



## 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.

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales*, by means of its Victorian Georgian Style, generous proportions and largely intact porphyry walls contributes to the definition of the street corner. (Criterion 1.1)

The north-west and north-east facing walls addressing Austin and Darlot Streets receive ample direct sunlight, unlike the porphyry walls of the *Murchison Club Hotel* which has verandahs. When viewed from the north-eastern end of town, the stonework of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* complements that of the Police Station and Post Office, and the *Cue Shire Offices*, which also have large areas of good quality stonework. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is a mark of the expansion and prosperity of Cue at the turn of the century. It is representative of the boom time in a gold mining town where the solid and expensive materials belie the often impermanent nature of the industry. (Criterion 2.2)

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* has historic value as it was the first bank in the region. (Criterion 2.2)

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is associated with the architect John Talbot Hobbs. (Criterion 2.3)

#### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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#### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* contributes to the sense of place of the community of Cue and its surrounding districts because of the continuity of its function throughout most of this century. (Criterion 4.2)

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* has limited social value as it has lost its important social role. It is now a private residence.

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* demonstrates a function no longer practiced in the town, personal banking in a purpose-built bank building. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The prominence and fine detailing of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* demonstrates the confidence and optimism that the bank's owners had in the future of the town. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is in fair to poor condition. The soft porphyry walls are deteriorating badly in places. The rear verandahs are in a dilapidated state.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

Although only part of the building was originally intended for habitation, the entire building is now serving solely as a private residence. Even though the original rendered sign is still in good condition, describing the original intention, the integrity of the place is low as the original intention of the building is no longer being fulfilled.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

The majority of the fabric of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is original. Unsympathetic, albeit practical renovations to the external walls, consisting of in-situ concrete, detract from the authenticity of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales*. Internally, modern modifications are as follows. In the main passage, the skirtings have been removed and been replaced with zincalume mini-orb corrugated metal skirtings. In the lounge room the skirtings have the same detail. In the kitchen, the fireplace and mantelpiece have been removed and shelving inserted. The bathroom has been fitted out in recent times and has a concrete floor, and internal walls lined with weatherboards and fibrous cement. As a result of these changes, authenticity of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is fair.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Prue Griffin, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is a single-storey stone building built in 1900 as offices for the West Australian Bank in Cue.

Cue was established as a result of a gold find reported by Tom Cue in 1892. The location known colloquially as 'The Patch' rapidly filled with prospectors. In 1892, up to one thousand men were fossicking in an area approximately 3 kilometres by 2 kilometres. Conditions were tough, water was scarce and enteric fever swept the camps. A hospital committee was formed to care for the sick but real relief came on 13 May 1892 when water was finally struck in a well dug at the site of the present rotunda. A Progress Committee was formed in 1893 and the townsite of Cue was gazetted on 17 August 1893.<sup>1</sup> From 1893, the townsite rapidly expanded with substantial public and private buildings being erected.<sup>2</sup>

The bank site was purchased in 1894 by the West Australian Bank.<sup>3</sup> The price paid for the land was £20, considered to be significantly lower than the value of the land. Prior to this purchase the bank had operated in the town firstly from a tent, and then from a timber structure.<sup>4</sup>

The architect of the design was John Talbot Hobbs, a prolific and influential architect in Western Australia around the turn of the century.<sup>5</sup> Tenders for the construction of the bank were submitted to his office in April 1899. Hobbs must have had a certain interest in the building as *The Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette*, mentions that he came to inspect the newly completed building.<sup>6</sup> He was also paid a sum of £40 for duties associated with the Cue Western Australian Bank, although this sum was paid in 1896.<sup>7</sup> A source suggesting that Alfred Edward Cox was the architect of the building appears to be in error.<sup>8</sup>

Materials used in the construction of the building were detailed thoroughly in *The Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette*. The stone used for the walls was to be quarried from the Cue area, but stone for the window sills and doorsteps was brought from Melbourne. All internal timber fittings were to be of Sydney cedar.<sup>9</sup> The article continues to describe the benefits of the new building:

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<sup>1</sup> Conversation with June Gronow of the Geographic Names Section of the Department of Land Administration, 17 March 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Heydon, P. R. *Just a Century Ago A History of the Shire of Cue* Hesperian Press, 1987, p. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Certificate of Title, Volume 61 Folio 97, Department of Land Administration.

