

## HISTORY OF THE HOUGHTON PROPERTY

### Early settlement.

The original division of land of which Houghton was part (Swan Location II) was assigned by Governor James Stirling to Revett Henry Bland in 1829.

In 1836, a syndicate of three British Army Officers who had been serving together in India purchased the northern half of Swan Location II. They named it after the senior ranking officer of their group, Lieutenant Colonel Richmond Houghton. Houghton himself did not come to Western Australia. For the next 23 years the property was managed and developed by another member of the syndicate, Thomas Newte Yule.

### Winery and homestead.

In 1859, Dr John Ferguson purchased the Houghton property for the sum of 350 pounds. In that same year he produced the first 'commercial' vintage of wine from the vineyard, a modest 25 gallons.

At the time of this purchase a mud brick dwelling stood within the area now covered by the winery itself. Some of the walls of this dwelling were later incorporated in the winery buildings and remain a part of the central dividing wall between the two long passages of the old cellar.

Plans for the 'Crofters' homestead were brought to the new colony from Scotland, designed in the manner of a Scottish crofters farmhouse of the time.

Crofters was built in two separate parts.

The main house, a long rectangle surrounded by verandahs, included living and sleeping quarters for the family.

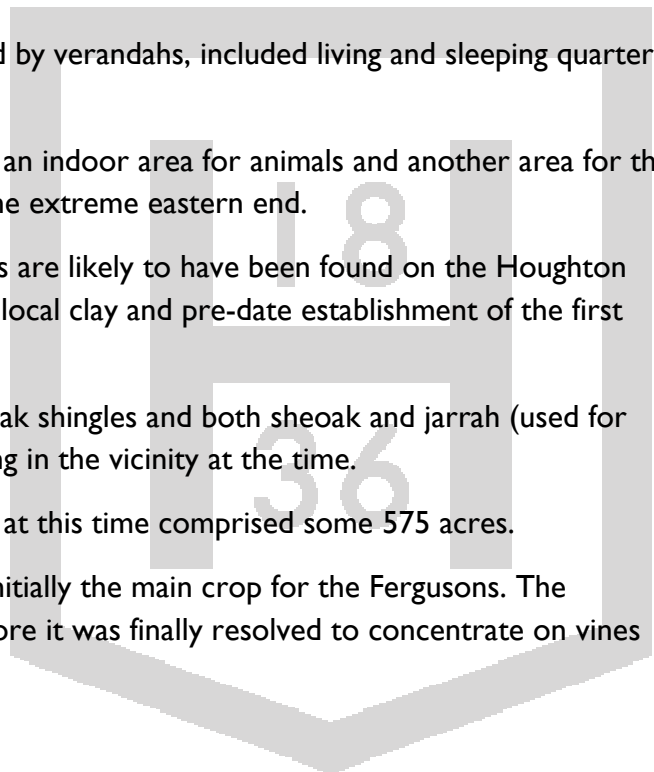
The stables building included a large kitchen, an indoor area for animals and another area for the storage of a buggy and other equipment at the extreme eastern end.

Materials for the original homestead buildings are likely to have been found on the Houghton property itself. The hand-made bricks are of local clay and pre-date establishment of the first commercial brickworks in the area.

Both buildings were originally roofed in sheoak shingles and both sheoak and jarrah (used for floorboards) are known to have been growing in the vicinity at the time.

Crofters was the focus for a property which at this time comprised some 575 acres.

Vines were well established but wheat was initially the main crop for the Fergusons. The emphasis later changed to fruit orchards before it was finally resolved to concentrate on vines for wine and raisins.



### **Expansion and extension.**

Within a very few years of construction, an additional wing was built on the south western end of the main building. It seems likely the shingle roof may have been replaced with corrugated iron at this time. The sheoak is thought to have proved a poor roofing material because of shrink and warp problems.

In 1875, ownership of the property transferred to Dr Ferguson's son Charles. He is seen by many as the real father of Houghton wines and a major force in the developing Australian wine industry.

