



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

Wesley Church is a fine example of colonial architecture, distinctive for the use of handmade bricks in rich earthy tones, laid in flemish bond. (Criterion 1.1)

Wesley Church is an excellent example of the work of R. R. Jewell in the Victorian Academic Gothic style, in Perth. (Criterion 1.2)

Wesley Church is a landmark in central Perth. (Criterion 1.3)

Wesley Church is an important component in the stock of colonial architecture of Perth together with the Town Hall, The Barracks Arch, Government House, The Cloisters and the Central Government Offices. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Wesley Church founding of Western Australia, and also of the importance of religion in the general community. (Criterion 2.1)

Wesley Church illustrates the character of the earlier, colonial, townscape of Perth prior to the Goldrushes, much of which was demolished or altered in the subsequent boom period of the Goldrushes. (Criterion 2.2)

Wesley Church has a close association with the Shenton and Hardey families who were early pioneers of the colony and which families made substantial contributions to the development of Western Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

Wesley Church has a close association with Richard Roach Jewell, Clerk of Works and Superintendent of Perth and Fremantle of the colony until 1885. Jewell was responsible for the design of a large number of public buildings in this period. (Criterion 2.3)

The fabric of *Wesley Church* reflects changes over time: increases in population, memorials to members of the congregation fallen in war, changes

in usage and the damage caused by the 1968 Meckering earthquake.
(Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Wesley Church is held in high regard by the congregation and the general community. It is held in high regard for its aesthetic characteristics and financial appeals for its restoration have been supported by the wider Perth community. (Criterion 4.1)

Wesley Church has been of value to the members of the Methodist and now Uniting Church for over 120 years. (Criterion 4.1)

Wesley Church contributes to the sense of place of the community as a religious place of worship and as a reminder of the past, colonial history of the development of Perth. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Wesley Church is one of a small number of remaining colonial buildings of the mid-nineteenth century, the loss of which would greatly diminish the historic building stock of Perth. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Wesley Church is highly representative of the Victorian Academic Gothic style of architecture. It well demonstrates all the principals characteristics of the style. (Criterion 6.1)

The erection of a sophisticated building like *Wesley Church*, within a comparatively small community, is representative of the importance of religious observance in the social and cultural fabric of the colony. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The building is in sound condition. There is a regular program of maintenance and repair undertaken under the supervision of the architectural practice, Duncan, Stephen and Mercer.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of the original building of 1870 has been respected through the course of subsequent additions and alterations. Unsympathetic alterations and additions were, in the most part, corrected in the 1987 restorations. The internal fittings and fixtures of the place are substantially intact, with a process of accretion rather than diminution taking place over the years.

The original function of the place as a place of worship remains intact. The place has a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Although there have been alterations and changes in functional requirements in over a century of use, the fabric of the building is largely intact. The building has a considerable degree of authenticity despite the addition of a modern chapel constructed in modern brick. The chapel additions, and the incorporation of other modern materials in the place, whilst not desirable, do not significantly alter the authenticity of the place, and are incorporated in a manner which is stylistically similar to the original design. The building has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Wesley Church is a brick church built in 1870, for the Methodist congregation of Perth.

The first Methodists arrived in the Swan River Colony, on 3 February 1830, aboard the *Tranby* to found a small religious community on a peninsula of fertile land four miles upstream from Perth, where the present Perth suburb of Maylands is situated.³² The group was led by Joseph and John Wall Hardey, and the Clarksons.³³ The Hardeys established a property and built a house called 'Tranby'.³⁴ They would later farm in the York area.