<sup>4</sup> Hope, George 'Murchison Goldfields' supplement to the *Geraldton Express*, part 1, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> Morison, Margaret Pitt *Immigrant Architects in WA 1885-1905* Batty Library PR 13589.

<sup>6</sup> *The Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette* 22 April 1899, p. 2; 5 June 1900, p. 2 and 7 June 1900, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> John Talbot Hobbs Ledger, State Archives File 2780A.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> *The Murchison Times...*, 22 April 1899, p. 2.

Altogether the building when finished, should present a very handsome appearance. The officers of the bank have been well looked after, the accommodation provided for them being ample, and after their experience of the ramshackle building that has done duty in Cue for a number of years, will appreciate the change to a cool and lofty building during the summer months.<sup>10</sup>

The building was completed in June 1900 and the Western Australian Bank opened for business in the same month.<sup>11</sup> The first manager in the new building was Mr. A. S. McD. Gunning. He was succeeded by Mr. J. H. Broad who managed the branch until 1920.<sup>12</sup>

The bank continued to trade at this site, with the slight change of name to the West Australian Bank, until 1927 when the property was transferred to the Bank of New South Wales.<sup>13</sup> The building remained their property until the Shire purchased it in 1978.

The Shire did lease the property to private companies. In 1981, one of these companies, Consolidated Resources, painted the doors of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* an 'unacceptable colour' which the Shire Clerk believed 'went against the look of the Historic building'. The blue colour chosen by the company was, they stated, close to the original colour but the Shire replied that the original colour was brown. The company did agree to change the colour but the task would have a low priority.<sup>14</sup>

The present owner purchased the site in April 1996.<sup>15</sup> He uses the building as a private residence and is currently undertaking internal renovations of the building. The internal layout of the building remains as it was since its original construction.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The single-storeyed *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is located on level ground on the southern corner of the junction of Austin and Darlot Streets. Almost directly opposite but slightly west, on the median strip, is *Rotunda* and on the other side of Austin Street is the two-storeyed Dorsett's Guest House. Opposite Darlot Street is the two-storeyed *Murchison Club Hotel*. Behind *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is a lane which runs parallel to Austin Street, beyond which is Newlec Electrical, located in a relatively modern single-storeyed fibrous asbestos dwelling. To the south-west is a vacant lot, and beyond are Golden West Financial Services, located in a single-storey shop.

*Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is built in a Victorian Georgian style as evinced by the segmentally arched openings and symmetrical plan. Victorian Romanesque influences are apparent and can be seen in the semi-circular window heads and in the relatively small areas of fenestration in relation to solid walls.

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<sup>10</sup> ibid.

<sup>11</sup> ibid, 7 June 1900.

<sup>12</sup> Western Australian Post Office Directories 1900 - 1920.

<sup>13</sup> Certificate of Title, Volume 61 Folio 97, Department of Land Administration.

<sup>14</sup> Heydon, P. R. op. cit. p. 138.

<sup>15</sup> Certificate of Title, Volume 1164 Folio 366, Department of Land Administration.

At present, *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* is used as a private residence and is undergoing internal renovations.

The front room was originally a large rectangular banking room, running the full width of the building, and measuring approximately nine metres by six metres, with the long axis arranged parallel to Austin Street. Access to two rooms is available directly from this room. The room to the south-east is at present a store room, but was probably the manager's office. The room on the south-west corner is a strong room. Access to this room was not available at the time of this inspection.

A central corridor extends from the banking room to the rear verandah of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales*, giving secondary access to the previously mentioned store room, and also to a bedroom adjacent to the strong room, a kitchen adjacent to that, and a lounge room at the rear of the building. These are their current uses and were probably originally used as such by the presumably resident manager and his family. A secondary cross corridor immediately south-west of the office provides access from Darlot Street.

