



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Residency Museum, built of local clay bricks, exhibits the harmonious proportion common to the Victorian Georgian style of architecture in Western Australia. (Criterion 1.1)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Residency Museum is a valuable part of the architectural building stock of the early convict period in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.1)

Residency Museum is one of the last remaining components of what was the York convict depot, a precinct of Government buildings that played an integral role in the development of York, the significance of which is no longer so readily apparent. (Criterion 2.2)

the place demonstrates the 1970s adaptation and reuse of a building for the first regional museum established under the *Museum Act 1969-73*. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Residency Museum is highly valued by the community for its role in the early development of York and its long term association with the adjacent *Old York Hospital*. (Criterion 4.1)

Residency Museum contributes to the community's sense of place as a reminder of the early European settlement and development of York. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Residency Museum is representative of domestic buildings of the period; a homestead style in a spreading form. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Residency Museum has been restored and is maintained by the Shire of York and the York Society. The place is in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Although the place is now a museum, its original function remains evident. The building retains its original fabric and is being conserved as a museum by the local historical society. The presence of display cases does not diminished the cultural heritage significance of the place.

Although the rear addition is of similar height and proportion, the addition does not replicate or diminish the original building. *Residency Museum* retains a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Alterations to the building fabric have been minimal and therefore *Residency Museum* retains a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Residency Museum is a single-storey building constructed as part of the convict establishment circa 1850s.

Good land was discovered in the Avon Valley in 1830, by a party led by Ensign Dale of the 63rd Regiment, and the district in the vicinity of Mount Bakewell was named Yorkshire for its resemblance to that county in England. As the district was opened up for settlement, a townsite of 3840 acres was reserved at the foot of Mount Bakewell and gazetted in November, 1830. Settlers moved into the district in 1831, and the first town allotments were sold in 1835. York was one of the earliest rural settlements and the first inland town of the Swan River Colony.¹

It is thought that the Residency was constructed during the period of office of the second Government Resident Captain R. G. Meares, successor to R. H. Bland. Meares, and his family, had arrived in the Swan River Colony in December 1829, with Thomas Peel in the *Gilmore*.² After holding a number of official positions, Meares became Government Resident of the Murray district. At the same time, he acquired land in the Avon Valley and, in September 1842, he moved to York as its Government Resident.³ In addition to magisterial duties, he was registrar, statistician, collector of land fees and dog taxes, organiser of road repairing and building parties. The opening of the convict hiring depot at York increased his responsibilities further. Meares resigned as Government Resident in 1859, when the magisterial duties were transferred to Northam. However, the Residency continued to be occupied until about 1901. Shortly after, the place was adapted for use as a Maternity Hospital. *Old York Hospital*, located on the adjacent site, did not have the space to provide the required facilities.⁴

The former Residency remained in use as a maternity hospital and/or nurses' quarters until the early 1940s, when the single-storey maternity hospital was built between the former Residency and *Old York Hospital*. The former Residency became the Matron's Quarters. The place continued to be used as part of the *Old Hospital* until the early 1960s, when a new hospital and nurses' quarters were built.⁵

The place was unoccupied and neglected until the early 1970s, when the York Society took an interest in establishing the building as a museum. *Residency Museum* was opened on 27 August 1972. It was the first regional museum

¹ Pitt Morison, M., *Western Towns and Buildings*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979 p. 235.

² Pike, D., (ed) *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 2, 1788-1850, (Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1967), p. 219.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Community Recreation Council, 'The Old Hospital - York' (March 1978), p. 2.

⁵ *ibid.*, 'The Old Hospital', pp. 5-6.

established under the *Museum Act 1969-73*, to be recognised by the Western Australian Museum.⁶

In March 1995, *Residency Museum* continues to be used as a museum. It has become a well known tourist attraction, drawing visitor's attention to the early European settlement and development of York and the surrounding district.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Residency Museum is a single-storey structure, built as part of a convict depot,⁷ in the Victorian Georgian style.⁸

Residency Museum is on the south side of Brook Street, west of Suburban Road. It is set back from the building line and surrounded by a sandy clearing. A paved path leads to car parking on the eastern side of the building.

Residency Museum is simple in form, 'L' shaped in plan and constructed of local clay bricks. The building was probably of faced brickwork and painted at a later date as was frequently the case with typical buildings of the period.

Residency Museum has a timber framed, medium-pitched hipped roof, that was originally shingled, as evidenced by the remaining roof timbers. The roof is believed to have been re-clad in corrugated iron in 1920. Slender timber posts support a spreading verandah that is a low pitched extension of the main roof.

Residency Museum features simple chimneys, flat arched windows, stone lintels, casement sashes with small panes and a timber-panelled entrance door.

Residency Museum was originally built as three rooms, with a fireplace in each, and a central passage. The passage leads to a covered verandah that adjoins another three-roomed structure. Differences in the joints in the brickwork suggest this structure was built at a later date, possibly as a guard's house. This later building comprises a kitchen/living space with a fireplace, and two rooms either side, one smaller than the other.

In 1870, the original building was extended and adapted to a residence.⁹ Two rooms, divided by a double chimney, were added to the eastern side of the principal facade. The rooms were probably used as an office and living space.

The interior is simple but with the exception of mansard ceilings in the original building and matchboard ceilings in the three-roomed structure, the interior lacks any adornment.

⁶ Conversation with Mr Greg Wallace, of Museum of Western Australia, 15 March 1995.

⁷ Wroth & Wilson, *Avon Valley Sketchbook*, (Rigby, Australia, 1977) p. 40.

⁸ 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) pp. 42-45.

⁹ Conversation with Shirley Lutze, York Society, 9 March 1995.

As a maternity hospital, the building accommodated a maternity and labour ward, nurses' bed/sitting room, duty room and in the adjoining structure, a store, kitchen and maid's room. In 1926, a bathroom, toilet and new verandah were added to the northern wall of the central court.¹⁰

In 1952, as matron's quarters, the building underwent renovation. By the 1960s, the place had been adapted to nurses' quarters, and the building connected by a covered way to the 1940s maternity block and *Old York Hospital* on the adjoining property.¹¹

Since the building's conversion to a museum, the interior fabric of the building has been largely untouched. A glass display case blocks the original entrance and timber louvred shutters have been installed to increase security. Further display cases have recently been installed to some rooms but can be easily removed.

In 1988, with the assistance of an National Estate Grants Program 1984/85, the Shire of York carried out restoration works to the exterior of the building. The works included; urgent repairs to the corrugated iron roof sheeting including refixing, installation of new gutters and downpipes, repainting the roof and roof drainage pipes, and replacement of verandah posts and floorboards. Timber decking with a timber lattice screen converted the central court to a display area for tools and equipment. A portion of the western verandah was also enclosed and is used for storage.

A single-storey rear addition of office and toilets was built about five years ago. The addition is linked to the verandah of the original building by a covered way.

13.3 REFERENCES

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet, 8 September 1992.

¹⁰ PWDWA Drawing No. 19200. The additions have since been removed. The date of demolition is unknown.

¹¹ PWDWA Drawing No. 31554