in East Fremantle and contributes to the community's sense of place. The local importance of the place as a landmark is further demonstrated by the recent renaming of a section of Gordon Street to Penshurst Street. (Criterion 4.2)

### 12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

### 12. 1. RARITY

*Penshurst* is a late Victorian residence of an unconventional design. The plan arrangement of the north-eastern corner of the house, with two multi-faceted bays at right angles to one another and hemmed by a two storey verandah, is very unusual. There was, in all probability, no other building built to this plan configuration.

### 12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The constructional characteristics of *Penshurst* are typical of those found in substantial buildings constructed in the late 1890s and early 1900s in Fremantle and Western Australia generally. For example, the manner in which services were located in a weatherboard skillion at the rear of the masonry core of the building represents an approach to building that was current at the time.

### 12. 3 CONDITION

The building fabric of the place is in poor condition, having suffered from a lack of maintenance, termite damage, and vandalism. From the street, *Penshurst* presents as a dilapidated building.

Verandahs wrapping around the north-east quarter of the house are in very poor condition, with much of the flooring removed and broken on the ground floor, balustrading damaged on the upper floor, structural timbers unprotected from weather and decorative trim largely missing. Infill fabric on the upper storey verandah is no longer intact, with most louvres missing and sheets of asbestos cladding broken and missing.

The masonry fabric of the core appears to be in sound condition, although cement render has been applied to most external walls. Within the core of the house, it was noted that termites have damaged skirtings in some areas. Floors and ceilings are mostly sound, and door and window joinery is in fair condition. Vandalism and recent modification work have resulted in the loss of some elements such as fireplaces and door joinery.

The skillions at the rear of the house are in fair condition, although the condition of the external weatherboard cladding and the internal finish of bathroom and toilet areas is poor. The cellar trapdoor, stairs and shelving appears to be in good condition, and the walls sound.

Additions on the south side of the house are in poor condition. The partial collapse of some areas of wall has occurred as a result of fretting mortar and in places the concrete has spalled due to corroding reinforcement. Window glass and doors are damaged.

The tankstand at the north-west corner of the house is in fair condition, the timbers being weathered but apparently structurally sound. The tank does not appear to be watertight.

### 12. 4 INTEGRITY

The general form and intent of the house has been retained, although the unsympathetic additions to the south side have detracted from the place's elegance. There is a large portion of wall on the east side that is recent, and may originally have contained windows or doors. Internally, the loss of the staircase and entrance screen (door with fanlight/sidelights) have most significantly detracted from the original organisation of the spaces. Few modifications have affected the overall layout of the spaces, with only one

masonry wall having been removed on the ground floor and one stud wall removed upstairs.

Besides the staircase, there has been a loss of some fine joinery work, including skirtings and architraves in some areas, doors, and mantelpieces. Remnant joinery to have survived is, however, considerable, and includes some original doors, kitchen cupboards and shelving, partitioning in the upstairs bathroom (early but possibly not original), and matchboard wall and ceiling lining.

Considerable evidence remains of the place's use as flats, most of which is intrusive to the original design intent. The tankstand, laundries, and possibly the cottage, are non-intrusive remains of this phase in the place's history.

## 12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Little of the external fabric is in its original state, the verandahs having deteriorated significantly, walls rendered and unsympathetic additions made to the south which has altered the building's massing. The main stair is a replacement. Specific areas and elements within the building are still in their original state, such as the kitchen cabinet work, cellar and laundry. Generally speaking, however, the place has a low degree of authenticity.

## 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Simon Stevens, B.A.(Hons), historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Kevin Palassis Architects.

### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

#### Introduction

*Penshurst* is a property containing a colonial-built two-storey limestone house (with additions) and a cottage. It is situated at Richmond Hill close to the south shore of the Swan River in East Fremantle. Its high position gives it a commanding view of the river to the north, and Fremantle and the ocean to the west. It has been the property of merchants and politicians, including Philip Collier, the longest serving Labor Premier of Western Australia.

In the colonial era the merchants of Fremantle preferred to settle just on the outskirts of town, in the leafier terraces of East and South Fremantle. The locals simply called this area Richmond.

#### Chronology

1891 David Symon MLA and David W. Harwood buy Swan Loc. 336.<sup>1</sup>

1897 Frederick W. Markham buys Swan Loc. 336.<sup>2</sup>

c.1897 Main house built.

