



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*

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford is a fine example of Richard Roach Jewell's vernacular Free Gothic style, executed in a small scale building and exhibiting his use of distinctive polychrome brickwork. The symmetry and scale materials of the original building are aesthetically pleasing and well proportioned. (Criteria 1.1 & 1.2)

The place is a significant element in the Meadow Street precinct and contributes to the quality of the streetscape. The scale, form and materials of *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford*, complement nearby buildings, including the Post Office, Police Quarters, Goal and Courthouse. (Criteria 1.3 and 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford represents an Australian adaptation of British culture and provides physical evidence of the Mechanics' Institute ethos, which was to promote the educational and cultural development of the community. Once prolific, the majority of Mechanics' Institutes have been replaced by the public library and adult education systems and their social function has all but disappeared (Criterion 2.2)

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford is associated with persons prominent in the historical development of the Guildford district and the State, such as Governor Hampton, W. L. Brockman, and Doctors Waylen and Viveash.. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford was the first public hall built in Guildford and is valued for its various roles as meeting place, public library and museum

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter A *Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* North Ryde NSW, Angus & Robertson 1989.

and for its continuing social associations as a venue for community based activities; (Criterion 4.1)

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford evokes a sense of place for many members of the Guildford community and is valued for the contribution it makes to the Meadow Street streetscape and the town of Guildford. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

The structure is a fine surviving example of a hall constructed in the early days of the Colony, of which very few remain with the historical, architectural and social associations that this building demonstrates. (Criteria 5.1 & 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford is representative of the Mechanics' Institute ethos which was concerned with promoting adult education and cultural development. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford, is in very good condition, considering the age of the building and the range of activities it has housed.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* has been retained throughout the evolution of the place and the uses of the place have to date been compatible with the building and its original intent.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, conservation professional, in association with Gillian O'Mara, archival researcher. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, with plans and elevations courtesy of Rosemary Rosario.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford, originally the Swan Mechanics' Institute, is a two-storey brick building, located in Meadow Street, Guildford. It was constructed in 1865 to provide a permanent meeting place for the Institute's members and soon became the unofficial town hall.

The Mechanics' Institute originated in Scotland in the early 1800s as a means of providing instruction for tradesmen (mechanics), many of whom had not received a childhood education. By 1826, an Institute had been established in London, and by the 1850s, there were six hundred Institutes throughout England.¹ Although the Institutes were founded on the ideal of improving the working classes, the organisational positions were usually reserved for the gentry.²

By 1852, Mechanics' Institutes had also been established in Perth, Fremantle and Albany, followed by Guildford (1862), Geraldton and Northam (1864), Newcastle (Toodyay; 1866), and York (1868). Others followed and Mechanics' Institutes became widespread throughout the colony as a form of adult education. They initially provided facilities such as halls and libraries for the whole community but gradually became gentlemen's clubs for the benefit of the 'better classes' rather than working men. In line with the rules of Perth's Swan River Institute, where J. S. Roe was President for many years, most did not admit expeires and men of the lower social classes as members.³

The first meeting of the Swan Mechanics' Institute was held on 14 March 1862, in the Guildford's Government School building.⁴ W. L. Brockman, who was very prominent in the district's public affairs, was elected to the position of President, with Dr Waylen, Dr Viveash and Samuel Barker the Vice Presidents and Thomas Jecks the Secretary. Governor Hampton was Patron. Other committee members in the first few years included Rev. William D. Williams, Jas. Chester, G. Johnson, J. Little, S. Annear and W. Bibra.⁵ Brockman was elected to the first Legislative Council as a Member for Swan in 1867, and was later Chairman of the Swan Districts Road Board.⁶ Doctors Viveash and Waylen were also prominent figures in the Colony, being Resident Magistrate and Chief Colonial Surgeon respectively in the 1870s.⁷

The activities of the Institute included weekly discussion and music groups, and specific evenings were scheduled for a variety of regular events. Periodic

¹ Johnston, R. *W. L. Brockman A Portrait*. Darelle Publication, Nedlands, 1982, p.51.

² Bourke, M. J. *On the Swan: A History of the Swan District, Western Australia*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 19878, p.207.

³ Erikson, R., *Old Toodyay & Newcastle*, Toodyay Shire Council, Toodyay, 1974, p.232.

⁴ CSR, Acc 36/517, First Annual report, 5 January 1863, pp 169-171.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid*, pp. 222, 223.

