

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 2.5 Promoting settlement
- 3.3.4 Looking for land with agricultural potential
- 4.1.1 Selecting township sites
- 4.5 Making settlements to serve rural Australia
- 7.7.3 Going to war
- 8.4 Eating and drinking
- 8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 107 Settlements
- 111 Depression and boom
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 405 Sport, recreation and entertainment
- 501 World wars and other wars

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is a good and intact representative example of a regional Town Hall in the Inter War Free Classical architectural style. (Criterion 1.2)

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is a landmark in Pithara, as a prominent building with a distinctive presence, which makes a significant contribution to the streetscape and character of the town. (Criteria 1.3)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is an integral part of the Pithara streetscape, together with nearby buildings of a similar era. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is associated with the growth and subsequent decline in population of Pithara, especially through its construction in 1931 to replace an earlier timber and iron hall, and the addition of a Supper Room in 1956. (Criterion 2.1)

Pithara Hall is associated with World War II, and with the feared Japanese invasion of Western Australia, through its use as an army hospital in the early 1940s. (Criterion 2.2)

Pithara Hall was designed by the well-known firm of Western Australia architects, Powell, Chisholm & Cameron. (Criterion 2.3)

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is associated with Hugh McNeill, a significant local businessman in the Pithara area. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Pithara Hall has been a focal point of community social activity since 1931 until its closure in 1999, and the Supper Room since 1956 to the present (2010). It has served as a venue for church services, dances and balls, movies and concerts, family and social events, weddings, formal ceremonies, and sporting club occasions. (Criterion 4.1)

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is associated with those organisations that have used the building, including various sporting clubs, the Farmers Union, the RSL, and the CWA. (Criterion 4.1)

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is highly valued by the residents of Pithara and the surrounding area, as demonstrated by the number of people attending a meeting in May 2009, where it was resolved that the place should be preserved for the community's benefit. (Criterion 4.1)

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is highly valued by the community of Pithara and surrounding area, for the sense of place and memories of civic and social events that have taken place in Pithara since 1931. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Pithara Hall & Supper Room demonstrates the once central importance of town halls to rural communities. The loss of this function of the place reflects a change to a distinctive way of life or custom, which is the result of declining rural populations. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is representative of town hall complexes in regional Western Australia. (Criterion 6.1)

Pithara Hall is representative of Inter War Free Classical town halls. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Pithara Hall is generally in fair condition. There are leaks in the roof, which have and will continue to cause damage to the ceilings. Some sections of the ceilings have collapsed. Much of the material with termite damage has been replaced, particularly the floors.

A building report indicated leaks in the roof, termite attacks to the floors and joinery, fallen ceiling panels and drainage issues around the site. Without remedial works, the building may become unsound in the near future.

The Supper Room is also in fair to poor condition with evidence of quite severe rising damp to the external walls and cracking to the rear wall. The roof to this building is corrugated asbestos cement, and whilst in a fairly good condition will have a limited future life span.

The ground drainage to the site around the buildings is quite poor and is contributing to the rising damp issues of the Supper Room.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Pithara Hall has a high level of integrity, and with appropriate conservation works could directly function as a Town Hall.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Pithara Hall & Supper Room remains largely unchanged since construction with the exception of the construction of the Supper Room in 1956-57. A 1931 image of *Pithara Hall & Supper Room* demonstrates negligible change to the street facade or the roofline. Internally the buildings remain essentially as constructed.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Eddie Marcus, historian, and Annabel Wills, heritage architect in August 2009, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Pithara Hall & Supper Room comprises a single-storey rendered brick Town Hall (1931) in the Inter War Free Classical style, with a symmetrical façade and gabled parapet, and later brick Supper Room (1956).

Pithara is a small (pop. 341)¹ wheatbelt town in the Shire of Dalwallinu, about 240 km north-east of Perth and 12 km south of the Dalwallinu townsite. It is located on the Wongan Hills to Mullewa railway line, which opened in 1915. Tourism associated with spring wildflowers is becoming increasingly important to the local economy.

