



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 Cloisters contributes to the aesthetic qualities of the landscape through its diapered brickwork, mellow toned colouration, and use of both Gothic and Tudor stylistic influences. (Criteria 1.2, 1.3)

The Cloisters occupies a strategic location at the intersection of Mill Street and St. Georges Terrace, Perth. It terminates the vista at the top of Mill Street and is a landmark in the rise of the street to the ridge of the plateau. Subsequent modern buildings have taken the colour tones of *The Cloisters* as a model for their brickwork and have extended the colour influence of the building beyond the physicality of *The Cloisters* to create a similarly toned, albeit modern, precinct. (Criterion 1.3)

The Cloisters is one of a small number of remaining convict-built colonial buildings of the mid-nineteenth century in the central area of Perth. At the time of its construction it formed part of a cohesive landscape of public buildings, most of which have been demolished, but the residue of which is still important in establishing an historic precinct in central Perth. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The Cloisters is important as the first secondary school in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.1)

The Cloisters also has an association with the provision of residential accommodation for students in the founding years of the University of Western Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

The Cloisters has historic significance for its association with the political development of community lobby groups to conserve buildings and the development of conservation practice in the State. (Criterion 2.2)

The Cloisters has a close association with Bishop Hale, the first Anglican Bishop of Perth, and also with some of the colony's young men who, subsequently, made notable contributions to the development of both Western Australia and Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

The Cloisters has a close association with architect Richard Roach Jewell, Clerk of Works and Superintendent of Perth and Fremantle of the colony until 1885. Jewell was responsible for the design of a large number of public buildings in this period. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Despite adaptive alterations, particularly to the interior, sufficient original fabric survives to demonstrate vernacular construction techniques used in the mid-nineteenth century. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The Cloisters is highly valued by the Anglican community for its educational associations and the place is held in high regard by members of the general community as a place of architectural interest. (Criterion 4.1)

The Cloisters is highly valued by the community in the development of conservation awareness in the state as an early example of an inner city commercial development project where it was recognised and accepted that the project could incorporate the conservation of an historic building. (Criterion 4.1)

The Cloisters contributes to the community's sense of place by providing a physical and social link with the early colonial development of Perth. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The Cloisters illustrates the character of the earlier, colonial, townscape of Perth prior to the Goldrushes, much of which has been demolished or altered in the subsequent boom period of the Goldrushes. (Criteria 5.1, 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The Cloisters demonstrates the principal characteristics of Victorian Tudor architecture and its expression in Western Australian vernacular materials. (Criterion 6.1)

The Cloisters is indicative of a period in Western Australian history when public buildings derived their main stylistic influences from England. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The Cloisters is in good condition. The building has had a program of regular maintenance in place since 1971. Fretted bricks have been replaced between 1988 and 1994, with new bricks to match the existing materials and style.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The level of integrity, especially to the interior, is diminished due to the conservation methodology employed in the 1970s. Insufficient internal building fabric has been retained to identify the original layout of the building as a school or boarding house. *The Cloisters* retains a low degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

There have been additions, alterations and even reconstructions to the internal fabric of *The Cloisters* which reflect the changes in functional requirements over nearly one hundred and forty years of use. Renovation and restoration in the 1970s was intrusive to the interior fabric of the building; however, the external fabric of the building was conserved and the external form of the building was retained largely intact. *The Cloisters* has a reasonable degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The Cloisters was built by the first Anglican Bishop of Perth - Bishop Hale, in 1858, as a secondary school in Perth for boys. It was established and funded with a grant from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Bishop Hale's own donation. Called the Perth Church of England Collegiate School, the school was important as the sole source of secondary education in the colony and it attracted wealthy young men as pupils.

