



# 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 \*

*North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* is significant for its aesthetic characteristics being a fine example of the Federation Arts and Crafts style. The building features asymmetrical elevational compositions, unified construction of limestone with brick quoins and openings, traditional but distinctive roof massing, half-timbered gables, and elegant chimneys with distinct cornices. (Criterion 1.1)

The well modelled composition of the exterior and above average quality of detailing to the interiors, particularly the hall, demonstrates a high quality of architectural design. (Criterion 1.2)

Within the context of North Fremantle, *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* is one of the more visually prominent places and as such has considerable value for its contribution to that area's townscape character. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The place has significance for its part in the urban development of North Fremantle, having served as the first and main institution for public education in the district from 1894 to 1967. Its architecture is typical of public works from the period in which North Fremantle's initial development took place. (Criterion 2.2)

In July 1983 the place became the first Bail Hostel established in Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

The planning of *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* is well resolved for its original function as a school, reflecting the high degree of technical and creative skill of the Public Works Department of the time. Although many schools of the time were based on similar design principles, no two buildings were identical in plan. (Criterion 2.4)

Some significance may be attributed to the place for its association with George Temple-Poole, the architect responsible for the initial creation of the

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

building, who has since become recognised as one of the State's most important architects. Some significance is also attributed to the relationship of the place with Sir Donald Bradman, world famous Australian cricketer, who planted three Tuart trees on the northern end of the sports ground (two of which are still alive) and to Mr J.T.Tonkin who was a teacher at the school and later became the State Minister for Education and Premier of Western Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

The building and site generally has archaeological potential. Study of the place's fabric may assist in developing a more thorough understanding of the history of human activity within the State's educational system. The possible overlap of this site with that of the poorly documented North Fremantle Convict Depot would further contribute towards its archaeological potential. (Criterion 3.2)

### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* and the two associated Tuart trees are highly valued by the local community because of their social, aesthetic, and educational associations. (Criterion 4.1)

As a minor landmark building, and one that has remained largely unaltered despite the changes that have occurred in the area, the place contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

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### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The planning and architectural detailing of *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* is representative of Public Works Department design for Government school buildings of the 1890s, particularly those designed under the direction of George Temple-Poole. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

The place was found to be in a good state of repair, and it would appear that maintenance is carried out regularly. Joinery and stonework do not appear to have suffered greatly from the long term effects of weather, although paint on some windows is peeling and requires work. The fibre-cement roof, masonry chimneys and associated flashings appear to be in good condition. No evidence of leaks or rising damp was identified within the building and internal finishes were noted to be in very good condition.

Landscaping elements appeared to be maintained and generally sound. Recent termite damage was noted in the picket fence at the rear of *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)*, a concern in view of its close proximity to the building. One of the Tuart trees supposedly planted by Sir Donald Bradman was noted to be dead and some limbs had been removed with a chainsaw.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The place has low integrity. It no longer functions as a school, and as such both the building and the grounds have been modified to suit very different use requirements than those for which the place was designed. The grounds have almost no physical trace remaining which relates to the area's historic function as a school yard.

Adaptation of the interior has been executed in a manner which has been sympathetic to existing early elements such as fireplaces and ceilings, and is mostly reversible.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

*North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* retains a moderate degree of authenticity, having retained much of its original fabric and sustained few intrusions of a permanent nature which affect the original design intent. Adaptation, although sympathetically executed, has left the interiors in an un-original state, some areas within the building having sustained changes such as partitioning and false ceilings, most areas having had fluorescent lighting and carpets introduced.

An intrusive pergola arrangement has been built onto the east side of the building dramatically altering the building's presentation.

Modifications of secondary importance which have had an impact on the building's authenticity include the painting of the exterior (it was originally limewashed) and the use of cement render for some repairs.

The grounds included within the curtilage of this assessment have a low degree of authenticity. With the exception of the Tuart trees, all of the landscape features and outbuildings that existed when the place was a school have been removed. Substantial areas of land have also been taken from the property for railway purposes etc.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Dr Robyn Taylor, Research Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Ian Boersma of Kevin Palassis Architects.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)*, now known as 'Stirling House', was designed and constructed by the Public Works Department in 1894 with subsequent additions dating from 1897. The building comprises the main school building and is currently used as a training centre for prison officers run by the Operational Training Unit, Offender Management Division, Department of Corrective Services.