1899 Cecil H. Hammond buys Swan Loc. 336.<sup>3</sup> He named the place *Penshurst* after the town in England from which his family originated.<sup>4</sup>

1926 Cecil Hammond dies, but the Hammond family retain mortgage on *Penshurst*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Certificate of Title, DOLA, vol. XXXIV, fol. 382.

<sup>2</sup> Certificate of Title, DOLA, vol. XLI, fol. 182.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Hammond, Ian. Communication with Ian Boersma, 29.04.1999.

c.1920s-1932. Cottage built.

- 1931 Perpetual Executors Trustees & Agency Company (WA) Ltd. hold Swan Loc. 336 in trust until the Hammond family's mortgage is discharged in 1935.<sup>5</sup>
- 1935 Philip Collier MLA buys Swan Loc. 336.<sup>6</sup>
- 1939 Oliver W. Strang buys Swan Loc. 336.<sup>7</sup>
- 1941 *Penshurst* converted into four flats. Brick and concrete addition with stair built on south side, tankstand built, second laundry added, central staircase removed and other changes made.
- 1980 Strang signs an option to sell *Penshurst*. The option reneged by the potential buyers.<sup>8</sup>
- 1988 Oliver Strang dies intestate. The probate is ratified in 1989.<sup>9</sup>
- 1989 Opulence Pty Ltd buy *Penshurst*.<sup>10</sup>
- 1990 Feilman Planning Consultants draft report on *Penshurst* for Town of East Fremantle.  
*Penshurst* classified by the National Trust of Australia (W.A.).
- 1995 *Penshurst* entered into Town of East Fremantle municipal inventory.
- 1997 Ian Lush & Associates inspect *Penshurst*. Palassis Architects inspect *Penshurst* and document the built structures on the site.
- 1998 *Penshurst* referred to the Heritage Council of W.A.
- 1999 Palassis Architects prepared an Assessment of significance for the place.

## History

The early history of *Penshurst* is strongly associated with Symon, Hammond & Hubble, a firm of merchants based in Cliff Street, Fremantle. In one newspaper advertisement the company described itself as 'hardware and machinery merchants'. Among the many things they sold were windmills, dynamite, "burglar-proof" safes, wine and medicine.<sup>11</sup>

In 1891, two prominent merchants, David Symon and David William Harwood, purchased adjoining Swan Locations K2, 12, 330 and 336. David Symon was an ironmonger, shipping merchant, and senior partner in the firm Symon, Hammond and Hubble. At the time he co-purchased the property at Richmond he was the Member of the Legislative Assembly for South Fremantle. David William Harwood was a prominent businessman, founder of Harwood Brewery, and an avid horse racer.

Symon and Harwood sold Swan Location 336 (then divided into six lots) to Frederick Warren Markham in 1897. Little is known about Markham, other than he was an agent for the business of Symon, Hammond & Hubble.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Certificate of Title, DOLA, vol. 1041, fol. 818.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> *Daily News*, November 24, 1983

<sup>9</sup> Certificate of Title, DOLA, vol. 1041, fol. 818.

<sup>10</sup> Certificate of Title, DOLA, vol. 1840, fol. 667.

<sup>11</sup> *The West Australian*, September 21, 1888.

*Wise's Western Australia Post Office Directory, 1899* lists Markham's address as Pier Street, Richmond (Pier Street runs parallel to View Terrace).

*Penshurst* was built on Lot 258 sometime between 1897 and 1899. Whether it was built before or after Markham purchased the property is unknown. However, #47 View Terrace is listed on a municipal map of North and East Fremantle dated March 31, 1901.

Cecil Henry Hammond of Symon, Hammond & Hubble, bought *Penshurst* in 1899. He is thought to have named the house after a town in England.<sup>12</sup> He lived there for a short time, but later moved to Subiaco and rented out the house. He died in 1926 at his home in Subiaco.<sup>13</sup> Following the death of Fanny Hammond, Cecil's wife, in November 1931, 'a probate of her will was granted to The Perpetual Executors Trustees and Agency Company (WA) Ltd'.<sup>14</sup> They took over the Hammond family mortgage, which was finally discharged in 1935. Throughout this period the house remained a rental property.

Philip Collier (1873-1948) bought Swan Location 336 in 1935. He was the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Boulder from 27 October 1905 until his death on 18 October 1948. He never lived at *Penshurst*, but continued Hammond's use of the house as a rental property. He resigned as Parliamentary Leader of the Australian Labor Party on 16 August 1936, and his ministerial portfolio three days later, due to ill health. Collier was Western Australia's longest-serving Labor Premier.

