



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 THEMES

- 2.4.2 Migrating to seek opportunity
- 2.5 Promotion of land Settlement
- 3.3.4 Making forests into saleable resource
- 3.6.1 Establishing postal services
- 3.11.5 Retailing food and beverages

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEMES

- 101 Immigration, emigration and refugees
- 107 Settlements
- 304 Mail Services
- 3.6.1 Establishing postal services
- 3.11.5 Retailing food and beverages

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Darnell's General Store exhibits the aesthetic characteristics of a simple vernacular collection of buildings that are typical of the kind of modest structures built in Group Settlement hamlets and timber towns in the South-West of Western Australia. Its simple underlying design is overlaid with a series of alterations, wear and tear, and decay, making the place a visually rich experience. It is its ordinariness, the adaptations, and patination that give it much of its aesthetic interest. (Criterion 1.1)

The place has a local landmark quality in Witchcliffe, and is an integral part of the vista in the locality of Bussell Highway and Redgate Road. (Criterion 1.2)

The place is an integral part of a hamlet, where almost all the buildings are simple timber framed structures. None of these structures reach great aesthetic heights in their own right, but the places are of aesthetic interest as a collection. *Darnell's General Store* is an important component of the hamlet townscape of Witchcliffe. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Darnell's General Store was constructed in 1927, concurrent with the Group Settlement Schemes following World War One in Western Australia and the development of the timber mill at East Witchcliffe (1924). Timber from the mill provided materials for most of the buildings in the town, including this place. (Criterion 2.2)

Darnell's General Store has historic value as one of a diminishing number of general stores running along traditional lines, with goods displayed behind counters and customers being served over the counter. All these extant fittings date from 1941. Early period fitout and stock has been retained on display to reinforce the 'old fashioned character and charm' of the place. The trend of self-service has greatly diminished the number of places retailing in this method. (Criterion 2.2)

The place has been closely associated with George Shervington and Bill Darnell, the joint owners of the place from 1941 to 1960. Following the death of Shervington in 1960, Bill Darnell has been the sole owner of the place and has continued to operate the store up to May 2000. Shervington is commemorated in Shervington Avenue, Witchcliffe. Bill Darnell was a member of the Roads Board for 33 years and also ran a general store at Rosa Glen. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Darnell's General Store is highly valued by the community of the Shire of Augusta Margaret River, for the important and highly significant role it has played in the development of the district. It has value for its associations with the Group Settlement Scheme and for its important role in the development of Witchcliffe. Darnell is a prominent local identity and his store is much valued by the community, to the extent that the community is very concerned to ensure its ongoing existence. (Criterion 4.1)

The place contributes to the community's sense of place, as an integral part of the town of Witchcliffe and the Shire of Augusta Margaret River, as evidenced by its inclusion in the Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places for the Shire. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Darnell's General Store is one of a diminishing number of general stores running along traditional lines, with goods displayed behind counters and customers being served over the counter. All these extant fittings date from 1941. The trend of self-service has greatly diminished the number of places retailing in this method. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Darnell's General Store is a fine representative example of building construction associated with timber towns and Group Settlements. It is also representative of adaptation of an existing building by the owner over time and an example of the ethic of making do and self-reliance. (Criterion 6.1)

The place is a good representative example of a mode of trading that was common in the late nineteenth century and extended well into the middle of the twentieth century, where goods and services were offered over the counter and from display cabinets by sales assistants. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Darnell's General Store remains in use as a store, a function it has served for more than sixty years, possibly since 1927. It has not had a rigorous maintenance regime and as a result has deteriorated, though its deterioration has not detracted from its heritage value. There is no maintenance program in place and there is a range of issues that will contribute to the deterioration rate, including the need to repair or replace roofs, repair joinery, floors, and paint systems. Overall the place is in fair to poor condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The original use of *Darnell's General Store* remains a matter for further research as there are number of issues that are still not well understood. However, the place has served the community as a post office and general store longer than any other use, possibly since 1927, and continues to perform this function. Some thoroughgoing maintenance and conservation works will be required to allow the place to continue to perform its present function as further neglect may result in the structure being condemned. Urgent action is required to ensure its ongoing existence. However, overall the place retains a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Darnell's General Store would appear to have had all its major elements in place before being converted for its present and longest standing function. The changes have been large in number, but apart from dividing the main space into several areas, small in effect on impact on the original fabric. Cumulative change is part of the significance of the place. Overall the authenticity of the place is moderate to high.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Robin Chinnery, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Philip Griffiths, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Darnell's General Store is a group of buildings comprising a retail store, with two w.c.'s, chemical store (former single men's quarters), and a seed store. The place was built in 1927 as an entertainment hall and store by the owner, Thomas Hopson. The buildings are constructed of timber, with iron roofs, with floors and verandahs of timber, and a with brick baker's oven at one side of the retail store.