The history of the former school is of interest for its association with the settlement of the North Fremantle district, and the development of the design of state school buildings by the Public Works Department during the gold boom years of the late nineteenth century. Although the original plans are missing, the school appears to have been designed as one of the first mixed state schools for boys and girls, with classrooms located off a central hall. In this regard, the school can be compared to the 1895 Albany School, which is believed to have been the 'first school planned from the outset as a large mixed school'.<sup>1</sup> Other large state schools designed in the 1890s with classrooms arranged around a central hall include East Perth (1895) and Subiaco (1897). The designs for these schools varied in response to site and accommodation needs.

The settlement of North Fremantle has connections with the advent of convict labour in Western Australia, and the establishment of a convict depot, possibly adjacent to the site of the present school building.<sup>2</sup> The depot was designed by the officers of the Royal Engineers,<sup>3</sup> and was one of eight convict depots established throughout the state by 1853.<sup>4</sup> Other early settlers in the district included a number of pensioner guards, honourably discharged former British soldiers who had played an important role in the management of convicts during the years of transportation. Another settler, from 1891, was Henry Passmore who had been in charge of convict public works. He had bought land in North Fremantle and built a number of timber and random-rubble cottages.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bremen van, Ingrid, 'The New Architecture of the Gold Boom in Western Australia', Vol. 2, 'Government Buildings Under the Direction of G. T. Poole, 1885-1897', Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Architecture, University of Western Australia, 1990, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Further research is needed to establish whether the earlier convict depot and the later state depot were located on the same site. A sketch of the school site dated 1898 makes reference to a nearby 'old depot' on what would be railway reserve land. Education Department Files: Acc.1653, 596/98, 3 August, 1898.

<sup>3</sup> Oldham, R and J, *Western Heritage*, Lamb Publications, Perth, p.34.

<sup>4</sup> Gertzel, C., 'The Convict System in Western Australia, 1850-1870', honours thesis, University of Western Australia, 1949, p.100.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these cottages are still standing, creating an unusual hamlet-like setting at the end of Passmore Avenue. For further information on Henry Passmore, see Dorothy Erickson, 'Art & Design in WA: Colonial Viewpoints', *Craftwest* 1996:4, p.23-24.

Factors that contributed to the increased settlement of North Fremantle were the establishment of the Perth-Fremantle Road which had commenced with convict labour in 1860, and the completion of the Perth-Fremantle traffic bridge in 1867. Before this time the road from Fremantle to Perth, via North Fremantle had been a sandy track which ran along the sea coast. This eventually linked up with the track that was to become the Perth-Fremantle Road. The alternative route to Perth had been via Preston Point with travellers taking a ferry or punt across to Minim Cove thus by-passing the North Fremantle area.<sup>6</sup>

A daily coach service carrying passengers and goods between the port and the city was established after the completion of the Perth-Fremantle Road,<sup>7</sup> then in 1881, a single railway line began operating between Fremantle, Perth and Guildford, which further helped to establish the district. During the 1890s a quarry was established at Rocky Bay to provide limestone for the Harbour works and this had an impact on the settlement of the district. In September 1895, North Fremantle was proclaimed an independent municipality.

The North Fremantle School traces its beginnings to 1886. According to a report in *The Weekly Times*, dated 16 October, 1886 (p.10):

The Government opened a school in the Mission Room, North Fremantle, on October 4th, under F. Ashwell. The Rev. D. G. Watkins attended and opened the school. There were 55 children present which is a very good beginning and bids fair to become a large school.<sup>8</sup>

This accommodation soon proved to be unsuitable. An extract from the 1887 annual report of the Central Board of Education states:

...the building is unsuitable, small and inconvenient, good discipline is impossible in the present crowded state of the schoolroom, the school is organised in five standards with a large section of infants, and, results of exams are as good as could be expected, the master having worked single handed.<sup>9</sup>

During the following year, plans were drawn by the government architect, George Temple-Poole, for a new school building.<sup>10</sup> Although this plan was apparently discarded and the erection of the school delayed for another six years, it has particular interest as one of Temple-Poole's early school designs for a 'big' school.<sup>11</sup> The floor plan depicts a large school room with 69 seats and a classroom with 30 seats with lighting coming from windows at the back and one side of the rooms. There are separate entrances for boys and girls and separate hat and cloak rooms. The steeply pitched roof with flèche, tall narrow windows, timbered gable and the projecting bay windowed cloak

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<sup>6</sup> Erickson & Taylor, Cottesloe Municipal Inventory, 1995, p.7.