From photographs taken during the next twenty years, it appears likely that the second wing on the north western side of Crofters was not added until the turn of the century.

### **Crofters separated but returned 30 years later.**

The homestead and surrounding 15 acres were separated from the winemaking operations of the Houghton property in 1950 when the Emu Wine Company purchased the vineyard and winery from the Ferguson family.

In 1976, the South Australian Hardy winemaking family acquired the stock of the London based Emu Wine Company and with that purchase, became owners of Houghton.

In late 1980, the Houghton homestead and surrounding acres were also purchased and reunited with the winemaking operations.

### **Restoration of Crofters.**

In the intervening years the homestead and in particular, the kitchen wing, had been badly damaged by earthquake and only limited repairs made. The kitchen wing was in an advanced stage of deterioration when planning for full scale restoration began in 1983.

After extensive enquiries, Houghton commissioned highly regarded conservation architect Ron Bodycoat, of Duncan, Stephen and Mercer, to see the project through to completion.

Additional hand-made Swan Valley clay bricks were located following a public appeal. Final plans were drawn up and work began in September 1987.

At the same time, the search for genuine colonial pieces to furnish the restored building got underway.

Throughout the project, the aim was to restore the homestead authentically, whilst enabling it to take on a new lease of life for the 21st century as the home of Houghton wines.

The Houghton Crofters homestead is mentioned in the Register of the National Estate as a fine example of early Australian farm building and is included on the Swan Valley Heritage Trail.

## The Historic Gardens of Houghton

### The Jacaranda Grove

The magnificent Jacaranda trees (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) in this area were planted by Jack Mann in the early 1950s. They were planted to form an archway over what was going to be the road into Houghton from Great Northern Highway. This plan was later changed in favour of the Dale Road option that we use today.

From November to January each year they are covered in stunning purple blossoms that are then followed by flat leathery seed pods. Jacaranda trees are native to the high plains of Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina but thrive in the warm climate of the Swan Valley. Other trees you will see in the Jacaranda Grove area are:

### Indian Flame Tree (*Erythrina syksei*)

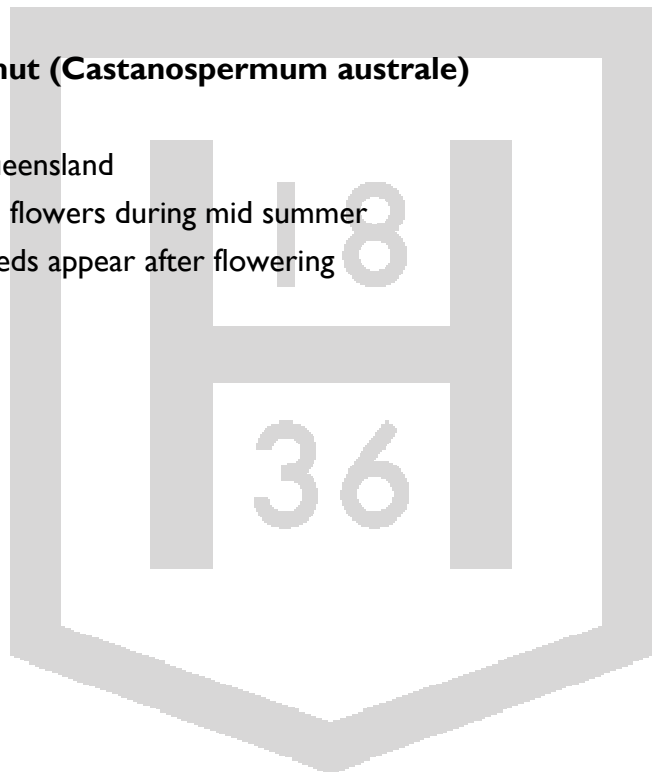
- Deciduous
- Flowers late winter when leafless
- Excellent Shade tree
- Flowers attract nectar-eating birds

### Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*)

- Masses of Scarlet flowers from November to February
- One of the most brilliant native trees in Australia
- Drops its leaves for the flowering period
- Flowers retain their colour when they fall and create a red carpet on the ground

### Black Bean Tree or Morten Bay Chestnut (*Castanospermum australe*)

- Situated near the tennis Court
- Native to the North of NSW and Queensland
- Masses of Orange to Yellow pea type flowers during mid summer
- Thick pea pods with Chestnut like seeds appear after flowering



## **Flooded Gums (*Eucalyptus grandis*)**

- Located in the car park
- Native to Queensland and New South Wales
- Reaches 40 to 50 metres in ideal conditions
- Smooth white bark and a straight trunk with dark fibrous bark at the base making it appear as if the tree has been standing in water – hence the common name Flooded Gum
- White flowers in Spring

## **The Vinecourt**

The trellised area outside the Museum passage and Moondyne room is covered with Glory Vine (*Vitis coignetide*). The vines closest to the passage entrance were planted in 1957, the younger vines and the back of the courtyard were planted in approximately 1970. The glory vine provides a lush green covering over the courtyard in summer. By early autumn it turns a deep russet red, slowly turning to amber prior to losing its leaves by early winter, when it is then pruned back to the main canes.

## **Norfolk Pine Tree Area**

Norfolk Pine Trees (*Araucaria heterophylla*) are native to Norfolk Island in the Pacific Ocean region. The four large trees planted near the car park entry are approximately 135 years old, planted by Charles William Ferguson in 1868. Charles' father Dr John Ferguson purchased the farmlet that is now the garden and winery area of Houghton for Charles when he returned with his mother Isabella from Scotland, where he was taken to complete his education. Norfolk Pine trees in the wild can grow to a height of 220ft tall and have a trunk as large as 10 feet across. When the cones on the trees at Houghton are ripe they are a very popular source of food for large flocks of short billed white corellas who very noisily feast in amongst the branches.

## **Red Flowering Gums**

(*Eucalyptus ficifolia*) The Red Flowering Gum trees in the Norfolk Pine Tree Grove were given to Jack Mann by Cass Smith, a plant pathologist from the Department of Agriculture in the mid 1950s. A virus had attacked Red Flowering Gums growing in Kings Park and Cass Smith had developed a strain of virus-proof red gums in his nursery. He gave Jack six of these new virus-proof gums to plant at Houghton. Unfortunately the day the cellar truck was sent down to pick them up it was very hot. The trees had been taken out of the ground and left bare rooted, and only two of the original six trees survived.

## **Cork Trees**

The *Quercus suber* or Cork Tree flourish in the Mediterranean region and the majority of cork used today in the Wine industry comes from Portugal. The trees at Houghton were given to

Jack Mann by a professor from the University of Western Australia in the early 1950's, the same time that the famous cork trees in Hackett Drive Nedlands were planted.

### **Jacaranda Grove Garden Beds**

These gardens were established in 1992.

Deep shade and rich loam soils are ideal for a range of shade tolerant plants. In this area we have fine examples of Hydrangea ( Hydrangea macrophylla ) Agapanthus (Agapanthus africanus) Hippeastrum ( Hippeastrum Sp ) Azaleas (Rhododendron Sp ) Camellia (Camellia japonica) Philodendron ( Philodendron selloum) Gardenia (Gardenia florida ) Impatiens (Impatiens Sp ) Fruit salad plant (Monstera deliciosa ) Orange Jessamine (murraya paniculata ) Hen and Chicken Fern (Asplenium bulbiferum ) Oyster Plants (Acanthus mollis) Tree Ferns (Dicksonia and Cyathea ). These are just a few of the many plants in this Garden bed.