The first occupants of the area now known as Dalwallinu Shire were the Badimia people, who lived in the northern tracts of the Shire, and the Galamaia people, who were the largest group in the area. Although boundaries were not rigidly defined, Galamaia country included Lake Moore and the land south to Koorda Shire. Small areas of Amangu, Yued and Balardong countries also overlap with the current Shire boundary.² Various claims are made for the Aboriginal meaning of 'Dalwallinu', including 'a place to wait awhile' and 'lame leg'.³

There are a number of sites of Aboriginal heritage significance throughout Dalwallinu Shire. One is an excavation in the Wilgie Hills district, from which ochre was mined, along with another ochre quarry in the vicinity of Karara. Other sites include a cave with rock art, a hill on Ninghan Station, and a circular arrangement of stones near Pithara.⁴ Pithara is an Aboriginal name, derived from a nearby well, first shown on maps of the area in 1907.⁵

The first graziers in the Pithara district were Benedictine monks from New Norcia who kept sheep on vast pastoral leases taken up in the 19th century. However, European settlement did not occur until 1907, with the ambition to develop the place into a wheat growing region. Michael Leahy applied for land in the area now known as Pithara, and on 6 August 1907 was granted Melbourne Location 1284, a block which had to be surveyed before it could be allocated. A short time later Michael's brother, William, and cousin, Jack, also acquired land in the district.⁶

Michael Leahy's farm was gradually developed over the next few years. Using branches from felled trees, hessian and sheets of iron, he constructed

1 www.censusdata.abs.gov.au [accessed 30 July 2009]

2 Crake, Hellen Antonio, *A History of Dalwallinu: A place to wait a while, 1846-1979* (Shire of Dalwallinu, 1985), p. 20

3 'Shire of Dalwallinu: Community Profile' (Shire of Dalwallinu, 2002), n.p.

4 Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, pp. 21-22; see also www.dia.wa.gov.au

5 www.landgate.wa.gov.au/corporate.nsf/web/History+of+country+town+names+-+P [accessed 30 July 2009]

6 Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, p. 45

a house. In 1910 his wife and twelve children packed up their possessions and made the trip north from Bejoording, near Toodyay, to Pithara.⁷

In May 1912, work commenced on the building of the railway line from Wongan Hills to Dalwallinu. In 1913, this section of the railway was linked with the line running southwards from Mullewa. As the construction of the railway progressed sidings were located alongside it every few miles. Settlers west of the line in Dookling Marling, an area now known as the Milling District, were now able to cart their harvest to a siding on the Wongan Hills-Mullewa line, which was eventually given the name of Pithara. Although the trip took some seven hours, it was much quicker than the previous one they had been making to Coomberdale on the Midland line. It was around this time that a store opened in Pithara enabling farmers on long wheat carting trips to buy supplies.⁸

Pithara was approved as the name of a siding in April 1913, but before the railway line was opened the name was changed to Hettie, after 'the lady from whom the government resumed land for the townsite'. When the government gazetted a townsite in 1914 it also was named Hettie. Locals objected to the name Hettie, and the townsite was gazetted as Pithara in December 1914.⁹

By 1917, Pithara had become a small village. A Co-operative Store had opened for business, while mail was handled by the Greengrass family who later ran the Post Office. Local children attended a canvas and iron 'pavilion' school. Miss Enid Tindale, the inaugural teacher, opened the school on 8 November 1915. The Pithara Hotel, owned by Hugh McNeill, opened its doors in 1916, and was operated on the east side of the railway line which had opened in 1915.¹⁰

Pithara's Progress Association was formed in 1916 and by 1918 a timber and iron Town Hall had been erected, using an imported building from an abandoned Goldfields mining town.¹¹ This Hall was used for community functions until superseded by Pithara Hall in 1931. However, the first Hall was not removed after construction of the new brick building, instead functioning as a Supper Room until 1956.¹²

The timber and iron Hall hosted balls, dances, parties and social evenings. One of the highlights of the year was the Race Club Ball, which drew crowds coming from some distance to enjoy an evening of dancing.¹³

Pithara grew rapidly during the 1920s. By the late 1920s, V. and J. Gatti had opened a general store in the town. There was a bakery and a greengrocers/saddler's shop as well as a Post Office building. Meat could be

⁷ Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, p. 45

⁸ Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, pp.67-68.

⁹ www.landgate.wa.gov.au/corporate.nsf/web/History+of+country+town+names+-+P [accessed 30 July 2009]

¹⁰ Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, p. 100

¹¹ Shorthouse, Elizabeth Mavis, 'Notes on the history of Pithara: information gained from residents of Pithara & government depts' (unpublished, 1979), n.p.