Methodist services were held in Fremantle soon after the first congregation arrived in the Colony, until the beginning of May, most of the party moved to the peninsula; Joseph Hardey's first public service in June 1830 in Perth, was held under a tree.³⁵ Chapels were built in 1834 and 1841.³⁶ The first service in the second chapel was held on the first Sunday in January, 1842.³⁷

In June 1866, Rev T. C. Laurance (who was stationed in the Geraldton area but maintained close ties with Perth) said in a letter to London, 'Mr Lowe will have mentioned, I daresay, that we are now about to erect a new and larger Sanctuary'.³⁸ Land to build upon, at the corner of Hay and William Streets, Perth was purchased from Mr James Inkpen at a cost of £400. An appeal was launched for the acquisition of the land and a letter circulated in June 1867:

'My Dear..., The Wesleyans of Perth having for considerable period found that their Chapel is not sufficiently large for the Congregation many sittings have been inquired for which could not be supported - the Trustees have decided on building a Church at the Corner of Hay and William Streets which will be commodious for the congregation and

³² Stannage, C. T. *The People of Perth. A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City* (Perth, 1979) p. 38; and Lutton, W. *The Wesley Story, Centenary of Wesley Church, Perth, Western Australia 1870 - 1970* A4 brochure, no pagination, (Perth, Wesley Church, 1970) circa p. 2; Johnston, R. *The Tranby Hardeys* (Serpentine, Parmelia Publishing Pty. Ltd.) p. 13.

³³ *ibid.*, Lutton, pp. 1-2.

³⁴ The place may have initially been referred to as 'Peninsula Farm'.

³⁵ *Sunday Times*, 10 March 1985 p. 11; and Ward, K., *A Perth Sketchbook* (Perth, Rigby Limited, 1979) p. 34.

³⁶ Synod of Western Australia.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

an ornament to the Town. The new structure will contain over 600 sittings. The land purchased for the site of the intending building has cost £400. The Trustees confidently believing that the important object they have in view in erecting a large and beautiful church will advance the moral and spiritual interests of the people of Perth and its vicinity, now respectfully and urgently appeal to you...for your sympathy and aid in this important undertaking. Donations will be thankfully received by W. Lowe, G. Shenton and Joseph Hardey.³⁹

The new church was the third Methodist place of worship to be built in the forty years in which the denomination had been established in the Swan River Colony. George Shenton had earlier suggested that the name of the church be *Wesley Church*, and promised £1,000 to establish the building fund.⁴⁰ The executors of George Shenton's estate honoured the promise. Joseph Hardey contributed £500.⁴¹

Richard Roach Jewell, architect, circuit steward and church member designed the church. Jewell arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1852, and was Clerk of Works of the Colonial Establishment. His first building was the *Perth Gaol and Courthouse* (1853-56). He would remain in office until 1885, and was responsible for the design of a number of prominent Perth buildings including, *Pensioner Barracks* (1863), the west wing of the *Central Government Offices* (1874) and the lower two storeys of the east wing in 1882, *The Cloisters* (1856), the extensions to the Roman Catholic pro-cathedral convent buildings (1860s), and alterations to *Perth Town Hall* (1870).

Jewell designed *Wesley Church* in the fashionable Gothic revival style, a style which he successfully adapted in his other buildings. The Gothic revival style became much favoured for new buildings throughout Australia and other parts of the British Empire from the 1850s to the 1870s - not only for churches, for which it had strong historical associations, but also for other public buildings. The style had been given prominence in the work of Ruskin, Pugin, Street and Scott in the United Kingdom and Pugin's *Houses of Parliament* in London (1850) epitomised the style.

Jewell submitted a plan for *Wesley Church* comprising the nave, chancel and bell tower with a tall and elegant spire, which was accepted with one alteration - the relocation of the bell tower from the north-east side to the south-east side.⁴²

The total cost of the building was estimated to be in the vicinity of £3,000 - a considerable sum for a church membership of 138 in total and with a quarterly income of little over £66.⁴³ An appeal was launched to raise the funds; George Shenton and Joseph and John Wall Hardey gave over half the cost of the church between them. Rev. T. C. Laurance contributed £20, and the Rev. William Lowe £10, towards the cost of the site. Funding for the building was raised by subscription and a bank loan of £800 at the interest

³⁹ Appeal letter, 1867

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, Stannage, p. 150.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, Synod.