<sup>7</sup> Briggs, T. J., *Life and Experiences of a Successful West Australian*, Sands & MacDougall, Perth, 1917, p.13.

<sup>8</sup> This reference is given in the 'Centenary Edition, North Fremantle School Magazine, Later Days Number', p.2. This date is supported by an Education Department letter dated 18 February 1986 to the compilers of the school's history.

<sup>9</sup> 'Centenary Edition, North Fremantle School Magazine, Later Days Number', p.6.

<sup>10</sup> Fremantle (North) School, dated 1888. Contract Drawing No.1, Plan 1666, 2. CAMS Plan Room. A notice regarding the erection of the school was placed in the 1888 Government Gazette. Unfortunately the gazettes are missing for this period.

<sup>11</sup> Bremen van, Ingrid, 'The New Architecture of the Gold Boom in Western Australia', Vol. 2, p. 282.

room, creates a picturesque design reminiscent of Richard Norman Shaw's designs for English village schools.<sup>12</sup> However, the plan also reflected current ideas for school buildings in Western Australia which had been developed by the Board of Education from approved models adopted in the eastern states. Using these models, the Board had sought designs for school buildings when Temple-Poole's office couldn't cope with the demand. A design submitted by the local architect H. S. Trigg was accepted by the Board which 'approved of the neat and elegant appearance of the elevation as well as the internal arrangements'.<sup>13</sup> Temple-Poole's 1888 design is regarded as 'clearly related to the earlier Trigg designs for York, Bunbury and Newcastle...', but with the addition of Temple-Poole's sophisticated touches.

In 1889, the government began renting the nearby Congregational Hall as a day school.<sup>14</sup> Whether the Hall was to replace the Mission Room, or to be used as additional space has not been established. The Education Department had a policy 'of testing increased attendance by renting rooms or houses to supplement existing accommodation before proceeding with the building of a new school or additions'.<sup>15</sup> Although this policy may have been the reason for delaying the building of the school designed in 1888, by 1894 this policy would have been coming under increased scrutiny. Annual Education Department Reports for 1895 and 1896 were indicating that such places were now being used 'just to cope with increased numbers until permanent school buildings could be completed'.<sup>16</sup>

In 1894 tenders were again called for the erection of the North Fremantle School, with the successful tender going to Mr L. Burness, Contractor, for £1,837/9/8.<sup>17</sup> The school building was erected on its present site adjacent to the railway reserve and north of the town centre. Quoted extracts from the Central Board of Education records state, 'A portion of the Depot Site has been reserved as a site for the future school',<sup>18</sup> and, 'The buildings used as the Government Stores on *Stirling Highway* (italics added) were improved and rendered suitable for the school in 1895'.<sup>19</sup> Given that the building does not bear physical evidence of having been an 'improved' former depot, it is probable that an existing building on site may have been used for school purposes. Another Education Department source states, 'In 1892 estimates were approved for a new school building to be placed on a portion of the North Fremantle Depot site', and, 'The new building was completed in 1894 at a cost of £1,008 and B Gilmore joined the staff as a teaching assistant'.<sup>20</sup> A sketch map dated 1898 shows the location of the 'old depot' on land opposite

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<sup>12</sup> Bremen, p.282.

<sup>13</sup> Bremen, p.281.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from the Superintendent of Education (Planning), to Mrs L. Bovell, dated 18 February, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory, J. and Smith, L., 'A Thematic History of Public Education in Western Australia', prepared for the Building Management Authority, Centre for Western Australian History, 1995, p.11.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, p.11.

<sup>17</sup> *Government Gazette*, 26 September, 1894, p.960.

<sup>18</sup> 'Centenary Edition, North Fremantle School Magazine, Later Days Number', p.6. The date 1893 is given above this quote, but this may not be the actual date.

