



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

Loton Park Tennis Club has some aesthetic interest in the manner in which the Arts and Crafts ethos has been interpreted. (Criterion 1.1)

There is a strong contextual relationship between the tennis courts and the building that adds aesthetic value to the former. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Loton Park Tennis Club is the headquarters of one of the oldest remaining tennis clubs in Western Australia. The building, as the focus of social and competitive tennis matches and associated community gatherings, has been in continuous use as a clubhouse since 1922. (Criterion 2.1)

The building is an example of a minor project from the major private architectural practice of Eales and Cowan. (Criterion 2.3)

Importance accrues to the building site as a marker of part of the former extensive property holdings of Sir William Thorley Loton, politician, merchant and landowner and for his association with the development of Loton's Paddock as Perth Oval and Loton Park. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Loton Park Tennis Club demonstrates the development of tennis as a competitive and recreational sport. The building is significant as a focus of community spirit and demonstrates the way in which sport was to become an important feature of Australian society. The building has been the focus of social and competitive tennis matches and associated community gatherings. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Loton Park Tennis Club represents one of the few clubhouses, from this era, which is still used for its original purpose. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Loton Park Tennis Club is of interest as a modest yet representative pavilion typical of an inner suburban tennis club. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Although in otherwise sound condition, the building in 1996 is in need of some conservation. A schedule of this work is set out in the Conservation Plan.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

With the exceptions set out in the Conservation Plan, the building retains a high level of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The external fabric of the building is generally in its original state. For more detail, see also the Conservation Plan.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by David Kelsall, Architect. This material has been supplemented with sections of supporting evidence included in the Conservation Plan for the building prepared by Fiona Bush and John Stephens in August 1996.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

'Looking Backward', a paper read to the WA Historical Society in July 1946 by Mr W E Bold, Town Clerk of the City of Perth between 1900 and 1944, contains some of his reflections on his term in office. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the City had a policy for the acquisition of additional lands for recreation.

I remember Mayor Harry Brown coming into my office one day early in the century to ask my opinion with regard to the advisability of the Council accepting an offer which had been made to him by ex-Mayor W T Loton, of the block of land now known as Perth Oval. I agreed that it would be a wise purchase, the offer was submitted to the Council, and was accepted, thus securing this fine open space for the use of the people. ... The present Perth Oval stands on the site of portion of 'Stone's Lake', named after G F Stone. The major portion of the 22.5 acres now owned by the City was purchased from Sir William Loton for the purpose of making this a public park.

Loton, a well known pastoralist, agriculturalist and merchant, was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1884, resigned in 1887, then was elected a member for Greenough from 1889. He represented Swan in the Legislative Assembly between 1890-97 after which he returned to the Council. He became Mayor of Perth in 1901-2 and was knighted in 1923, a year before his death in 1924. His home, 'Dilhorn', remains on elevated land across Bulwer Street and overlooks the Perth Oval grounds and the Tennis Club grounds. Loton had extensive land holdings throughout the State.

William Loton offered the paddock immediately to the south of his residence 'Dilhorn', to the Perth City Council on September 12, 1904 for £8,500. Maps prior to that time, show the land as 'Loton's Paddock'. Juxtaposition of the present road layout over Stone's Lake, shown on maps of the Colony soon after settlement, suggest 'Loton's Paddock' to be on rising ground forming the northern embankment of 'Stone's Lake'. Loton stipulated that the land was to be used for parks and gardens or recreational use. By 1894, subdivisions extended well beyond Loton's residence and the site known as 'Loton's Paddock' (Swan Location 14) was separated from the sites on which the Tennis Club (Z1 and Z2) now stand. Loton may well have been trying to dispose of the holding for some time prior to making the offer to the City of Perth. The low lying nature of the ground and its unsuitability for residential purposes without expensive filling, may have been a factor.

Lawn tennis was first played in Australia in the 1870s. In Western Australia, during the 1880s, two courts were established in the grounds at Government House and Sir John Forrest had a court constructed at his Hay Street bungalow. As 'tennis fever' began to take hold, many of the wealthier families of Perth followed suit. Tennis became popular because it could be played by both sexes and was more vigorous than croquet or bowls. Lady

Forrest was a leading patron of the game and her attendance was regularly reported at tennis tournaments and functions throughout the 1890s. Competition tennis was played on the courts of Government House until the mid 1890s.

The formation of a private club to be known as Perth Tennis Club was promoted in 1896 by a number of influential backers including E.A. Stone, a Supreme Court judge, A.C. Willis, manager of the Union Bank, and A.K. Money of the Australian Mutual Providence Insurance Company. Encouraged by the support of S.H. Parker QC, MLC, the promoters held a series of well publicised meetings before it was decided, in July 1897, to build courts adjacent to the Perth Bowling Club on The Esplanade, Perth. In August 1898, it was announced that the membership of the club was fully subscribed and that the courts were ready for use. Other metropolitan clubs soon followed this lead. Inaugurated in 1899 and reformed in 1902, the Lawn Tennis Association of WA was finally established in 1903 with seven founding clubs being represented.

In 1905, the City of Perth constructed an oval, a grandstand and other facilities on Loton Park. Given the local popularity of the game at that time, the 'other facilities' may well have included tennis courts. Certainly, tennis courts had been constructed by 1916, when the City of Perth was approached regarding the use of the Loton Park courts for a proposed new tennis club. The City of Perth agreed to the courts being leased by the club provided the members assisted with the immediate repairs and shared the annual upkeep of them. Once agreement was reached with the City, those interested in the proposal met at Perth Oval to discuss the formation of the club. The Hon. R.J. Robinson was elected President, while the position of Secretary was filled by Mr J. Broadway. The Loton Park Tennis Club held its inaugural meeting on 4 December 1916 and officially opened the club courts twelve days later.

