



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)

- 8.1 Organising recreation
- 8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 405 Sport, recreation & entertainment
- 407 Cultural activities

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Armadale District Hall has aesthetic value as a competently built hall, which displays the characteristics of the Inter-War Art Deco style used to produce a well composed principal elevation and appropriately embellished interior. (Criterion 1.1)

Armadale District Hall has landmark qualities as a distinctive building set in a prominent, slightly raised, open site. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Armadale District Hall is associated with the development of Armadale and the immediate district that evolved out of the Depression years. The establishment of the place in 1936 represents the renewed optimism that was emerging at the end of the depression. (Criterion 2.1)

As the second community hall built in Armadale, *Armadale District Hall* is representative of the increase in population and consolidation of the district, which had occurred in the 1920s and continued following the Depression. (Criterion 2.2)

Armadale District Hall was designed by eminent Western Australian architectural firm Oldham, Boas & Ednie-Brown and constructed by the well established builders J. B. Hawkins & Son. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

* 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*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Armadale District Hall is highly valued by the local and regional communities for its social, cultural and aesthetic associations, and in particular for its use as a picture theatre until c.1958. This was illustrated in March 2001, when rallies were staged opposing the redevelopment of the site for commercial use. (Criterion 4.1)

As the district's community centre since 1936, and the venue for balls, dances, public meetings, displays, fundraising, wedding receptions, school concerts, and similar events, *Armadale District Hall* contributes to the local community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Armadale District Hall is a representative example of district halls constructed in Western Australia during the Inter-War period, many of which are still intact. (Criterion 6.1)

Armadale District Hall represents the renewed optimism that was emerging at the end of the Depression. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Armadale District Hall is in good condition and has benefited from regular maintenance.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Armadale District Hall has a high degree of integrity, as the original intention remains largely intact. The place continues to be used as a community hall.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Armadale District Hall has a high to moderate degree of authenticity. Two major changes have been carried out on the building, these being the addition of the balcony within the hall and the addition of toilets beside the front entrance. These additions are sympathetic and do not detract from the original design.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Palassis Architects for 'Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan' for the City of Armadale, October 2001.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Armadale District Hall was constructed in 1936 to a design by architectural firm Oldham, Boas & Ednie-Brown. The builder was J. B. Hawkins and Son. In

1938, a new gallery was added in the main hall. In 1961, an entry porch to the lesser hall and new toilet facilities beside the main entrance were added. The toilet facilities created an extra bay on each side of the facade. The original architects designed all additions.

The Armadale district was settled early in the colony's history, with the establishment of a townsite at Kelmscott on 6 July 1830. Land was taken up in the area and beef cattle, dairy cows, horses, goats, pigs and chickens were raised and wheat, oats, barley and vegetables grown. Fruit trees and grapes were also cultivated. The district was called Narrogin for the Narrogin (Neerigen) Brook, which ran through the area south of Kelmscott. In the 1850s, the Perth to Albany Road was constructed by convict labour and the Narrogin Inn was established at a major road junction near the Brook. As traffic increased along the road, small stores selling local produce were established around the inn and along the road through Kelmscott.¹

In 1871, the area was placed under the control of the Canning Roads Board. A timber industry was established with the harvesting of wandoo and jarrah for telegraph poles and railway sleepers, and sandalwood was collected east of the Darling Range for export to China. The industry, with its sawpits and mills, expanded throughout the Kelmscott, Armadale and Roleystone districts.² In 1887, the route of the South Western Railway line Perth to Bunbury was surveyed, and construction of the line was completed in August 1893.³ Railway sidings were established at Kelmscott and Armadale, the latter named for one of the two Scottish towns of that name, the name Narrogin having already been given to a station on the Great Southern Railway line. During construction of the line the district flourished as farmers provided produce for the railway construction workers and their families, and employment was available in providing sleepers and gravel for ballast.⁴

