



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES – ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

•	3.8.12	Banking and lending
•	6.2	Establishing schools
•	7.6.4	Dispensing justice
•	7.6.12	Conserving Australia's heritage
•	8.5.1	Preserving traditions and group memories

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

•	308	Commercial & service industries
•	402	Education & science
•	403	Law & order
•	407	Cultural activities

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is an elegant architectural building with attractive use of local stone, brick quoined openings and corners, and arched doorways. (Criterion 1.1)

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin makes a significant contribution to the townscape and character of Narrogin, in complementing and enhancing the historic aesthetic of the town. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin reflects changing educational requirements and expectations around the turn of the twentieth century, and the rapid growth of the Narrogin district. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. A *Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.
For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin typifies the scale, materials and design of the rural government buildings of Colonial Architect and Superintendent of the Public Works Department (1885-1896) George Temple Poole. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is highly valued by the local community for its previous associations with early education, banking and the administration of the justice system, which is confirmed by the continuing use of the place, currently as a local museum. (Criterion 4.1)

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin contributes to the community's sense of place as a nineteenth century construction, which is part of the historic built environment of the town. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is a representative example of a regional State school constructed prior to 1897. (Criterion 6.1)

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is a representative example of the Western Australian government practice of recycling and adapting government buildings for alternate uses. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is in fair to good condition having been continually occupied since construction. Regular maintenance has been applied to those areas in constant use whereas some environmental effects are evident on the exterior, particularly the rising damp damage and subsequent repairs to the stone walls on the west and south walls.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin has retained a high degree of integrity despite a range of different uses: school, court, bank, and museum. Some changes have taken place over the years, to facilitate those ongoing uses but those changes are minimal in the context of the place, and the original school use and subsequent court function are clearly identifiable.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The remaining original fabric of *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* is mostly intact. The original face stone has been partially repaired and re-pointed on the south and west walls. There have been some changes, most significantly the removal of the rear wall of the original schoolroom, and the bricking in of a window and remodelling of the fireplace in the original schoolroom. *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* has retained a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman, Historian and Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant, in October 2005, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is a single-storey stone building with brick quoining and a corrugated-iron gable roof, showing influences of Federation Free style. The place was built in 1894 as a single classroom school to a standard Public Works Department (PWD) plan.

In September 1890, the Williams District Education Board submitted to the Education Department a petition signed by eleven families for the establishment of a school at Narrogin. The petitioning families had 25 children between them, aged from 3.5 to 14 years. The person recommended by the District Board as a teacher was not considered suitable by the Education Department, with the result that a school was not established at Narrogin until eighteen months later. In March 1892, a provisional school under 19-year-old teacher Beatrice Caruthers was opened. The Caruthers family had recently arrived in the district from England.¹

As a provisional school, it was the responsibility of the local community to find a suitable building, with the furniture and rent provided by the local Road Board, and books and materials provided by the parents. The premises used were described as a one-room building with a dirt floor, owned by Alf Oxman. A provisional school became a Government school once a regular attendance of twelve students could be maintained. This was achieved later in 1893, and the school was recognised as a government school from 2 October that year. At the end of 1893, Mr. Oxman required the school building for his own use, and the school was relocated to a room in the Caruthers's home, which the Education Department rented at three shillings a week. While Beatrice Caruthers is given as the first teacher at the school, her mother Julia was the teacher by the end of 1893.²

Lot 54 on Falcon Street had been set aside for a school site when the town was surveyed, but in 1893, School Inspector James Walton considered the site unsuitable for the purpose. Lot 54 was exchanged for Lots 9 and 10, on the corner of Egerton and Earl streets, which were owned by the Western Australian Land Company. The site was gazetted Reserve 2583 on 10 August 1894.³

Tenders for construction of a school were called on 18 May 1894. A contract was awarded to Thorn, Bower and Stewart for the construction at a cost of £481.⁴ It is uncertain whether this tender included the four-room teacher's quarters, but the cost suggests that it did. The builder who undertook the work is understood to have been Andrew J. Stewart.⁵ Both buildings were of stone construction with

¹ Education Department file, 'Narrogin – application for opening of a school', Item 193/90 & 'Narrogin - building and works', Item 460/92, SROWA, ACC 1497.

² Education Department file, 'Narrogin - building and works', Item 460/92, op cit.

