



**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)

- 4.3 Developing urban institutions
- 7.2 Developing institutions of self-government and democracy
- 8.1 Organising recreation
- 8.5 Forming associations
- 8.5.1 Preserving traditions and group memories
- 8.5.2 Helping other people
- 8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid
- 8.7 Honouring achievement
- 8.8 Remembering the fallen
- 8.9 Commemorating significant events and people
- 8.11 Making Australian folklore

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 404 Community services and utilities
- 501 World Wars and other wars

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Birdwood House, Geraldton is a good example of a public building demonstrating elements of several Inter-War architectural styles, including Free Classical and Georgian in its external presentation and Art Deco in its interior detailing. (Criterion 1.1)

Birdwood House, Geraldton is a strong visual landmark on an elevated site, with its façade featuring a raised entry porch. Its war memorial addresses the busy corner and is in line of sight for arrivals at the nearby *Geraldton Railway Station*. (Criterion 1.3)

* 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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Birdwood House, Geraldton was constructed in 1935 as the first permanent home in Geraldton for the Returned Services League and its preceding associations, at a time when the organisation provided significant social support and services for veterans, with a strong membership of returned service personnel from World War One. (Criterion 2.1)

Anzac Day services have been held annually at *Birdwood House, Geraldton* since 1936, organised by the RSL. Both the League and the annual services across Australia have contributed substantially to the revival of interest in Anzac Day from the 1980s onwards and the particular, increasingly dominant, form of Australian nationalism associated with Anzac remembrance. (Criterion 2.2)

Birdwood House, Geraldton was designed by Tom Roberts, the only architect registered in Geraldton or anywhere north of Perth through the inter-war years. He designed many buildings in Geraldton and also in the surrounding region. (Criterion 2.3)

Birdwood House, Geraldton was named in honour of William Riddel Birdwood, later Baron Birdwood, the much-respected British General who commanded Australian and New Zealand forces from 1914 to 1918, at Gallipoli and in France, and the choice of name is indicative of the very high esteem with which he was held in Australia following World War I. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Since its was constructed in 1935, *Birdwood House, Geraldton* has been the centre of Anzac Day commemorations in Geraldton, and as such the place is valued by those involved in these ceremonies, especially the RSL, war veterans more generally, and generations of scouts and guides, as well as the wider Geraldton community. (Criterion 4.1)

Birdwood House, Geraldton contains a significant collection of military memorabilia and is valued by the general public as a regional museum, visited by many people beyond the RSL. (Criterion 4.1)

The choice of strong architectural motifs and landmark site for *Birdwood House, Geraldton* demonstrates the social significance placed on returned servicepersons in the inter-war years, with the building's visual strength and presence commemorating and affirming the place of war service in the wider community. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Birdwood House, Geraldton is rare as one of the earliest known extant purpose-built RSL halls in Western Australia and one of four from the inter-war period (all 1930s) still in use by the RSL. (Criteria 5.1 & 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Birdwood House, Geraldton is a good, modest example of Inter-War Free Classical style with Georgian elements. (Criterion 6.1)

Birdwood House, Geraldton is a good example of the extensive work in Geraldton by local architect Tom Roberts in the inter-war years, and particularly his work on public buildings. (Criteria 6.1 & 6.2)

Birdwood House, Geraldton is representative of the development of RSL halls and meeting rooms across Western Australia in the inter-war years, and is a relatively substantial and prominently sited example from this period. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Birdwood House, Geraldton is in fair to good condition. The grounds and war memorial are well kept. Conservation works in recent years have improved the condition of the building since the 2008 conservation plan was completed.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Birdwood House, Geraldton has very high integrity, as it continues to be used for the purpose it was constructed for in 1935.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Birdwood House, Geraldton has high authenticity. The original layout remains largely intact, with small modifications and extensions to the rear. On the whole original fabric has been retained throughout. Replacement of ceiling and roof cladding in recent years has been done in a manner sensitive to the original.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on Eastman Poletti Sherwood Architects with Gary Martin, Historian, 'Birdwood House, Geraldton, Western Australia: Conservation Plan', prepared for Geraldton City RSL, October 2008, with amendments and/or additions by the Office of Heritage and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Birdwood House, Geraldton is a single-storey brick hall and associated granite war memorial, both constructed in 1935 for the Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (Later Geraldton City Returned and Services League of Australia Sub Branch).¹