The opening of the line, together with the Government's proactive approach to land settlement with the *Homesteads Act, 1893* and *Agricultural Bank Act, 1894*, attracted many new settlers to the district.⁵ On 14 December 1894, the Kelmscott Roads Board District was gazetted, comprising an area of some 199 square miles (51,540ha) formerly included in the Canning Roads Board District.⁶ One of the first projects undertaken by the new Board was the construction of a hall, the Mechanic's Institute. The hall was built at Armadale near the Narrogin Inn. The Institute was the site of weekly dances, music hall and other entertainments, and later was used for roller skating and travelling picture shows. It housed a lending library donated by Martin Jull. In 1901, the Institute hall was enlarged.⁷ On 26 February 1909, the town of Armadale was gazetted and the following year the Kelmscott Roads Board was renamed the Armadale-Kelmscott Roads Board.⁸ In 1927, Kate Wilkinson,

¹ Popham, Daphne, *First Stage South: A history of the Armadale-Kelmscott district, Western Australia*, Town of Armadale, 1980, pp. 30-40. This history does not include footnotes or endnotes and few references to sources.

² Popham, Daphne, *op cit*, pp. 36-40.

³ Gunzberg, A. & Austin, J., *Rails Through the Bush*, Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 206-207.

⁴ Popham, Daphne, *op cit*, pp. 58-59.

⁵ 'The Homesteads Act', No. 18 of 1893 & 'The Agricultural Bank Act', No. 21 of 1894, *Statutes of Western Australia*, Perth, Gov. Printer.

⁶ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 14 December 1894, p. 1247.

⁷ Popham, Daphne, *op cit*, pp. 80 & 98.

⁸ *Spanning the Years 1894-1994: A pictorial history of Armadale Kelmscott, celebrating 100 years of local government*, City of Armadale, [1994], Appendix.

owner of the Narrogin Inn, built the Muckcross Tearoom on Albany Highway. At the rear of the tearoom was a large hall, which was hired out for social functions. The hall was a popular venue for dances and wedding receptions, as the Mechanic's Institute had become too small for the growing population of the district.⁹

The depression years had a serious impact on the Armadale region, as major employers in the area, including most of the sawmills and the Armadale Brickworks, ceased operations. In response to the growing unemployment crisis, the State government brought forward the construction of Canning Dam, and from 1933 to 1940, many locals worked on the project as sustenance labour. By the mid-1930s, the area was beginning to recover from the Depression, and a number of social or civic buildings were constructed, including the RSL Hall (1935), a new main section of Narrogin Inn (1937) to replace most of the original building, and *Armadale District Hall*.¹⁰

The planning and construction of a new public hall has been documented in detail in 'Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan', prepared by Palassis Architects, October 2001.

From mid-1921 the Armadale and District Road Board discussed proposals by the R.S.L. to provide a parcel of land to construct a Memorial Hall to replace the Mechanics Institute Hall which was no longer adequate for the town's needs. Hobbs, Forbes and Partners prepared plans for a new building but the development was not proceeded with.¹¹

Discussions as to the desirability of a new hall for the ratepayers of the district commenced again at the end of 1935. Plans drawn by architects Oldham Boas and Ednie Brown were tendered, and the suitability of various sites was also discussed.¹²

The designers of *Armadale District Hall*, architectural firm Oldham Boas & Ednie-Brown, had come into being on the death of Charles Oldham in 1920. Harold Boas was offered Oldham's practice on condition he keep the Oldham name. In 1923, Boas took into partnership Colin Ednie-Brown, who had been completing his articles with Oldham. The firm continued until 1959, being responsible for many of Perth's fine buildings.¹³ The builder, was J. B. Hawkins & Son, a West Australian firm which had its beginnings during the gold rush years, starting in 1895 with James Hawkins and his son John Bearne Hawkins.¹⁴

... in January [1936], the Town Planning Commissioner, Mr Davidson, attended a Road Board meeting where he was requested to inspect the two sites - namely Lot 8 and Reserve 8330 - considered suitable locations for a District Hall.

⁹ [Popham, Daphne, op cit, p. 132; O'Brien Planning Consultants, City of Armadale Municipal Heritage Inventory, 1995, entry for Muckcross Tearoom.](#)

¹⁰ [Popham, Daphne, op cit, pp. 135-138.](#)

¹¹ [Quoted from Palassis Architects, Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan, October 2001.](#)

¹² [Quoted from Palassis Architects, Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan, op cit, p. 11.](#)

¹³ Pitt Morison, M. 'Immigrant architects and their work, 1885-1905', unpublished paper, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴ Battye, J. S. (ed) *The Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Hussey & Gillingham, Adelaide, for the Cyclopedia Co, 1912-13, Vol. 1, p. 654; *Wise's Post Office Directory*, trade entries, 1940.

