



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

The design of *Hackett Memorial Buildings* and the combination of modern technical skill with 'Mediterranean' architectural influences contributed to Western Australian architectural design in the 1930s. The quality of the design for the *Hackett Memorial Buildings* was recognised, even before they were completed, by the award of the Royal Institute of British Architects' Triennial Architecture Bronze Medal in 1932. (Criterion 1.2.)

The individual buildings were planned as an integrated piece of civic design and demonstrate a high level of unity. The composition is carefully balanced and scaled to achieve a strong presence in the landscape setting. The memorial busts, reflecting pool and stone seats contribute to the aesthetic value of the group as a whole. (Criteria 1.1 & 1.4.)

The rich texture and warm colours of the sandstone, limestone and cordova tiles set a design standard and theme for the development of the rest of the campus and have helped unify the architectural character of the place and enabled modern additions, such as the Bookshop, to be integrated with the overall design. The design and detail of the arcading adds to the unity and quality of the setting as well as acting as a medium to visually define the perimeter of *Whitfeld Court*.

The Tower is a landmark which identifies the University Campus from many distant parts of Perth and the Swan River. (Criterion 1.3.)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Hackett Memorial Buildings is important as the central University buildings for Western Australia's first University, and as the first University in Australia providing free tuition. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2.)

Hackett Memorial Buildings has a close association with the benefactor Sir Winthrop Hackett and the architects Alsop and Sayce. The internal details of the place were created by a number of prominent artists and crafts people and were significant in design quality for the period. (Criterion 2.3)

The off form concrete columns used in the arcading of *Winthrop Hall* were innovative for their time. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Hackett Memorial Buildings is held in high esteem by the University and the wider community. *Winthrop Hall* continues to play its traditional role as ceremonial Hall to the University and, with the Tower, remains the focal point and symbol of the University. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2.)

Since its construction, *Hackett Hall* has been used to provide student services and does so today, thus maintaining a student presence in the historic hub of the campus. (Criterion 4.1.)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Hackett Memorial Buildings is representative of the work of Alsop and Sayce. The continued development of the place is representative of the continued use and change of the campus as a whole. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The place, as a whole, is generally in a sound physical condition. A program of conservation and maintenance of the key building materials (limestone, sandstone and Cordova tiles) is in progress (1995), under the supervision of conservation architect, Robert McK. Campbell.

Badly weathered roof tiles are being replaced, limestone facings, which have cracked as a consequence of differential movement and water penetration, are being repaired and repointed, and Donnybrook stone details, near the ground and affected by damp, are being replaced (1995). However, most of the place is still in excellent condition.

Whitfeld Court has been well maintained and the close relationship between buildings and landscape has been preserved.

The interiors of *Winthrop Hall* and the Great Gateway are in good condition; the key decorative elements are well maintained.

The interiors of *Administration Building* and *Hackett Hall* have undergone a series of alterations over the years to support continuity of use but are in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The buildings continue in use as University accommodation and as the focal point of the Campus. The original design intent of creating a formal unified architectural and landscape group remains intact. *Hackett Memorial Buildings* retains a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

There has been little alteration to *Winthrop Hall* except for the installation of the organ and the upgrading of lighting in the 1960s. The enclosure of the undercroft area with glass permits the visitor to view the Great Court through the undercroft and, while it would be possible to reinstate the open-air nature of the undercroft, it is unlikely to occur given the current use of the space.

Changes to the other buildings have been primarily internal re-arrangements of space, or in the form of additions to the edges of the buildings which face away from *Whitfeld Court* and so, while altering the overall forms of the buildings, have not substantially altered the appearance in relation to *Whitfeld Court*.

The removal of most of the original poplar trees at the northern end of *Whitfeld Court* has, to an extent, altered some of the visual relationships initially intended but this has been necessary as part of the ongoing maintenance of the place and does not substantially affect the relationship of the place to the grounds of the University.

