

# Old earth cottage gone, not forgotten

EVEN 60 years ago I was amazed at the lack of interest shown in the old building situated on the banks of the Harvey River.

At the age of 12 we spent many weekends playing in the old cottage, Governor Stirling's cottage.

Over the years it seemed to me that it all must have been a dream, but alas, not so.

On my recent visit to Harvey we drove down to the site via the Ag School and while there was nothing left of the building, further enquiries to my delight, proved that an interest and a very keen one did exist.

In the early '30s a school friend of mine, Edmond London, lived on one of the adjoining farms to the cottage area.

It was a regular event when Edmond's mother would ring my mother and ask if I could go on the Sunday and spend the day playing on the farm.

It was not long before two lads of our age followed the old irrigation channel up to the cottage looking for some mischief.

By Wilfred (Bill) Hepton

On wet cold days we used to light a fire in the old fireplace and look down the old cellar for something to do.

The second building some 100m away from the cottage was of little interest as even by this time was in poor repair and being used as an abattoir.

As a matter of interest Edmond like a lot of my other school mates lost his life in World War II.

It was always, even in those years, Mrs London's wish that her boy was to be a pilot.

I understand he was lost flying over Germany.

Mr London was a TPI from World War I, outlived his wife and probably due to his disabilities remarried and they moved to Henton Cottage, Australind, till he died. That's another story.

The cottage as I remember was of oblong shape, iron roof from hips and a short ridge, not a large building.

Half of the building, the end nearest the irrigation channel, was completely covered by a creeper. I would think probably briar rose stock.

Even at my age then I often wondered how they got corrugated iron there from England.

Could the roof have been recovered over the years, it looked original to me.

What the London's knew about the cottage I would love to know now.

They always told me life at the cottage in the original days was always a hazard, as the natives were hostile.

Over the years memory fades but I feel sure the walls were of earth construction.

The door opening was I believe a little wider than normal but not double.

The fireplace was open and of the kitchen type.

At this time, half of the floor was paved with wooden blocks hexagonal or octagonal, half were missing.

Each block 200/250 across and up to 300 deep, I can't remember if they were good firewood or not.

There was little of the cellar left, just a wooden door frame, the earth roof had nearly all fallen in. The cellar was adjacent to the fireplace on the river side.

Of the second building we never went there as the smell was unpleasant.

I have some memory of the roof being of steep pitch, but this may not have been original.

Other than my early days as a school boy playing there and my recent visit to the Harvey Tourist Bureau, I have never heard of Governor Stirling's Cottage ever being mentioned.

Certainly never at school where it certainly should have got a mention at least.

NOTE: A replica of Stirling's Cottage is now to become a feature of the Harvey Tourist Bureau area near the Harvey River bridge.

Concept plans have been drawn up and a site selected on a loop of the river.