European settlement at Geraldton began in 1849. It was linked to Perth by rail in 1894 and developed as a regional centre. From the 1890s, the town centred around the northern end of Marine Terrace, near the 1893 railway station and the Durlacher Street jetty.²

As service personnel began returning from World War One, it became clear that both they and the families of those who did not return would require significant social and economic support, which the government was not providing.³ In 1916, service personnel returning from the war formed the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), later to become the Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA, 1940) and finally the Returned & Services League (RSL) in 1965. The League was very active in providing and lobbying for welfare services and other assistance to returned service personnel, as well as being a social club and working to honour the memory of those killed.⁴

The 1916 League did not include representatives from Western Australia. Instead, several parallel organisations formed during the war, one of which was the AIF Returned Soldiers' Association.⁵ In 1917, a branch of this RSA formed in Geraldton and the following year the first Anzac Day service was held in the town.⁶ In 1918, the RSA amalgamated with the Empire Sailors and Soldiers Association and the new combined group was admitted as a State branch of the national RSSILA.⁷

One of the first actions of the Geraldton RSA was to establish a trust fund to care for returned service personnel: the Geraldton Sailors, Soldiers & Airmen's Memorial Institute Trust. In 1920, the Trust purchased Wainwright's Store in Marine Terrace as a headquarters. The premises included 27 rooms for

1 Information provided by Barry Stinson, Vice President Geraldton City RSL 25th September 2015

2 Eastman Poletti Sherwood Architects with Gary Martin, Historian, 'Birdwood House, Geraldton, Western Australia: Conservation Plan', prepared for Geraldton City RSL, October 2008, pp.15-16

3 SHO assessment documentation, P14468 ANZAC House, December 2014 (draft), p.5

4 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.16-17

5 SHO assessment documentation, P14468 ANZAC House, December 2014 (draft), p.6

6 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.16-17

7 SHO assessment documentation, P14468 ANZAC House, December 2014 (draft), pp.5-7

temporary accommodation of returned service persons, and was known as the Soldiers' Memorial Institute.⁸

From 1918, the Commonwealth Government initiated a substantial repatriation scheme to assist returning service personnel, largely as a result of RSSILA pressure. The RSSILA continued to provide practical assistance to members and their families, particularly by seeking employment and government services for veterans, as well as having a strong social role and seeking to ensure the memory of war service. Membership of the WA Association increased rapidly after the end of World War One.⁹

In 1922, the Geraldton RSSILA Women's Auxiliary was formed, meeting in the Geraldton Council Chambers.¹⁰

In 1927, a plaque inscribed with the names of Geraldton district's service personnel who had died during World War One was unveiled at *Geraldton Town Hall*.¹¹ Anzac Day commemorations in this period were held at the Town Hall, with the local Scouts and Guides groups already involved by this time.¹²

In 1933, Geraldton Architect Tom Roberts drew plans for the Geraldton Sailors, Soldiers & Airmen's Memorial Institute Trust for a new hall, as the Soldiers' Memorial Institute was no longer suitable for its purposes. After some negotiation, vacant land at the corner of Eleanor (later Chapman) Road and Forrest Street was designated Town Lot 1118 and transferred to the Trust in 1934. A.E. Crothers was appointed to construct the building and it was officially opened in September 1935. In keeping with AIF policy, as much of the design and construction work as possible was contracted to veterans. Honour Boards from *Geraldton Town Hall* were relocated to the new premises and it became the headquarters of both the Geraldton RSSILA and the Women's Auxiliary.¹³

In addition to the building, a memorial monument was also installed, sited to address the corner and intended as a visual statement for arrivals at *Geraldton Railway Station*. The 4.3 metre high granite structure was constructed by Messrs Wilson, Gray & Co Ltd of Perth.¹⁴

Anzac Day ceremonies for Geraldton were relocated to *Birdwood House, Geraldton* from 1936. The 1936 commemorations included veterans along with members of the Women's Auxiliary, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Brownies, Cubs, and members of the Town Council, local clergymen, police and the RSL Band.¹⁵

The new building was named 'Birdwood House' in honour of William Riddel Birdwood, later Baron Birdwood, the much-respected British General who

8 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.17-18

9 SHO assessment documentation, P14468 ANZAC House, December 2014 (draft), pp.5-7

10 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.29

11 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.17

12 'Anzac Day: Geraldton's combined service', *Geraldton Guardian*, Tuesday 27 April 1926, p.2
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/67166610>