¹² Brian Browning, telephone interview, 3 August 2009

¹³ Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, p. 128

purchased in the butchers, and John Pearn ran the blacksmiths. A garage operated, along with a billiard saloon, tearooms, and a coffee palace.¹⁴

Sport has played a significant role in the social life of Pithara residents. Tennis courts were put down early in the town's history, along with a cricket pitch. Winter sports included Australian Rules Football and Association Football, with the local rivalry drawing the largest crowds for games against Dalwallinu. In 1930 a golf course was laid down and a club established, and a hockey club began about the same time.¹⁵

Performing arts were catered for by the Pithara Pierrot Society, which was formed before 1924, and presented plays and skits at various local events.¹⁶

In 1926 the Bank of NSW opened a branch in Pithara, and in 1929 the CWA began operating in the town.¹⁷

The Pithara Hall Committee, chaired by Hugh McNeill, had been active in seeking a replacement for the timber and iron Town Hall, which was no longer suitable for the needs of the community. Consequently, and despite the effects of the Depression, in January 1931 the Dalwallinu Road Board 'agreed to a special order for the passing of a loan for erecting a new brick hall at Pithara and accepting the tender of Henley Builders (£1,657) for same'.¹⁸ A letter from the architects, Powell, Cameron & Chisholm, in February 1931, pointed out that the Hall would be slightly more expensive, at £1,992, and that this was to be the amount of the contract.¹⁹

Use of the timber and iron Hall continued during the construction of the new building, with, among other events, a successful St. Patrick's Day dance,²⁰ a 'novelty ball' for the Rifle Club,²¹ and a benefit concert for a Mr W. Hughes, after his motor accident in the town.²²

An indication that the new Hall was being built under difficult circumstances was a note in the local newspaper that the Depression meant that only 60% of the normal quantity of crops had been sown in the area in 1931.²³

In March 1931, it was reported that work on the new Hall would commence shortly.²⁴ However, discussions on furnishings for the hall were delayed by the Dalwallinu Road Board, since it appears to have had insufficient funds to purchase them.²⁵ The Board decided that the Pithara Hall Committee should hand over its funds to pay for the furnishings. In addition, the Board suggested to the architects that commercial buildings could be incorporated

14 Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, pp. 128-29

15 Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, pp. 130-31

16 Crake, *History of Dalwallinu*, p. 131

17 *Dilly Dallying: Reminiscences of People and Places around Dalwallinu Shire* (Compiled by Senior Citizens Club, 1988), p. 87

18 *North-Eastern Courier*, 24 January 1931, p. 2

19 *North-Eastern Courier*, 21 February 1931, p. 3

20 *North-Eastern Courier*, 14 March 1931, p. 2; 21 March 1931, p. 3

21 *North-Eastern Courier*, 2 May 1931, p. 2

22 *North-Eastern Courier*, 23 May 1931, p. 1

23 *North-Eastern Courier*, 16 May 1931, p. 2

24 *North-Eastern Courier*, 21 March 1931, p. 4

25 *North-Eastern Courier*, 4 April 1931, p. 2

into the design to assist in the funding of the Hall. This latter suggestion was not carried through.²⁶

There was resistance from the Pithara Hall Committee, however, who resented the Road Board's attempt to co-opt their funds. One member of the Committee stated that people who do not live in Pithara should not dictate to the town what furnishings it should have in its Hall.²⁷

In May 1931, Powell, Cameron & Chisholm informed Dalwallinu Road Board that good progress was being made with the Hall.²⁸

Pithara Hall opened on 29 August 1931. The local newspaper observed:

Nearly 200 people were present at Pithara last Saturday afternoon to witness the Minister for Agriculture (Hon. P. D. Ferguson, M.L.A.) officially open the beautiful new hall there. The building is of brick and comprises main hall, stage, dressing rooms, committee room, cloak rooms, and was designed by, and erected under, the supervision of Messrs Powell, Cameron and Chisholm, architects of Perth; the contractors being Messrs Henley, builders, of Northam. The contract price was £1992, and with additions amounted to £2032 7s 6d, and to meet this expenditure a loan of £2400 was raised by the South Ward of the Road Board. The electric light installation (a Lister plant) and furnishings costing £500 was provided from funds raised by the Pithara Hall Committee.²⁹

The electric lights in *Pithara Hall & Supper Room* were run by a 32v generator until the State Electricity Commission introduced mains power.³⁰