The commissioner's opinion was that the latter location was the preferable one. Further meetings in February and March of 1936 resulted in the acceptance of the tender of J. B. Hawkins and Sons, builders, for the demolition of the existing Mechanics Institute Hall and the construction of the new District Hall. The price tendered was 5,003 pounds. The building was to be 118 feet long by 83 feet wide, and was to accommodate up to 700 people.

The following month it was decided to send our circulars to all rate-payers in the Armadale Town, Armadale West and Bedforddale wards advising of the likely arrangements to finance the construction of the hall.

..In view of the progress Armadale and District is now making, it behooves us all to keep pace with the times by building an up-to-date Hall, especially on the easy terms the Road Board put before the Ratepayers at the Public Meeting held on the 18th instant.

In addition, our young people should be adequately catered for and not forced to travel miles to neighbouring halls because our present hall is out of date, and no longer suitable for present day entertainments.

Therefore, Vote YES on both Loans. If you vote NO, no Hall, no Pictures.

At the poll taken on 30 May 1936, the majority of rate-payers voted in favour of both loans. Two months later, the Road Board voted their approval for construction to proceed, and, in the following September, agreed to name the structure the Armadale District Hall.¹⁵

Armadale District Hall was opened on 12 December 1936 by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir James Mitchell. Proceedings commenced at 3.30pm with his inspection of a Boy Scout Guard of Honour, followed by a speech by Mr. R. Knuckey, Chairman of the Road Board. Sir James unveiled two commemorative plaques on the exterior of the place, following which the official party had afternoon tea and were entertained by local vocalist Miss Turner. In the evening, a ball was held, with music provided by Mr. Hart's four-piece orchestra.¹⁶

The report of the opening included a brief description of the building:

Of brick construction with a tile roof, the hall is attractively situated at the corner of Jull Street and Prospect Road, where a large area of land is available for car parking and for future gardens. The exterior of the building is of modern design and finished in white cement to represent stone work. The hall itself, which measures 50 ft by 75 ft and is 23 ft high, seats 700 people and is provided with a supper room to accommodate 150 people. Ventilation and lighting are a feature. There are cloak rooms for men and women, a stage and dressing rooms, a large kitchen, and a shop with a separate kitchen. A fire-proof cinema box and up-to-date facilities are available for the screening of motion pictures.¹⁷

The screening of pictures at *Armadale District Hall* was of great importance for the regular revenue this would generate. A Mr Hart had entered into a three-year contract, which gave him exclusive rights to show pictures in the place, for which he agreed to pay 15% of the takings with a minimum payment of £3 per week. Shows were to be held each Tuesday night and three Saturdays each month. By 23 March 1937, Mr Hart had disappeared, owing money for hall rental and film hire. C. M. Morrow then took over the screenings on

¹⁵ [Quoted from Palassis Architects, *Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan*, op cit, pp. 11-13.](#)

¹⁶ [Palassis Architects, *Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan*, op cit, p.13.](#)

¹⁷ [Quoted from Palassis Architects, *Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan*, op cit, p. 14.](#)

similar terms but within two months arranged to transfer his lease to Messrs Bleakley and Evans.¹⁸

The problems associated with the running of the picture shows were probably instrumental in the addition of the new gallery and bio-box in 1938.¹⁹ These changes no doubt contributed to the later success of the shows, which were run for many years by R. R. Perrie. Picture shows were held in the place until 1958, about a year after the arrival of television. The rent R. Perrie paid for use of the hall met much of the cost of the building and its maintenance. *Armadale District Hall* was the earliest of three halls in the region to consistently show pictures. When the weather was hot, the pictures were shown in an open-air picture theatre on the opposite side of the road. The increased floor space in the main hall created by the addition of the gallery was much appreciated when dances and balls were held.²⁰

The addition of the gallery resulted in some changes to *Armadale District Hall*, including the addition of a fire escape on the east side exterior, a new window in the upper facade and a landing for the stairs to the new bio box, which protruded onto the roof. The window and the landing reduced the symmetry of the façade as originally designed.²¹