At the rear of the *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales*, on the Darlot Street elevation, is a stone wall in the same plane as the main wall, raked at the top, with a barge capping. The barge forms the edge of the lean-to roof beyond. A straight vertical mortar joint directly under the point where the lean to roof is joined to the main building indicates that shortly after *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* was built, part of the lean-to back verandah was enclosed, possibly as a washhouse. On the other side of this wall is a bathroom, which is entered from the back verandah. The back verandah is in a dilapidated condition, and was probably built before the north-west verandah, which is in a better state. The north-west verandah finishes roughly in line with the back wall of the banking room.

The hipped roofed, centrally gabled front elevation of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* has three symmetrically placed semi-circular headed openings. Recessed back from the centre and north-western openings are semi-circular headed windows, and recessed back from the north-eastern opening are the front doors, with a fixed semi-circular pane over. A rendered string course, just below the springing point of the arches, extends across the front elevation, and returns at the three openings into the recessed window surrounds. The string course returns about 300 mm along the side elevations before terminating. The central window on the front elevation is emphasised by the central stone gable over, which is in the same plane as the piers between the openings. Above the central window, on the lower half of the stone gable is a painted and rendered sign. The two windows are divided into two panes of approximately equal area, and have rendered and painted sills. The head height of the two timber entrance doors matches the string course height. Each of the two doors has four panels aligned vertically, one above the other.

The piers to each side of the openings are about 200 mm proud of the smooth faced recessed stonework that occurs around the two windows and doors. At the windows, the stone work below sill height is also recessed, so that the two windows are in bays that are identical in dimension to the entrance door bay. The pier stone work is articulated by rock faced voussoirs and quoins, the

latter being supported by a low rock faced plinth which also returns into and follows the recessed stone work stone entry steps, so that the floor level is clearly indicated as being at the top of plinth level.

On each of the north-west and south-east elevations, there is a semi-circular headed window, similar in size and shape to the front windows. These windows, however, are not located in a shallow bay but are in the main wall, and are aligned on the central long axis of the banking hall. The front banking hall therefore is clearly defined by the five semi-circular headed openings, the central gable and also by a higher eave line.

The eaves toward the rear of the side elevations of *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* are about 300 mm lower than the front eaves. The windows have segmentally arched heads, contrasting with the semi-circular window heads of the banking hall. Both head and window sill heights are lower than those of the banking hall, however the floor level is constant. Further emphasis is placed on the banking hall by the plinth which terminates at a point near the rear wall of the banking hall.

Internally, *Fmr. Bank of New South Wales* has timber floorboards which are about 75 mm wide on joists which are about 200 mm above ground level. The relatively narrow width of the boards would indicate that they were installed in recent times. Part of the back verandah has floor boards which are about 120 mm wide - a similar floorboard was probably used originally throughout. The ceilings are corrugated metal, similar to the 'mini orb' profile available today, and appear original. Typically the ceiling height is about 3.6 metres, and the banking room has a ceiling height of four metres. The fireplaces and mantelpieces to the front office, bedroom and lounge room appear original. Original skirtings are 300 mm and 200 mm high respectively.

The high timber skirtings in the front banking room have been removed. Timber backing battens for the skirtings are still extant and fixed to the exposed stone walls at about 800 mm centres. Above the skirting line, the walls are plastered. The original ornate jarrah counters and partitions are mostly intact and in a good condition, although most of the panels on the staff side of the counter are missing. Some of the partitions are coming apart at joints and in places are missing altogether. The front counter is about four metres long, and has four evenly spaced consoles with projecting bases. A plinth, about 200 mm high, steps around the bases. Between the consoles are panels that are embellished by raised mouldings forming a horizontal rectangle, in the centre of which is a rectangular, diamond pointed raised panel. The partitions, some at bench height and others at eye height, are divided into vertical rectangles, about 300 mm by 400 mm, with raised perimeter mouldings and recessed fields.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

Campbell, R. 'Conservation Survey The Austin Street Precinct at Cue' prepared for the WA Heritage Committee, May 1985.

National Trust Assessment Exposition 2 March 1982.

### **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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