In response to the imminently expected Japanese invasion of Western Australia during World II, a munitions dump was established near Pithara, and an armoured division was stationed there. Three army camps were based around Pithara, and *Pithara Hall & Supper Room* was co-opted as a military hospital, with tents outside acting as wards, including an infectious diseases tent. A red cross was installed on top of the building. Additional tents to the rear of the Hall were used for accommodation for the stationed armed service personnel. The main room in the Hall became an operating theatre, while the Supper Room (the original timber and iron Hall) functioned as the mess.³¹

The brick Supper Room and kitchen, designed by Cameron, Chisholm & Nicol, and built by Tom Easton, was erected in 1956.³² The architects appear to have carried out a similar extension to Dalwallinu Town Hall at the same time. The erection of Pithara's extension necessitated the demolition of the original 1918 Hall. However, it appears that structural problems with the new Supper Room meant that repairs and rebuilding of sections of a wall were necessary shortly after it was completed.³³

²⁶ *North-Eastern Courier*, 20 June 1931, p. 3

²⁷ *North-Eastern Courier*, 27 June 1931, p. 4

²⁸ *North-Eastern Courier*, 16 May 1931, p. 2

²⁹ *North-Eastern Courier*, 5 September, 1931, p. 2

³⁰ Dawn Reynolds, telephone interview, 3 August 2009

³¹ Shorthouse, 'Notes', n.p.; Dawn Reynolds, telephone interview, 3 August 2009; Sue McCreery, correspondence, 4 August 2009

³² Shorthouse, 'Notes', n.p.; Cameron, Chisholm & Nicol, Plan 54/13/1, 4 June 1954; Dawn Reynolds, telephone interview, 3 August 2009; Brian Browning, telephone interview, 3 August 2009

³³ Dawn Reynolds, telephone interview, 3 August 2009

Brian Browning, a long-term resident of Pithara, recalls the Hall being regularly used for Saturday night dances, sporting club balls, as well as movie showings from films which were brought around the region by a Mr Baker. The Hall was also used for the RSL and Farmers Union meetings.³⁴

Dawn Reynolds (née Hartree) was born in Pithara and was caretaker of *Pithara Hall & Supper Room* from c.1984 to 1999. She remembers the building being actively used from World War II to the end of the 20th century for movies, badminton, table tennis, CWA meetings, school speech nights, fancy dress balls, balls and dances, weddings and 21st birthdays. In addition, the building held services for both the Congregational Church and the Anglicans.³⁵

Music for the dances and balls was often provided by a local family, the Hartrees, who offered a small orchestra including, among other instruments, drums, piano and violin.³⁶

In 1960 the bakery, situated north of *Pithara Hall & Supper Room* burnt down, and was never replaced.³⁷

With only eight pupils enrolled, Pithara School closed in 1986.³⁸

With declining revenue and repairs needed to the roof, the Hall was closed c.1999.³⁹

In 2007, Pithara celebrated its centenary with some of the events being held at the rear of *Pithara Hall & Supper Room*.⁴⁰

A building report on *Pithara Hall & Supper Room* for the Shire of Dalwallinu highlighted leaks in the roof, termite attacks to the floors and joinery, ceiling panels that had fallen and various drainage issues around the site.⁴¹ Consequently, in May 2008 the Shire of Dalwallinu resolved to demolish the Hall (possibly retaining the façade) unless a viable use was demonstrated. However, the Shire's discussions with the Pithara Progress Association stalled on this issue. At a subsequent community meeting in Pithara in February 2009, a consensus was reached that if the façade of the Hall was retained the demolition of the Hall could go ahead.

The Shire began a tender process in March 2009 and resolved to accept one of the tenders for the demolition of the Hall. In April 2009 the Hall was nominated to the Heritage Council of Western Australia for consideration for entry in the State Register of Heritage Places.