Overall, *Hackett Memorial Buildings* retains a high level of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Hackett Memorial Buildings comprises *Administration Building* (1930), *Hackett Hall* (1931), and *Winthrop Hall* including the Tower and Great Gateway (1932), enclosing *Whitfeld Court* at the University of Western Australia.

The University of Western Australia was incorporated in 1911, and teaching began in 1913, in temporary buildings located in Irwin Street, Perth. The University offered free tuition 'a startling departure from traditional practice in other parts of the nation'.¹ The University moved to the Crawley campus in the early 1930s with the completion of the *Hackett Memorial Buildings*.²

The design of this group of buildings, named after the first Chancellor and the primary benefactor of the University, Sir Winthrop Hackett, was the result of a competition won by Melbourne architects, Conrad Sayce and Rodney Alsop, in 1928.

The winning design was a combination of the work of Alsop and Sayce with, according to Ferguson, the assessors showing a definite preference for Sayce's design.³ Sayce was born in Somerset in 1888, and studied architecture in Sunderland. He migrated to Australia, circa 1912, and joined Alsop's office in 1925 as an employee. Both men agreed to submit the 'office' design and Sayce's private design under the name of both and, should they be successful, form a partnership to complete the work. This they did, but the partnership of Alsop and Sayce dissolved in 1931. Alsop continued to supervise the design and construction of *Hackett Memorial Buildings*. Sayce left Australia for South Africa where he continued to work as an architect.⁴

Alsop was Australian born (Kew, Victoria, 1881) and as early as sixteen was spending his spare time at the office of Melbourne architect Hyndman and Bates. He was articled to the firm, in 1901, and was admitted to the Victorian Institute of Architects, in 1906, when he formed a partnership with F. L. Klingender (until 1920) and a partnership with Henderson, Alsop and Martin (from 1921 to 1924). His practice, prior to his involvement with *Hackett Memorial Buildings*, included a variety of houses, commercial and hospital work, churches and landscape architecture projects. He had, at the time of designing his scheme for *Hackett Memorial Buildings*, developed a strong 'Mediterranean' style' in his work.⁵

¹ White, M. A., 'Extending educational opportunity, 1899-1917' in Neal, W. D. (ed.) *Education in Western Australia*, (Nedlands, 1979) p. 91.

² Roberts, F., Shervington, C. *A Walk Through the University of Western Australia*. (for UWA, 1991).

³ Ferguson, R J. *Crawley Campus. The Planning and Architecture of the University of Western Australia*. (UWA Press, 1993) p. 24.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Alexander, F. *Campus at Crawley. A Narrative and critical appreciation of the first fifty years of the University of Western Australia*. (F. W. Chesire, Melbourne for The University of Western Australia Press, 1963), p. 170.

Alsop described the style of architecture as 'Renaissance', essentially of southern Italy and Sicily, being an appropriate choice for the Mediterranean climate and setting described by the University brief for the competition:

'Renaissance' is the only definite term that can be given as the style of the Hackett Buildings - and the Renaissance began in Italy ... it was found necessary to return to the fountain head, and develop directly from the early Renaissance of the sunny climate of Italy, where mass and form count more than the applied detail, which in the greyer climate of England became such an important feature of the style.⁶

Despite this statement, *Hackett Memorial Buildings* exhibit a wealth of detail. There is a potpourri of details including the dressings of donnybrook stone which contrast against the coarser rusticated wall, there are venetian styled mosaic insets and a coloured frieze of winged beasts with a byzantine theme.