In the post World War One period, Western Australian Premier James Mitchell proposed that the State should become self-sufficient in dairy products.¹ This was to be achieved by means of a group settlement scheme to settle thousands of farmers in the South-West of the State, much of which had remained heavily timbered and sparsely settled.² In May 1921, the first group settlement was organised at Manjimup.³ By late 1922, about 200 men in 30 group settlements were engaged in the preparation of blocks for

¹ Crowley, F. K. *Australia's Western Third: A History of Western Australia from the first settlements to modern times* (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1960) p. 212.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

dairying in the vicinity of Manjimup, Pemberton, Augusta, Margaret River, and near Busselton.⁴

In the face of great difficulties in clearing and farming the land, many 'groupies' abandoned their holdings. In 1924, the group settlement scheme was suspended so far as the settlement of new groups was concerned.⁵

Among the early group settlements in the Augusta-Margaret River area were those near Witchcliffe and Rosa Brook and Rosa Glen. Group 57 was established near Witchcliffe, and Group 22 near Rosa Brook and Rosa Glen.⁶ In December 1923, Mr. J. H. Pilgrim and two partners formed the W. A. Jarrah Forest Ltd. with the Adelaide Timber Company.⁷ In January 1924, the company began operations at East Witchcliffe, under the management of Mr. J. F. Pilgrim, and the mill became known as Pilgrim's Mill.⁸ A typical mill town was developed, with houses, single men's quarters, boarding house, a hall, and general store.⁹

On 24 October 1924, the Busselton-Witchcliffe section of the railroad from Busselton to Witchcliffe was officially opened.¹⁰ Subsequently, on 1 April 1925, the Witchcliffe-Flinders section, which had been owned and operated by Millars was transferred to the West Australian Government Railways (W. A. G. R.)¹¹

On 27 June 1927, Lot 6 Witchcliffe, one rood and thirty two perches in area, was granted by the Crown to Thomas Hopson, storekeeper of Witchcliffe, for the sum of £20; and he was registered as the proprietor of the land on 4 July 1927.¹²

Circa 1927, *Darnell's General Store* was built by Tom Hopson as a general store, post office, dance hall and meeting place to serve the small town of Witchcliffe and the nearby group settlements.¹³ Tom Hopson travelled into Witchcliffe from Pilgrim's Mill at East Witchcliffe to build a hall and store in Witchcliffe at Lot 6, using in its construction timber cut at the mill.¹⁴ The main building comprised a single-storey timber weatherboard building, with an iron roof supported by 40' karri beams, timber floors and a front verandah.¹⁵ It was built 'like a hay shed', with the stumps set down into the ground, and the timber floor resting on large 5" timber bearers.¹⁶ There were no

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, p. 215.

⁶ Cresswell, Gail *The Light of Leeuwin: The Augusta-Margaret River Shire History* (Augusta-Margaret River Shire History Group, Margaret River, 1989) p. 220.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. Note: the business was taken over by the Adelaide Timber Company in 1930, which continued to operate the mill.

⁹ Ibid, p. 224.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 190.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Certificate of Title Lot 6 Witchcliffe, Vol. 968 Fol. 23, 27 June 1927.

¹³ Rate Book, Central Ward, Shire of Augusta Margaret River, 1927, p. 6; Cresswell, Gail op. cit., p. 220; and National Trust of Australia (W. A.) Nomination Form, 11 August 1987. Note: the Rate Book entry records only the store, with unimproved value of the land at £15; however, oral evidence gathered by Cresswell, and for this assessment from Bill Darnell, substantiates the foremost use of the place as a hall in the period 1927-37. The National Trust nomination states that the date of erection at Witchcliffe was 1922, and that the store was 'originally built in the Goldfields' at the turn of the century. No documentary evidence has been located to substantiate this date or origin.