34 Brian Browning, telephone interview, 3 August 2009

35 Dawn Reynolds, telephone interview, 3 August 2009

36 Brian Browning, telephone interview, 3 August 2009; Dawn Reynolds, telephone interview, 3 August 2009

37 *Dilly Dallying*, p. 88

38 *Dilly Dallying*, p. 88

39 Shire of Dalwallinu, Ordinary Council Minutes, 26 May 2009; Dawn Reynolds, telephone interview, 3 August 2009

40 picasaweb.google.com/tonysutherland/Pithara20071013#5123028456054250946 [accessed 3 August 2009]

41 Shire of Dalwallinu, Ordinary Council Minutes, 26 May 2009

In May 2009 the Minister for Heritage received a protest concerning Pithara Hall and the Shire agreed to preserve the building until further community consultation. A meeting held on 14 May 2009 was well attended with more than 70 people present. They resolved to request that the Shire of Dalwallinu rescind the demolition of Pithara Hall and that remedial action be undertaken to repair the roof of the Pithara Town Hall as a matter of urgency.⁴²

In June 2009 the Heritage Council of Western Australia requested that the Minister for Heritage issue a 'Stop Work Order' for *Pithara Hall & Supper Room*. The Heritage Council also resolved to commission a priority heritage assessment of the building.⁴³

The Hall was closed c.1999 and has officially been declared a closed building. In 2009 it does not meet current regulations and standards and would require upgrading prior to being reopened for use as a public building. The Supper Room is still used as a meeting place for the local Pithara Progress Association.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Pithara Hall & Supper Room, comprises a single-storey rendered brick Town Hall in the Inter War Free Classical style (1931) with a symmetrical façade and gabled parapet, together with a Supper Room and kitchen (1956).

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is located in the town of Pithara. Pithara is a small wheatbelt town in the Shire of Dalwallinu, 240km north of Perth and 12km south of Dalwallinu on the Great Northern Highway. The Shire of Dalwallinu comprises an area of 7,236 square kilometres. It is primarily an agricultural area and the town of Dalwallinu is the Shire's administrative centre

The town of Pithara is a declining town with a small population of approximately 340 in the surrounding farming area but only approximately 30 in the town itself

The *Pithara Hall and Supper Room* form an integral part of the town centre of Pithara. Along with the former Bank of New South Wales (1923) (now a residence), P & K Trading Company (1917) (the former Co-operative Store – now cafe and shop) and the Pithara Tavern (1916) there is a central group of heritage buildings that are the core of the town and assist in creating a sense of place for Pithara.

The Site

The *Pithara Hall and Supper Room* are located on Reserve 15585 (Lot 36 and 37 Leahy Street) and the site is vested in the Shire of Dalwallinu.

To the east of the site is the Great Northern Highway, to the west a rear laneway and vacant lots to the north and south.

The site is located on the western side of the Great Northern Highway. The Hall is located on the front boundary line of the site whilst the Supper Room is set back approximately 6.3m.

⁴² Shire of Dalwallinu, Ordinary Council Minutes, 26 May 2009

⁴³ Shire of Dalwallinu, Ordinary Council Minutes, 23 June 2009

The site is flat and bounded to the north, south and west by an approximately 1200mm high steel post and timber rail fence clad with asbestos. Two gated openings to the rear boundary fence open to the rear laneway.

The fence to the front boundary is a steel post and rail and steel mesh fence in front of the Supper Room. There is a flag pole to the northern end of this fence. The Hall building is located on the front boundary line. A decorative iron gate is located to the north of the Hall at the front boundary.

The Hall sits 4m from the northern side boundary fence. There is 3.1m between the two buildings and the supper room sits 13.4m from the southern boundary fence.

Two rose gardens are located in front of the Supper Room and a large Gum tree is located in the south west corner of the site. The ground is generally dirt and gravel.

Two brick and iron toilet blocks are located in the rear corners of the site, the female toilet block to the north west corner and the male toilet block to the south west corner. The walls to these structures are painted brick, the floor is concrete and the roof is corrugated iron. Metal framed and clad privacy screens have been added at a later date. There are three WCs to the female block and one WC and a urinal to the male block.

Pithara Hall

The Pithara Hall is a single-storey brick building with a symmetrical façade and gabled parapet constructed in the Inter War Free Classical style of architecture.

The floor plan of the Hall is essentially as it was when constructed in 1931 comprising a main hall, stage, dressing rooms, committee room, cloak room, ticket room and bio box. The brick Supper Room building was added in 1956 and comprises a kitchen and hall space.

The front elevation of the Hall is symmetrical with rendered and painted brick walls between a pair of painted brick pilasters to either side of the central front door. The pilasters are painted red and have a recessed course every fourth course of brick. There is a rendered and painted plinth to the base of the building and two concrete steps leading up to the recessed entrance.

The central door is a pair of timber framed doors each with 6 panes of glass to the upper portion and T&G timber boards to the lower section.

