

RESEARCHING THE
History of ———
— your property

**Researching the
history of a building
in detail is like a
jigsaw puzzle.**

It requires patience
and a careful eye for
hints that will help to tie
the pieces together.

98 Gloster Street, Subiaco.
Image courtesy of Subiaco Museum.



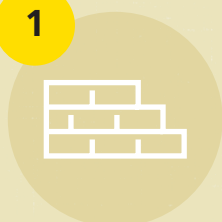
Historic buildings are often categorised by a general period of construction and a broad architectural style, but what about the human stories that have played out within the walls?



Mrs Heeds school shop building.
Image courtesy of Subiaco Museum.

Information that can add richness to our understanding of Subiaco's buildings and help guide conservation works might include:

1



when the place was **actually constructed**

2



who was the **original owner** and who occupied the place over time

3



personal stories about these people

4



what was happening in the local area at that time

5



the nature of the **original floor plan** and detailing

6



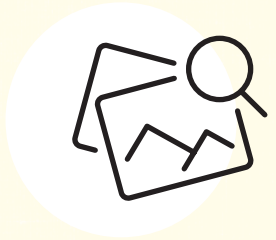
some of the **key changes** that have been made.

Some simple detective work can identify basic information about former owners and some of the occupants. Names and addresses can then be used to seek further information about these people, including family members, occupations, events and other stories.

Plans, aerial photographs and historical photographs of the building can provide information about the original design and major alterations. With close inspection, many buildings can also reveal fine scale physical evidence that can help you to understand former detailing.

While some pieces of information may be missing and many of the associated people will have left little trace, the final picture can still provide some fascinating insights into the building and its evolution.

Start here



Has any historical research already been done on my property?

Detailed information has been prepared for properties on the City of Subiaco Heritage List, in Heritage Areas and for some places included on the Local Heritage Survey. These documents are available on the City of Subiaco website.

Historical information about many other early buildings is included in the Local History Collection at Subiaco Library, and some additional information may be included in the Heritage Council of Western Australia's online database, InHerit.

Where to start:



- ✓ [City of Subiaco heritage database](#)
Note: enter the street name in the keyword search box to see if a detailed report has been prepared for your area or property.
- ✓ **Local History Collection**
Subiaco Library, 237 Rokeby Road, Subiaco
- ✓ **Heritage Council of Western Australia**
[InHerit database](#)



Daisy Bell Cottage. Image courtesy of Subiaco Museum.

STARTING MY OWN RESEARCH

Record the location details

Start with the current street address, together with the survey plan and lot number. You can find the lot number by using IntraMaps on the City of Subiaco website, or on the property certificate title or by using Map Viewer Plus on the Landgate website.

Keep your findings well organised

A simple way to collate information as you find it is to create a three column table, with the year, transcribed information, and the source. This will allow you to keep track of the evolution of the place over time, acknowledge the source of each piece of information, and easily compare or check details.

Cross check different sources

The readily available sources are variable and the information you gather should not always be taken at face value, even when it is found in official records. Some of the issues that can lead to incorrect answers include:

- street numbers, survey plan and lot numbers, and even street names were sometimes changed over time
- the information published in public records was sometimes out of date or even incorrect
- the original building may have been radically altered or even demolished
- people's names were sometimes given differently in different records
- even uncommon names were sometimes held by more than one person.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Searching for information may require some lateral thinking

For example, if a house was owned by Mary Ellen Brown, it is possible that this woman was formally known as Ellen and informally as Nellie. Any of these names may have been used in the documentary records! If she then married Alexander John Whyte she would have often been referred to as Mrs A. J. Whyte or possibly Mrs Alex Whyte (with occasional misspelling as White). From that time on, even though she was the owner of the house, her husband would have been generally identified as the primary occupant unless they were living separately or he had died. This could be further complicated if her husband's father shared his name, as it may not always be obvious if a document refers to the family of Alexander, junior, or Alexander, senior.

Where to start:



Heritage Council of Western Australia – Useful Publications
[Researching Heritage Places](#)



City of Subiaco online mapping tool
[IntraMaps](#)



Landgate
[Map Viewer Plus](#)

WHEN WAS THE PLACE BUILT AND WHO WERE THE DIFFERENT OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS OVER TIME?