³ Education Department file, 'Narrogin – school site', SROWA, ACC 1497, Item 518/93; DLI Reserves Index.

⁴ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1894, p. 479, 18 May 1894 & p. 596, 22 June 1894; Education Department file, 'Narrogin - building and works', Item 460/92, op cit.

⁵ Pustkuchen, O. E., *The Way Through: The story of Narrogin*, Artlook Books Trust, Perth, 1981, p. 191.

brick quoining and iron roofs.⁶ The school was built to the standard PWD plan for 40 pupils, with the addition of two extra windows in the north facing gable wall.⁷ Chief Architect of the PWD at this time was George Temple Poole.

Poole took up the position of Superintendent of Public Works in WA in 1885, and when the colony was given responsible government in 1890, he became the first Colonial Architect, Superintendent of Public Works, and Assistant Engineer in Chief. He held these positions until he retired in 1896, when he continued to work as an architect and engineer in private practice. He was the first President of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects WA. Because of his position, his early work involved numerous public buildings and included: Beverley, Perth, Fremantle and Coolgardie railway stations; the Royal Mint; the Titles Office; Observatory; and a number of post offices and schools throughout the state.⁸

Narrogin School was ready for occupation at the beginning of the 1895 school year, by which time the number of students enrolled had reached 25.⁹ Adolf Schneider was the head teacher in late 1895 and he occupied the teacher's quarters with his wife, who taught music.¹⁰ Later teachers were A. M. Lynberg, P. J. Turvey, who established a school band in 1900, and T. E. Liddington.¹¹

In 1898, the Government purchased the Great Southern line and associated land grants from the Western Australian Land Company, including the townsites that had been established along the line. Narrogin townsite was enlarged and lots renumbered. The two lots comprising School Reserve 2583 were renumbered Lots 260 and 261 and the Reserve was regazetted as Reserve 5630 with the addition of adjoining lots 31-33. The extra land was no doubt intended for future expansion of the school.¹²

By 1902, enrolments had reached 82 in a schoolroom designed for 40. Tenders were called for the addition of a second room and builder Andrew Stewart was awarded the contract, costing £349. Construction commenced on 5 February 1903 and was completed in March.¹³ By mid 1904, there were 106 students enrolled. Room 1 housed 69 students comprising Infants (21), Class II (6), Class III (7), Standard I (21), and two-thirds of Standard II (14). These classes were taught by an assistant teacher with the help of a monitor, whose job it was to hand out books and materials. Room 2 housed the 47 students in the upper classes comprising the rest of Standard II and Standards III to VII, who were taught by the head teacher.¹⁴

Between 1894 and 1904, educational standards had seen radical improvements, and a new standard school design, which allowed for expansion, had been

6 Photos of school and quarters c. 1895, Pustkuchen, O. E., op cit, pp. 170 & 192.

7 Public Works Department (PWD) Plan 212, 'Standard drawing: School-for-40-scholars' & Plan 9591 'Narrogin School additions', December 1902, courtesy Dept of Housing & Works (DHW); physical evidence.

8 Pitt Morison, M., 'Immigrant Architects and their work, 1885-1905', unpublished paper, Battye Library PR13589.

9 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1894, p. 494; Education Department file, 'Narrogin - building and works', Item 460/92, op cit.

10 Pustkuchen, O. E., op cit, pp. 169, 170 & 192.

11 Information on plaques at Narrogin Courthouse Museum.

12 DLI Reserve Index, 27 May 1898.

13 Education Department file, Narrogin school journal, 29 February 1902 - 23 April 1923, SROWA, ACC 826; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1902 p. 4613 & 1903 p. 95; PWD Plan 9591 'Narrogin School additions', December 1902, op cit.

14 Education Department file, Narrogin school journal, op cit.

developed by the PWD in 1897.¹⁵ Rather than add more classrooms to the existing Narrogin school building, a larger piece of land was acquired on the corner of William and Glyde streets. So, in late 1904, tenders were invited for construction of a more modern school and quarters on the new site. These buildings were completed early in 1905 and school furniture and fittings were moved from *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* on 29-30 April that year.¹⁶

Reserve 5630 was gazetted for the purpose of public buildings and *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* was designated for use as the Narrogin Courthouse. A local court had been established at Narrogin in 1900 and held a monthly sitting.¹⁷ A contract for the conversion was awarded to A. Ede on 10 November 1905 at a cost of £290.¹⁸ The work involved the addition of two rooms on the east end of the 1903 addition, each with a corner fireplace, and the removal of the wall between the two school rooms to create one large space.¹⁹