Between the pilasters on either side of central doors is a pair of steel framed, 14 pane textured glass casement windows. There are 8 panes to the lower pairs of casements and 6 panes to the upper casements. The sills to the windows are painted half round bricks.

There is a central rendered awning, gable and pediment above the recessed front doors emphasising the symmetry of the facade and the entrance with decorative brackets to the rendered awning and gable.

There is a ventilated gablet – hipped roof corrugated galvanised iron roof with short length sheets behind the front parapet wall. The roof has metal gutters and square metal downpipes. The front parapet has decorative horizontal

rendered and painted mouldings. The parapet reads "PITHARA HALL" and the gable reads "1931".

The side elevations to the Hall are constructed in bays with red stretcher bond face brick between attached piers. The piers are 2 bricks square to a height of approximately 1500mm capped by a rendered plinth which transitions the piers to 2 brick x 1 ½ brick attached piers to the roof level. The seven structural bays are at approximately 4m centres. Wall vents are located along the two side elevations.

The front most bay has a centrally located steel framed 16 pane casement window with 8 panes to each of the lower casements and 6 panes to each upper casement.

The remaining six bays have centrally located steel framed 8 pane hopper windows each with the operable portion having 4 panes. The central bay has a pair of timber framed and T&G panelled doors.

The rear elevation has 2 engaged brick piers and 2 timber doors at 1200mm above the ground level. There is evidence of two sets of former stairs leading from these doors to the outside ground level.

Internally the Pithara Hall comprises to the front portion of the building an entry/foyer, committee room, cloak room, ticket room and bio box and to the rear portion of the building the main hall, stage and dressing rooms.

The front portion of the building has the entry/foyer space centrally located with the committee room to the south and the cloak room and ticket office to the north. The bio box is located above the entry /foyer and is accessed via a staircase in the ticket office. Centrally located double doors then lead to the main hall with the stage beyond flanked on either side by the dressing rooms.

Generally the floors to the front portion of the building are 100mm wide timber floor boards running in an east west direction on a typical timber framed sub structure. There is a timber ¼ round as a skirting and a simple plaster cornice. The walls are plastered and painted brick with a recessed dado at 1500mm high. A timber hanging rail with metal hooks is located around the walls of the committee room, cloak room and ticket office. The ceilings are plasterboard sheeting with exposed timber battens and decorative vent panels. There is evidence of water damage to the ceilings and some areas of ceiling have fallen away exposing the ceiling space. There are wall vents to the side walls. The ceiling to the entry/foyer is the underside of the concrete bio box floor and there is no cornice to this room.

The doors are timber framed and panelled with three panels to the upper section and three panels to the lower section. The door to the ticket office is a split barn door with two panels to the lower section and two panels to the upper section.

The ticket office contains the timber framed stair to the bio box with a timber framed store room below. The stairs are open treads of narrow dimensions. Within the store room is the electrical board with surface mounted conduits running up to the bio box.

There are simple hanging single pendant lights to these rooms and original switches with surface mounted wiring.

The bio box is a concrete and masonry room with small openings facing into the hall. The walls are plastered and painted brick, the floor unpainted concrete and the ceiling painted concrete.

The rear portion of the building houses the main hall, stage and dressing rooms. The main hall is approximately 18m long by 11m wide. The floors are 100mm wide timber boards on a typical timber substructure with brick pier stumps. There are playing court markings painted onto the floor.

The walls are plastered and painted with a recessed moulded dado at approximately 1500mm high. There skirting is a timber ¼ round and a 140mm x30mm timber board laid flat in front of the ¼ round. The windows, as described above, are steel framed hoppers with eight panes, four of which are operable, sitting at approximately 2700mm above the FFL. The doors are centrally located to each side wall and are a pair of timber framed and T&G panelled doors. There are wall vents along each side wall, one of which has been removed. The eastern wall of the hall (to the entry/foyer) has acoustic tiles attached.

The ceiling is plasterboard with exposed timber battens raked to the edges and flat in the centre. The central 2 panels of the flat section of ceiling for the length of the hall has decorative vent panels. Several sections of the ceiling are broken and missing and there is evidence of damp to some areas. The structural steel roof trusses are exposed beneath the ceiling and are painted white. There are steel tie rods also painted white to each truss. Lighting is a series of hanging single batten fluorescent lights.

The stage is to the western end of the hall, is timber framed and clad, and protrudes approximately 1m into the hall space, is approximately 1.1m high and has two sets of timber access stairs at either side. The floor of the stage is timber boards. The front of the stage is clad with vertical timber T&G boards and two small timber doors allow access to the under stage area.