⁷ *ibid*, p.231.

lectures by local or visiting speakers and occasional performances by travelling actors or singers were welcome events.⁸ The Institute also had a lending library, and although the first annual report referred to the Institute committee's pledge to establish a Museum, the works were deferred due to a lack of funds.⁹

From the mid-1860s, there was much construction activity in Guildford, largely due to Governor Hampton's vigorous campaign of public works which aimed to take advantage of convict labour before transportation ceased in 1868. The Governor also supported other community building works, and contributed £50 towards the construction of each Mechanics' Institute hall throughout the Colony. In addition to this, he also made the Government Architect available to design each hall.¹⁰ The members of the Swan Mechanics' Institute took advantage of the opportunity to build their own hall and a site was selected next to the Convict Depot Hospital.¹¹ The Crown Grant was granted to W. L. Brockman, A. W. Waylen and G. Johnson as trustees for *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford*.¹² The local community raised the funds needed to cover the balance of the cost of the building.¹³

The hall was designed by the Colonial Clerk of Works (Government Architect) Richard Roach Jewell.¹⁴ Jewell also designed St Matthews Anglican Church in Stirling Square (1860), the Guildford Government School (c. 1862) and Guildford Court House in Meadow St (1867).¹⁵ He also designed the Guildford Government Boy's School and St Mary's Church in Middle Swan. All of these buildings display Jewell's distinctive style of 'chequered' brickwork.¹⁶ Jewell also designed a number of significant buildings in Perth which also display the trademark Flemish bond decorative brick work.¹⁷

The foundation stone for the *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* was laid on 17 April 1865, by Dr A. R. Waylen, and the cornerstone by Mr S. W. Viveash, in the absence of the President.¹⁸ The builder, John Welbourne, was well known in the Guildford district.¹⁹ After completing the Government gaol in 1841, Welbourne had been appointed police constable, and later a gaoler.²⁰ In 1852, he built the Stirling Arms Hotel in Meadow St, assisted by ticket-of-leave men.²¹

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford was officially opened on 7 September 1865. A grand concert, featuring the glee club, Fremantle pianist Mr Kochanovsky, singer Mr Grieves, and the Negro Melodists from Perth entertained the

⁸ Bourke, op. cit., p.207.

⁹ *Perth Gazette & Independent Journal*, January 1863.

¹⁰ Garden, D. S., *Northam An Avon Valley History*, Hesperian Press, Perth, 1992 p.92.

¹¹ *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 19 April 1865. p. 2. The Guildford Post Office was later built on the site of the Convict Depot Hospital.

¹² Book 15, Memorial No XV. 508, dated 20 November 1906, DOLA.

¹³ It was at this time that the word 'Swan' was dropped from the Institute's name.

¹⁴ De Burgh, W. J., *Dacresfield: A history of the Dacres Williams family*, 1993, p.77.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 78. St Matthew's was destroyed in 1872.

¹⁶ Bourke, op. cit., p.218.

¹⁷ Le Page, J. S. H., *Building a State: The story of the Public Works Department of Western Australia 1929-1985*, Water Authority of WA, Perth, 1986, pp. 90-91.

¹⁸ *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 19 April 1865. p. 2.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Bourke, op. cit., p.152.

²¹ *ibid.*, p.174.

crowd. An article in the *Inquirer and Commercial News* noted that the opening was:

a fact of more significance and weight than may yet have been attributed to it. It is an event which in a new country marks the progress of society, and inaugurates an era.²²

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford was the first public hall to be constructed in the Swan District and the building soon became the unofficial town hall. Public concerts, meetings of the Town Trust and the wine judging of the Guildford Agricultural Show were amongst the early activities held there.²³ The hall also housed the public library and the Institute required annual subscriptions for the use of its library facilities.²⁴

Evidence suggests that additions to *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* took place c. 1880, despite heresay claims that they took place the year following the hall construction. A streetscape of Meadow Street, dated in the mid 1870s, shows *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* without extensions.²⁵ During a musical evening at *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* in 1889, Mr W. G. Johnson, the President, referred to 'the four additional rooms which had been added to the Institute for the convenience of the public, and the residence of the caretaker.'²⁶

William G. Johnson, William Padbury, and James Jecks became trustees in 1906.²⁷ In 1930, William Padbury, the only surviving trustee and President of the Institute at the time, handed *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* over to the Guildford Town Council.²⁸ From this time, *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* operated as the community centre and library. The Garrick Theatre Club was based at the *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* from 1932 before relocating to the Commissariat building further south in Meadow Street two years later. In 1962, the newly formed Swan Guildford Shire donated £250 worth of books to the Institute's Library to commemorate the Swan Mechanics' Institute's centenary.²⁹

The Library was relocated to the Guildford Council Chambers a short time later, so as to facilitate the conversion of *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* into an historical Museum.³⁰ The Swan Guildford Historical Society opened the Museum on 7 November 1965. This event was preceded by a celebratory Musical evening held on 31 October.³¹ In 1980, the Museum was relocated to the Courthouse as lack of space at Mechanics' Institute prohibited its efficient operation.³² The Guildford Historical Society used *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* for several years, until it too relocated to the Courthouse in 1988.

In 1987, funding through the National Estates Grants program provided for conservation works on the *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford*, including drainage

²² *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 8 September 1865.

²³ Bourke, op. cit., p. 225.

²⁴ Garden, op. cit., p.92.

²⁵ Bourke, op. cit., p.228.

²⁶ *ibid.*; *The West Australian*, 21 August 1889.

²⁷ Book 15, Memorial No XV. 508, dated 20 November 1906. DOLA.

²⁸ Rosario, R. 'Conservation Plan', Shire of Swan, file R186980; Ward, E. T., *The Story of Guildford 1829-1952*. Shire of Swan, undated.

²⁹ *The West Australian*, East Suburban Section, 20 August 1962.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *The West Australian* 1 November 1965.