Apperly *et. al.*, in *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, label *Hackett Memorial Buildings* as 'eclectic but essentially Romanesque', as well as 'Mediterranean in character ...'.⁷ According to J. White, 'the buildings combined modern technical skills with a romantic view of 'Mediterranean' architecture and had a profound influence on Western Australian building in the decade that ended in 1939'.⁸

Construction, by the builders were A. T. Brine and Sons, began in 1928, under Alsop's supervision. The foundation stones for *Hackett Hall* and *Winthrop hall* were laid in 1929, although *Administration Building* was the first completed. The Vice-Chancellor moved to *Administration Building* in March 1930, and the first lectures were given there in July of the same year. The opening of *Winthrop Hall* took place on 15 April 1932, with Hackett's daughter officiating at the ceremony.⁹

The campus, in which *Hackett Memorial Buildings* is located, is an integral part of a continuous landscape system comprising Kings Park, the campus and the Swan River foreshores including Point Currie. When viewed as part of this system, the tree canopy is the dominant element of the campus, penetrated only in few places by towers and buildings.¹⁰ The Tower of *Hackett Memorial Buildings* is the most dominant of these landscape features on the campus. The gardens of the campus date from the time of the design competition. They comprise a series of gardens, combining various landscape themes within a framework of lawns and indigenous trees and massed flowering shrubs. The basic layout of the buildings followed the 1927 plan for the Crawley campus.¹¹ There was a deliberate attempt to incorporate as much native vegetation as possible and to make an interesting tree canopy through which the University buildings would be viewed.¹²

⁶ Alsop quoted in Ferguson, p. 25.

⁷ 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).

⁸ Pitt Morison, M and White, J. *Western Towns and Buildings* (UWA Press, 1979) p. 130.

⁹ Ferguson, p. 33; Alexander, p. 137.

¹⁰ Ferguson, p. 53.

¹¹ Stephenson, G. *Planning for the University of Western Australia.* (Langham Press, 1986).

¹² Alexander. p. 640.

In 1932, *Hackett Memorial Buildings* was awarded the Royal Institute of British Architects triennial Bronze Medal for excellence in design.¹³

Hackett Memorial Buildings, and the University grounds, are a popular tourist and wedding location. *Hackett Memorial Buildings* features on tourist publications and on postcards of Perth. In October 1980, the gardens of the University of Western Australia, including *Whitfeld Court*, were entered to the Register of the National Estate.

Administration

Administration Building was originally designed to house two levels of Arts classrooms in the south wing and the Library in the north wing. The central connecting block was for Administration, Vice-Chancellor, Clerk of the Senate, Accountant and the general office.

The Library was a double volume space behind the north-east gable; the central block contained sixteen rooms opening off a central corridor which ran full length crossing the double volume entrance lobby as an open gallery. The balcony to the library was decorative and not accessible.

In 1952, plans were prepared for internal alterations and, in 1953, plans were prepared by the Public Works Department for extending the south wing westwards.

The Faculty of Arts moved to its own new building further south on the campus in 1963 and, in 1964, further alterations were planned for *Administration Building* by architects, Marshall Clifton and Gordon Stephenson. The north wing continued to be used as the University Library with an annexe in the garden to the west until the Reid Library was opened in 1964. The westward extension of the north wing was built, in 1968, to the designs of Clifton and Stephenson.¹⁴

Since then, *Administration Building* has had several further phases of internal refitting to keep up with the changing demands of the Administration Department.¹⁵ Internal alterations have filled up the original large open spaces contained within the original building.

Hackett Hall

Hackett Hall was designed for the use of the student body. It was conceived as a two-storey building to balance the composition around the central court but the ground floor was built and completed in 1931. The original accommodation comprised a billiard room, games room and men's common room in the south-west wing adjoining *Winthrop Hall*. The central wing, behind the arcading, contained to the south: a shop; Principal and secretary's offices; boardroom; women's reading and writing rooms; and, to the north, the women's common room, locker room and lavatories. To the north, the dining rooms were divided in two by accordion doors, with duplicate men's and women's cafeteria and general servery and kitchen backing them up. Further north, there was a kitchen yard, stores room and staff cloak rooms.

¹³ Ferguson, p. 33.

