

## ENROLLED PENSIONER GUARD COTTAGE

### BASSENDEAN

#### IN THE BEGINNING

In 1851 a convict depot was established at Guildford, but it was 1854 before any Pensioner Guards actually set up residence at West Guildford. Their families settling in the area helped the area develop into a permanent settlement, which eventually became known as Bassendean.

The cottages were built with bricks made by hand by convicts, using clay from the area.

Men in sawpits cut timber from local trees. (A most uncomfortable occupation, particularly for the man at the bottom of the pit working the large crosscut saw.)

As the Pensioner Guards and their families moved into their cottages, it was not an easy life. The old Guildford Municipal Council largely ignored many of their basic needs as their settlement was separated from the main town by the river, a horse-ferry being the only way of crossing that river. Indeed life was difficult but persevere they did and we can today be grateful for their resilience and persistence in making a life for their families.

Land Grant records show those who were able to make a basic living and obtain full title to their land.

It is believed surviving cottages were used for accommodation after the War. Members of later generations of those families have since recorded for posterity their ancestors' struggles.

Some years ago, the Enrolled Pensioner Guard Group was involved in discussions with Bassendean Council regarding the use of the historic Bassendean Pensioner Guard Cottage as a display and interpretative centre.

Correspondence was exchanged and meetings were held in an effort to involve our Group in any undertaking to recognize the historic building as the original home of an Enrolled Pensioner Guard.

Bassendean cottage No. 1 Surrey Street reputed to be the only original cottage



surviving as it had been built, was purchased by Bassendean Council in 1988 and opened for display in 1993.

It was later thought a set of Interpretative Panels would increase public interest in the site and generate some finance towards its upkeep and updating. An enormous amount of thought and planning work was put in by a number of people whose aim was to have the displays upgraded.

Paul Bridges, Val Humphrey and members of the Bassendean Historical Society were all active and supportive of the plan and our Group were kept informed of progress, including a meeting of some members of our Committee at the house in 2002.

As far as and is known, two archaeological digs have taken place on the site unearthing some small items of interest.

On Sunday 22 February last, a ceremony was held at the Cottage to launch the new interpretative panels, history of the Cottage and some details of original occupants.

The Mayor of Bassendean, Tina Klein officially opened the new display by cutting the ribbon at the entrance gate.

A demonstration by the Perth Volunteer Rifle Brigade provided a very audible performance to celebrate the occasion in front of a very attentive audience.



Perth Volunteer Rifleman in EPG uniform

Afternoon tea was served by volunteers, giving visitors an opportunity to exchange information on their own family history interests.