Oliver Wilfred Strang (born Oliver Cecil Wakefield) purchased *Penshurst* in 1939, but did not ever live there. During the First World War, he spent twenty months in a German prisoner-of-war camp. At various times, he was a coachbuilder, motor dealer and hotel manager. In 1941 he commissioned the house to be transformed into flats through a series of changes and additions.

Around the same time a cottage was built close to the main house. Post Office directories for 1932-1949 list #47 and #49 View Terrace. The two numbers probably refer to the main house and the cottage. If this is the case, then the cottage must have been built prior to 1932.<sup>15</sup>

The Post Office directories also list several people as residing at *Penshurst*. For example, from 1932 to 1949 Robert Gordon lived at #47, and from 1932 to 1940 Frederick C. Foster and George Smith lived at #49. Gordon was an orchardist, Foster a stockman, and Smith a 'wool worker.' The 1941-42 directory lists #49 as vacant. The 1942-44 directories list #49 as flats. This may mean that #47, listed earlier, refers to the cottage. The residents named were Herbert E. Dawson, Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. S. Wright. The 1949 directory lists #49 as 'O. W. Strang Flats'. The residents were Mrs. D. Hutchins, Mrs. Tasker, Stanley W. Fairchild, Lyall Porter and Mrs. A. Wright.

Interestingly, the 1936 state electoral roll lists Robert Gordon as living at 'Invermay,' View Tce., East Fremantle. This raises the question as to whether

---

<sup>12</sup> Information from officers of the Town of East Fremantle attending HCWA meeting on 14 April 2000.

<sup>13</sup> *The West Australian*, August 14, 1926.

<sup>14</sup> Certificate of Title, DOLA, vol. XLI, fol. 182.

<sup>15</sup> Further research has shown that it is possible that the cottages were probably built c. 1926. Although no street numbers are provided, the 1926 *Wise's Post Office Directory* lists Robert Gordon, Fred Foster and George Smith as living between the water reservoir and Chester Street.

or not this was another name by which *Penshurst* was known, or a reference to the cottage.

In 1980, Lewes Nominees Pty Ltd signed an option to buy *Penshurst*. They reneged on the option, and Strang fought a successful legal battle against them.<sup>16</sup> After three years of legal arguments and three heart attacks, Strang decided not to sell *Penshurst*. He died intestate in 1988. The probate was not finalised until early 1989. The current owners of *Penshurst*, Opulence Pty Ltd, bought the property in 1989.

No documentary evidence has been located to confirm or support several stories relating to *Penshurst*. One suggests that a sea captain built the main house. Another suggests that the 'home was built for a young British lord who ordered that it should be "the best residence in Perth with the best position"'.<sup>17</sup>

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Penshurst* is a substantial late Victorian residence, built in the exuberant style of Western Australia's Gold Boom era, and prominently sited on a high point of Richmond Hill in East Fremantle. The place consists of a two storey dwelling house constructed of limestone masonry with weatherboard skillions at the rear and a brick extension on the side; a cottage of asbestos clad timber framed construction; a large timber tankstand; and an extensive curtilage which contains garden terraces built in limestone and red brick, and several remnant plantings including two palm trees in front of the house. The cottage was until recently occupied by a caretaker, but both buildings are presently vacant.

#### **Siting and relationship to other buildings**

The siting of the house offers panoramic views of the Swan River. Conversely, the building is readily evident from vantage points along the Swan River such as Monument Hill in Mosman Park and Cypress Hill in North Fremantle (Rocky Bay). Within its immediate context, *Penshurst* stands in a commanding position, considerably elevated from the road and surrounded by open ground on the north and east. *Penshurst* also stands alone as a heritage building in an area that would once have been the north-eastern extremity of the East Fremantle settlement.

The building is oriented to address both View Terrace (northern aspect) and Penshurst Street (eastern aspect).<sup>18</sup> Both the north and east elevations have a projecting, multi-faceted bay and a two storey verandah wraps around the north-eastern portion of the building. The rear of the building faces west, towards the crest of Richmond Hill, and has abutting weatherboard skillion rooms containing wet laundry, bathroom and toilet facilities. Built onto this side is brick and concrete addition comprising bathrooms and toilets as well as an external stairway and upstairs verandah (partially enclosed with asbestos). A large tankstand with a corrugated iron tank abuts the north-west corner of the house, and the caretaker's cottage is located 6.58 metres west of the house. Two palm trees are located immediately in front of the house.