¹⁴ Drawings held by Property Services, UWA.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

In 1946, minor alterations to the kitchen and servery were carried out and in 1961, a new wing designed by Marshall Clifton was erected to the east to create a central courtyard. The 1961/62 extensions are easily identifiable and respect the building line and colour and texture. Until the mid 1970s the arrangement of the original rooms was substantially intact, with similar uses but, since this time, a number of changes have been made to meet the changing requirements of the Student Guild.¹⁶ *Hackett Hall* is still used by the student body, and the dining room is still in use, although no longer segregated.

Winthrop Hall, Tower and Great Gateway

Winthrop Hall is the dominant element in the group and was designed as the grand ceremonial hall for the University. The Tower is a landmark for the campus. The Hall is planned like a medieval guild hall with an open undercroft and a great hall above on the first floor. The Undercroft was designed as a meeting place and was dedicated to Socrates. The elements of the design of the place were taken from a number of different European buildings which Sayce and Alsop admired. For example, the rose window at the eastern end is very similar to that of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Assisi, Italy. Taylor writes that 'Artists were commissioned to create unique art works and Italian craftsmen brought especially to Perth to lay the intricately designed marble floor of the foyer of Winthrop Hall, said to be copied from the Stockholm Town Hall'.¹⁷ Other details, such as the detail of the capitals on the balcony on the Hall, are more Australian and feature a design derived from the local Banksia flower and leaf.¹⁸

Lighting in the Senate chamber was mounted on a pedestal Grecian columns with lights installed on columns which are both classical and art nouveau in derivation and are similar to lights found at Yale University but were uncommon in Perth at the time.

In the 1960s, a large organ was installed over the dais at the eastern end, curving the pipe line to accentuate the rose window which now forms the centre piece of the organ 'sculpture'.

Linking *Winthrop Hall* and *Administration Building*, is the Great Gateway which houses the Senate Chamber on the first floor.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Taylor, R. 'An investigation into the nature of modernism and modernity during the 1930s in Perth, Western Australia, through the study of specific buildings and related art and design forms.' Vols. I & II, (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Western Australia, Department of Fine Arts, 1993) Vol I, p. 189.

¹⁸ Further discussion of the decorative elements and their derivation can be found in Taylor, Vol. I. ch. 3.

Sunken Gardens

The area known as the Sunken Gardens was developed from the building sand pit, to the west of the *Administration Building*, which was used in the construction of the *Hackett Memorial Buildings*. In 1930, Whitfeld described his vision for the garden as a place '... as secluded as possible which will be used by the Staff on all occasions when they feel inclined to enjoy the fresh air or sunshine, in quiet contemplation or meditation...'¹⁹ In 1936, the Shann Memorial sundial and inscribed stone seat, commemorating the inaugural Professor of History and Economics at the University, was put in the area. The stone seat was inscribed with the words 'Tangaroa, Clear Away The Clouds That Ru May See The Stars'. At the end of the 1940s, the sand-pit was terraced so that an audience could sit facing the Shann Memorial. In the 1950s, the area was planted with native trees and shrubs, and two lily ponds were created spanned by an arched timber bridge.²⁰

Bookshop

The Bookshop, situated on the northern edge of *Hackett Hall* and in line with the body of the building, was completed in 1962. The architect was Marshall Clifton. It is a double storey building constructed of materials sympathetic to those of *Hackett Memorial Buildings*.

Additional Building

In the 1970s, an addition to the north-east of the Bookshop was constructed which was attached to the Bookshop by an arcade. The building was built to house retail services for the student body. It is modern in nature, but utilises materials sympathetic to those of *Hackett Memorial Buildings*.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Hackett Memorial Buildings defines and encloses, on three sides, a court named after the first Vice-Chancellor, Professor Hubert Edwin Whitfeld. A commemorative plaque and bust are mounted on the central axis of the court. Poplars and an avenue of cypress were planted when the complex was completed in 1932.²¹ In front of *Winthrop Hall* is a reflecting pool which was part of the Alsop plan and which was excavated by students.²² His work is commemorated on one of the stone seats flanking the pool; the other seat further commemorates Professor Whitfeld. The undercroft is dedicated to Socrates and busts of Socrates and Diotima, the goddess who is purported to have taught Socrates wisdom, have been placed beside the northern face looking back into *Whitfeld Court*.