⁴² *ibid.*, Lutton, p. 8.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 7, cites the income was Voluntary £46/7/9. Government stipend £20.

rate of five per cent per annum, for which Joseph Hardey and George Shenton were guarantors.⁴⁴

Perth in the mid-nineteenth century was a small town, the people of influence known in the whole community. The Hardey family had prospered since 1830 with productive lands that they were able to extend. John Wall Hardey became a member of the Legislative Council. George Shenton had established himself as a general merchant and, by 1867, had a fine house in Perth and political influence. His son, George Shenton, Jnr. would later become Lord Mayor of Perth.⁴⁵

Wesley Church was a centre not only of worship but also of moral and social influence and commemoration. George Shenton, who was so active in establishing the church, drowned before *Wesley Church* was built. His family contributed additional funds to build a larger chancel than originally planned and installed a memorial window to his father.⁴⁶

James Brittain's tender of £200/3/0 won the contract for laying the foundations. The corner stone was laid on 24 October 1867, by Governor J. S. Hampton. A bottle containing news of the day was deposited in the cavity and the Governor was presented with a silver trowel by Joseph and John Hardey.⁴⁷ The Rev. T. C. Laurance summed up the mood of the occasion in his address: 'Beautiful as was the Crystal Palace - sparkling like a gem in Heaven's sunlight - more beautiful in God's sight is a temple of Grace, a material structure erected for His worship; but most beautiful before Him is a converted man, devoted to His service - a living temple consecrated by in the indwelling Jehovah'.⁴⁸

William Buggins built the church walls and the spire for a total of £394. A tender for 100,000 bricks for the church was recorded as filled for 26s per thousand by W. Sloan. According to the Synod of Western Australia, Sloan's first delivery was rejected as being of inferior quality, crumbling at the edges.⁴⁹ The nave was estimated to require 152,848 bricks (11.3 x 23.8 x 7.5 cms); the chancel, 18,288; and 187,248 for the tower.⁵⁰ The construction workers on site also built *Perth Town Hall* which was being erected one block to the east.⁵¹ The floor was laid by J. Halliday for 18s per square of 100 super feet. The contract for plastering was let to J. Platt for £294. A tender was let for the roof and the pews and was won by H. Cutting for £345 and £102/67/6, respectively. The steeple weathercock is believed to have been made by Alfred Carson and stood on the spire, 35 metres above the ground.⁵²

Wesley Church was opened on Sunday 10 April, 1870. The Rev. W. Lowe preached in the morning, The Rev. W. Traylen in the afternoon and The Rev. T. C. Laurance in the evening. Mr Lowe preached from 1 Kings 8:27 'But will

44 *ibid.* Lutton, p. 9.

45 *ibid.* Lutton, pp. 81, 102 & 120.

46 *ibid.*, Lutton, p. 8.

47 *ibid.*, p. 9.

48 *ibid.*, Stannage, p. 151.

49 The Synod has no evidence of Sloan receiving payment. Dyson, whose tender was the next lowest, was paid £672.7.20 for 'Bricks and Timber'.

50 *ibid.*, Lutton, pp. 7-10.

51 Perth Heritage Trails: Settlement and Development of the City of Perth, pp. 30-31.

52 *ibid.*, Lutton, pp. 7-10.

God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house that I have builded?' In the afternoon, William Traylen spoke from Psalm 87:5, 'And of Zion it shall be said This and that man was born in her; and the highest himself shall establish her.' The offerings for the day were £70 and some members later made gifts of watches and jewellery which realised an additional £150.⁵³

In 1880, a clergy vestry was added to the church at a cost of £385. By the mid 1890s, the influx of people during the goldrush meant that seating in the church needed to be increased. In 1896, a choir vestry and organ loft were built and alterations and additions to the church were made including, the north-east tower (which buried the original foundation stone),⁵⁴ the side galleries and the ceiling to the nave, and the south-west porch. The alterations were at a cost of £1,150 and the architect was J. J. Talbot Hobbs. Hobbs was prominent Perth-based architect who had migrated to Perth in 1887. By 1896, he had been responsible for a number of buildings including the Princes Building and the Masonic Lodge in Perth, domestic buildings and additions to St. Albans Church in Highgate. Further additions made to the northern side of the chancel by Hobbs, Smith and Forbes at the turn of century, were later demolished in 1974.⁵⁵

After the First World War, a pulpit was placed in the centre of the chancel as a memorial to the fallen.