¹⁴ Cresswell, Gail op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bill Darnell, conversation with Robin Chinnery, site visit, 18 May 2000

ceilings.¹⁷ Cresswell (1989) states there were no living quarters erected; however, Bill Darnell maintains that the outbuildings were constructed at the same period as the hall.¹⁸ The outbuildings included two timber and iron w.c.'s; single men's quarters; and a store with a timber landing.¹⁹ Physical evidence indicates that there have been some alterations and additions to the fabric of the place post 1927; however, no documentary evidence of these changes has been located. The date at which the baker's oven was constructed has not been established, nor has it been established whether bread was made for sale.

Darnell's General Store became the centre of community life for the small town of Witchcliffe and the surrounding district.²⁰ The hall was used for dances; for picture shows; for roller skating, with the seats arranged to provide a barricade between the novices in the middle of the hall space and the more experienced skaters who could speed around the perimeter; for Congregational Church services prior to the building of the church in 1933; and for the whole gamut of social events.²¹ In 1929, *Wise's Post Office Directory* includes the entry T. Hopson, store.²²

From 1929, Mrs. Julia Tonkin, operated a small store from the front verandah of her home, at Lot 7, Redgate Road, Witchcliffe.²³ Stores were also established on nearby Lots 4, 5, and 9.²⁴

The name of the registered proprietor of Lot 6 Witchcliffe was amended on the Certificate of Title to Thomas Clevinson Hopson.²⁵ He died on 4 October 1930, as a result of injuries sustained in an accident in which he was burnt when serving petrol at the place while using a hurricane lantern.²⁶ Letters of Administration of his Estate were granted to his widow, Ada Louisa Hopson of Witchcliffe, on 7 May 1931.²⁷ The business was taken over by Mrs. Vera F. Fearn, and her mother Mrs. Dolly, who rented the premises from Mrs. Hopson.²⁸ Her husband, George Fearn, was among the group settlers near Witchcliffe at Group 57, he continued to farm there for some time, whilst Mrs.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid; and Cresswell, Gail op. cit.

19 Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, site visit, 18 May 2000. Note: Bill Darnell maintained that the place is substantially unchanged, other than the minor alterations to the interior recorded in the Documentary Evidence. He stated that the place operated as a hall prior to its acquisition by himself and George Shervington. However, in an interview with Sally Hays of the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River on 15 May 2000, Bill Darnell said that when they bought the business it comprised Post Office, newsagency, and also sold papers and lollies. The use as a store is confirmed by the documentary evidence, for it is recorded from 1927 as a store in the rate books, and in other records such as post office and business directories in the 1930s.

20 Cresswell, Gail op. cit., p. 202, states that the present store 'was previously the Witchcliffe Hall'; however, no documentary evidence of such nomenclature has been located

21 Cresswell, Gail op. cit., p. 220, p. 224; and Bill Darnell, conversation with Robin Chinnery, site visit, 18 May 2000.

22 *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1929, p. 303.

23 Rate Books, op. cit., 1928-1938. Julia Tonkin was the mother of the future Premier of Western Australia, John Tonkin.

24 Ibid, 1929, p. 14.

25 Certificate of Title Lot 6 Witchcliffe, Vol. 968 Fol. 23, 4 September 1931.

26 Ibid; and Bill Darnell op. cit.

27 Ibid.

28 Rate Books, op. cit., 1931, p. 38. Note: the place continued to be recorded in *Wise's Post Office Directory* as T. Hopson, store, through the mid 1930s.

Fearn ran the store.²⁹

In 1931, Julia Tonkin's store at Lot 7 was taken over by Stanley Mutton, who rented the premises from her.³⁰ In the same year, J. H. Staples, mechanic, established a garage at Lot 2.³¹

On 3 February 1934 Ada Louisa Hopson died, and subsequently Letters of Administration of the Estate, with the will and un-administered estate of Thomas Clevinson Hopson annexed, were granted to Annie Clues, married woman, of Fremantle, on 28 July 1938.³² Vera Fearn continued to lease and operate the store during the 1930s, following Mrs. Hopson's death.³³

By 1937, the town of Witchcliffe had grown somewhat. W. H. Samworth, storekeeper, and Rodgers Bros., butchers, continued in business, as did also J. H. Staples, Agent and Repairer; M. K. Mutton (widow of Stanley Mutton) General Storekeeper, Grocery, Drapery, Fruit and Vegetables, and Refreshment Rooms, and Fearn's Cash Store.³⁴

