A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUBURB

HIGHGATE

The area currently known as Highgate is bounded by Lincoln, Lord, Harold and William streets. It is believed to have been named "Highgate Hill" after the town of Highgate in Kent, England.

HISTORY

1829-1870

The land was bounded by wetlands, which flooded in winter and were a breeding ground for mosquitoes. The surrounding lakes were Stone's Lake (later known as Loton's Paddock, Loton Park and Perth Oval), Lake Poullet (First Swamp, now Birdwood Square), Lake Thompson (Mews Swamp between Lake, Brisbane and Beaufort streets) and Third Swamp (Hyde Park).

In establishing the site for the town of Perth, Captain James Stirling was instructed to 'take care that a square of three miles be reserved for…[the town's] future extension'. Land in this area could only be leased and not secured by permanent grant.

In 1858 town lots began to appear around Stone's Lake towards the Highgate area. These were around 1.2 hectares (almost 3 acres) to allow space for a productive garden as well as a residence. In 1865, Suburban Lots 140 to 149 bounded by Beaufort, Walcott, Lord and Lincoln streets were added. These were around nine hectares (22.2 acres) and may have been planned for use as market gardens and small farms, including dairies. There would have been a cottage or two on these lots. The earliest residences were simple two-room or four-room buildings constructed in mud brick with a thatch roof. These gave way to cottages of brick and shingle. There were also some prefabricated timber residences transported out from Britain.

1871-1890

Heavy flooding of the wetlands in 1872 prompted efforts to improve drainage. Third Swamp was nominated for a public garden. Lake Poullet was drained and first used as a rubbish dump.

The subdivision of Highgate Hill was one of the first suburbs on the north side of Perth. It consisted of *a* small number of workmen's cottages, clustered together in a hollow at the eastern side of Beaufort Street.

Perth Suburban Lot 166 at Highgate Hill, was granted to the Church of England in 1874, but remained unused until 1888 when, in response to the increase in their congregation, open air services commenced on the site under a large gum tree. In February 1889, the foundation stone for St Alban's Church, Highgate was laid and the church opened for service in June 1889. This was named after St Alban's Cathedral in Highgate, England. In 1903 the block was split, thus forming St Alban's Avenue, and much of that site underwent subdivision.

New roads developed as the subdivisions grew. Harry Pratley ran a hansom cab service to the area in the late 1880s, but despite these refinements, Highgate did not grow rapidly. Few of the early residences built in this area have survived.

1891-1919

In 1884 the population of the Perth district was just over 6,000; by 1911 it had reached 87,000. In 1891 Beaufort Street was only bitumenised a little beyond St Alban's Church and beyond that there was very little development. The open bushland (which was later to become the Mount Heart Estate) and a very tall lookout tree, known as the 'Crows Nest', were very popular with weekend picnickers. In 1891 the land was owned by a prominent Perth

businessman, James Grave, but Mayor of Perth Alexander Forrest had financed the deal. In 1893 it was officially acquired by Forrest.

The subdivision known as Mount Heart Estate was bounded by Mary, Margaret (Harold), Beaufort and William streets. An area on Mary Street, in the centre of the subdivision, was reserved as Alacoque Square, named after the Sacred Heart of Jesus, St Margaret Mary Alacoque. Alacoque Square was acquired by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth, Mathew Gibney, for a very moderate sum considering its market value, and it has been suggested that he and developer Forrest had a prior arrangement. By 1896 the majority of the lots in the estate had been sold to prominent Perth families.

The Roman Catholic Diocese subdivided a triangular portion of its land, near the intersection of Vincent and Beaufort streets, in 1891. They erected cottages for members of the parish. By 1899, the Monastery of Our Lady of the Missions, incorporating a school, was erected on Alacoque Square and was followed by the construction of St. Mary's Church in 1906, and the Sacred Heart Primary School in 1914, on the same site. The Monastery was occupied by a congregation of Our Lady of the Missions.

Woodley Park Estate, also referred to as the Highgate Hill extension, was offered for sale in March 1897. It encompassed a section of Guildford Road (Lord Street), Broome, Turner and Wright streets, and was advertised as comprising 'magnificent building sites and garden land'.

George Shenton, who was probably the wealthiest man in Western Australia before the goldrushes of the 1890s, and was Mayor of Perth for most of the 1880s, invested in land on Lincoln Street near Lord Street in the late 1890s. In 1904 he was leasing six houses on Lincoln Street, which today are situated at 16-36 Lincoln Street.

Many of the streets in the estates established during this period were owned and maintained by the developers, and had been named by them. In the mid to late 1890s, Perth City Council took over control of them, and streets were renamed and numbered, so a street passing through a number of estates had the same name for the whole length. For example in 1897 the street known as William Street in the city and Hutt Street north of the railway line became William Street for its entire length.

The Highgate Primary School at 147 Lincoln Street opened in 1895, and the Highgate Police Station at 57 Lincoln Street was established in 1897. This was the first police station and lockup built to the immediate north of Perth.