<sup>19</sup> 'Centenary Edition, North Fremantle School Magazine, Later Days Number', p.6. The last quote was not in parentheses, and would need to be checked.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from the Superintendent of Education (Planning), to Mrs L. Bovell, dated 18 February, 1986.

the school grounds on the western side of the railway line. The head teacher's quarters and a well are also indicated.<sup>21</sup>

The building of the school in 1894 took place during the period of educational reforms introduced by the new Inspector of Schools, J. Walton who was appointed in 1890. 'One of the most significant changes involved Walton's recommendations that mixed schools should be substituted for separate departments for boys and girls.'<sup>22</sup> Other design reforms for school buildings included a central hall with classrooms which could be entered from the hall, and glazed partitions between the hall and the classrooms which assisted teacher supervision of those areas. Designs also allowed for future extensions.<sup>23</sup> Apparently the school in Albany was the first of the new mixed schools. The floor plan for this school and a description in the local newspaper reveals a number of similarities with the North Fremantle school, especially after additions were made to that school in 1897 and in subsequent years.<sup>24</sup> Another school which could be compared to North Fremantle is the Bunbury school. This school was 'built to the Trigg standard design plan of 1885, [and] transformed into an Albany plan school by using its main schoolroom as a central hall and adding classrooms all around it, a few at a time from 1894 to 1898'.<sup>25</sup> This evolving process of classrooms being added as required around a central hall was to occur at North Fremantle.

The initial design for the North Fremantle school (that is, an 1897 plan with additions indicated) shows two classrooms, what would be hat and cloak rooms approached through two separate front verandahs, and a hall at the rear of the building. There are glazed partitions between the classrooms and the hall.

Public Record Office files for the North Fremantle School building begin in 1897 with letters from the Headmaster, Mr A. M. Cooke. In these letters he indicates the increasing numbers of children coming into the school and the urgent need for 'another large classroom be erected at the north end of the main room'<sup>26</sup>, (the main room being the hall area). A note written on the bottom of the page indicates there were 281 children on the school roll. The relatively few years between the erection of the school and the need for additions, was apparently anticipated at the time the original plans were being drawn. A departmental memo refers to an archway that was 'built into the north wall of the main room to allow for further extension.'<sup>27</sup> Another memo refers to a 'Corridor to the new classroom which will allow further additions at a future period.'<sup>28</sup> While these plans were progressing the urgent

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<sup>21</sup> Education Department Files, North Fremantle School, State Archives: Acc 1497, Item 596/98. A letter dated 3 August, 1898 accompanies the sketch.

<sup>22</sup> Bremen, p.283.

<sup>23</sup> Bremen, p.285.

<sup>24</sup> See Bremen, op.cit., pp.283-284 and Figure 7.3 which provides a floorplan and elevation of the Albany school.

<sup>25</sup> Bremen, p.285.

<sup>26</sup> Education Department files, North Fremantle School, State Archives: Acc 1497, Item 593/97. Letter to the Secretary of Education dated 29 January, 1897.

<sup>27</sup> Education Department files, North Fremantle School, State Archives: Acc 1497, Item 593/97. Memo dated 6 February, 1897 from the Fremantle District Board of Education to the Secretary for Education.

<sup>28</sup> Education Department files, North Fremantle School: Acc 1497, Item 593/97. Memo dated 9 March, 1897.



need for a temporary iron building to accommodate about 50 children was raised. A May 1897 report by the Fremantle District Board of Education states:

The Board finds the school is in a terribly overcrowded condition. There is only one classroom and into this eighty children are crowded, and even then, half the number of children in one of the classes occupying this room have to be taught outside in a shed in the yard...<sup>29</sup>

A number of recommendations were made in this report including the need for a suitable room for the infants 'with accommodation for 125'. However, it soon became apparent that a separate building for the infants was needed, and as there wasn't sufficient space on the existing site, a search was on for available land 'in close proximity to the school'.<sup>30</sup> In the meantime 'a temporary iron building was transported from the school site in Newcastle Street to the North Fremantle school site and a gallery was moved from the main to the temporary building to accommodate infant classes in January 1899'.<sup>31</sup> A separate Infants' School was eventually erected in 1900 further north of the school and on the other side of the Perth-Fremantle Road (also referred to as Victoria Road where the road enters North Fremantle). The Infants' School would later re-amalgamate with the school in 1926.<sup>32</sup>

The rapidly increasing numbers of school-age children in the North Fremantle district (from around 50 to 100 pupils between 1886 to the early-mid 1890s, to an average of about 300 pupils at the beginning of the 1898 school year)<sup>33</sup> reflected a local manifestation of the population explosion that was taking place in various parts of Western Australia during the gold boom.<sup>34</sup> In North Fremantle this necessitated the erection of public facilities such as a town hall, a post office (now demolished), and a police station and lock-up. The latter two buildings are credited to George Temple-Poole and his Department of Public Works.<sup>35</sup>

The necessity for a plentiful supply of good drinking water at the school was raised by the headmaster who requested that the new additions be roofed with iron instead of shingles, 'so that clean water might be caught in a tank.' The original building, 'though it had been erected for some years' was

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<sup>29</sup> Education Department files, North Fremantle School: Acc 1497, Item 593/97. Report dated 19 May, 1897. The reference to one classroom in this report is puzzling, and could be an error.