The club adopted the rules used by the South Perth Tennis Club and chose blue and white as the club colours. These colours may have changed in later years as the minutes record the use of purple and green on a club blazer in 1926, then the following year, the addition of stripes. Loton must have taken an interest in the affairs of the club as the family donated the Loton Trophy, to be awarded for service to the Club. Early members of the club some of whom were of Polish origin, donated the Polish Cup as a player's trophy.

Development History:

- 1904 William Loton offers 'Loton Paddock' to City of Perth, to be used for public recreation on the proviso that it be known as Loton Park.
- 1905 City of Perth constructs oval, grandstand and other facilities in 'Loton Park'.
- 1916 7 August, Mr Hatfield writes to City of Perth requesting the use of three tennis courts at Perth Oval (Loton Park).
 - 4 December, inaugural meeting of the Loton Park Tennis Club.
 - 16 December, official opening of tennis courts by the club.
- 1917 Club granted the use of two more courts. Club applied twice to City of Perth unsuccessfully for permission to build a pavilion.
- 1919 Loton Park Tennis Club joins the Western Australian Lawn Tennis Association.

- 1920 City of Perth advances £100 towards the construction of a 'club house'. Club Secretary organises the drawing up of plans. Two sets of plans proposed by the architects, Eales and Cohen. The Club chooses a plan providing two rooms and a verandah. Club takes over the maintenance of the courts from the Perth City Council.
- 1922 5th June, opening of new Club 'pavilion', mixed doubles tournament held to celebrate the opening.
- 1927 Discussions held proposing extra space to be provided.
- 1928 Discussions held regarding the provision of folding doors between the two rooms.
- 1932 Pavilion extended to provide extra changing facilities.
- 1937 New wire fences installed, pavilion painted with financial assistance from the City of Perth.
- 1939 Pavilion connected to the sewer.
- 1947 Ti-tree hedge planted between tennis courts and the oval.
- 1953 Guttering renewed at the rear of the building.
- 1954 Toilets and showers installed.
- 1955 Ti-tree hedge extended to complete the division from the oval.
- 1956 Steps at the eastern end of the pavilion renewed for £15.
- 1958 Pavilion repainted and redecorated.
- 1961 Falling membership evident.
- 1962 Pavilion struck by lightning, small fire extinguished.
- 1995 Men's toilet renovated. Tennis Club obtained a Lotteries Commission Grant to prepare a Conservation Management Plan to enunciate the basis for further grant applications to provide funds for further urgent repairs.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The Perth Oval site slopes evenly upwards from Brewer Street along the south boundary, to the Bulwer Street boundary along the northern perimeter. To provide the level playing fields on the site, the tennis club site has been deeply cut in this corner, the main fall being evident along the Lord Street frontage. The length of frontage allocated to the tennis club is such that little depth of land is available for building.

It follows that the resulting elongated building is founded on the northern embankment of the court area with the floor level roughly mid-way between the playing surfaces and the adjoining pavement of Bulwer Street. The courts are aligned north-south.

The Tennis Club building is set to the west of 'Dilhorn', away from what must have been a splendid view to the south. It is possible Loton or his family may have exerted some influence on the location and height of the clubrooms.

The tennis courts are set out in a rectangle and are partially fenced (at present) from the spectator plats of the adjoining oval, and along the street frontages with galvanised link mesh fencing. The courts are grass and two courts on the east are presently being relaid. There are some rare species of palm trees on the banks surrounding the courts.

The clubhouse is timber framed and presently clad with fibre (probably asbestos) reinforced cement sheeting with a saddle roof over the main building and gables each end, and with a smaller gable over the entrance door off the verandah. A section of the north wall projects towards the street. The roof, including the skillions, is clad with similar reinforced material, cut into shingles and laid in a diamond pattern. The verandah on the south front returns against an enclosed section on the west end. The extent of the 1932 additions to the western end of the building is evident from the differing materials in the roofing. The ridge over the original section is terra cotta with terra cotta finials each end - the added section of the building has a ridge tile of differing material, probably cement. The gable over the south front is surmounted by a flagpole.

The steps and verandah are of timber construction, with timber handrails and balustrading. The handrail is missing along the south front of the building. The undercroft is enclosed with horizontal battening.

The internal accommodation includes a kitchenette set in the north bay, male and female change rooms and ante rooms with some internal demountable partitions, leading from the Meeting Room.

The Conservation Management Plan for the *Loton Park Tennis Club* describes the style of the building as Arts and Crafts, a movement which was dying out at the time this building was constructed. It is possible that style elements of the original presentation c1917 were carried through into the final design; however, due to the very limited finances available for the pavilion, the accommodation is basic, with a minimum of embellishment. What little there is imbues this modest, vernacular building with a little of the Arts and Crafts character.

The same style was retained in the 1932 extension which again displays evidence of limited financial resources. The cosy, snug, picturesque and residential scale of the Arts and Crafts style shows through.

13.3 REFERENCES

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

National Trust Assessment.

Early Days, Journal and Proceedings, WA Historical Society, Vol 3, Part 8,

Stephens, J., and Bush, F., *Conservation Management Plan for Loton Park Tennis Club Building*, Loton Park Tennis Club, 1996.

Harry C.J. Phillips *Tennis West: A History of the Western Australian Lawn Tennis Association from the 1890s to the 1990s* Sydney, Playright Publishing Pty. Ltd., 1995.