In 1937, Bill Darnell with George Shervington took over Mrs. Mutton's store at Lot 7, renting the premises from Mrs. Tonkin.³⁵ George Shervington had borrowed £250 from his father to start a farm at Rosa Brook; however, with back problems consequent to clearing land for the farm, his request was granted to use the money to purchase the business with Bill Darnell.³⁶ They had calculated that there were approximately 100 properties within a five mile radius of Witchcliffe, and therefore it was a worthwhile proposition.³⁷ George Shervington ran the store at Witchcliffe, whilst Bill Darnell ran Darnell's Store at Rosa Brook.³⁸ Darnell and Shervington extended the store at Lot 7.³⁹

Bill Darnell's father, Alfred, had been among those who established Group 22 around Rosa Brook from 1924.⁴⁰ Bill, who had been working in a store in England, emigrated to join his father in 1926.⁴¹ After a period working in the wheatbelt, Bill returned to the farm at Group 22 and worked on farms in the vicinity.⁴² In 1931, he purchased a block in the Mowen townsite (now Rosa Brook), where he erected two timber weatherboard rooms with iron roofs, from which he commenced trading as a store for the small community and the group settlement.⁴³ Darnell's Store at Rosa Brook has continued to serve the community for more than sixty years.⁴⁴

On 28 July 1938, Lot 6, was transferred to Vera Florence Fearn, married

²⁹ Cresswell, Gail op. cit., p. 220. Note: Later George Fearn established a tearooms and store at Margaret River, and he is recorded as storekeeper there in *Wise's Post Office Directory* from 1936-37.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Certificate of Title Lot 6 Witchcliffe, Vol. 968 Fol. 23, 28 July 1938.

³³ Rate Books, op. cit., 1934-1941; and *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1933-34 to 1941.

³⁴ *The West Australian Business Directory* 1933-34, p. 203.

³⁵ Rate Book, op. cit., 1937, p. 33.

³⁶ Bill Darnell op. cit.

³⁷ Bill Darnell, interview with Sally Hays, op cit.

³⁸ Cresswell, Gail op. cit., p. 220.

³⁹ Bill Darnell, op cit.

⁴⁰ Cresswell, Gail op. cit., p. 220.

⁴¹ Ibid; and Bill Darnell op. cit.

⁴² Ibid; and *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1932-33, p. 464.

⁴³ Cresswell, Gail op. cit.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

woman, of Witchcliffe.⁴⁵ In the late 1930s, the store continued to service the town and the district, including deliveries to the Sustenance Gang of 20 men, which was put on in 1939 to carry out 'urgent road work'.⁴⁶ In the period 1940-42, *Wise's Post Office Directory* has two entries each year for Vera Fearn at Witchcliffe, Margaret River, as storekeeper, and as post mistress.⁴⁷ It is probable that some alterations were made to *Darnell's General Store* in this period to accommodate the post office, as indicated in the physical evidence.

On 7 October 1941, William (Bill) Darnell and George John Shervington, storekeepers of Witchcliffe, as tenants in common, purchased Fearn's Cash Store, which was subsequently re-named 'Darnell's General Store'.⁴⁸ The place has continued to trade under this name.

George Shervington continued to run *Darnell's General Store* at Witchcliffe until his death in 1960.⁴⁹ He was active in the local community, serving as a member of the Augusta-Margaret River Roads Board, and as first president of the Rotary Club which was founded in 1959- 60.⁵⁰

During the period 1941 to 1960, minor alterations were made to the interior of *Darnell's Trading Post and Post Office, Witchcliffe*, comprising the construction of a wall between the retail portion of the store and the storage area to the rear, the construction of shelving and counters, and the central display cabinet, all constructed of top quality jarrah from the local timber mill.⁵¹ Four jarrah timber posts, supplied by the Adelaide Timber Company, were inserted in the retail shop section of the building to give additional support to the roof, and a post was inserted in the same part of the building.⁵² A couple of the karri roof beams were replaced with two 8" x 2" beams bolted together to make a new beam, following termite damage.⁵³ Re-growth of a stump beneath the floor of the room at the east (now the office) necessitated repairs to that floor.⁵⁴ Drainage has been a problem, and as the bearers have rotted and the floor has subsided, repairs to the floor have been necessary at various times in the period from 1941 to 2000.⁵⁵ Downpipes have been added to the building at various times to divert water.⁵⁶

On 19 May 1960, George Shervington died.⁵⁷ The Shervington family is

⁴⁵ Certificate of Title Lot 6 Witchcliffe, Vol. 968 Fol. 23, 28 July 1938.