In 1908, with plans in place to construct a new Town Hall, Narrogin Council sold the 1896 Agricultural Hall to the Government for use as public office accommodation. The former Hall was first occupied by the Lands Department, then in a swap of premises, the courthouse was moved into the Hall and the Rural & Industries (R & I) Bank occupied *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin*.²⁰ The R & I Bank had been established by the State Government in 1894 to assist development in agricultural areas at a time when the Government was encouraging land settlement for wheat production.

In converting *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* for use as a bank, the former school cloakroom became the strongroom, requiring the removal of the two small windows and relocation of doorways. Other alterations comprised partitioning to suit bank functions.²¹ It is not known which year the R & I Bank moved into *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin*, but it appears to have been sometime after 1925.²²

PWD plans show that the courthouse moved back into *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* in 1947. The exchange required further remodelling of the former school cloakroom for use as a witness room, with installation of a new window and a new arrangement of doorways. New internal partitioning was installed for court operations.²³

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- 15 Gregory, Jenny & Smith, Lisa, *A Thematic History of Public Education in Western Australia*, Centre of Western Australian History, 1995, pp. 8-15.
 - 16 Education Department file, Narrogin school journal, op cit. The 1905 school is part of the current Narrogin Primary School.
 - 17 Where the Narrogin court sat from 1900 to 1906 has not been ascertained.
 - 18 Pustkuchen, O. E., op cit, p. 193; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1905, p. 3329, 10 November 1905; DLI Reserve Index, 13 October 1905.
 - 19 PWD Plan 12138/9, 'Narrogin court house (conversion of old school building)', September 1905, courtesy DHW.
 - 20 Pustkuchen, O. E., op cit, p. 153.
 - 21 PWD Plan 31167, drawing 8, 'Interchange of premises between Rural & Industries Bank & Courthouse, Narrogin' [1947], courtesy DHW.
 - 22 Maurie White, in his *Memorial II: Narrogin and World War I*, 1983, mentions a newspaper article of 1925 reporting that the Soldiers Memorial Institute was being built beside the 'shabby' Agricultural Bank. The Institute is located several lots east of *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin*. Annual reports for the R & I Bank do not include information on buildings or locations, and no street addresses for either the courthouse or the Bank are listed in the Post Office and Telephone directories to at least 1950.
 - 23 Pustkuchen, O. E., op cit, p. 153; WD Plan 31167, drawing 7, 'Interchange of premises between Rural & Industries Bank & Courthouse, Narrogin' [1947], & Plan 31165 'Courthouse Narrogin', 31 August 1947, courtesy DHW.

In the late 1960s, plans were in place for construction of a new courthouse and a public office building on the police precinct site on the opposite side of Earl Street. A roadway known as Memorial Avenue, on the east side of the police precinct, was acquired from the Town Council to provide a sufficiently large construction site, and in return the Government agreed to transfer *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* to the Council 'in situ' for museum purposes. The new courthouse building was occupied in September 1970, and *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* remained vacant for the next twelve months while the Government ascertained its temporary public office requirements. Construction of the new public office building was delayed due to financial constraints, and it was found necessary to make repairs and renovations to *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* for use as temporary offices for the District Engineer and staff of the Water Supply Department. Termites were found to be active in the floor, and a structural roof beam had failed, resulting in a sagging ceiling. The budget of \$6,000, which was allowed for the repairs, was exceeded by about 30%, 'because of the state of the building and the necessity to maintain the historical aspect of the repairs to match existing'.²⁴

The new public office building was constructed in the 1972-73 financial year and was occupied on 12 March 1973. *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* was to be transferred to the Town of Narrogin with the understanding that the surrounding land would be developed as a parking area for both the museum and the public offices.²⁵ On 19 July 1974, Lot 260 was redesignated Lot 1592 and vested in the Town of Narrogin for 21 years as Reserve 32682.²⁶ The Town placed the management of the museum in the hands of the Narrogin Historical Society.