1920-1946
In the short period post World War I and the late 1920s there was a building boom where residential infill occurred. A number of the small, cheaply built timber homes built in the 1890s were replaced by more substantial brick homes.

1947-1972
Post World War II saw a population boom when the Australian Government embarked on an immigration campaign, and displaced persons began to arrive from Europe in 1947. The demand for housing materials far outstripped the supply available. The pressure on existing dwellings saw many divided into flats, makeshift extensions added and verandahs enclosed.

1973-2014
Highgate has again become a popular residential area. Increased construction of buildings containing apartments, shops and offices raised the number of singles and couples in the area. It is attractive for its cafes and restaurants, proximity to the CBD, the nightlife of Northbridge, and for those who work in the City but don't want a long commute, or to spend their weekends tending to a large garden. A 2014 survey by *walkscore.com* placed Highgate as the third most walkable suburb in Perth, based on the distance to amenities.

PLACES OF INTEREST

1. Highgate Hill Police Station, 57 Lincoln Street

Police Station with charge room and two lockup cells was built in 1897; architect Hillson Beasley. Police Quarters were added in 1906. This was the first police station and lockup erected to the north of Perth, when the development of the surrounding suburbs was in its very early stages. The station was originally staffed by one sergeant and seven 'foot' constables. The shooting of Sgt Marks at the Brisbane Hotel in 1828 prompted the introduction of firearms licencing in WA. The station closed at the end of 1940. In April 1942 the police wireless facility was secretly transferred there from East Perth, where it was considered too vulnerable should the Japanese bomb Perth. This building remained the hub of the police wireless section until 1975 and led to its use by Traffic Branch, Road Safety Section and Bicycle Education Unit. State Heritage listed in 2000, the station is considered architecturally unique as it is one of the few remaining stations with a charge room and double cell layout, and the only one with verandahs on all sides. In 2003 the buildings were handed into the care of the WA Police Historical Society who have established a Police Museum.

2. Lincoln Street Ventilation Stack, cnr Lincoln and Smith streets

An art deco tower built in 1941 to vent sewage fumes into the atmosphere. The tower is 38 metres tall and the second tallest sewer vent in Australia. Inadequate design led residents to complain of unpleasant smells, particularly during certain weather conditions. The base of the tower was cemented over to render it non-functional. The tower was referred to as *Dumas' Folly* after the engineer RJ Dumas.

In early 1942, the police wireless facility was secretly moved to the Highgate Hill Police Station as the tower served as an excellent antenna mast. It was not until 1956 that the location of the wireless section became public knowledge. The tower was used for an antenna mast for police wireless communications until 1975. Listed on both the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory and the State Register of Heritage Places

3. John Hyde's Estate, 102-118 Lincoln Street

John Hyde was a police constable who arrived in Fremantle in 1857 and was stationed at Fremantle, York, Canning and Perth. He retired aged 65 in 1893 and built a series of houses in Lincoln Street in the following years.

The houses included his home at number 118, a house at 114, a detached pair at 110 and 112 and semi-detached houses at 106-108 and 102-104 with a shop attached. These were rented to various people over time and some of the cottages were occupied by two of his sons. After his death in 1904 his estate was distributed to each of his surviving children.

The shop at 102 continued to trade as a shop. In 2006 the owners of the shop were granted approval to convert it into a tea room/café, which became Lincolns 102. Listed on the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory.

4. Sir George Shenton's Highgate Estate, 16-36 Lincoln Street

George Shenton was possibly WA's wealthiest man prior to the gold rushes of the 1890s. He was Mayor of Perth from 1875 for most of the 1880s, followed by positions in State Government until 1906. He invested in land on Lincoln Street and between 1898 and 1899 constructed three large brick and iron duplexes for leasing. Listed on the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory.

5. Highgate Primary School, 147 Lincoln Street

The original two-room school was built in 1895. Due to the rapid increase in pupils, a separate infants school was built in 1900. Additions were added regularly to both schools until 1913. The existing buildings reflect the size of the 1913 buildings. Highgate was one of the larger metropolitan schools, with enrolments of 646 in the senior school and 786 in the junior school in 1936. Around this time there were 72 Jewish children and 102 children of foreign extraction. The multicultural nature of the school continues with around 70 nationalities represented in 2013. Listed on the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory and the State Register of Heritage Places.

6. Sacred Heart Convent and School, 40-42 Mary Street

The school began in 1897, with the building erected in 1898. This is the oldest Catholic primary school still operating in Perth. The original building had an Elementary School on the ground floor and a small High School on the upper level, with various extensions over the years. The High School closed down in 1980 and the Primary School gained access to those areas. The school was operated by the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, who lived in a monastery on the premises. Five Sisters were chosen from the order in Christchurch to establish the mission and school in Highgate. Listed on the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory and the State Register of Heritage Places.

7. Sacred Heart Church (St Mary's Roman Catholic Church), 64 Mary Street, Highgate

The first church at Highgate Hill was a small iron building, which was opened in 1897. This was replaced by the current church, built of Donnybrook stone, in 1905. Bishop Gibney opened Sacred Heart Church with a Solemn High Mass in February 1906. (Bishop Gibney lived at 50 Vincent Street from 1910 to his death in 1925.)