13 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.18-20, 27, 29

14 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.36

15 'The People's Tribute', *Geraldton Guardian & Express*, Saturday 25 April 1936, p.3
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/67326060> Note: this article uses 'RSL' rather than 'RSSILA', which was technically the name of the organisation at the time.

commanded the Australian and New Zealand forces from 1914 to 1918, at Gallipoli and in France. The name, selected in 1935, was inscribed in the portico pediment. Birdwood visited Geraldton in August 1937 and was given a key and 'freedom of' the building.¹⁶ Birdwood was held in extremely high esteem in Australia after World War I, and made frequent visits to Western Australia in the inter-war years, including performing ceremonial duties at many RSL events.¹⁷

A caretaker for the hall was appointed from November 1935, and the position remained filled by a succession of men, mostly war veterans, until it was dispensed with in 1950.¹⁸

The grounds were landscaped by volunteers from 1935 to plans prepared by W.P. Edwards. Canna lilies and hibiscus were planted. Several items were donated, including an 'artistic figure fountain', concrete garden seat and flag staff. A hedge was planted along the southern boundary. An existing well was equipped with a tank and pumphouse, male toilets were in a separate building behind the hall, and an area was reserved for a future bowling green. The pumphouse was expanded into a shed in 1938, and grounds levelled for a bowling green, but the latter never eventuated.¹⁹

Within a year of the hall's opening, the kitchen was found to be too small to cater for functions. It was subsequently enlarged by removing a wall to the original Caretaker's Quarters. A portion of the rear verandah was filled in to expand the Caretaker's Quarters.²⁰

Membership criteria of the RSSILA/RSSAILA were quite stringent, and the Association upheld conservative political values. The Association appears to have been less popular with World War Two veterans after that war than it had been with veterans returning from World War One, as WA membership numbers declined steadily from the late 1940s through to the 1970s.²¹ This is likely because the range of other support services available was far greater in this period than it had been in the inter-war years.

Birdwood House, Geraldton appears to have initially been used only for RSSILA purposes, or for events such as wedding receptions of RSSILA members' families. However, by the 1950s a range of 'occasional users' were recorded for the hall, providing a small but steady income stream for the Geraldton Sailors, Soldiers & Airmen's Memorial Institute Trust. Uses include various social and service clubs, art exhibitions, church meetings, dance groups and sporting associations.²² In 2016, any income generated now goes to the Geraldton City RSL Sub Branch.²³

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- 16 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.19; A.J. Hill, 'Birdwood, William Riddell (Baron Birdwood)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/birdwood-william-riddell-baron-birdwood-5240> accessed 25 May 2015
- 17 John Stephens, conversation with Clare Menck, 26 June 2015
- 18 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.35
- 19 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.37-40
- 20 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.34
- 21 SHO assessment documentation, P14468 ANZAC House, December 2014 (draft), pp.8-9
- 22 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.20-25
- 23 Information provided by Barry Stinson, Vice President Geraldton City RSL 25th September 2015

From 1949, recommendations were periodically put forward to bituminise the forecourt of *Birdwood House, Geraldton*, and the area resurfaced with colas [sic] and metal in 1964.²⁴

On-site caretakers were again appointed from 1953 and the role remained filled until the early 1990s, generally by a war veteran.²⁵

In 1960, a new free-standing Caretaker's Quarters was constructed on site by F. Carilini.²⁶

In 1962 the Geraldton RSSAILA requested the Town Council remove from its grounds a cannon and anchor. However, in 1975 the League subsequently applied for a Howitzer to display in the grounds. In 2016, a 105mm Pack Howitzer is on display together with a Leopard Mark I Main Battle Tank, which was installed in 2011. A seedling from Lone Pine at Gallipoli was planted in 1969, but failed to survive, and has not been replaced to date.²⁷

In 1975, a water tank and stand was removed from the rear of *Birdwood House, Geraldton* and in 1981 the rear area was levelled and gravelled for a parking area.²⁸

In 1976, a large entrance with double-doors was made between the original billiard room (later bar) and the main hall. Major conservation works were also completed in 1975-76, including repair of all external joinery, repair or replacement of fretted vents, repairs to roof leaks and broken glass, and repainting throughout. Guttering was renewed in 1984 and other upgrades, such as repairing the side-entrance double doors, reinforcing the wall by the rear door and installing a wheelchair access ramp, appear to have also been undertaken through the mid-1980s. Alterations and additions, designed by Lew Eves, were completed in 1989, including installing internal male toilets and adding a rear storeroom, with access from the Main Hall, where there had formerly been a rear verandah. This rear storeroom was later converted for use as a museum, displaying the Geraldton RSL's considerable memorabilia collection.²⁹