On 18 September 1976, the Old Courthouse Museum opened in *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin*. The opening ceremony was performed by Sir Thomas Wardle, chairman of trustees of the WA Museum. Also present were Mayor P. W. Farr, WA Museum trustees D. E. Hodgkin and A. Kennedy, and Peter Jones MLA (Minister for Housing and Conservation). The opening was attended by over three hundred people, many of whom dressed in period costume for the event. A feature of the exhibition was a display of hundreds of varieties of wildflowers. Members of the Country Women's Association (CWA) and the Historical Society provided afternoon tea for the visitors. A photograph of the building that accompanied the newspaper report of the opening shows that the Liquidambar tree on the Egerton Street frontage was not in existence at that time and has been planted since.²⁷

The Museum provides an interpretation of the building in its use as school, courthouse and bank and displays items of local history.

In 2005, *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* continues to be occupied by the Old Courthouse Museum.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin, a single-storey stone building with brick quoining and a corrugated iron gable roof, shows influences of the Federation Free style and several stages of construction.

²⁴ Correspondence, 25 October - 3 November 1971, PWD file, 'Old Narrogin courthouse – repairs and renovations', SROWA, CONS 689, Item 1937/1025.

²⁵ Press Statement, 8 May 1973 & news item in the *West Australian*, 11 May 1973, PWD file, 'Old Narrogin courthouse – repairs and renovations', Item 1937/1025, op cit.

²⁶ DLI Reserve Index.

²⁷ *Narrogin Observer*, 23 September 1976, p. 1.

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is located on the southeast corner of the Egerton Street and Earl Street crossroads where there is a roundabout. The site is bounded at the rear by Harris Street with a bitumen car park between the rear of the building and the street. The car park extends along the east side of the site, screened partially by juvenile native plantings that include a range of Eucalypts and Casuarina. The building is accessed primarily from the Egerton Street frontage, and from the car parks at the rear and east side, with the entry door on the east side. The immediate street frontages of Earl and Egerton streets are fenced with metal-posted chain link fencing, with grassed setbacks to the concrete path that surrounds the building. Within the Egerton Street setback on the centre front is a Weeping Peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) and on the east side, there is a Liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and a rock with a sesquicentennial plaque commemorating first exploration in the Narrogin area in 1845. Separate, near the southeast corner of the school building, is a gable roof stone structure that provides public toilet facilities.

The original 1894 classroom is the section that fronts Egerton Street, closest to the street corner. It has a high-pitched gable frontage and the roof extends to a low verandah along the east side. The 'front' wall is symmetrical with three double hung windows, the centre window with an added height in response to the gable apex. The 1902 and 1905 additions are across the south side, in a rectangular footprint, forming an 'L' with the original building. The extensions have a gable roof that provides a gable detail to the Earl Street frontage. The east verandah of the original classroom is enclosed in the centre with a stone wall room, and there is an open verandah on the north and a verandah where the current entry is located on the south side of the verandah enclosure.

The building is constructed entirely of random granite stone that has been pointed. Window reveals are quoined with face brick with arched soldier headers and concrete sills. The chimneys are face brick with simple corbelled detailing. The walls show considerable evidence of repairs on the west and east walls, with inappropriate cement rich mortars and re-pointing over the top. The repair interventions are predominantly along the lower sections of those walls, indicating a rising damp issue. On the south wall the pointing is white over black on the 1902 section of the building and black on the 1905 extension, clearly illustrating the addition. The addition is further illustrated by the short sheet galvanised roof sheeting on the 1902 section and long sheeting over the 1905 section. The original 1894 roof is delineated by 2 vents on the ridgeline. The verandah has a concrete floor and is supported by square stop chamfered posts, and the gable infill end is lined vertically with matchboard. There is a small corrugated iron awning porch over the east door from the southeast room. The gutters throughout are non-original square profile and although a round galvanised downpipe is evident, these are predominantly pvc. On the 1894 building, the front elevation has a group of three double hung sash windows. On the west wall there are three similar windows with 4 pane sashes. The windows are spaced equally along the wall, and the northern most window has been bricked in. On the same wall there are two windows with two pane sashes, associated with the 1902 extension that also has a set of three windows on the south wall. All the windows have weld mesh fitted on the exterior. On the west wall there are a series of small rectangular metal louvred wall vents.