In 1961, Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown and Partners designed an entry foyer for the lesser hall and new toilet facilities off the main entrance. The toilet facilities were housed in a bay added to each side of the facade. The bay on the right hand side screened the gallery fire escape from view at the front of the place. The additions were created in similar style to the original construction.²²

Armadale District Hall has been the district's community centre since 1936, being the venue for balls, dances, public meetings, displays, fundraising, wedding receptions, school concerts, and similar events.²³ In a study undertaken in March-May 2000, to assess the need for cultural facilities in Armadale, the local community strongly endorsed the retention of the place.²⁴ In 2001, the City of Armadale proposed to rezone the land around *Armadale District Hall* to allow the establishment of a large retail premise, to be occupied by Harvey Norman stores. On 24 February 2001, concerned residents staged a rally on the steps of *Armadale District Hall* to oppose the

¹⁸ [Armadale and District Road Board, Minutes of Meetings held 21 December 1936, 23 March, 19 April, 17 May 1937, Palassis Architects, Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan, op cit, p.16.](#)

¹⁹ [Plan for 'Armadale-Kelmscott Roads Board Hall, Armadale, Addition of New Gallery', Oldham, Boas & Ednie-Brown, 11 June 1938, Health Dept Plans Register, SROWA, CONS 5093.](#)

²⁰ Popham, Daphne, op cit, pp. 148-9.

²¹ [Plan for 'Armadale-Kelmscott Roads Board Hall, Armadale, Addition of New Gallery', op cit.](#)

²² Plan for 'Proposed alterations and additions to the Armadale Public Hall for the Armadale-Kelmscott Road Board', 16 January 1961, Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown & Partners, Health Dept Plans Register, SROWA, CONS 5093.

²³ *South-Western Advertiser*, various advertisements and notices, 1937-1958.

²⁴ [APP Projects with James Coulter Young & Ralph Beattie Bosworth, Needs assessment and feasibility study for Armadale Cultural Facilities: Final Report, prepared for the City of Armadale, 25 May 2000, as referenced in Palassis Architects, Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan, op cit.](#)

scale and location of the proposed development.²⁵ The development has not gone ahead.

Armadale District Hall was given a Level A management category in the City of Armadale Municipal Heritage Inventory, adopted on 21 August 1995.²⁶

In 2002, the place continues to be used for social functions.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Armadale District Hall is a brick and tiled building. The building contains the main hall, the lesser hall and the entrance foyer. The main hall is the dominant element of the building and contains a double height space that for a time served as a cinema.

Armadale District Hall is sited near the corner of Church Avenue and Jull Street, Armadale and stands beside Centenary Gardens. The gardens are about twenty five metres wide consisting mainly of areas of grass, planted beds and deciduous trees. The building faces north and is set about 6 metres from the rear of the footpath. The front of the building is raised about 1200mm above the level of the footpath.

A large bitumenised carpark stands on the east side of *Armadale District Hall*. A group of modern shops stand opposite the building.

A small freestanding lavatory block, which appears to have been built at the same time as the hall, is situated about ten metres away from the south east corner of the building.

Armadale District Hall consists of a parapetted block which houses the entrance lobby, the main hall, which is set behind the lobby, and the lesser hall which stands on the east side of the main hall.

The front (north) façade of the building is axially composed and is approached from street level by a wide flight of brick steps. The steps lead to the flat roofed entrance porch that matches the width of the entrance lobby and is supported at its outer corners by brick piers in which every fourth course is slightly recessed. This motif is repeated on the brick piers that stand at the back edge of the canopy.

The front façade of the parapetted block containing the entrance lobby is symmetrically composed with the walls on either side of the entrance containing two large metal-framed windows. There is a concentration of Inter-War Art Deco detailing around the entrance, notably the stylised pediment in the parapet above the entrance which carries the name of the building spelt out in metal letters.

The glazed entrance doors are slightly recessed and stand on either side of the small ticket office, which is positioned so that it is half internal and half external. The roof of the inner part of the entrance block is half hipped and rises to meet the gable wall at the end of the main hall. The dominant element of the front façade is the bio-box, which projects from the upper part of the gable wall. The bio-box is smooth rendered and faceted at its outer corners.