The stage opening is approximately 6m wide at the front with heavy stage curtains. Either side the walls are timber framed and clad with plasterboard with exposed timber battens to one side only. There is a timber framed and panelled door to either side of the stage leading through to the dressing rooms. The timber framed wall between the dressing rooms and the stage are also clad only on one side and are angled, narrowing the stage area by 500mm each side to the rear. The two dressing rooms each have a steel framed 8 pane hopper window at approximately 1700mm high and a timber door leading outside to the rear of the building.

Several sets of original attached seating rows are located within the building, along with stage props and costumes.

Supper Room

The Supper Room is a single-storey brick building with a simple symmetrical facade and gable roof constructed in the Post War period in a simple utilitarian style.

The brick Supper Room building was added in 1956 and comprises a kitchen and hall space.

The walls to the Supper Room are rendered brick to approximately 1500mm high with red face brick in stretcher bond above. The front elevation has two sets of 4 steel framed casement windows and an awning supported by steel brackets above. There is evidence of rising damp to the external walls of the Supper Room.

The roof is a simple gabled roof with corrugated asbestos sheet cladding with an asbestos vented ridge capping. Gutters and downpipes are painted steel.

The side elevations have 4 engaged face brick piers to each side. A pair of timber ledged and braced doors and a single timber door are located to the north elevation and a single timber door to the south elevation. The side elevations each have two sets of 6 pane steel framed casement windows to the hall space and a smaller four pane casement window to the kitchen. Wall vents are located along the two side elevations. The windows have 25mm thick sill brick detail.

There is a brick chimney built into the rear elevation and a 6 pane steel framed casement window with a flat awning above.

The electrical services to the Supper Room have recently been upgraded.

Internally the Supper Room comprises a kitchen and hall space. The hall space is approximately 13.6m long and 7.4m wide. The floors are 80mm timber boards running in an east west direction. The walls are face brick to 1700mm high with plastered and painted brick walls above. There is a timber ¼ round and 120x30mm timber board laid flat as a skirting. The windows are all steel framed casement windows with textured glass. Wall vents run along the two side walls. The ceiling is a suspended plasterboard tile ceiling and the lighting is single batten fluorescent lights.

The kitchen has original cupboards and bench tops, a No. 3 Metters stove and a copper. Two servery openings with sliding timber covers open from the kitchen to the hall space and a central pair of flush panel doors run between the two rooms. There is some cracking to the rear wall of the kitchen.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Dalwallinu and Pithara

There are 75 places in the Shire of Dalwallinu included in the Heritage Council of Western Australia's database. Of these, only one is entered in the State Register of Heritage Places:

- P00666 *Wubin Wheat Bin Museum* (1939): comprises an 'H' type bin with eleven curved bays of corrugated iron on each side supported by vertical timber posts with internal tie rods. The roof is of corrugated iron sheeting supported by timber columns in a grid pattern.

Only one place in the Shire of Dalwallinu is in the Heritage Council's current assessment program:

- P00658 Dalwallinu Post Office (1924): a timber and iron building in the Inter War Stripped Classical style.

Five places in Pithara, other than *Pithara Hall & Supper Room*, are entered in the Heritage Council's database, all of which are listed in the Shire of Dalwallinu's Municipal Inventory. None are entered in the State Register:

- P0668 Pithara Tavern (1916): a brick and iron hotel, with eight accommodation rooms, owner's quarters and a games/meal room.
- P11924 P & K Trading Company (1917): the former Co-operative Store.
- P00670 Bank of NSW (fmr) (1923): a brick and iron building, in the Inter War Free Classical architectural style.
- P11925 McIntosh Park: site of the first fatal air crash in Western Australia (in 1921).
- P11763 Petrudor Rocks: a popular picnic spot, with spring wildflowers.