Certificates of Title

Historical Certificates of Title and survey plans provide the most accurate information about the ownership of a property over time, including:

- the name(s) of the owner(s)
- date(s) on which the property was officially transferred
- historical occupation of a landowner
- any changes to the lot and survey plan numbers, including subdivisions.

While this will not include details about any buildings (or lack of buildings) on the site, it will give you important information that will tell part of the story of the property and assist with further research.

For example, in areas such as Subiaco, where speculative building was quite common, this can sometimes identify an owner who was also likely to have been the builder/developer (reports in the Local History Collection at the Subiaco Library include information about many of the builders and developers who were active in the area in the early twentieth century). It can also help to distinguish between owner/occupants, landlords and tenants when using other sources such as Post Office Directories and historical newspapers.



Hint:

By starting with the current Certificate of Title you can work backwards. The previous title number will be shown somewhere on this document and a copy of the cancelled title can be obtained from Landgate (charges apply).

Historical Certificates of Title typically recorded multiple changes of ownership on a single page, with details about any mortgages and caveats on the back. On these older documents, the volume and folio number of the previous Certificate of Title is shown at the top left hand corner of the front page.

Where to start: > Landgate [Historical Records](#)

Council Rates Books

Some of the City of Subiaco's Rate Books for the early twentieth century have been conserved and are available at the State Records Office. These provide information about the owner and occupier of a property and indicate if the site was developed or undeveloped at that time.

Hint:

Where these record a change of ownership, this may be earlier than that shown on the Certificate of Title if the purchase began with a deposit, but was not completed until additional regular payments had been made to the developer.

Where to start: > State Records Office Search Room State Library, James Street, Perth

Western Australian Post Office Directories

These directories were published from the early 1890s through until 1949 and provide information that was sorted by address, surname (followed by first name or initials), and by trade/profession.

You can search the complete set of directories online. By starting with the 1949 directory you can identify the names of the primary occupants of a particular address back through the years (noting that Subiaco's streets were listed in the Perth section in 1901–1936). By determining the position of the property along the street (e.g. in relation to cross streets and to nearby residents) you can also check if there have been any obvious changes in street numbering.

Hint:

The year a listing first appears for the place is likely to be approximately one year after it was first developed (although the entry was sometimes delayed for longer than that or simply omitted).

Where to start:

- ✓ **State Library of Western Australia**
[Western Australian Post Office Directories](#)

Western Australian Electoral Rolls

Many of the Electoral Rolls dating from 1903 to 1981 can be searched online. Start with the name of a known occupant and the suburb or locality. This can lead to additional information, such as the occupation of the person and the names of other family members who were living at the same address.



An occupation was generally specified for men, but for much of the twentieth century women were commonly identified by marital status or home duties even if they worked outside the home.

Hint:

When using this source it should be noted that people sometimes moved without updating their Electoral Roll details or failed to change their entry when they changed profession, so there may be discrepancies with other sources.

Where to start:

- ✓ **The Ancestry Library Edition**
Accessed free of charge at Subiaco Library, it includes the Electoral Rolls and many other useful databases.



Many of the Electoral Rolls dating from 1903 to 1981 can be searched online.

The Dudderidge Family. Image courtesy of Subiaco Museum.

ADDING MORE DETAIL TO THE STORY

Trove – online newspapers

Trove is an online research platform maintained by the National Library of Australia. Among other things, it includes scanned newspapers that provide extensive coverage of the nineteenth century through to the early 1950s.

To search these newspapers for historical information about a property, start with a key phrase (such as the street number and name, or a version of an associated person's name) together with other distinctive words (such as Subiaco). Then gradually refine the search to reduce the number of irrelevant results.

Each piece of information found can be used to create new searches that may gradually reveal interesting information. This could range from the sale or lease of a property (sometimes including detailed descriptions), through to the business dealings, community activities, celebrations and tragedies of an associated family. If you are lucky, family notices can sometimes give a name for a house in addition to the address.

As a minor cautionary note it should always be remembered that newspaper articles occasionally include biased or inaccurate information.

Hint:

Slight variations in the search term can be useful. For example, Subiaco Road will reveal different results than Subiaco Rd.