### **The Winemakers and Laboratory Garden**

The photograph taken in 1946 shows the ramp that the grapes would have been taken up before being processed in the winery buildings located at the top of the rise. The winery was built in this location so as the Winemakers could take advantage of gravity when transferring the juice from one area to another. The area was converted into offices and the Houghton laboratory in 1988. The garden beds now feature standard roses, China Doll Baby Darling, Dream cloud and Woburn abbey.

### **The Rose Garden and Homestead**

The Rose Garden is located behind the Historic Houghton homestead. The design of the building is based on a Scottish crofter's farmhouse of the time.

The Homestead was built in 1863 and was home to many generations of the Ferguson family. The hand made bricks are of local clay and roof features She oak shingles that were later replaced in favour of corrugated iron sheets. By the late 1980's the Homestead and Kitchen wing were in advanced states of deterioration and plans for full-scale restoration began in 1983. After extensive enquires Houghton commissioned the highly regarded conservation architect Ron Bodycoat of Duncan, Stephen and Mecer to see the project through to completion. Work on the restoration commenced in September 1987 and was completed in 1988. The Homestead houses the corporate offices for the Houghton Wine Company and while the inside of the building is not open for inspection visitors are very welcome to walk the outside perimeter of the homestead. The Rose garden is set up in the English style and features Hybrid tea roses.

- Mr Lincoln
- Princess Margaret
- Electron



- Peace
- Royal Dane
- Amatso otome
- The standard roses are Seafoam
- And the hanging baskets contain Red Carpet Roses

### **The Pear tree and Mulberry Tree**

The pear tree near the well and the Mulberry tree located at the rear of the rose garden near the car park are thought to have been planted about the same time as the homestead was constructed in 1863. The pear tree is registered with the National Trust and hollowed with age and is one of the oldest non-native trees in Western Australia and the second oldest tree on the Houghton Property. Angela Mann, the widow of our legendary wine maker Jack Mann, remembers picking buckets of Pears and Mulberries from these already mature trees when she stayed at the property as a child in the 1920s.

### **Queensland Bottle Tree**

(*Brachychiton rupestris*) Bottle trees are mainly found in the dry areas of Western Queensland and Northern New South Wales. They grow to height of 18 to 20 metres in ideal conditions and have a characteristic bulbous trunk that gives rise to the common name and makes the tree unmistakable. Yellow bell shaped flowers form in clusters at the end of the branches, seed capsules which contain many large seeds follow the flowers. The bottle shaped trunk begins to be noticeable when the tree reaches 5 to 8 years of age, the tree at Houghton was planted in 1988.

### **The Well**

The old well located in the Rose Garden was excavated during restoration work in 1989. The well was used as the original source of water for the Homestead. Buckets were lowered down into the well, submerged until full then pulled up via the pulley wheel located at the top of the well. The wishing well and Rose Garden are very popular venues for Wedding Ceremonies and photographic shoots.

### **Cape Lilac Trees (*Melia azedarach* Var *Australasica*)**

The seeds of the Cape Lilac trees located at the front of the Homestead are thought to have been brought to Western Australia in the mid 1800's by early settlers from the North West of our state. Trees are Native to Iran and the seeds are thought to have been brought to Western Australia by immigrant camel drivers. The exact age of the trees is not known but the photograph taken in 1946 shows the already well grown trees that would have been at least thirty years old then. The trees at Houghton are registered with the National Trust and have pale Lilac flowers in spring followed by orange / yellow berries that are said to be poisonous to humans. Old Cape Lilac trees provide an ideal habitat for possums and birds. Each spring native

Black ducks nest in the hollow branches, when the young ducklings are old enough to leave the nest but still too young to fly they "float " down from the high branches and follow their parents down to the nearby Swan River.