From View Terrace the site slopes upwards sharply, but the slope up from Penshurst Street and Pier Street is more gradual. An unsealed driveway

---

<sup>16</sup> *Daily News*, November 24, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Penshurst Street was previously called Gordon Street, and prior to that Chester Street.

extends from the north-east corner of the site, rising in a direct line towards the house and then parting at the base of the limestone retaining wall close to the house. The branch presently in use winds around the north side of the house to the caretaker's cottage. The other branch appears to have passed around the east side of the building, curving around to the remains of a galvanised iron shed at the rear of the property, south of the cottage. Retaining walls, constructed of a similar brick as has been employed for the additions on the south of the house, are found below the eastern branch of the driveway and for a short distance along View Terrace from the intersection of Gordon Street. A group of sheetmetal letterboxes are mounted on the end of this wall at the foot of the driveway.

### **Detailed description of the house**

The core part of the house is constructed of rubble limestone masonry with brick quoins to the external corners and openings. External walls are approximately 540mm thick (without cavity) and internal walls are approximately 340mm thick on the ground floor and 260mm on the upper floor. Walls sheltered by the verandahs are painted white, but the texture of the stone and brick is evident. Other external walls have been covered with a smooth cement based render, and painted white. Stuccoed quoin work has been applied to the external corners.

The roof over the core part of the house is hipped in form and of timber construction, clad in galvanised corrugated iron. The rafters project at the eaves, and are notched to support sheetmetal guttering of a common profile. There are two chimneys rising above the line of the roof. These are made of red brick with stucco cornices and terracotta chimney pots.

Verandahs on the north and east sides of the building are constructed principally of hardwood, with Oregon trimmings. Posts are square in section, with sides measuring 120mm across, and are stop chamfered. At ground level the posts rest on a concrete footing. Floors are narrow tongue and groove hardwood boards, laid with their length perpendicular to the wall. On the ground floor, the boards have deteriorated and are missing in places. Each external corner has three posts, one post flanking either side of the corner post. Remnant string mouldings are found on some posts, and the valance at the underside of the upper floor and eaves line has a very gentle curve terminating in a small radius curve just before the post. Balustrading on the upper floor consists of twin rails with three intermediate posts and three fine balusters in the space between the intermediate posts. The western half of the upstairs verandah has been enclosed with timber paneling (over which asbestos sheeting has been fixed) and louvred windows. This work is now in a very dilapidated state.

The weatherboard skillions at the rear of the house appear to be mostly contemporary with the core part of the house. This is evident from the style of the joinery and manner in which the internal planning integrates with the core part of the house. A single storey skillion, one room deep, is attached to the rear of the building, and attached behind this is another skillion of approximately the same depth but lower roof line. There is also a small cantilevered room at the upper floor level, containing a toilet.

Additions on the south side of the house comprise a two storey bathroom and toilet block, a concrete first floor verandah that is partially enclosed with asbestos in-fill, and an external concrete staircase. The fenestral treatment, massing and quality of construction of this fabric is of a lesser quality than

that of building's older parts, and generally inconsistent with the character of the place.

Internally, the masonry core of the house consists of six rooms on the ground floor and eight rooms on the upper floor. Walls of the upstairs rooms are mostly located directly above those of the rooms below, with the exception of the lobby and bathroom in the centre of the west end. Entry at ground level may be achieved through any one of four doors: a door in the east facing bay, a door off the west end of the verandah, a door off the verandah in the skillions at the west end of the building, or a door into the brick addition at the south end of the building. Access to the upstairs rooms is from an external staircase on the south side of the building or via an internal staircase in the centre of the building. This staircase has recently been installed and appears to have replaced a stair arrangement in the same space.

The configuration of bathrooms and kitchens shows that the house was divided into four flats, two on either floor. The two rooms on either floor at the southern end of the building appeared to have served as kitchens, each being equipped with a cupboard topped with a sink and drainer. In each case the stove appears to have been located in the fireplace recess, those in the rooms at the south-west end of the house having built-in wood stoves. These two rooms are also fitted with cupboards and shelving on either side of the fireplace, which appear to be contemporary with the construction of the house. It is likely that the south-west rooms on either floor were both originally fitted out as kitchens. Bathrooms and toilets for the flats in the eastern part of the house are located in the addition on the south side. The bathroom for the west upstairs flat is located in the centre of the west end of the core, and the toilet located in a stud-walled appendage to the west wall (cantilevered over the ground floor skillion). On the ground floor, the bathroom and toilet of the west flat is located in the weatherboard skillion. Some of the finishes and detailing of the west ground floor bathroom are possibly original, and fabric of the toilet and bathroom of the west upstairs flat also appears to be of an early date. Bathroom and toilet facilities in the brick addition obviously date to the 1940s. There are two laundries located in the south-west corner of the weatherboard skillion. Each laundry is equipped with a "copper" and concrete twin-tub wash trough.