The Meckering earthquake of October 1968, caused major damage to a number of buildings in Perth. It shook *Wesley Church* and structural cracks appeared in the steeple. A decision was made to demolish the steeple but when about thirty feet was removed, the remainder of the structure seemed quite secure, and so a copper cone was placed on the top to replace the damaged section. The bell was removed from the tower as it was thought the structure too weak to support its weight.⁵⁶ The bell was, instead, mounted outside the church on a concrete stand. Concrete paving was put in place around the building to assist in drainage and to provide more stability to the soil. Repairs totalled nearly \$10,000.⁵⁷

In 1974, redevelopment commenced on the north-west and south-west sides of the church site and the Wesley Centre was built.⁵⁸ Turn-of-the-century additions to the northern side of the chancel by Hobbs, Smith and Forbes were demolished opening up the approach to Wesley Arcade. Wesley Arcade opened before Christmas in 1975, and the centre as a whole opened in May 1976.⁵⁹

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 10. The Synod of Western Australia has no record of additional money received in such as fashion. The placing of the purses on the corner stone is well documented.

⁵⁴ Bodycoat, R. *Report on Wesley Church Restoration for Wesley Property Committee, Perth, Uniting Church in Australia*. (Duncan, Stephen and Mercer Architects for Uniting Church, March 1983) p. 1.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Synod of Western Australia suggests the bell was removed simply because it was an opportune time as the bell had not been rung for decades.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, Lutton, p. 11.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, Bodycoat, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, Synod.

Wesley Church continued to be used as an active centre of worship and, in 1977, the congregation joined the Uniting Church of Australia.

In 1983, a report on the condition of *Wesley Church* by Ron Bodycoat, showed that major restoration was necessary to the lower sections of external brick walls of the south-east and north facades, as well as the gables, parapets and high parts of the tower brickwork which had fretted.⁶⁰ The Restoration Appeal was launched in 1985, through the National Trust of Australia (WA) with a target of \$150,000 of which \$62,000 was allocated to restoring the brickwork; \$22,000 for plaster; \$29,000 for painting; \$13,000 for repairs to glass and plumbing; and \$24,000 for electrical work. Funds were raised and the restoration work completed mid 1987.⁶¹

Today *Wesley Church* is the place of worship for a large and growing congregation of all ages, as well as the spiritual home for many Western Australian families which have an association with *Wesley Church* through baptism, marriage and funeral services. *Wesley Church* is also the place of worship for Wesley Mission, which provides caring and support services for disadvantaged people.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Wesley Church is built of load bearing brick laid in Flemish bond in the Victorian Academic Gothic style, and features a landmark spire, steeply pitched roofs, parapeted gables, label (hood) moulds, and wall buttressing.⁶²

Wesley Church has a strong verticality of form emphasised by tall lancet windows with plate tracery to the east facade. Angle buttresses divide the nave wall into five bays and the major windows have stucco label moulds above them. The bricks of the building, fired at uncertain temperatures in wood-burning kilns, show a range of mellow tones and, laid in Flemish bond, create a chequerboard effect on the walls, which provides a decorative element to the walls of the building.

The spire is 35 metres high with a weathercock at its point. The spire is surrounded by four smaller spires at its base which are capped by metal finials. The north east tower replicates these smaller spires above the gable.

The roof structure is made of hand sawn timber and the roof covering was originally shingles but, at some point the church was re-roofed in clay tiles.⁶³

The interior of the Church is simple, with the nave leading up to the chancel in which the communion table is sited. A vestry opens to the left and above this, at gallery level, is the organ loft (1896). To the right is the chapel and the entrance to the chapel is through the north west porch.

⁶⁰ See R. Bodycoat for further details.

⁶¹ Conversation with the Rev. Owen Roberts, Co-ordinator of Appeal. 11 February 1994

⁶² 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. 78-81.