<sup>30</sup> Education Department files, North Fremantle School: Acc 1497, Item 593/97. Memo dated 11 August, 1897.

<sup>31</sup> Education Department files, North Fremantle School: Acc 1653, Item 596/98. Cited in documentary history on Former North Fremantle Infants School for HCWA heritage assessment, p.7.

<sup>32</sup> Education Department letter dated 18 February, 1986. A heritage assessment and conservation plan for the former Infants' School (Activ Foundation Workshop) has recently been completed, HCWA Place No. 1040.

<sup>33</sup> Graph of annual enrolments in the 'Centenary Edition, North Fremantle School Magazine, Later Days Number', inside front cover.

<sup>34</sup> The 1901 census revealed a 345 per cent increase in the state's population on the preceding decade. (*Western Australia, An atlas of human endeavour, 1829-1979*, p.121)

<sup>35</sup> See Oldham, J & R, *George Temple Poole: Architect of the Golden Years, 1885-1897*, UWA Press, 1980, p.191; Molyneux, I., *Looking Around Perth*, pp.18-19. Today there is a reluctance to ascribe particular designs to Poole because of the massive volume of work that went through his office during the 1890s.

shingled and apparently the water was still disagreeable to taste.<sup>36</sup> The issue of water was to be a continuing one, especially when it was found that the underground water storage tank had been emptied by the builders. There is also mention of the well on the site with a surrounding wall that is 'a very old one.'<sup>37</sup> This well could possibly date from the original convict depot.

During the next thirty years or so the school generally maintained the high level of enrolment that was reached during the boom period. However, according to reports by the school medical officer, Dr Roberta Jull, this enrolment included an unusually high proportion of mentally defective children.

In the two schools together [the Infants' and Senior or Primary school] twenty one children are classed as defective, while a very large number of others are distinctly dull. I think that we should start a special class for these defective children. There is no room available in either of the schools at present, and I recommend your approval to the erection of a pavilion room for the purpose.<sup>38</sup>

These particular children had also been found to be 'dirty in their person and clothing, and therefore specially unsuited for close contact'.<sup>39</sup> A pavilion room with canvas shutters was eventually erected on the school grounds.

Other structures at the school which are mentioned at various times in the school correspondence include separate latrines and shelter sheds for the boys and girls (the boys' latrines in particular being a constant source of grievance), water tanks, a wood shed, and crumbling stone walls which eventually give way to picket fences. There is little correspondence about the teacher's quarters at the north end of the site. The site plan referred to above which dates from 1898 gives the approximate location of the quarters. Internal departmental correspondence dating from 1921 makes reference to the building as unoccupied quarters, and states that it was:

... erected in 1906 or 1908 (our records are not quite clear as to the exact date). These quarters are not up to standard. They are too near the railway line and are unsatisfactory in other respects. They were handed over to the PWD in May 1910.<sup>40</sup>

What eventuated in relation to the quarters is unclear. A PWD plan signed and dated in 1915 shows sewerage works for the teacher's quarters, so the building or its amenities may have been upgraded for a time. The railway was also a problem for the school with reports about the vibration from the trains affecting the brickwork in some of the classrooms and bricks falling down one of the chimneys.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Education Department files, North Fremantle School: Acc 1497, Item 593/97. Memo dated 8 September, 1897.

<sup>37</sup> Education Department files, North Fremantle School: Acc 1497, Item 593/97. Correspondence dated 1 November, 1897 and 11 January 1898. A 1898 sketch plan of the school site gives an approximate location for the well.

<sup>38</sup> Education Department Files: Acc.1629, 495/18, Memo dated 7 January 1920.

<sup>39</sup> Education Department Files: Acc.1629, 495/18, letter to head teacher from the Director of Education, dated 12 November 1919. What constituted 'mental defectiveness' in a child is not elaborated upon in the correspondence. Poverty could be one reason for the dirtiness of the children.