From the verandah, the entry leads directly into an expansive space that includes the Courtroom on the left, delineated by a timber dado railing and the remains at each end of the original rear wall of the 1894 classroom. On the right is a partition wall that separates the major section of the original classroom, on the

north side of the partition. Left of the courtroom, on the east side, are two rooms, side by side, each accessed from the courtroom, and both originally having external access, although the 'kitchen' still opens to the east side exterior. Between the two rooms there is evidence of an arched doorway that has subsequently been in-filled.

The original classroom is predominantly intact. The original 5-inch (127mm) hardwood floors, hard plaster walls, and coved ceiling lined with painted matchboard remain in situ. The fireplace still has an arched opening but has been remodelled to a flat rendered element. The original four-panel entry door at the northwest corner opens onto the small open verandah. A full height jarrah veneer and glass office partitioning has been installed, possibly during the R & I Bank period. The wall separating the classroom from the courtroom is clearly a timber framed partition wall that is not in the position of the original rear wall of the school room, which is evident by the continuation of the school room ceiling and the remains of the side walls.

The courtroom retains the original fabric of 1902 when it was the second classroom addition. The floors are 5-inch (127mm) hardwood boards, the walls are hard plaster, and the ceiling is plain plaster. The jarrah 'bench' is a raised element along the south wall and there is a truncated fireplace in the southwest corner. The fireplace has an arched opening and a simple bracketed jarrah mantelpiece. Doors on the east side lead to the two rooms that are the 1905 courtroom additions. The walls, floors and ceilings are as for the courtroom, and there are back-to-back truncated fireplaces. The fireplaces have arched openings and are detailed with timber surrounds and mantelpieces that have since been painted. The southeast corner room has a c.1950s basic kitchen fit out. The small stone enclosed room under the main verandah was inaccessible.

The stone outbuilding also has brick quoined openings and corners, and arched doorways, and features vented brick detailing in the gable apexes at both ends. The corrugated iron gable roof has been painted red. More recent brick privacy walls have been constructed on both sides.

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is in fair to good condition having been in use since construction. Different uses: school, court, bank and museum, have facilitated changes over time, but the impact on the original fabric has been minimal except for the removal of the south wall of the original school room. Regular maintenance has been applied to those areas in constant use whereas some environmental effects are evident on the exterior, particularly the damage and subsequent repairs to the stone walls on the west and south.

Plans dated 1945 show the existing layout except that the dais in the courtroom is central on the south wall and there are no steps from the Magistrates room.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The HCWA database lists 43 schools constructed between 1890 and 1900. Fifteen are constructed of stone. Six are located in the Wheatbelt region. Old Primary School (fmr), Southern Cross (1895) is the only other place in the Wheatbelt constructed of stone in the 1890s.

Thirteen schools constructed in the 1890s of stone are on the State Register.²⁸

A new standard school design, which allowed for expansion, was developed by the PWD in 1897. Single room schools constructed in stone were built in a

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Heritage Council database.

number of rural areas prior to 1897. *Yardarino School (ruin)* (P01245) in the Irwin Shire was a gable-roofed school built in 1878 to the standard PWD plan by local settlers, originally functioning as a provisional school. It operated from 1878 to 1939 and is now a ruin. The *Central Greenough School* (P01156) built in 1865 by William Trigg has a hipped roof. The place has been restored by the National Trust. Neither of these places has had additions to the original single classroom building. Both places are on the State Register. *Cossack School (ruins)* (P03230) was built in 1896-97 to replace a building destroyed in a cyclone. It is interim listed on the State Register and has had conservation work undertaken to preserve remaining fabric.²⁹

Government School, Cue (P00644) was built in 1896, and had two extra classrooms added by 1905. The stonework has been painted and it has a powder coated corrugated galvanised steel roof. It is still in use as the local school and the quarters are extant and occupied. The place is on the State Register.³⁰

Of the four other single classroom rural schools – Wagin, Broomehill, Katanning and Mount Barker - that were built in the region at the same time as *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin*, only the Mount Barker School (P02271) appears to be extant. It is currently in use as the Seventh Day Adventist Church.³¹

Courthouse Museum, Narrogin is a fine example of a rural stone school building of the single classroom design which were constructed prior to the introduction of standard school design in 1897, and one of very few still intact.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

Education Department and PWD files for Narrogin School and Courthouse, State Records Office, Perth, as referenced.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

²⁹ Heritage Council assessment documentation.

³⁰ Heritage Council assessment documentation.

³¹ Education Department file, 'Narrogin - building and works', Item 460/92, op cit; Heritage Council database.