Where to start:

- ✓ [Trove](#)
- ✓ [Advanced search of Newspapers and Gazettes](#)

Subiaco Library – Local History Collection

The local history reference collection at Subiaco Library holds published and unpublished documents relating to the history of the City of Subiaco. These include information about the general development of the area, as well as historical notes for each of the places identified in the Local Heritage Survey. They also include information about particular aspects of the area's history – such as the builders and architects who were active here in the early twentieth century, and some of the shopkeepers of Rokeby Road in Subiaco.

This can help to develop an understanding of what was happening in the area when a building was erected, providing a developmental and social context for the place. Sometimes it may also reveal more detailed information about the building itself or the people who were associated with it.

Where to start:

- ✓ [Local History Collection](#)
- Subiaco Library, 237 Rokeby Road, Subiaco

Family history

The State Library of Western Australia website identifies a number of useful guides and sources for those who may be interested in discovering more about the families who were associated with a particular building.

Where to start:

- ✓ [State Library of Western Australia](#)
- [Family History](#)



HOW HAS THE PLACE CHANGED OVER TIME?

Interrogating the building fabric

When a building has been altered it is often difficult to find documentary evidence about its original appearance. However, a close inspection of the building itself can help to tell this part of the story.

For example, the end wall of a verandah may retain physical evidence of the profile of a former roof; paint scrapes may help to identify former colour schemes; lightly sanding back timber may reveal where brackets or other elements were previously notched in; and the spacing of old roof battens may help to confirm if the place was originally clad with tiles or corrugated iron sheeting.

Comparing the place with other similar buildings can also help, provided care is taken to consider if the elements being noted are original or if they may have been introduced as part of subsequent refurbishment.



Historical photographs

Historical photographs of ordinary houses and people are only occasionally held in public collections.

The Subiaco Museum collection includes photographs dating from the 1890s to present, all of which are closely related to the City of Subiaco. However, these only cover a small percentage of the places and people of the area. You can submit a request to Subiaco Museum to see if there are any images relating to a particular area of research. If available, these may be reproduced, subject to copyright conditions and a service charge.

Other relevant photographs may be held in the State Library's Pictorial Collection. Some of these have been catalogued online, but the majority of the collection can only be accessed by using the card catalogue at the State Library.

Where to start:

-  **Subiaco Museum**
museum@subiaco.wa.gov.au
-  **State Library of Western Australia**
James Street, Perth

includes photographs dating from the 1890s to present

No. 68 Thomas Street

Image courtesy of
Subiaco Museum.





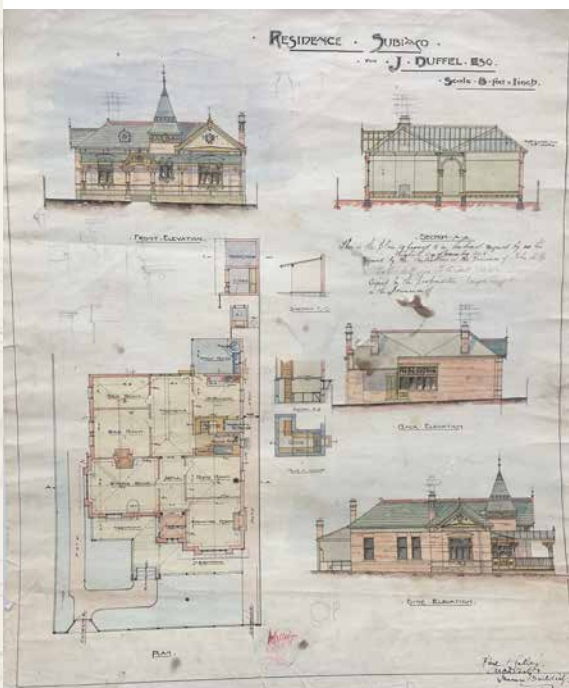
House plans

Original plans are only occasionally found for historic buildings, but a request can be submitted to the Subiaco Museum to see if plans for a particular place are held in the museum collection.

An owner of a property can also request copies of documents held in the City of Subiaco's building files for that place (search and copy fees apply). These files generally relate to the post World War Two period, but can still include useful information about former floor plans and the nature of some of the alterations undertaken.

Where to start:

- ✓ **Subiaco Museum**
museum@subiaco.wa.gov.au
- ✓ **City of Subiaco**
city@subiaco.wa.gov.au



Mr Duffel's House Plan.
Image courtesy of Subiaco Museum.