<sup>40</sup> Education Department Files: Acc.1629, 495/18. Typed file note attached to a memo dated 26 January, 1921.

<sup>41</sup> Education Department Files: Acc.1629, 495/18. Memo from the Senior Inspector of Schools dated 5 August, 1918.

Two additional classrooms were added to the west side of the school prior to 1918, thus realising the central hall plan with surrounding classrooms. However, the rooms were subject to complaint by the teachers because of the glare from the sun which necessitated the installation of external venetian blinds,<sup>42</sup> and the heat and lack of ventilation during the summer months. The ceilings were considered to be too low and there was talk of having them raised, and also the replacement of the windows with 'Simplex Reversible Windows'. Eventually, ordinary windows with fanlights were installed on the western wall and two ventilating windows were placed in the internal walls of each classroom connecting them to the hall. Additional ceiling vents were also installed.<sup>43</sup>

According to memories of past pupils, the school established a reputation for its academic achievements, as well as its social, cultural and sporting endeavours.<sup>44</sup> The latter was no doubt helped by the construction of a concrete cricket pitch c.1934-6 which was officially opened by leading Western Australian cricketer Ernie H. Bromley, the state's representative in the Australian XI. The pitch was funded by the North Fremantle Council.<sup>45</sup> Another link with a notable cricketer was the planting of three Tuart trees in 1933 in the school grounds by Sir Donald Bradman, the world famous Australian cricketer.<sup>46</sup> Also notable amongst the teachers from this time was Mr J. T. Tonkin, who would later become the Minister for Education and Premier of Western Australia.

The school hall with its polished wooden floors was also used by the local community for Saturday night dances. Other amenities at the school which came gradually included connection to the main water supply around the last year of the nineteenth century, and the installation of electricity towards the end of 1920. Gardens were established by the children, though subject to repeated attacks by the neighbours' goats, and grassed and gravelled areas were laid down in the playground as well as trees and shrubs being planted. The Parents and Citizens Association was also active with fund raising activities to improve the school's amenities through the holding of bazaars, dances and social events.

From the 1940s, when part of the school was used as an air raid shelter and army store, to the 1960s, the school and the district generally began to experience substantial change and decline in its residential population. Already a place of industrial development, for example the Ford Motor Factory was established in 1929 (now the Matilda Bay Brewery), and the Dingo Flour Mills date from 1922, a number of families evacuated the area during the war years. Oil installations were constructed west of the railway line and there was government resumption of land for railway use. In 1966, the School Medical Officer reported that 30ft (9.1 metres) of the school playground had been taken by the railways and that another rail had been laid close to the school. The inappropriateness of the site for a school had

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<sup>42</sup> Education Department Files: Acc.1629, 495/18. Memo dated 12 November 1919.

<sup>43</sup> Education Department Files: Acc.1629, 305/25. Letter dated 17 July, 1923.

<sup>44</sup> 'Centenary Edition, North Fremantle School Magazine, Later Days Number'.

<sup>45</sup> Undocumented newspaper clippings held by the Local History section of the City of Fremantle Library, File 372.24.

<sup>46</sup> Craig Burton, Heritage Study of North Fremantle, Volume 2A - Draft Inventory, June 1994.

been noted in the 1950s. On his appointment as Head Teacher, George Forster wrote:

...the school was an agreeable surprise to the new staff. Lofty rooms in good repair, neatly painted, adequate cupboard accommodation, evidence of interest of the local P and C in the provision of library books... On the debit side there is a very inadequate playground, poorly surfaced and lack of sewerage. Fronting the busiest thoroughfare in the State, the site of the school is particularly ill chosen. Noise from trains and heavy motor vehicles makes hearing difficult at times.<sup>47</sup>

Although a number of these debit points were addressed, nothing could prevent the traffic noises, or the general population decline. In 1966, conditions were still reported as remaining very difficult. In 1967, the school moved to new buildings in John Street.

No longer suitable for a primary school, the building was subsequently adapted by the Prisoners' Aid Association to become the 'Kui' Men's Hostel, the word 'Kui' meaning 'welcome'.<sup>48</sup> The hostel operated as a half-way house for ex-prisoners and accommodated about twelve persons, with caretakers living in separate quarters. The former art room was converted into a kitchen, 'and the office next door [to] the Headmaster's study... Each boarder at the hostel has a room to himself with a shared kitchen... There is a recreation room, billiards and table tennis and a television room.'<sup>49</sup> Floor plans of proposed alterations dating from 1968 indicate three of the classrooms were each converted into three bedrooms and a lounge area.