There is a cellar beneath the house, accessible via a stair that surfaces in the store room at the south-east corner of the weatherboard skillions. The stair is covered by a trapdoor in the floor. Walls of the cellar are brick, with a limewash finish. The walls are lined with Jarrah wood shelving.

Typically, the interiors have plastered walls with tall moulded skirtings and lath plaster ceilings. A number of the rooms in the northern part of the house have elaborate moulded cornices. There are no picture rails. On the ground floor almost every room has a fireplace, and on the upper floor the two southern rooms and the north bay room have fireplaces. There are no extant mantelpieces. Interiors of the two north rooms, east bay room and stair well have been modified recently, with some items of joinery removed (not all of which remains in the building). Two door frames that featured sidelights and fanlights have been removed from the ground floor. One was located between the east bay room and the stairwell, the other in the passage in the weatherboard skillion at the rear of the building. Rooms in the weatherboard skillions at the rear of the building that were accessible from within the house are lined with Oregon matchboard. The laundries are not lined.

### **Detailed description of the cottage**



The cottage has a rectangular plan form, the long axis of the building oriented north-south on a gently sloping site. In response to the slope, the building has been stepped midway along its length, interrupting the floor and roof lines. The roof is hipped, and clad in Marseille pattern terracotta tiles over a timber structure. The rafters extend past the wall by approximately 300mm at the eaves, being finished with a timber fascia which supports a sheetmetal gutter of common section. Two brick chimneys project above the roof, one in the south-east corner and one mid-way along the west side of the building.

Walls of the cottage are of timber stud-frame construction, clad externally with weatherboard (lower part) and asbestos sheeting, and internally with plasterboard. Battens covering the joints in the asbestos sheeting express the pattern of studwork. Windows in the principal elevation (facing east) are casement types, sets of three vertical sashes arranged side by side, each sash having three pane divisions. A row of narrow highlight windows are located in the north elevation, and appear to have been installed at a later date. A window opening in the south end wall is of different proportions to those in the principal elevation, but has been boarded over. Windows in the west elevation relate to the bathroom and toilet.

Internally, the cottage is divided into four main areas. In the northern quarter there are two small bedrooms which open into a living area which has a door to the outside and a brick fireplace in the south-west corner. From this room, a doorway leads to a kitchen/dining room which is three steps down from the northern part of the building. There is a brick fireplace with a stove in the north-west corner of this room, backing onto the fireplace in the previous room. The southern quarter of the building contains a bathroom and a toilet in walled off areas on the west side, and general laundry facilities. The brick chimney of a laundry "copper" occupies the south-east corner. This room also has an external door in the east wall.

The constructional style of the cottage would tend to indicate that it was built some time in the 1930s or 1940s. Although its design is very basic, it appears to have been constructed with competence and does not intrude on the house.

### 13.3 REFERENCES

Architectural drawing for "Additions to Premises - 49 View Terrace, East Fremantle - For O.W.Strang Esq." --/--/1941.

City of Fremantle, facsimile from Loretta O'Reilly (librarian) to Greg Smith (Town of East Fremantle) "Re: 53 View Tce, East Fremantle." 10/11/1995.

Ian Lush & Associates, "Penshurst House: 49 View Terrace, East Fremantle" (building condition report). 22/12/1997.

National Trust Assessment Exposition, for Penshurst. 3/12/1990.

Palassis Architects, documentation relating to building inspection carried out on 17/12/1997.

Palassis Architects, "Penshurst, East Fremantle: Measured Drawings & Photographic Record." --/10/1998.

*The Daily News*, 24/11/1983.

*The West Australian*, 21/09/1888.

*The West Australian*, 14/08/1926.

#### **13. 4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

At a late stage in preparing this documentation it was found that descendants of the Hammond family have further information relating to the place, including a more detailed history of the family's relationship with Penshurst in England, and at least one early photograph of the house. This material has the potential to increase our understanding of the place's historical value.