From the late 1960s into the 1970s, general interest in Anzac Day declined, particularly in response to Australian involvement in the unpopular Vietnam War. The RSL continued holding Anzac services. From the 1980s, there was a revival of interest in Anzac Day commemorations among the general public, despite a rapidly declining number of surviving veterans from World War One. Anzac Day largely shed its links to British Imperialism and was refocussed as a celebration of Australian nationalism, with many young people taking part.³⁰ The scouting movement became regularly involved in Anzac Day commemorations, with a

24 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.38

25 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.35-36

26 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.34-35

27 Information provided by Barry Stinson Vice President Geraldton City RSL 25th September 2015

28 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.39

29 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.24-25, 31, 34

30 Sonja Bates, 'The Anzac Day Legend: Its Origins, Meaning, Power and Impact on Shaping Australia's Identity', Masters of Peace and Conflict Studies Dissertation, University of Sydney, 2013, pp.27-28, http://www.gcpc2015.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sonja_Bates_Dissertation_Anzac_Legend.pdf
Accessed 27 May 2015

specific 'Their Service Our Heritage' badge available, to the present (2015), to scouts who participate in Anzac Day activities.³¹

The words 'Geraldton RSL Sub-Branch' were added to the entrance doors to the front of *Birdwood House, Geraldton* in 1990. In 1992, a metal plaque commemorating conflicts in Korea Malaya Borneo & Vietnam was been affixed to the Granite Memorial.³²

In 1992, Geraldton RSL acquired a liquor license for the premises, thirty years after a bar was installed in the billiard room and twenty years after an initial attempt to form a license club had failed.³³

A children's playground to the south of *Birdwood House, Geraldton* was acquired by the RSL and landscaped as a memorial park from 1992. A plan was prepared by Bob Bandy and Charlie Britt in 1996 and the park, including Memorial Wall, officially opened in 2002.³⁴

Although a caretaker had still been on site in the mid-1980s, by 1995 the caretaker's quarters were unoccupied and reported to be uninhabitable. However, a caretaker was reported as moving into the premises in January 1996. By 2007, they were again vacant.³⁵

In 1995, the RSL considered moving the war memorial to a Mount Scott, which was considered a more suitable site for Anzac day services, but the project did not proceed due to lack of funds. The memorial remains at its original location and continues to be the focus of annual commemorative events.³⁶

In 2007, Geraldton RSL received Lotteries Commission funding to prepare a conservation plan for *Birdwood House*, and this was completed by Eastman Poletti Sherwood Architects and Gary Martin Historian in 2008. The RSL immediately sought to replace the building's ceilings using polyglass to imitate the original fibrous plaster cladding and decorative plaster cornices.³⁷ However, the works did not proceed at the time due to potential asbestos contamination from the roof sheeting. The works were eventually undertaken by cladding the ceiling with gyp rock sheeting over steel battens in order to stabilise the old plaster board (still in situ). New architraves and ceiling features were installed to match the original.³⁸

In 2010, a brick extension was made to the rear of *Birdwood House, Geraldton*. The existing rear shed was proposed for replacement with a larger shed. Original corrugated asbestos roof sheeting was removed in 2011 and the entire roof reclad with metal sheeting. The City of Greater Geraldton in 2012 granted \$6,000

31 Scouts Australia, 'Their Service Our Heritage', <http://www.scouts.com.au/their-service-our-heritage-badge-placement> accessed 27 May 2015

32 Information provided by Barry Stinson Vice President Geraldton City RSL 25th September 2015

33 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.23&25

34 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.40-41

35 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.24-25, 36

36 Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, p.37

37 SHO file P01049

38 Information provided by Barry Stinson Vice President Geraldton City RSL 25th September 2015

over three years as a Community Grant for further restoration works at the place. Lights have also recently been replaced.³⁹

In 2015, Birdwood House received a grant of \$10,000 from the City of Greater Geraldton towards a \$21,000 project to paint the exterior timber and masonry. Solar Panels were installed in 2015 as part of the City's Sustainability Program.⁴⁰

In 2015, *Birdwood House, Geraldton* continues to be used by Geraldton RSL for its original purpose as an RSL hall and war memorial.⁴¹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Birdwood House, Geraldton is a single-storey brick hall and associated granite war memorial, both constructed in 1935 for the Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (Later Geraldton City Returned and Services League of Australia Sub Branch. It is designed in Inter-War Free Classical styles with elements of Inter-War Georgian Revival style, with Art Deco interior detailing.