Listed on the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory and the State Register of Heritage Places.

Beaufort Street is named after the Duke of Beaufort. It became one of the first shopping strips north of Perth. There are many examples of early shops still to be seen.

476 Beaufort Street

8. St. Alban's Anglican Church, 423 Beaufort Street

The first church service at this site was held under a gum tree in September 1888. Designed by architect J.J. Talbot Hobbs, the church was built of limestone over four months and consecrated on 13 June 1889. In 1893, a visitor to the church described the place: *'Just a mile from the Cathedral you found a little stone church with a rough fence around it. I suppose it would hold about 80 people; it had just been improved by the addition of a porch and a vestry. It stood in a block of five acres of bush, where beautiful wild flowers grew.'*

A rectory, also designed by Talbott Hobbs, was added in 1895 and a Parish Hall added in 1896. The church was extended in 1898. The original wooden parish hall was demolished and replaced by the present hall around the 1970s. Listed on the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory and under the Heritage Council's Assessment Program.

Lincoln Street is named after Abraham Lincoln, who was the chief organist and choirmaster at the church.

9. The Queens Hotel, 520 Beaufort Street

Built in 1897 as a private residence for boot manufacturer John A Gent. Leased from 1898 as the Queens Hotel. Originally brick and iron construction. The original verandas were later replaced with brick verandahs. The exterior remains intact, although it was dramatically renovated in the 1980s, reopening as The Queens Tavern and winning an architecture design award in 1988.

10. Christian Brothers College and St Mark's International College (former), 1/131 Harold Street (formerly 369-373 Stirling Street)

In February 1936 the Christian Brothers Intermediate School was opened to provide upper primary and secondary education for the boys from Sacred Heart Primary School and surrounding areas. There was a school section, financed by the parish, and a residence for the Brothers, financed by the Christian Brothers. The first enrolment was 160 pupils and within a year the numbers had increased to over 200. In 1949 two classrooms and an assembly hall were added. By this time the school was known as Christian Brothers High School.

The building was occupied by St Mark's International College from 1991, providing courses for improving English speaking, reading, listening and writing skills for all levels of ability. In 2004 the school won the West Australian Industry and Export Award for its work with overseas students. It closed in January 2010. The land was divided into strata lots at location 1/131 Harold Street. In 2013 the development application for the constructions of mixed use multiple dwellings was approved by the City of Vincent. The existing heritage listed two-storey Interwar Georgian Revival building is to be retained.

11. Silver Chain Nursing Association, 19 Wright Street

Built in 1910. From 4 August 1916 the house was occupied by the Silver Chain Nursing League and opened as the first Silver Chain Cottage Home for old people. The Silver Chain officially commenced on 3 June 1905, growing out of community concern for poor children in the days before there was a children's hospital. It began from a children's column in the Western Mail, where a

society for "mutual helpfulness" was established, known as the Silver Chain, with members as Silver Links who paid one shilling membership each year. Adults then began to get involved with cash donations. Money raised went to pay a district nurse from 1907, who visited sick children. The movement led to the establishment of the Infant Health Association and infant health centres, and then diversified into aged care when the house was opened as a hostel in 1916, with purpose built cottages added from 1920. In 1924, there were 18 residents aged from 60 to 92 years. New wings were added in 1924, 1937 and 1955. In 1956 the Silver Chain Nursing Association moved its administration offices to the Wright Street premises.

12. 57-75 Harold Street

This group of Federation houses, built between 1902 and 1914 is one of the largest intact cultural groups in the district. No.57 is Federation Italianate style followed by Federation bungalows, with No.75 is the only one modified to post-war immigrant nostalgic, with the verandah and windows replaced and roof tiles added. The earliest residents included a butcher, fishmonger and gardener. Listed on the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory.

57 Harold Street, built c.1906

63 is a classic example of the style. Built c.1906
The original owner was Margaret Matheson.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING IN THE LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Books

Davidson, J and Laurie, M, *Early Businesses of Vincent: a local history*
Leederville, Town of Vincent, 2010   994.11 EAR

Ker, Margaret, *Children of the same God: celebrating 100 years of Catholic education in Highgate, Western Australia.*
Mount Lawley: Sacred Heart Primary School, 1997.   372.99

Highgate Primary School conservation plan prepared by Hocking Planning and Architecture in association with Lucy Williams, historian.
Perth: Hocking Planning & Arch., 2002.   Q727.1 HIG

D'Arcy, Rima *Hyde Park Precinct, Highgate: report on the heritage places in the Hyde Park Precinct.*
Perth: National Trust, 1990.   Q994.11 HIG

Maps and Real Estate subdivision posters

Street Vertical Files

Subject Vertical Files

Oral History Interviews with transcripts

City of Vincent Municipal Heritage Inventory: www.vincentheritage.com.au

Local History Image Library: www.vincent.wa.gov.au/library

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Available in other formats and languages upon request.