In 1983, the hostel became the first bail hostel in Australia. Named 'Stirling House', the bail hostel was established after a study of bail hostels in England by the Under-Secretary for Law, Mr Roy Christie. Christie recommended the concept to the state government as a way of reducing the numbers who were remanded to gaol while awaiting trial. The building was converted for this purpose at a cost of \$200,000. 'The old stone building [was] faithfully restored with brass fittings, polished floorboards, open fireplaces and turn-of-the-century windows and doors...'<sup>50</sup> Live-in caretakers managed the hostel under the supervision of the Probation and Parole Service.

The bail hostel eventually proved to be uneconomic. It was expensive to run, about \$250,000 a year, despite being used in conjunction with other forms of detention such as the House Detention Program. The function of the bail hostel was taken over by Community Based Services' Fremantle Branch and the hostel was closed in 1995.<sup>51</sup>

On 9 November 1995 *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* became a training centre for prison officers, with courses run by the Operational Training Unit of the Offender Management Division, Department of Corrective Services.

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<sup>47</sup> 'Centenary Edition, North Fremantle School Magazine, Later Days Number', p.13.

<sup>48</sup> *Daily News*, 4 August, 1977, p.6. Different reports give the name as being Aboriginal and Maori.

<sup>49</sup> *Fremantle Gazette*, 31 August, 1978.

<sup>50</sup> *Daily News*, 19 July, 1983. The claim for a faithful restoration is somewhat fanciful. For example the brass fittings on the doors are modern. There had been a request by the first headmaster for brass finger plates to be fitted on all doors at the time when the first additions were made to the building in 1897.

<sup>51</sup> Telephone conversation between I Elliot of HCWA and officers of the Fremantle Branch of Community Based Services, Ministry of Justice.

## 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The place consists of a limestone building, *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)*, and its landscaped setting. *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* addresses Stirling Highway, and backs onto the Perth-Fremantle railway line. The site is wedge shaped, its long sides parallel with the railway line and highway respectively, and tapering to a truncated point on the north where it adjoins the North Fremantle railway station. *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* is near the southern boundary of the site, and there is only one other building on the site, a metal clad garden shed of recent date.

Approximately 100 metres north of the site, and on the opposite side of the highway is the Activ Foundation Workshop, formerly the North Fremantle Infants School. South of the site are several blocks containing buildings from the 1890s, including residential, commercial and ecclesiastical buildings. This area does not have the coherence to warrant its identification as a precinct, but retains the complexity and diversity of built form typical of very old neighbourhoods.

The external form of *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* is characterised by four dominant gables in the east and north elevations, and by the unity of scale and materials which gives harmony to the somewhat amorphous form of the building. The building plan consists essentially of classrooms centred around large hall space, the three front classrooms separated by circulation areas and expressed in elevation with the said gables. The plan is largely asymmetrical, although there is a high degree of consistency and formality in the composition of individual classrooms which provides for the overall unity of external form.

In terms of its elements, the roof is steeply pitched (at 45°) and clad with corrugated cement fibre sheeting. The gables are half timbered and cantilevered forward, some have vents which provide interest as detail. The chimneys are tall and elegant, constructed of brick with moulded render cornices. Limestone has been used for the larger part of the building, although two classrooms and a recent laundry/bathroom area at the rear are made of brick and painted a light tone to match the other work. Red brick quoins express the openings and external corners. The windows are double-hung sash types, of the usual tall proportions, and generally grouped in threes. Windows in the east and north gable walls are shaded with awnings that are supported with well crafted but unornamented brackets.

