



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.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex is a good example of colonial architecture in the Victorian Georgian style utilising local stone and timber shingles. (Criterion 1.1)

Current landscaping and restoration work have given these landmark buildings a picturesque quality. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex, Mount Barker, is associated with early roadside coaching requirements on the Albany Road, with the establishment of law and order in the Plantagenet District, and is an example of convict built public works. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex is valued by the local community as a reminder of the early European settlement of the district and for its role as a public site associated with the administrative activities in the town. (Criterion 4.1)

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex has landmark qualities that contribute towards the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex is a type of building prominent in the major towns of Western Australia with an individual appearance. Relatively few of these buildings are still in existence. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex demonstrates a civic and community need for order in the community. (Criterion 6.1)

The appearance of the two police buildings demonstrates the domestic style of building that was initially built for the civil administration.

12. 3 CONDITION

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex is in good condition, as a result of major restoration work that has taken place.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex has been interpreted in such a way as to restore integrity to the place, although it is no longer used as a police or other government site.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex retains authenticity especially with relation to the stables. The original police station has less authenticity, in that neglect led to the removal of flooring and verandah boards. Major restoration of the fabric has taken place. The roof finish is not original. There are parts of the furnishing materials that are authentic as the result of the renovation that was allowed to occur. Generally the building is a good example of shape, style and finishes.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Lise Summers, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by J C Keen, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex at Mount Barker, includes the first of three Police stations built on the site over a one hundred year period, a single-storey stone building, stables and out buildings.

Land at Mount Barker was first alienated around 1832, and settlement proceeded slowly from the 1840s. Around 1844, a Catholic mission was sent to the area, but eventually failed and the missionaries, having lived very poorly, left Australia.¹ The area later became known for its capacity as a fruit growing region, in particular apples.²

In 1867, a party of convicts from the Albany depot, were sent to Mount Barker to build a residence for the local policeman, as well as a coach house and stables. The convicts used local materials: ironstone for the walls and timber, for the flooring and shingle roof.³

The first constable at the station was Daniel O'Connell, who had come to Western Australia as an Enrolled Pensioner Guard, in 1863. Within two years he had taken up the position of police constable on the Perth-Albany Road, which position he held until 1874.⁴

The station was occupied by a succession of police constables, who normally held the post for approximately two years. In 1888, this pattern changed with the appointment of Constable John Larter Wall who remained at Mount Barker until 1900.

In 1879 the police station took on additional significance in the lives of the Plantagenet and Albany communities when the Government mail was established. The need for fresh horses resulted in the station becoming the first staging post between Albany and Perth.⁵

While the Government postal service retained horses at Mount Barker, the police station added an innovative bicycle to its list of equipment under the auspices of Constable West, who took over the station from Wall in 1900. Keen to prove to his superiors the worth of the bicycle, West undertook longer and longer patrols, up to 27 miles a day. However, when longer trips were required, such as when ensuring all eligible voters were enrolled, West reverted to horseback.⁶

By 1908 the original station no longer met standards for accommodation and security. Reports by senior police and the Contemporary Superintendent of

¹ Green, Neville 'Aborigines and white settlers in the nineteenth century', in *A new history of Western Australia*, edited by T. Stannage (Perth, University of Western Australia 1981), p.91.

² Battye, J.S *Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*, Vol I, p.779.

³ Glover, R et al *Plantagenet: a history of the Shire of Plantagenet* Shire of Plantagenet, University of Western Australia Press, 1979, pp.312-313.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*, p.340.

Works at Albany resulted in the decision to build a new station adjoining the first, retaining only the original Coach-house and stables. Work commenced in July 1908, and continued, despite some criticism from the incumbent constable who felt that the bricks, transported from Katanning, were too soft. The first station was closed, although it may have been used as a mechanic's workshop for some time. In 1919, a courtroom was added to the second station. A third police station was built in 1957, and the second station used for a time as housing for the staff at the high school.⁷ The first, abandoned building was vandalised, and in 1966⁸ was threatened with destruction.

The Plantagenet Historical Society became involved in retaining and restoring the building. Frank Beech described the building as 'an awful place' but 'when I went inside I found the walls were solid and the inside was all right.... The floorboards had been pulled out and used for firewood'. A local sawmiller donated boards sawn from sleepers to replace the missing floors and a stonemason was employed to make good the stone and plasterwork.⁹ The building was opened in 1971 as a Museum celebrating the history of early police in the area, concentrating on the period when Constable Wall had been employed, using items donated by members of the local community and members of the police's, and in particular Constable Wall's families.¹⁰

Cyclone Alby, in 1978, destroyed some of the pines on the site which were believed to have been planted over a century before.¹¹ In 1984 the Shire of Plantagenet obtained National Estate funding, allocated over a three year period, to enable restoration of the Station. In 1987 they applied for additional funding to enable restoration of the associated Coach house and stables.¹²

The Plantagenet Historical Society continues to operate the Station and surrounds as a museum.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Fmr Police Station and Gaol Complex is a rectangular single-storey ironstone building with a verandah all the way around. The roof is timber shingles.

The main building is 16 m x 4.5 m with a 1.8 m verandah. The building consists of three rooms and an entrance passage. At the south end the verandah has been enclosed to form two stores.

The main stone walls were repaired in the 1980s (photographs are available of the premises). The photographs show that there are timber studs and horizontal timber members in the iron stone random coursed wall. The

⁷ *ibid*, p.341.

⁸ In an oral history interview, Frank Beech, a key member of the Society states that the Society took over the building in 1960, although this contradicts later information put out by the Society itself. Teasdale, Jean - *Oral history interview with Frank Beech*, (1976) JS Battye Library OH169; Plantagenet Historical Society promotional brochure (nd).

⁹ Teasdale, Jean op. cit., p.21.

¹⁰ Plantagenet Historical Society promotional brochure.

¹¹ Glover, R. op. cit., p.313.

¹² Shire of Plantagenet, Letter 5 June 1987, to Western Australian Heritage Committee, Ref: CEN/8.4.

ironstone is bedded in a mixture of sand mortar and rendered internally and externally. The render has some coursing joints marked on it.

The windows are timber with security bars to the kitchen area which was also used as a gaol for overnight prisoners. The ceilings are timber board with timber covered strips. The floors are of timber boarding. The roof is timber with timber shingles.

Externally within the grounds are the old stables with a gaol at one end. This block is built from timber posts with iron stone infill to the walls. The roof is timber with timber shingles.

The mortar joints have been highlighted in white paint. The front entry has timber work to the lock up at one end. The stables are timber with glass over which has been re-made during recent renovations.

On the site there is a small timber building, Block G, which is a timber framed school house built by the early settlers of the district. This has a corrugated iron roof. It has been transported onto the site from elsewhere.

There are toilets of similar construction for boys and girls that have been transported from Mrs Elliot's Drapery Shop.

The General Purposes art room/community arts room is a 1960s built building.

The Museum is at right angles to the Police Station and Stables.

To the rear and north of the site there are metal frame and clad machinery storage sheds containing old pine implements.

The grounds lay-out gives an English Cottage effect. The grounds are well kept by the local Historical Society.

13. 3 REFERENCES

No Key references.