Axial planning integrates the buildings and landscape. The colours and textures of limestone, sandstone and cordova tiles contribute warmth and richness to the architectural character of the group. These colours and

¹⁹ Correspondence Whitfeld to Alsop, 27 February 1930, University file 78-81 cited in Alexander, p. 631.

²⁰ *ibid.* pp. 188-189, 630-631.

²¹ Shervington.

²² Alexander, p. 136.

textures were adopted as a guiding principle for the later development of the campus and have helped to unify the architectural character of the place. According to Gordon Stephenson, Alsop's design of *Hackett Memorial Buildings* clearly suggests a university and no other institution.²³

The walls of each of the buildings which comprise *Hackett Memorial Buildings* are constructed of a composite construction. The outer leaf is of limestone, there is a 5 cm cavity and an inner leaf of brick on which the concrete floor slabs bear. The windows are of steel; heads, sills and panels are generally of pressed cement. Colonnade details are in donnybrook stone, carrying arches of limestone. The tiled roof structure is carried on timber trusses.

Wrought iron work in all the buildings is by C. R. Caslake of Melbourne to designs by Alsop.²⁴

Administration

Administration Building is a two and three-storey building with a single storey arcade across the front. It is on the western side of *Whitfeld Court* and is linked to *Winthrop Hall* by the Great Gateway.

The colonnade is of donnybrook sandstone carrying arches of Cottesloe limestone.²⁵ The ground floor windows of the central wing are set in limestone arches filled with pressed cement panels, with glazed sectile mosaic medallions which depict emblems of the various arts and sciences.²⁶ In the gables, at first floor level, are set balconies featuring decorative panels of pressed concrete utilising the byzantine motif of the peacock and the grape vine, and featuring the University's shield and motto.²⁷

The building utilises metal framed doors and windows, set within slightly peaked florentine arches, which define the openings and contribute to the decorative quality.

Hackett Hall

Hackett Hall is a single-storey building enclosing *Whitfeld Court* on the east. It is linked by archways to *Winthrop Hall*. An arcade runs across the front of the building which mirrors the one in front of *Administration Building*. This arcade which is built of a sandstone colonnade, supporting limestone arches and a pitched orange cordova tile roof, continues the *Winthrop Hall* architectural language and materials around *Whitfeld Court*, contributing to the unity and quality of the setting.

The west face of the dining room, the south face of the Guild, and the arches between, are faced with limestone over brickwork. The east and west walls of the main building are rendered and painted instead of stone faced.

²³ Stephenson; Ferguson p. 78.

²⁴ Taylor, Vol. II, Fig. 3.25.

²⁵ Some sources cite cottesloe limestone, some coogee. It is likely, given budget constraints, that the stone was local, but similar in nature to the eastern states stone.

²⁶ Taylor, Vol. II, figs. 3.10, 3.18-3.20.

²⁷ *ibid.*, figs. 3.21-3.22.

Under the flat roof, there is evidence, in the form of a concrete beam and slab construction, that a second storey was originally intended for this building.

The extent of the 1961 additions can easily be seen on the west face with the change in wall materials and window design. Apart from the conversion of kitchen areas to a pharmacy and hair salon, and the changes made to the courtyard side of the building, the external form of *Hackett Hall* is virtually intact.

The interior, on the other hand, has had major spaces modified with new opening created and old openings sealed off since the mid-1970s. The circulation routes and their attendant hallway and lobbies have suffered the most. The dining room space is the least altered and retains a shape close to its original size and form. The kitchen and its service yard have been refitted many times but it is still in the original envelope.

The standard of detailing and craftsmanship in this building is not as high as in *Administration Building* but there is still some of the original timber joinery, metalwork and hardware inside that contribute to the architectural character of the place.

Winthrop Hall, Tower and Great Gateway

Winthrop Hall is on the central axis of the group, and uses the same materials but on a monumental scale to dominate the composition. The Tower is a landmark from the campus, from Stirling Highway and from many parts of Perth along the Swan River.

The wall body is of composite construction, limestone facing over brick. At the base, the stone is sawn ashlar with channelled joints. Above this line, the wall is rusticated and picked and laid in squared, course and snecked rubble. Generally, the stone facing on the outside covers a load-bearing brick inner wall. The arcading to the Undercroft is of off form concrete, incised to look like block work and with a fluted effect to the columns.

The design for the entrance to the hall incorporates decorative wrought iron, marble mosaics and stained glass. The brick interior walling of this space and the stairwell and adjoining passage is vaulted and is not rendered but left as face brickwork. With the mellow tones of the bricks, the effect is of a subdued aged richness, especially in the half light.

Inside the Hall, the height of the ceiling creates a monumental space, not dissimilar in volume to a cathedral. The effect is to give the rose window at the eastern wall, dominance and the arcaded walls with the two deeper arches on either side, imitative of a crossing, gives the space a processional quality, reflecting its ceremonial function. Around the Hall are hung the coats of arms of Australian and overseas universities. The beams and the ceiling of the ceiling are decorated with motifs derived from Aboriginal culture which were painted by George Benson in consultation with Daisy Bates. Included with them are the portraits of some of the foundation senators and others, on the beams immediately above the dais.²⁸

²⁸ Alexander, p. 643.

The details at balcony level and surrounding the rose window of *Winthrop Hall* are of fine tooled synthetic stone.²⁹ The quality of the sandstone, and the craftsmanship, is excellent and is weathering well. There is a decorative blue and buff terracotta frieze below the cornice depicting byzantine motifs, which is intact.

The Great Gateway marks the entrance to *Winthrop Hall* and connects the Hall to the *Administration Building*. Entrance is from a staircase inside the entrance to *Winthrop Hall*. This room has a domical vault ceiling with a decorative frieze of flying swans by Napier Waller.³⁰ The room is lit by tall lancet windows on the north and south walls.

Externally, the decorative elements on the Great Gateway and the Senate Chamber are also of finely tooled synthetic stone. The northern wall above the windows has a mosaic by Napier Wallace depicting the 'Five Lamps of Learning'.

Winthrop Hall, the Tower and the Great Gateway remain substantially unaltered. The Undercroft, which was designed as an open meeting place, was later glazed in and is currently used for exhibitions, receptions and examinations.

The Sunken Gardens

The gardens are substantially as created in the 1950s. Additional plantings have been made to screen the garden from the newly built Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery to the west.

The Bookshop

The Bookshop is a double storey, free standing building constructed of load bearing brick, clad in rusticated sandstone, with arcading to the western and northern elevations. The roof line forms a gable facing west, within the apex of which is a circular window which mimics the clock face on the Tower of *Winthrop Hall*. Although the Bookshop is freestanding, and at a higher level than *Hackett Hall*, with a pedestrian way between the two buildings, the consistent use of stone facings and arcading is of such a nature that the building becomes a visual extension of *Hackett Hall* and so further defines *Whitfeld Court*. In the 1980s, full height glazing to the northern wall replaced the original windows, although this alteration can not be seen from *Whitfeld Court*.

Additional building

A stone faced double-storey building north-east of the Bookshop and joined to it by an arcade, the building has floor to ceiling glazed windows to the east and the west. It is set back from the edge of Whitfeld Court and has a small plaza in front of it. Although seen from the Court, it is not intrusive. The colour of the building material, the tiles and the use of an, albeit, modern arcading in front of the building pay respect to *Hackett Memorial Buildings*.

²⁹ Taylor, Vol. II, figs. 3.29, 3.47.

³⁰ *ibid.*, .fig. 3.27.

13.3 REFERENCES

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