Metropolitan sewerage plans

Detailed plans of the area were prepared when sewerage works were being undertaken and upgraded during the first half of the twentieth century. These are now freely available online. The plans include a clear outline of each building at the time of the survey, including the location of verandahs and outbuildings. They will often illustrate the original footprint of the place and will give a clear indication of the nature of the surrounding development at the time of survey.

Where to start:

- ✓ **State Records Office of Western Australia**
[Retro Maps](#)

Historical aerial photographs

Historical aerial photographs of Subiaco can be viewed online using Map Viewer Plus on the Landgate website.

These are available from 1948 (when they covered only the eastern part of the suburb), and show the area every few years until 2000, after which annual images are available. The quality of the images is highly variable for the first 50 years, but they can still reveal useful details about the building footprint, roofline and garden setting.

To view these images enter the address on the search page, click on the camera icon at the top of the page, and scroll down to select an image date to view. Where the detail is indistinct this can sometimes be improved by zooming out.

The option to buy a selected section of the image is also available.

Where to start:

- ✓ **Landgate**
[Map Viewer Plus](#)

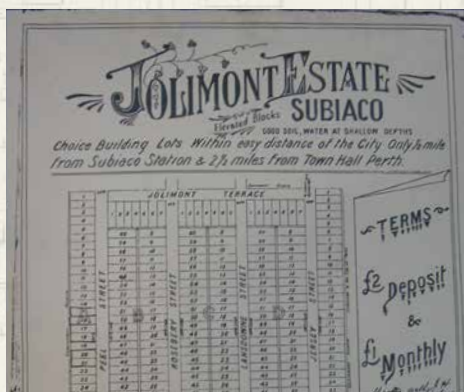
CAN MY RESEARCH ADD TO THE PUBLIC HISTORY OF THE CITY OF SUBIACO?

Subiaco Museum

If you obtain historical documents (such as old photographs) that are directly related to the history of the City of Subiaco, but which are not part of existing public collections, you are encouraged to ask if copies (or the originals) would be relevant to the collection held by Subiaco Museum. Where items do meet the collection criteria they can add to a professionally maintained and catalogued archive that will be available to current and future generations for both museum and research purposes.

Where to start:

- ✓ **Subiaco Museum**
[Donations to the collection](#)



Subiaco Library Local History Collection

Once you have finished your research you are also encouraged to ask if it may meet the criteria for inclusion in the Local History Collection at Subiaco Library. This can help to build up an important resource for future researchers and for all those interested in the history of the area.

Documents will be assessed in consultation with the Subiaco Museum curator before proceeding. Hard copies are preferred.

Where to start:

- ✓ **Contact the Librarian,
Collection Management and
Systems, Subiaco Library**
city@subiaco.wa.gov.au

List of useful links:

Heritage Council of Western Australia – Researching Heritage Places

<https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/information-and-services/historic-heritage>

Heritage Places and Tourism > Researching Heritage Places – Useful Publications

Direct link to PDF copy:

<https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/getmedia/8f3923f3-a2ed-4c89-9270-24db2ba66170/HER-Researching-Heritage-Places-2019>

City of Subiaco heritage database

<https://www.subiaco.wa.gov.au/Planning-and-development/Built-heritage>

InHerit database

<http://inherit.stateheritage.wa.gov.au/public>

Subiaco Museum

<https://www.subiaco.wa.gov.au/Things-to-do-in-Subi/Subiaco-Museum>

City of Subiaco IntraMaps

<https://www.subiaco.wa.gov.au/Your-council/About-Subiaco/Mapping>

Landgate – Historical Records

<https://www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/titles-and-surveys/historical-records/>

Landgate Map Viewer Plus

<https://www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/maps-and-imagery/interactive-maps/map-viewer/how-to-use-map-viewer-plus>

Trove, advanced search of historical newspapers and gazettes

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers>

Western Australian Post Office Directories

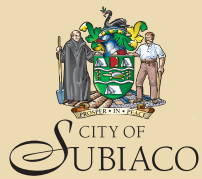
<https://slwa.wa.gov.au/explore-discover/wa-heritage/post-office-directories>

Retro Maps, historical metropolitan sewerage plans

<https://mapping.sro.wa.gov.au/>

Further information about family history research

<https://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/explore-discover/family-history>



All images courtesy of Subiaco Museum.

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This publication is available in alternative
formats on request.