The external characteristics of *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* are consistent with those of a number of other schools designed by the Public Works Department of Western Australia during the 1890s, notably Beaconsfield, Subiaco, Cottesloe, and Albany. In terms of their common character, these schools could be described as being of the Federation Arts and Crafts style.<sup>52</sup>

Internally, the building consists of distinct classroom spaces with interconnecting corridors. Most classrooms have been partitioned into compartments, but a view of the entire ceiling generally provides a sense of the original space. The central hall is the size of two classrooms and has a

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<sup>52</sup> 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).

lofty ceiling, truncated and lined with golden coloured softwood boarding which contrasts with the expressed hardwood trusses. Ceilings in the three north-east classrooms are similar in construction, although painted white. In the rooms with truncated ceilings, steel tie rods span the width the room at wall plate height. The two rear classrooms have flat lathe and plaster ceilings, strikingly lower than most others. The three main rooms on the southern end of the building have low ceilings which appear to be very recent. Because of their low level these ceilings would intersect the windows but the ceiling line in front of the windows rakes sharply upwards to meet with the window head. Modern lights and air comfort devices have been fitted throughout the building. No early electrical fittings were identified.

Walls throughout the building interior are painted plaster, with a scribed render line at shoulder height in some of the main circulation areas. Evidence of a chair rail or dado, since removed, is visible in the plasterwork of the central hall. Tall timber skirtings are found in the central hall, smaller quad and bullnose timber skirtings are found elsewhere. Floors in all main areas throughout the building appear to be timber with carpet or linoleum covering.

Door and window openings into the main hall are distinctively chamfered, a detail made possible by constructing in stone. The joinery throughout the building, door and window frames and fireplace mantles, is restrained in detail and well crafted, painted in finish. Two large arched openings the width of three doors and containing two fixed doors and one hinged door, with transom windows above, connect the oldest two classrooms with the hall. These doors consist of two solid lower panels, gunstock stiles and glazed upper part (approximately two thirds of the total). The large amount of glass, and margin glazing pattern of these doors, distinguishes them from their more recent counterparts within the building. Panes of three transom windows above these doors are divided into quadrants. A number of single doors which open into the hall are of the four panel type, some with a glazed transom above (divided into six panes). The doors leading into classrooms are also four panel types with bolection mouldings. On some the two upper panels have glazing beads rather than bolection mouldings and so presumably were originally glazed. One door of more heavy construction and without bolection mouldings was identified, leading into the south-east classroom and was presumably an external door at one stage. Different treatments of the transom windows are also found throughout the building, indicating different periods of construction. For example, the south-west door leading from the hall has no transom window at all, and transoms in the northern part of the building have three panes and an arched head. Door hardware throughout is of a recent date. Some early window furniture of a plain type remains.

There is considerable evidence of alteration and additions having occurred to *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* over the years. The rambling nature of the building itself is testimony of the place's growth from a central hall and two classrooms. The joinery detailing, as discussed previously, also provides clues of the staged growth of the place, as does the presence of arched openings and nib walls. Recent work relating to its use by the Ministry of Justice is for the greater part distinctly modern in appearance, and easily identified. External modifications include the enclosure of a courtyard on the

front of the building, consisting of a pergola and picket fence infill. A brick addition was made to the north-west corner of the building and painted a light colour and, apparently contemporary to this, the entire building painted over the older limewash finish. Internally recent work includes partitions, stud walls, new ceilings (below the original), new floor finishes, built-in furnishings such as shelving and cupboards, new wet areas, and fittings such as lights, fans and door hardware. Most of this work is of a non-permanent nature and sufficiently subdued to concede an appreciation of the older fabric and spaces.

The absence of any early fabric in the grounds besides the Tuart trees (*Eucalyptus gomphocela*) along the northern boundary, and the relatively established nature of the existing landscaping, would tend to indicate that substantial site clearance had occurred at the time when the place was converted for use by the Ministry of Justice.

At present the place appears to be well maintained, the gardens and building being in a tidy state. Inspection revealed no major building fabric defects. Identified problems of a minor nature included small areas of blistering to the external paintwork on the limestone walls, particularly at low levels where downpipes discharge, peeling paint on some external joinery, rust streaks on a wall below a vent brick which suggests a leak or questionable installation of an overflow pipe, bees in a wall vent, and termites in the picket fence immediately behind the building.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

'Centenary Edition, North Fremantle School Magazine, Later Days Number' 1986.

Education Department files, North Fremantle School. Public Records Office, State Reference Library.

Local History Unit, City of Fremantle Library, File 372.24 (North Fremantle)

### **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further research is needed to establish the connection and relevance of the old North Fremantle convict depot to this site. An old well is documented to have been on the school site last century, and may have been remnant fabric from this convict depot.

Early plans of the school building have not been located and would be useful to confirm that George Temple-Poole was indeed the architect of the building as is presently ascribed.