The location of *The Cloisters*, in the premier street in Perth and approximately half way between an institution for controlling convict labour (*Pensioner Barracks*) and the residence of the Governor, who controlled political power and British capital (*Government House*), reminded the students that they were to be the new leaders of the Colony - the owners of capital and labour.¹ The style of *The Cloisters*, derived from *St. James's Palace*, *Hampton Court*, parts of *Eton College*, and *Fulham Palace*, reinforced this. Tudor embellishments tied the structure to the history of the English monarchy (the head of the Church which Hale served) while signifying the power and authority of England under which government the colony was founded. Gothic features signified the moral and temporal authority of the Church. These same features, repeated in the *Pensioner Barracks*, *Government House* and later the *Town Hall*, established an architectural unity amongst the buildings used for imposing legal, educational, governmental and legislative authority in Perth in the nineteenth century.

The design of *The Cloisters* has been attributed to Richard Roach Jewell, who arrived in the Swan River Colony, in 1852, to take up the position of Clerk of Works and Superintendent of the Towns of Fremantle and Perth.² As part of the convict establishment, Jewell was responsible for supervising the convict building program. His first building in Perth was the *Perth Gaol* and *Courthouse* (1853-6). It is a measure of the determination of Hale, and of the need for local secondary education, that *The Cloisters* was begun so soon after Jewell's arrival. Jewell remained in office until 1885 and designed a number of substantial public buildings, including: the *Pensioner Barracks* (1863) at the western end of St. George's Terrace, *Trinity Church* (1864), the extensions to the Roman Catholic *Pro-Cathedral* (1860s), and *Wesley Church* (1870-71), alterations to the *Town Hall* (1870) and extensive additions and alterations the *Central Government Offices* in 1874 and 1882.

The initial enrolment of *The Cloisters* was twenty-three pupils and during the first years, Bishop Hale's School, as it was colloquially known, educated many of the young men who would become the colony's leading citizens in the first years of responsible government. They included: the Forrest brothers: John who became Premier of Western Australia and then Federal Treasurer, Alexander who would become the Lord Mayor of Perth,

¹ Hale's speech to students. Extract from *Westralian Voices* Document 1.19.

² Stannage, C. T. *The People of Perth. A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City* (City of Perth, Perth, 1979) p. 136.

and William and David; Stephen Henry Parker, later Q. C. and a major figure in achieving Responsible Government; and other leading citizens who played a major role in the commercial and industrial development of the State: Sir Edward and Frank Wittenoom; Edward Lee Steere, Maitland Brown; William F. Samson; Charles and Maxwell Lefroy; Henry de Burgh; John Bateman; Henry J. Saw; Richard Sholl; Robert E. King; Fred Brockman; and Fred, George and Augustus Roe.³

Bishop Hale continued to subsidise the school by investing over £1,000 of his own funds until 1865, when the school administration was taken up by the Anglican Church. Perth was growing fast and by 1870 the *Elementary Education Act* was promulgated which required all children who lived within five kilometres of a school to attend. In 1872, the boys school activities were relocated in another building further east on St. George's Terrace and *The Cloisters* was used as a Girls School. In 1876, an Act of the Legislative Council established a government high school in Perth.⁴ *The Cloisters* continued to expand and additions costing £500 comprising a double school room with a teachers room and dormitories above, dining room and servants offices were made in 1879-80 on the western side.⁵ However, by the late 1890s, the growth in Government-funded schooling and the diminishing number of private pupils, caused the school to close. The Diocesan Trustees, faced with having to recoup the cost of the more recent additions, divided the building in half with brick partitioning and rented out the eastern and western sections as private residences, for £100 and £80 respectively.⁶

The eastern half of the building soon became a boarding house and, in 1904, was first referred to as *The Cloisters*.⁷ The western side of the building was used as a college for the clergy, established by Archdeacon Lefroy (a pupil of the earlier school) and, by 1909, this portion was known as St. John's College.⁸ The western half continued to be used as a theological college until 1918, when the whole building was used as residential accommodation for students attending the recently established University of Western Australia. Although, the Anglican Church continued to own *The Cloisters*, the hostel was run by private interests on a lease basis.⁹

In May 1930, the Anglican Church ceded its interest in the building to the proprietress of *The Cloisters* who paid the Diocesan Trustees £45 per month for the building. In 1931, *The Cloisters* was damaged by fire and

³ Oldham, R. 'School Architecture in Western Australia' in *The W. A. Teacher's Journal* (June, 1966) pp. 156-157.