⁶³ Date of reroofing is unknown. According to the Synod of W. A. plans made, in 1896 to were to reshingle the church using jarrah shingles, although it is not known if this was done.

The timber pews are of simple design, arranged in a large bank in the centre of the nave with a smaller bank on either side. The side galleries, added in 1896 by G. T. Poole, are supported by cast iron legs and feature cast iron balustrading. The original colour scheme has, at some stage, been painted over in a uniform cream colour.

Between 1950 and the 1970s, the building underwent a number of modifications under the supervision of the architectural practice, Forbes and Fitzhardinge. In 1956, the front two bays of the gallery on both sides of nave were removed and cut back to splayed returns. In 1958, most of the original diamond paned glass was replaced with modern leaded glass, with the exception of some of the panels in the west window which survived as part of the original installation, together with some surviving diamond paned glass in the towers and vestry.⁶⁴ A year later the porch floors and internal doors were altered.⁶⁵

In 1965/6, the gallery seating was replaced and timber panelling to the chancel installed. In 1957, a crying room was created by closing in the recess at the rear of the church and forming a new doorway from the north-east porch.⁶⁶ In October 1968, the Meckering earthquake shook the building in general and damaged the church spire. The top masonry section of the spire on the south-east tower was replaced with copper sheathing on a light metal frame, and other general repairs were made.⁶⁷

Further adjustments to the chancel fittings were made in 1970. In 1974, as part of the Wesley Centre development, the turn-of-the-century additions to the chancel were demolished and the chapel and basement rooms were constructed.⁶⁸ The construction was in hard, modern bricks, in a different tone to those of the original and, although the details of the elevations were taken from the original and the bricks were laid in Flemish bond, they form a distinct demarcation from the original building. The use of the same bricks for the buttresses on the south-west corner is more obvious as they abut the original brickwork and strike a discordant note.⁶⁹

By 1983, the stucco work at the base of the tower was badly in need of repair and the facade of the building was badly decayed and flaking away. The building needed general painting and exhibited water staining to the walls and had wide cracks in one area. In 1987, after a public appeal had raised funds, major restoration work was undertaken: all the brickwork was washed down, restoration of the lower sections of the south, east and north faces was undertaken. Much intrusive modern brickwork, modern cement mortar and pointing was replaced with compatible brickwork in character with the original. Lime mortar similar in composition to the that of the original was used. New bricks were used that were similar in colour and texture to the

⁶⁴ According to the Synod of Western Australia, not all the west window is original, the stained glass panels were installed at different times.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, Bodycoat, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Synod of Western Australia.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *ibid.* Bodycoat, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Tan, R. J. *Perth Wesley Church Restoration; Conservation Case Study* (Curtin University, Student Report: Architecture and Culture, 1987) p. 9.

original brickwork and were the correct size in one dimension. These were generally used as headers in combination with original stretcher bricks.⁷⁰ Fretting brickwork and inappropriate mortar was also replaced in the two towers. The stucco work was repaired and repainted in a colour which was close to the colour of the mortar between the bricks.⁷¹ The spire was cleaned and waterproofed, and the cone and balance of the original masonry checked for stability. The retention of the 1969 cone provided evidence of the changes in the fabric over time. The internal features of the church remain intact.

For a full discussion of the condition of the building in 1983 and the restoration work undertaken in 1986-87 see Bodycoat, R. *Report on Wesley Church Restoration for Wesley Property Committee, Perth, Uniting Church in Australia*. (Duncan, Stephen and Mercer Architects for Uniting Church, March 1983)

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet

Bodycoat, R. *Report on Wesley Church Restoration for Wesley Property Committee, Perth, Uniting Church in Australia*. (Duncan, Stephen and Mercer Architects for Uniting Church, March 1983)

Lutton, W. *The Wesley Story, Centenary of Wesley Church, Perth, Western Australia 1870 - 1970* A4 brochure, no pagination, (Perth, Wesley Church, 1970)

Tan, R. J. *Perth Wesley Church Restoration; Conservation Case Study* (Curtin University, Student Report: Architecture and Culture, 1987)

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 7.

⁷¹ *ibid.* p. 10.