Birdwood House, Geraldton is sited on the south corner of Chapman Road and Forrest Street intersection, Geraldton. The whole site is elevated above street level by about 600mm and is held in place by a red face-brick retaining wall, giving the building an elevated appearance. Steps lead up to the front from Chapman Road.

The main building runs parallel to Forrest Street, addressing Chapman Road, and is set well back from the street with a paved forecourt. The war memorial is located on the corner. To the south of the building is a landscaped memorial garden. To the rear are several outbuildings and a bitumen carpark.

Birdwood House, Geraldton is a rectangular red brick building with gable roof clad in metal sheeting. Gabled parapets hide the roof cladding at front and rear. The dominant feature of the building is its substantial front entrance portico. The parapet and entablature with rendered mouldings is supported by six precast-concrete unfluted Doric columns and sited on a raised concrete, stepped plinth.

Internally, the front half of *Birdwood House, Geraldton* comprises several smaller rooms either side of an entrance lobby and central corridor, and the rear half a large main hall, with kitchen and museum beyond. Internal features of note include double leadlight entrance doors with top-lights and fanlights, decorative plaster ceiling cornices in Art Deco style, a small curved timber stage in the southwest corner of the main hall. The elaborate original system of roof ventilation was removed in 2011 when the asbestos roof sheeting was replaced.

The building and grounds contain a substantial collection of military memorabilia, particularly concentrated in the rear museum room. A very fine honour board covers a whole wall of the Board Room, and a 105MM Pack Howitzer Field Gun together with a Leopard Mark 1 Main Battle Tank is located in the memorial garden.

³⁹ SHO file P01049

⁴⁰ Information provided by Barry Stinson Vice President Geraldton City RSL 25th September 2015

⁴¹ The Physical Evidence section largely summarises the information presented in Eastman Poletti Sherwood & Martin, 'Birdwood House CP', October 2008, pp.56-62

The War Memorial is a 4.3 metre high, rectangular granite block that stands on a stepped plinth. The front and rear faces feature a large cross with a plaque beneath. The front plaque commemorates WWI and the rear plaque commemorates WWII. An additional plaque commemorates wars fought in Korea, Borneo, Malaysia and Vietnam.

For more detail refer to *Eastman Poletti Sherwood Architects with Gary Martin, Historian, 'Birdwood House, Geraldton, Western Australia: Conservation Plan', prepared for Geraldton City RSL, October 2008.*

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

RSL Halls

The State Heritage Office database lists 54 places with the specific use 'RSL Hall' and a further six halls with the keyword 'RSL' and other uses noted. Three of these RSL halls are on the State Register:

- P00562 *Marble Bar Hotel (fmr), Coolgardie*, an 1897 former hotel building used as the headquarters for the Coolgardie RSL from the 1960s to the present.
- P00825 RSL Building, part of P18402 *Esperance RSL Building, Norfolk Island Pine Trees and War Memorial*, an 1896 former school building, then used as Municipal offices before becoming the local RSL headquarters from 1966.
- P01227 *Irwin Roads Board Office (fmr)*, a 1910 municipal council office building, used by the RSL from 1966 to 1972.

In addition to *Birdwood House, Geraldton*, two other RSL halls are in the assessment program:

- P06918 Broomehill RSL & Citizens' Hall, a simple, small utilitarian building with no date in the database, but probably from the 1940s-1950s, earmarked for assessment as part of P12413 Broomehill Town Centre Precinct
- P08942 Northampton RSL Hall & War Memorial, a 1956 brick hall and granite war memorial, sited on a prominent town corner.