²⁵ [Armadale Examiner, 24 February, 1 March, 8 March, 29 March 2001, Palassis Architects, Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan, op cit.](#)

²⁶ [O'Brien Planning Consultants, City of Armadale Municipal Heritage Inventory, 1995, Site A02.](#)

The north wall of the east wing aligns with the gable wall of the main hall. The entrance block is placed in front of the main hall. The north wall of the east wing contains a faceted bay window and a door.

The east wing is substantially lower in height than the main hall. The ridge of the hipped roof running across the front of the building adjoins the roof of the main hall at just above the wall plate level. The lesser hall runs for the length of the main hall and the roof returns so that the ridges of the halls are parallel. The roof of the lesser hall abuts the wall of the main hall at a level that allows high level windows to be set above the boxed gutter and to thus provide light to the east side of the main hall. The side entrance to the hall has a flat roofed porch that is similar to the one above the main entrance.

The south (rear) part of the main hall, including the stage area, is housed under the half-hipped roof that rises to form a vented half gable. This rear section of roof is the only area where corrugated iron has been used as the roofing material. The rest of the building is covered with Marseilles pattern terra cotta tiles.

The west façade of the building is simply composed and is in effect the west wall of the main hall and the adjoining entrance block. The façade is broken into six bays by projecting piers. Five of the bays contain banks of windows that are set at high level and two have escape doors. A steel escape staircase leads from the door serving the upper level balcony at the back of the hall.

The walls of the building are of brick construction. The building sits on a plinth of face brickwork above which the walls are constructed of painted brickwork. Face brickwork piers stand at the outer edges of the front façade.

The main entry to the building is through a pair of timber framed glazed double doors, one set of doors on either side of the ticket office.

The ticket office is about two metres by two metres with a slight facetting to the inner corners. The booth is half glazed with jarrah boarding to the lower part.

Lavatories are located on the east and west sides of the entrance lobby. A timber staircase leads off the south west corner of the room. At the time of the inspection the staircase was boarded-off allowing no access to the upper floor. The double door located centrally within the south wall of the lobby leads through to the main hall.

The entrance lobby has jarrah-boarded flooring. The walls are finished in face brickwork up to door head height. Above this height the walls are of painted brickwork. The bricks have a slight clinkered finish. The ceiling is rendered.

The doors are of timber and each leaf has six panels with stop chamfering to the rails and muntings.

The lavatories have been modernised with vinyl floor tiles and standard vanity units and cubicles.

The main hall is about 22 metres long by 15 metres wide. The height of the room from floor to wall plate level is about 4.7 metres. The hall is divided into five bays by brick piers. The stage is at the south end of the hall and a balcony sits above two of the bays at the rear.

On the west side banks of windows three rows high sit at high level between the piers. On the east side the windows are only one row deep.

The roof is supported on trusses centred on brick piers. The bottom chords of the trusses are visible below ceiling level. The ceiling is faceted in cross

section presumably following the profile of the under side of the roof trusses. Sheets of fibrous plaster with edge battens line the ceiling. Two double doors lead from the east side of the room to the lesser hall. The main hall has jarrah flooring. The walls are of face brickwork to dado level and painted brickwork above.

The stage is a proscenium arch with the opening edged by stylised piers and entablature. The stage front is jarrah boarded.

The kitchen, which is at the north end of the lesser hall, is reached through a door in the north east corner of the hall. The room has had a modern fit out and is finished with sheet vinyl flooring and 150x150mm wall tiles. The ceiling is of battened sheeting.

The lesser hall is considerably lower than the main hall with a floor to wall plate level height of about three metres. The cross section of the ceiling is faceted and is lined with plaster. The walls are of face brickwork to dado level and painted brickwork above. The floor is carpeted. The external entrance doors are timber framed glazed. There is one bank of five casement windows in the east wall of the room.

The gallery to the main hall was constructed in 1938. The entry foyer for the lesser hall and new toilet facilities off the main entrance of *Armadale District Hall* were built in 1961.

Armadale District Hall appears to be in a good condition

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

(The section of 'Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan', by Palassis Architects, covering comparative analysis (pp. 27-28) has been appended.)

A comparison can also be made between the gallery seating in *Armadale District Hall* and the seating in the Cummins Theatre, Merredin (1928).

13.4 REFERENCES

Palassis Architects, 'Armadale District Hall Conservation Plan' for the City of Armadale, October 2001.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