Inter War Free Classical Halls

There are 29 places in the Inter War Free Classical style entered in the State Register of Heritage Places. Five of these are halls located outside the Metropolitan Region:

- 0668 *Cunderdin Hall* (1910): a single-storey brick and iron building built in at least three stages between 1910 and 1956, with a façade in the Inter War Free Classical style.
- 01576 *Road Board Office (fmr), Merredin* (1925): a single-storey building with central three-storey clock tower. Of face brick construction with rendered quoins, the place is symmetrical and regular in plan.
- 01426 *Kulin Town Hall* (1928): a single storey brick and iron building, with decorative detailing to the entrance portico and interior hall ceiling.
- 01920 *Alice Williams Memorial Building, Nungarin* (1936): a modest single-storey concrete block and tile building, with characteristics of the Inter War Free Classical style such as the use of classical themes and symmetrical street frontage.
- 02642 *Wagin Town Hall* (1896 to 1928) - a predominantly single storey brick building with an iron roof, in the Inter-war Free Classical style, incorporating a municipal council office and an earlier single storey stone agricultural hall.

All of the above places are in good condition. The most comparable place to Pithara Hall in terms of size, architectural style and construction date is *Kulin Town Hall*. *Road Board Office, Merredin* is more ornate as it includes a clock tower, and *Alice Williams Memorial Building* is simpler in its architectural detail. *Cunderdin Hall* is of a much earlier construction date, as is *Wagin Town Hall*, which also includes a two storey section.

Supper Rooms

It is difficult to know how many town halls include, or have included, a supper room in their design, as no comprehensive survey of these places has yet been undertaken. The following six halls are noted on the Heritage Council database as including a 'supper room'. None are entered in the State Register:

- 01779 Nannup Town Hall & Supper Room (1904): comprises two linked timber framed and weatherboard structures with simple gabled roofs, exposed eaves, projecting gabled entry to the Hall, and timber framed sash windows.
- 01364 Rockwell Agricultural Hall, via Katanning (1907): comprises an agricultural hall and classroom constructed from locally made bricks. A stone supper room was built to the right of the hall in 1921.
- 02248 Pingelly Town Hall (1907): built of locally made bricks in the Federation Free Classical style. In 1940 the hall was extended eastwards to add a kitchen and supper room at the rear of the stage.
- 0662 Dalwallinu Town Hall (1924): a single-storey brick structure, with painted face brick, an asbestos gable roof, and a symmetrical rendered façade with a stepped parapet. The adjacent Supper Room was probably built at the same time, and was demolished in 2009.
- 00445 Elgin Hall, Capel (1931): a timber framed building clad with asbestos with a weatherboard dado. The gabled roof is clad with corrugated iron. The supper room is a lean to on the side of the hall.
- 12860 Bolgart Hall (1932): extended in 1953, using bricks from Culham Hall, with a supper room and dressing rooms.

Masonic Halls appear to have often included a supper room, although some of these also appear to be later extensions, e.g. *Masonic Hall, Pinjarra* (1903), which has an asbestos extension which served as the supper room.

Powell, Cameron & Chisholm

Alexander Donald Cameron was born in Toowoomba, Queensland, and arrived in Perth in 1892, having completed his primary education in Queensland. He served articles with J. R. Wright and remained with him until 1906 when he became a partner of Wright, Powell and Cameron.

Thomas Walker Lloyd Powell was born in 1864 in Melbourne, Victoria, the son of a practising architect. He was educated in Melbourne and became articled to his father in 1882. In 1896, Powell moved to Western Australia and became associated with J. W. Wright.

With Wright's death in 1916, the name of the firm changed to Powell & Cameron, Architects, until 1930 when Oswald 'Ossie' Chisholm became a junior partner and the name changed to Powell, Cameron & Chisholm. The architectural firm continues to operate in 2009 as Cameron, Chisholm & Nicol and has offices in most Australian capital cities, as well as Jakarta.

Powell, Cameron & Chisholm undertook projects in a wide variety of architectural styles and were responsible for the design of various significant

buildings in Perth and regional areas. Other civic buildings designed by the firm include *Narembeen Public Hall* (1939), the remodelling and extension of *Claremont Council Offices* (1935), Dalwallinu Shire Offices (1938, demolished 2003), and Harvey Shire Council Chambers (1935). Other buildings attributed to the firm include, *Albany Bell Hatchery* (1943), *Chisholm House*, Dalkeith (1939), substantial extensions to *Christ Church, Claremont* (1938), *Fairbridge Farm School* (1921-1925) and *Gloucester Park* (1930), Tudor House (1939) South Perth, and Motor House, Perth (1936).

Conclusion

Pithara Hall & Supper Room is a good example of an Inter War Free Classical town hall, representative of those halls known to have supper rooms, and is a representative example of Powell, Cameron & Chisholm's work in the 1930s.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH
