



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Permanent Entry

1. **Data Base No.** 0874
2. **Name.** Victoria Pavilion (Fremantle Oval Grandstand) (1897)
3. **Description of elements included in this entry.** The Grandstand and the land on which it stands, being Reserve 8704.
4. **Local Government Area.** City of Fremantle
5. **Location.** Fairbairn Street, Fremantle
6. **Owner.** City of Fremantle
7. **Statement of Significance of Place (Assessment in Detail)**

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The history of the principal recreation sites in Fremantle can be traced from 1829 onward. The first known recreation area in Fremantle was known as "Fremantle Green" and was located in a reclaimed area bound by the former line of the foreshore along Phillimore Street, Cliff Street and Pakenham Street.¹ The land was made the subject of a Crown Grant for recreation purposes in 1875, but in 1878 the land was resumed for construction of the Fremantle Railway Station.

The area now known as Fremantle Oval was originally known as "Barrack's Green Field" and, as it is below the Fremantle Gaol walls, was used as a parade ground for the pensioner forces quartered nearby.² The Pensioner Guards came to Western Australia to guard convicts and ticket of leave men. Mostly retired servicemen, the Guards were an important part of the convict establishment and brought with them skills, some capital, and a desire to establish a lifestyle for themselves and their families in Western Australia such as they were unable to achieve in England.³ Although used mainly to guard the convicts, the pensioners could, if necessary, be used to protect citizens and their property.⁴ The Volunteer Defence Force, raised by C.A. Manning in 1861, organised manoeuvres and parades on Barracks Green, and the Volunteer bands provided entertainment.

Development of Fremantle Oval was the initiative of two local sporting bodies, the Fremantle Football Club and the Fremantle Cricket Club.⁵ In 1888, under the

¹ Hitchcock, J.K. *The History of Fremantle: the Front Gate of Australia 1829-1929*

² Ward, K. *A Fremantle Sketchbook* p 52

³ *ibid.* p 68

⁴ Williams, A.E. *Western Australia. An Architectural Heritage* (Perth, 1979) p 108

⁵ Ewers, J.K. *The Western Gateway* (Fremantle City Council. 2nd revised edition, 1971)

leadership of A.J. Diamond, the two clubs took a deputation to the Fremantle Municipal Council requesting assistance in obtaining Barracks Green for a public recreation area.⁶ The Council later took a deputation to the new Premier seeking approval of a Crown grant, and the grant, while initially refused, was later approved in June 1894. Fremantle Council made preparations for the opening of the football season by instigating improvements to the ground which included bulldozing of the ground, providing reticulation and forming a bicycle track around its outer circumference.⁷ The goal posts were 32 feet high, the tallest in Western Australia. They are also exactly the same height as the goal posts at the Melbourne Cricket ground, home of the Australian Football League.⁸

In December 1896 Fremantle Council called for competitive designs for a pavilion to be constructed in two stages at Fremantle Oval. The pavilion was to serve as grandstand viewing accommodation for the numerous events held on the Oval and the Council was to name it the Victoria Pavilion, in celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.⁹ Funds of £1,500.00 were made available by the State Government for the project.¹⁰ In January 1897 the contract was awarded to Mr F.W. Burwell, Architect, ahead of fourteen other applicants.¹¹ A small prize over and above the normal architect's fee was awarded.¹²

The foundation stone for the pavilion was laid by His Excellency the Governor, Lt. Col. Sir Gerald Smith, at a formal ceremony on the 25th of June 1897. Constructed by Blackman Brothers, under the supervision of Mr F.W. Burwell, the pavilion opened by Sir John Forrest, Premier of Western Australia on 6th of November 1897. Lunch was provided for the guests of honour, in the dining room under the pavilion, by the Fremantle Council.¹³

Since its opening, activities undertaken at the oval and viewed from the pavilion have been diverse. They include soldiers drilling, cricket, football (both Australian rules and rugby league), cycling, hockey, croquet and agricultural events. Festive events, including the celebration of Federation, were held there. Anzac Day Services were also held there.¹⁴ Sporting facilities at the oval were continuously upgraded; a cycling track was established in 1898., and a track for trotting and cycling in 1923.

The Victoria Pavilion has been home to the Fremantle Football Clubs since its inception. The Fremantle Football Club used the pavilion, initially, and was instrumental in the development of the oval and pavilion. Later on, the club was divided into the East Fremantle and South Fremantle Football Clubs. However, both teams continued to train at the oval, use the pavilion facilities

⁶ Stoddart, B. "Sport and Society 1890-1940" in Stannage, C.T. (ed) *A New History of Western Australia* (UWAP, Perth 1981) p 671

⁷ Ward, K. *op.cit.* p 52

⁸ *loc.cit*

⁹ Fremantle Council Minutes 24 Nov.1896

¹⁰ Fremantle Council Minutes 3 Dec. 1896

¹¹ Fremantle Council minutes 22 Jan.1897

¹² Fremantle Council Minutes 3 Dec.1896 allowed for a £25.00 payment over and above the normal architects fees which would have been received for the plans, specifications and for supervising the erection of the work.

¹³ *Inquirer and Commercial News* 12 Nov. 1897

¹⁴ D'Agostino, J., Mueller, S., Richardson, M. *Fremantle Oval: Victoria Pavilion* (Individual Project, Architecture and Cultural 402 unit, Curtin University, 1988)

(divided into separate club rooms: north and south), hold their Saturday night dances and run their administration from pavilion. Eventually the East Fremantle Football Club moved to other premises, but South Fremantle Football Club retains its association with the Victoria Pavilion, with its administration and past players rooms under the stand.¹⁵

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Sited in the north west corner of Fremantle Oval, close to Fairbairn Street, Victoria Pavilion is a tuck pointed brick superstructure with twin towers, surmounted by an ogee turret roofed with ribbed metal sheeting, and an unusual gabled timber and corrugated iron roof, comprising seven timber gables, which extends across the width of the grandstand. Flagpoles are attached to each gable hip and top turret top. Decorative cast iron fretwork encloses the end of each gable. Decorative timber balusters edge the front of the grandstand area.¹⁶

At the time of construction the Victoria Pavilion was described in the *Inquirer and Commercial News* on November 12th 1897 : "the pavilion is a handsome structure and is erected in such a position that it commands a full view of the sports ground. It has a length of 185 feet, a width of 48 feet, and seating accommodation for 1,200 persons. Its was erected by Messrs Blackman Brothers, to the design of F.W. Burwell, architect".

Photographic records illustrate the features of the building: a 1900 photograph shows the rear red brick wall, with an iron roof¹⁷; a 1905 photograph shows the timber balustrade situated at the bottom of the tiered timber seats, and cast iron lace work in the gable ends. The rear brick wall extends to the roof line.¹⁸

In a 1910 photograph the rear brick wall has been removed, while all other features at the front of the pavilion remain the same.¹⁹ In a close up photograph taken in 1927, the original decorative timber balustrade has been replaced by one of a simpler design. The rear brick wall, built to the height of the top timber seats, has new iron panels to the roof, and the timber balustrade can be seen around the stairs at the south end of the tiered seats, which lead to the dining room below the pavilion.²⁰

The pavilion was repainted in 1914 and 1947. At some point after 1949/50 the decorative timber supports to the columns were removed.²¹ These have not been replaced. In 1965 extensions were built to Parry Road, the old turnstiles demolished, and a new entry built.²²

In 1985/6 the pavilion was repainted and minor alterations took place. These included the demolition of unsympathetic additions to the northern and southern aspects of the building and the reinstatement and uncovering of

15 Hart, Ron, Past President South Fremantle Football Club (telephone conversation: 14 th Oct 1993)

16 Photograph of stand c1949/50. City of Fremantle Local History Collection photograph 1566B

17 City of Fremantle Local History Collection photograph 460

18 City of Fremantle Local History Collection photograph 539

19 City of Fremantle Local History Collection photograph 1175

20 City of Fremantle Local History Collection photograph 1009

21 They are still evident in photograph 1566B taken in 1949/50 cited in D'Agostino, J., Mueller, S., Richardson, M. *op.cit.*

22 *ibid.* p 2,3

original elements in the building. Original fabric was substantially intact and the work involved the removal of accretions with limited adjustments rather than full scale reconstructions.²³

In 1988/89 Fremantle City Council were successfully applied for a National Estates Program Grant and spent \$40,000 on the pavilion. Conservation work included the removal of unsympathetic steel handrails, provision of additional structural support to the floor, replacement of six turned ball post tops, reinstatement of 200 carved timber balusters and the handrail, refitting some floor boards, fitting of two decorative gable end panels with cast aluminium replacements, and painting the whole building.²⁴

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

1. AESTHETIC

The Victoria Pavilion has a simple but strong geometric facade. There is a well defined and pleasing rhythm to the gables, with the strong interior shadow caused by its elongated gabled form emphasising and reflecting the building's primary protective function. The building is strongly horizontal and broad, however the series of projecting gables and the turreted towers counter with a strongly vertical movement to the buildings. The verticality is further emphasised by the flagpoles, which add a festive touch to the overall image.

The pavilion has landmark status in Fremantle. It creates a significant aesthetic focal point, terminating the vista of Parry Street and contributing to the historic character of the area.

2. HISTORIC

The Pavilion has historic significance as one of a number of substantial civic/public structures built in the late 1890s with public funds to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

The Pavilion has a close association with the Fremantle Cricket Club, the Fremantle Football Club, and with A.J. Diamond, President of the Fremantle Football Club, and, later on, the East Fremantle and South Fremantle Football Clubs.

The construction of the Victoria Pavilion was to facilitate enjoyment of the activities at the oval. The oval has historic significance because of its continuous use for public activities associated with convict settlement in the 1850s through to the present.

The acquisition of the oval in 1893 by the Fremantle Municipality demonstrates the role of local government in providing recreational facilities to increasingly sophisticated and demanding ratepayers - many of whom were migrants from the Eastern States.

²³ Kiera, A. *op.cit.* p 2

²⁴ WA Heritage Committee *Final Report: Conservation of the Victoria Pavilion* (November, 1990) pp 1,2

3. SCIENTIFIC

4. SOCIAL VALUE

The pavilion has considerable social significance for the local community, because of its continuous association with the Fremantle Cricket Club and both Fremantle Football Clubs; both major sporting institutions in the Fremantle community.

The place is significant in providing Fremantle with an identity beyond its immediate locality, by being the home ground of the cricket club and the football club.

The social importance and high regard in which the pavilion was held is indicated by the Council organising a design competition, the foundation stone being laid by the Governor and the building opened by the Premier.

5. RARITY

The Victoria Pavilion is one of the few turn of the century grandstands still extant in Western Australia.

6. REPRESENTATIVENESS

The Victoria Pavilion is representative of grandstands constructed at recreational grounds by sports loving communities across the state.

It is also significant for its representation of the importance of the public celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

CONDITION

In 1988-90 a grant of \$40,000 was spent on conserving the Victoria Pavilion. The building is in sound condition.

INTEGRITY

The Victoria Pavilion continues to be used for the purpose for which it was originally designed, and therefore retains a very high degree of integrity.

AUTHENTICITY

The Victoria Pavilion has undergone a number of modifications and service upgrades to the area under the grandstand. The space originally occupied by the dining room now houses administrative offices, a first aid room, clubrooms, change rooms and storerooms. The timber balustrading has been reconstructed and two gable ends have cast aluminium fretwork, rather than the original cast iron. However, these modifications and reconstructions have not diminished the authenticity of the pavilion.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Victoria Pavilion has cultural significance for the following;

its continuous association with sport and recreational activities in Fremantle, particularly its close association with the East Fremantle and South Fremantle Football Clubs,

it is of interesting design, and a rare example of a turn of the century sports grandstand in Western Australia,

it is one of a large number of public works which were funded in the late 1890s to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

8. Register of Heritage Places

Interim Entry 20/11/1992

Permanent Entry 09/11/1993

9. Conservation Order

10. Heritage Agreement

11. References

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet

City of Fremantle Local History Collection

City of Fremantle Local History Collection photographs 460, 539, 1009 & 1175

D'Agostino, J., Mueller, S., Richardson, M. *Fremantle Oval: Victoria Pavilion* (Individual Project, Architecture and Culture 402, Curtin University, 1988)

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Civic Administration Centre, Fremantle.

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