⁴ Pitt-Morison, M. 'Settlement and Development. The Historical Context' in Pitt-Morison, M. & White, J. (eds) *Western Towns and Buildings* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979), p. 39.

⁵ Oldfield, M. "Cloisters: A case study", (Student report, Curtin University: Culture unit, 1987) no pagination, 2.0, circa p. 4

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ City of Perth ratebooks, 1904.

⁸ Oldfield 2.0, circa p. 5.

⁹ Alexander, F. *Campus at Crawley, A Narrative and Critical Appreciation of the first fifty years of the University of Western Australia* (F.W. Cheshire for The University of Western Australia Press, 1963) p. 506-509..

£2,000 was spent on alterations.¹⁰ There were suggestions that the building be demolished to enable the construction of a new building or the continuation of Mill Street, but the building was retained and, between 1942-45 was used as a WAAF Barracks afterwards and as a Dutch club and then a home for nurses.

From 1958 until the mid-1960s, *The Cloisters* was used as a guest house until plans to demolish the building and redevelop the site to provide funds for *Guildford Grammar School* and *Christchurch Grammar* were mooted by the Anglican Church.¹¹ In 1966-67, a campaign of newspaper articles in the *West Australian* generated public support for retention of the building, and the Port Jackson fig tree in front of it. Landscape architect and writer, Ray Oldham, and others, met with members of the Anglican Church and the Perth City Council to negotiate a higher plot ratio for the development site behind the building so that *The Cloisters* could be saved. A proposal for a twin tower office building with a plaza and shopping arcade which included the restoration and adaptation of *The Cloisters* building for professional and banking offices was approved by Perth City Council.

In 1971, *The Cloisters* was restored and adapted for use as a commercial outlet at a cost of \$100,000.¹² The approved scheme was designed by the architectural practice Howlett and Bailey. The significance of the building was recognised by one of the project architects who stated: "An early, historical building worth preserving as part of our local history. Although the building has little architectural significance, it is an aesthetic reminder of our past and a reminder of our traditional building methods."¹³ Incorporated into the project was the retention of the nearby Port Jackson fig tree which had been threatened in 1970, not by the developers but by water loss.¹⁴ A careful monitoring program by experts ensured its survival. This attitude to *The Cloisters* shaped the approach to its conservation.

In 1972, the Clay Brick Manufacturers' award was presented to architect Jeffrey Howlett, of Howlett and Bailey, "for his skilful incorporation of the building [*The Cloisters*] in a modern urban complex."¹⁵ In this regard, the award broke with tradition in not recognising an original design. In addition, a special award was made to bricklayer, Mr V. Prestianni for his craftsmanship in restoring the 'charm' of the old building. *The Architect* described the award winning project: "'The Cloisters' was sensitively restored during the construction of the building complex which harmoniously combines a 20 storey tower, pedestrian open spaces and the old building."¹⁶

The building was saved and the facades retained and restored, albeit with plate glass windows to the openings of the cloisters. The interior of the building was gutted to create additional office space.

¹⁰ alterations unknown.

¹¹ Oldfield 2.0, circa p. 5.

¹² Aris, K. "The Cloisters: A conservation case study". (Student report, Curtin University: Architecture and Culture unit, 1988) , p. 3.

¹³ Philip Harris, Architect, Howlett and Bailey, cited Aris, p. 4.

¹⁴ *West Australian*, 9 November 1970, p. 2.

¹⁵ *West Australian*, 18 November 1972, p. 4.

¹⁶ *The Architect*, 82/3, Vol.22, No.3, p. 37.

Together with the *Barracks* archway, the retention of *The Cloisters* was important in raising community awareness of the historic building stock of Perth and the need for public action to ensure the conservation of heritage buildings in the city.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The Cloisters is a two storey brick building constructed in the Victorian Tudor style¹⁷ and employs carefully detailed diapered brickwork, string courses and crenellations.

It is a well proportioned building constructed with bricks from James Brittain's brickworks in East Perth, and features the judicious use of different coloured bricks to form decorative elements. It has an interesting chequerboard pattern made of bricks on the west wing and diamond pattern on the east wing. The natural colours of the bricks transform the side of the building into a colourful and delicate tracery, with a strong vertical emphasis contrasting with the horizontality of the main architectural features.

The entrance is on the south elevation. On the south-west elevation of the building is a square tower. It is squat and imposing. The impression is one of solidity, of well-defined form and imposing authority. An arched entrance, echoing the cloisters, forms the portico to this tower and above it rises a blind arch flanked by two long narrow windows. Above a delicate tracery of brickwork, battlements complete the tower. The windows on the south elevation are narrow but rectangular and they impose an horizontal restriction on the upward movement of the arches below. On the northern elevation is a polygonal tower with a tourelle. Cloisters run the length of the elevation and to the eastern elevation. The window mouldings and copings of the building are finished in brick and have been painted at a later stage. *The Cloisters* also relates in detail to the *Pensioner Barracks* (of which only the arch survives), and *Government House*.

In 1879, additions of a double school room, dining room, teachers room, dormitory and servants offices, at a cost of £500, were made to the western elevation, extending the size of the building by over a third.¹⁸

In 1931, a fire damaged the building and necessitated the replacement of the original shingle roofing with corrugated iron and other repairs at a cost of £2,000.

Other work to the building in the 1960s was described in 1970, when the *West Australian* reported: "The work to be done to the Cloisters building will include considerable remodelling of the interior, the removal of recent brick partitions and the restoration of the painted brick walls to their original state. The rear elevation will be rebuilt, using old brick from demolitions behind the Cloisters. This will be a similar operation to the refacing of the western elevation of the Barracks arch. The ground floor

¹⁷ 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) pp. 86-89.

¹⁸ Oldfield, 2.0, circa p. 4

will be let for speciality shops. The first floor will contain 5,000 square feet of floor space for approved tenants."¹⁹

In 1971, the building underwent conservation. The interior was completely gutted and concrete floor with waffle slab upper floor and column system replaced it. The exterior of the building was restored where earlier attempts to repair fretting brickwork caused by rising damp had resulted in unsympathetic bricks being inserted. Substantial alterations to the northern facade of the building were removed and rebuilding of the northern facade to match the original elevation was done with modern brick to match and some early brick from the buildings demolished at the rear of the site.²⁰

The parapet battlements were reproduced on the north elevation to match the existing and the parapet wall was extended along the eastern and western elevations. In the northern elevation, new windows to match the existing were inserted. The pattern of fenestration was adhered to.²¹

To allow for the use of the building as offices and a banking chamber some openings and archways were bricked up and plate glass windows inserted in the walls of the cloisters to provide a "shopfront".²²

A corrugated iron roof, which had replaced the original after a fire in 1931, was removed and replaced with asbestos cement shingles.²³

In late 1995 the forecourt of Mt Newman House, in which the Cloisters is sited, is being refurbished in accordance with architectural plans considered to be acceptable to the Heritage Council.

13. 3 REFERENCES

Aris, K. "The Cloisters: A conservation case study", (Student report, Curtin University: Architecture and Culture unit, 1988).

Oldfield, M. "Cloisters: A case study", (Student report, Curtin University: Culture unit, 1987) no pagination.

National Trust Assessment Exposition.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

¹⁹ *West Australian* , 4 April 1970, p. 1.

²⁰ Oldfield 4.0

²¹ Aris, p. 6.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*