### **The Variegated Box Trees**

The grove of nine variegated box trees (*Lophostemon confertus* Variegata) in the Secret Garden where planted by Jack Mann in 1956 shortly after the acquisition by the Emu Wine Company of Houghton from the Ferguson family. Angela recalls Jack being severely reprimanded by the Emu Wine Company for spending the extravagant amount of 45 pounds on the 9 trees. The trees today create a canopy that protects the Elk horn Fern (*Platycerium bifurcatum*) Dwarf Philodendron (*Philodendron selloum* xanadu ) Birds nest fern (*Asplenium nidus*) Native Violets (*Viola hederacea*) Canna lilies (*Canna generalis*) Elephant Ears (*Alocasia*) Happy plants (*Dracena fragrans*) all in this tranquil and secluded garden.

### **Birds and Animals you may see at Houghton**

#### **Kookaburra**

The Kookaburra is a native bird of Eastern Australia but has settled in well to Western Australian conditions. They are the largest member of the Kingfisher family they have a short thick body with a large head and dark eye streak, their colouring is mainly light brown with black markings on top with a creamy under belly and head They are a carnivorous bird and live on Small marsupials, lizards, snakes and smaller birds. The early settlers called the bird a " Laughing Jackass "because of its very distinctive call, the call resembles a hearty laugh.

#### **Magpies**

Magpies are one of Australia's most often encountered birds. They have a beautiful "warbling " carol when they call for their partners or are defending their territory. Magpies feed on worms, ground dwelling insects and spiders. Magpies live in-groups with a dominant male, 2 to 3 females and any number of young. Magpies are very territorial and defend territories of 10 to 20 hectares in size. Females lay 3 to 5 eggs in spring, which hatch in approx 20days.

#### **Sulphur crested cockatoos**

The birds are white with yellow markings on their crest, ear and tails and some under feathers. Overall length varies from 40 to 50cm and weigh from 700 to 950 grams. They live in large groups or flocks and roost in large leafy trees. They are seed eating birds but will also eat fruit and berries.

#### **Pink and Grey Galahs**

Very noisy and active birds, their faces have pink eye rings and their bodies are pink with grey wings and tails. They are seed feeding birds, feeding on both native plant seeds fruits, nuts and

crops of wheat, oats etc. They do not make nests but lay their eggs in tree cavities, they lay 3 to 4 eggs which take about a month to incubate.

### **Port Lincoln Parrots.**

Commonly called 28's

Black head, narrow yellow collar, bright green back and wings, blue / green rump and tail feathers. The breeding season is from August to February. The eggs are laid in hollow branches. They lay between 4 to 7 eggs and can produce two broods per season if conditions are favourable. Port Lincoln Parrots feed both on the ground and in trees and shrubs they eat a wide variety of plant food seeds and fruits. The birds have a 3-syllable call sounding like "28" as the last note is in a higher pitch than the first two.

### **Willie Wagtails**

Small birds approx 200mm in length, the upper part of the body and throat is black with conspicuous white eyebrows and under parts. Willie Wagtails are busy birds and flit about restlessly swinging their bodies from side to side. They eat spiders, worms and insects. The birds are very aggressive when breeding and chase away much larger birds that venture too close to their nests, nests are located in trees and sometimes around sheds and verandas. The birds breed several times in a season and the chicks are raised by both parents.

### **Bandicoot**

The bandicoots at Houghton are northern brown Bandicoots. They are approx 14 inches long and 5 inches high, at first sight they resemble a large rat. Closer inspection reveals elongated feet, coarse fur, strong fore paws and a Canine snout. They eat insects, worms, seeds and berries. Bandicoots are Marsupials, the female has a backward facing pouch to avoid dirt from digging entering the pouch.

### **Goannas (Sand Monitors)**

The large Goannas at Houghton are sand monitors but commonly referred to as Racehorse Goannas due to the high speed they can achieve when running. The body length is up to 65cms and the tail can be up to 165cm in length. Goannas are good tree climbers and strong swimmers. They live in underground burrows and lay between 3 and 11 eggs in long deep burrows that are then sealed up and guarded by the female. Incubation takes between 169 and 265 days depending on the temperatures. Goannas eat insects, spiders, centipedes and even some small animals.

Our gardens are maintained by a dedicated team lead by Alan Guppy.