³² Rosario, op. cit.

works, some restoration of the floor and substructure and site works.³³ In recent years, the Guildford China Painters, arts and crafts groups, the local Red Cross branch and various other community groups have, and continue to use, the facilities provided at *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford*. In 1991, the Shire of Swan agreed to Oliver's Old Tyme Music Theatre using *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* as a venue for musical performances.³⁴

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford is located in the Meadow Street precinct and is a contributor to the aesthetic qualities of the streetscape and to the character of the town of Guildford. The site is bounded by the police quarters to the north, residential development to the east, Guildford Post Office to the south and Meadow Street to the north. The scale, symmetry and materials of *Mechanics' Institute, Guildford* complement the other buildings in Meadow Street.

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford is set among a number of mature trees and the grounds are for the most part level gravelled, grass or earth areas. The three adjoining property boundaries are delineated by a timber picket fence. A post and rail fence extend across the street front boundary and a gate opening is located on the south side.

Mechanics' Institute, Guildford shows evidence of at least two periods of development. The original hall is a rectangular brick construction with a steeply pitched gable roof. The first additions (c. 1880) comprised a two-storey caretaker's residence to the rear of the hall, a front entry porch and the provision of a stage in the hall. A back verandah and toilet outhouse were also added about this time. A lean-to at the back of the cottage was added (date unknown) to house the laundry. The place evidences a high degree of authenticity for each period of development.

The original (1865) section is a brick construction in Flemish bond with Jewell's distinctive two tone pattern on the front facade. The hall is symmetrical with a gable frontage and a central double door entry. A circular window is centred in the gable. Flanking the front doors are two eighteen pane sash windows, with arched fanlights above and rendered recessed window reveals. Rendered structural pilasters define the four corners of the building.

The original oregon floor boards, fireplaces and mantelpieces have been retained in the hall interior, although the fireplaces are no longer central within each side wall. The interior walls are rendered with a smooth finish incised with a block pattern (ashlar). The roof structure is exposed with no ceiling lining. There is no evidence of there ever having been a ceiling lining.

The c. 1880s addition to the rear of the original hall is a two-storey caretaker's cottage, which adjoins the back wall. The addition is constructed in Flemish bond and the roof of the cottage is minimally higher than that of the hall. The second storey is accessed by a full flight of boxed timber stairs and vertical balustrade. The ceilings are lined with tongue and groove timber and

³³ Shire Of Swan, 'Final report: Conservation of the Mechanic's Institute'. July 1989. The grant totalled \$7,800.

³⁴ R. Rosario, op. cit.

follow the line of the roof at the eaves. The northern upstairs room has a fireplace, evidenced by the chimney on the roof and a bulkhead in the room below (the room itself was inaccessible). The interior walls are smooth render as for the hall.

The ground floor area has a raked skillion ceiling and an open fireplace. The walls of the room are finished in a thick bag wash render and the low plain skirting boards contrasts with the more decorative boards in the hall and upper storey. The doors and door hardware throughout the c. 1880s addition are the original fabric. The doors are jarrah panelled. The more recent intervention of electrical wiring has exposed conduits throughout the cottage, although some original fixtures are still in place. An enclosed verandah, which runs across the full length of the caretaker's cottage, has a stove and fireplace in the northern wall. A separate c. 1970a bathroom is located at the southern end. The interior brick wall is finished in English bond and painted. The rear wall is timber framed and clad with fibro-cement on the interior and corrugated iron on the exterior. Beyond the verandah and attached at the rear on the southern side is a timber framed and corrugated iron clad lean-to, the construction date of which is unknown.

The front entry porch, which was also built c. 1880s, abuts the front facade of the hall. It is a brick construction in simple Flemish bond that is not as decorative as the facade of the original hall. The two entry doors open onto the southern side and as there are no doors in evidence leading from the foyer into the hall, the hardware on the main entry doors suggests that these may have been the original front entry doors. The interior porch wall finish, which is similar to the internal finish of the hall and rear addition, covers the original facade.

Alterations to the hall were also completed at this time. A stage area was built at the rear, with a timber framed wall height proscenium lined with patterned pressed metal. Two large ledge and brace doors at the back of the stage, which are now sliders, close off the stage area from the hall. The stage area has a tongue and groove ceiling lining. The stage, which was originally raised approximately 9" from the hall floor, built on a plinth, and laid with floor boards, was raised again c. 1970. The plinth-like structure is lined with compressed boards.

The entire hall and additions have a painted corrugated iron roof, and the rear skillion roof is c. 1982 colourbond in a custom orb profile. The entire roof drainage system is a recent intervention. All the external walls have been cement rendered, below sill height and there is also evidence of damp-proof coursing having been inserted. A brick drainage system which runs around the much of the building contains bricks from a number of Guildford clay pits.

13.3 REFERENCES

Bourke, M. J. *On the Swan. A History of the Swan District Western Australia*. UWA Press, Nedlands, 1987.

Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Historic Buildings, Meadow Street, Guildford: Courthouse, Gaol, Mechanics Institute, Commissariat Store and quarters - Conservation Plan', prepared for the Shire of Swan, July 1997.