The 2008 Conservation Plan claims that *Birdwood House, Geraldton* is an early extant example of an RSL Hall. The RSL was formed in 1916. Twenty-three of the RSL halls in the SHO database are noted as constructed prior to 1916 and therefore cannot have been purpose built. Of the others, the following are earlier than *Birdwood House, Geraldton*, none of which has been reviewed for possible assessment for the State Register:

- P06723 RSL Hall (fmr), Narembreen (1920), weatherboard and corrugated-iron roofed, converted to a residence
- P08209 RSL Anzac Memorial Hall, Corrigin (fmr) (1922), a small, modestly designed stone building with corrugated iron roof, converted to a shop

- P02432 RSL Memorial Hall, Osborne Park (1922-24), a small, simple hall with horizontal corrugated iron wall sheeting and a masonry façade with stepped parapet. The parapet appears to be a later addition, and has '1930' inscribed. The place remains in use by the RSL.
- P02688 Waroona RSL Memorial Hall (1932), more recently used as an agricultural hall, a brick and zincalume-roofed building listed as Inter-War Art Deco style but also demonstrating Classical characteristics. It is a building of comparative scale to *Birdwood House, Geraldton*, and possibly a little larger but with a similar scaled façade, prominently sited on South West Highway, with landscaped grounds. The war memorial is located about 200 metres further along South West Highway and is a small monument in a park setting. The RSL continues to use the hall for meetings and as the starting point for its Anzac Day commemorative march to the war memorial.⁴²
- P13376 RSL Hall (fmr) Wonthella (1932), a brick and fibrous cement-clad building with tile roof, on Eighth Street, noted in the Municipal Inventory as converted for use as a theatre. Google imagery from 2010 does not appear to show any building matching this description in Eighth Street.
- P04681 RSL Hall Armadale (1935), a weatherboard-clad corrugated-iron roofed building still in use as an RSL hall. It is a modest-scaled building sited in the rail reserve near the retail centre of Armadale, and has no on-site war memorial.

In addition, P12549 Ballidu RSL Hall (1920) is noted as a 'site' but also as timber and iron building in current use as an RSL Hall, and it has not been possible to establish whether it is extant. Google streetview suggests it probably is not.

The SHO database lists another four RSL halls from the 1930s, none of which has been reviewed for possible assessment for the State Register:

- P11996 RSL Hall & Harvey Sub-Branch RSL Honour Rolls (1937), a weatherboard-clad corrugated-iron roofed building with a simple brick façade that appears to have been added in a later period. The hall is listed in the Municipal Inventory as in use as an RSL hall, but 2015 Google imagery showing it with both 'RSL' in the parapet and a Playgroup logo by the door. It is in a side street and has no on site war memorial.
- P12288 RSL Hall, Tambellup (1937), a weatherboard-clad corrugated-iron roofed building with a simple brick facade. Although listed in the Municipal Inventory as still in use as an RSL hall, Google imagery from 2015 suggests it is either vacant or in use as part of a residence, without any remnant RSL lettering.
- P05917 RSL Hall, Pingelly (1938), a brick and corrugated iron-roofed building in Inter-War Free Classical style, believed to remain in use as an RSL hall. It is smaller than *Birdwood House, Geraldton* and, although on the main street of the town, is neither elevated nor on a corner and has no

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Drakesbrook Despatch, Issue 64, April 2015, p.1
<http://www.drakesdespatch.com.au/files/issues/201504.pdf> accessed 25 May 2015

associated memorial, making it less prominent. The hall has a decorative parapet but otherwise appears to be a relatively simple building.

- P01495 RSL Hall, Manjimup (1939), a brick and corrugated-iron roofed building of simple design, in use as an RSL hall and library when the Municipal Inventory was compiled. Google imagery from 2008 does not appear to show any building matching this description near the address given, and the Manjimup Library appears to no longer be located in an RSL hall.

Birdwood House, Geraldton is among the earliest known extant purpose-built RSL halls and one of four from the inter-war period (all 1930s) still in use by the RSL. It is one of two that are the most substantial and prominently sited, along with the 1932 hall at Waroona.

A heritage assessment for P14468 Anzac House, Perth, the RSL's WA headquarters site from 1934 to the present, a 1979 Brutalist building, was prepared in 2014 and consideration of the place for entry into the State Register is continuing.

RSL in Geraldton

The original home of the Geraldton RSL, Wainwright's Store, is no longer extant. The site is noted in the SHO database (P13466) and Geraldton Municipal Inventory. The Women's Auxiliary originally met in the Council Chambers, which are also no longer extant, but noted as an historic site (P13234).

Birdwood House, Geraldton was the first purpose-built meeting place for the RSL in Geraldton and remains its headquarters to the present (2015). The only other RSL hall listed in the SHO database in Greater Geraldton is the 1932 hall in Wonthella, noted above as no longer in use by the RSL and possibly no longer extant.

War Memorials

The SHO database includes 66 places noted as 'memorials' with the word 'war' in their name, of which 22 are on the Register. Most of these (17) are constructed of stone, with six specifically noted as granite. Many are much larger and/or more elaborate structures than at *Birdwood House, Geraldton*. Many include other features such as memorial gardens, honour boards and military hardware. Eight RSL halls in the database are noted as including a war memorial, of which one is Registered (P18402 *Esperance RSL Building, Norfolk Island Pine Trees and War Memorial*), but this is unlikely to be a full list as examples known to include both hall and memorial are not flagged in this search, including *Birdwood House, Geraldton*.

The War Memorial at *Birdwood House, Geraldton* is a small and modest monument in comparison to other examples.

Tom Roberts

Tom Roberts was born in Victoria c.1880 and moved to Western Australia early in the twentieth century. His early work in the State was in the goldfields, including involvement in the design of the Kalgoorlie Town Hall and Council Chambers. Roberts moved to Geraldton in 1910 and initially worked as a

publican before resuming architectural practice in 1911. In 1916 he enrolled with the AIF, returning to Geraldton after demobilisation in 1919. In the 1920s and 1930s, Roberts was the only architect registered in Geraldton and he designed a great many buildings in the town in the inter-war years, including shops, halls, golf club, residences and farm buildings. It appears Roberts was the only architect registered anywhere north of the metropolitan area in the inter-war period. He died in 1947.⁴³

There are two other places in the SHO database noted to be designed by Tom Roberts:

- P03726 *Glengarry Station Complex*, Moonyoonooka, a 1912 homestead within a collection of nineteenth century farm buildings (RHP)
- P01317 St John the Baptist Cathedral, Kalgoorlie, a 1908 brick and iron Federation Gothic style building (HCWA Assessment Program)

The 2008 Conservation Plan for *Birdwood House* notes that Tom Roberts also designed the 1934 Druids' Hall and 1932 Yacht Club Hall in Geraldton.

- P01059 Druid's Hall (fmr), cnr Sandford & Durlacher Streets, was entered into the Register on an interim basis in 2004 but in 2005 the Minister declined to progress it to a permanent entry and it was removed from the Register. The hall was subsequently demolished, with only the Inter-War Stripped Classical style façade retained, and a new building of similar scale to the original constructed in 2007.
- P13464 Yacht Club Hall, Marine Terrace near Foreshore Drive intersection, designed in a similar style to Druids' Hall, with modifications to enclose the front entrance and create a new main entrance from the side.

Both the Yacht Club and the Druids' Hall are similar in scale to *Birdwood House, Geraldton*, and all are simple rectangular gable-roofed buildings with roofing hidden behind decorative parapeted facades.

Architectural Style

Birdwood House, Geraldton is designed in the Inter-War Free Classical style with Inter-War Georgian Revival details.

The SHO database includes 120 places noted as Inter-War Free Classical style, of which 38 are on the State Register. Twenty-one of these are outside the Metropolitan area, including one in the Midwest:

- P01620 *Morawa Shire Office & Town Hall* (1930 and 1939)

The SHO database includes 75 places noted as Inter-War Georgian Revival style, of which 16 are on the State Register. Eight of these are outside the Metropolitan area, including two in the Midwest:

- P01662 *Masonic Lodge (fmr), Mullewa* (1926)

⁴³ John Taylor, 'Thomas Roberts (c.1880-1947)', *Western Australian Architect Biographies*, November 2012, [http://www.architecture.com.au/docs/default-source/wa-notable-buildings/t-roberts-for-aia-\(wa\).pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://www.architecture.com.au/docs/default-source/wa-notable-buildings/t-roberts-for-aia-(wa).pdf?sfvrsn=2) accessed 27 May 2015; Post Office Directories, 1920-1939, http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/wa_resources/post_office_directories

- P01938 *Bank of New South Wales (NSW) (fmr)* (1935)

Birdwood House, Geraldton has little in common with either of these buildings, in style, scale or materials.

Birdwood House, Geraldton is a good, modest example of Inter-War Free Classical style with Inter-War Georgian Revival elements.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

Eastman Poletti Sherwood Architects with Gary Martin, Historian, 'Birdwood House, Geraldton, Western Australia: Conservation Plan', prepared for Geraldton City RSL, October 2008.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