⁴⁶ Cresswell, Gail op. cit., p. 262.

⁴⁷ *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1940-41, p. 370, and 1941-42, p. 376.

⁴⁸ Certificate of Title Lot 6 Witchcliffe, Vol. 968 Fol. 23, 7 October 1941; and Rate Book op. cit., 1941, p. 29. Note: Bill Darnell maintains that he and George Shervington took over the premises from Fearn in 1938; however, the Rate Books for the period continue to show the proprietor as Vera Fearn until 1941. George Fearn continued to operate the store and tea rooms he had established in Margaret River until 1942. He is commemorated by Fearn Avenue, Margaret River. (Cresswell, op cit. p. 239.)

⁴⁹ Bill Darnell op. cit.; and Cresswell, Gail op. cit. Note: Although ownership of the place changed, Vera Fearn continues to be recorded as storekeeper and postmistress in *Wise's Post Office Directory* in the period 1941-1944, and as storekeeper in 1945. However, *Western Australian Telephone Directory* indicates the business operated by Bill Darnell and George Shervington is shown as Darnell and Shervington, Storekeepers, Witchcliffe, in the period 1941-1945.

⁵⁰ Ibid, Bill Darnell; and Cresswell, Gail ibid, p. 298.

⁵¹ Bill Darnell interview with Sally Hays op. cit.

⁵² Bill Darnell conversation with Robin Chinnery op cit.

⁵³ Bill Darnell interview with Sally Hays op. cit.

⁵⁴ Bill Darnell conversation with Robin Chinnery op cit.

⁵⁵ Ibid, and Bill Darnell interview with Sally Hays op. cit.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Certificate of Title Lot 6 Witchcliffe, Vol. 968 Fol. 23, 28 January 1964.

commemorated in the naming of Shervington Avenue, Witchcliffe.

From mid-1960, Bill Darnell took over the running of the store at Witchcliffe, whilst his son, William H. (also known as 'Bill'), ran Darnell's store at Rosa Brook.⁵⁸

On 27 November 1961, Probate of the Will of George John Shervington was granted to the executors of his will, his widow, Florence Jane Shervington, of Bussell Highway, Witchcliffe, and Christopher Alphonus Parkinson, Accountant, of Tuart Hill.⁵⁹

On 10 June 1965, *Darnell's General Store* was transferred to William Darnell, Storekeeper, of Witchcliffe.⁶⁰ Bill Darnell has continued to run *Darnell's General Store* up to May 2000.

In August 1987, *Darnell's General Store* was nominated for assessment by the National Trust of Australia (W. A.); however, it has not been classified by the Trust.⁶¹

Circa 1992, *Darnell's General Store* was painted.⁶²

In 1995-96, the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River compiled a Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places, in which *Darnell's General Store* was included, and also Darnell's Store at Rosa Glen.⁶³ The Statement of Significance stated the place was 'in its original state, not only externally but internally as well'; and that the layout and operation remained 'as it was in the 1930s, which gives it a unique character and attracts many tourists.'⁶⁴

On 12 August 1998, the *Augusta Margaret River Times* reported that as a result of ill health Bill Darnell had to sell *Darnell's Trading Post and Post Office, Witchcliffe*, signalling 'the end of an era'.⁶⁵ It went on to state that the Witchcliffe Progress Association was working to form a co-operative to purchase the place, 'the town's landmark'.⁶⁶ The sale of the place did not eventuate, but the business has continued in operation, with Bill Darnell regularly spending time there, with a number of people employed in the store as shop assistants.⁶⁷

Darnell's General Store is seen as an integral part of the town of Witchcliffe and the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River, and is highly valued by the community for social and historic reasons.⁶⁸ The place is perceived to have 'old fashioned character and charm', because it has changed little through the period since its erection in the Inter War period. Early period fitout and stock has been retained on display to reinforce this aspect.⁶⁹ Bill Darnell is 'loved and respected' by the community of Witchcliffe and the Shire of Augusta-

⁵⁸ Cresswell, Gail op. cit.

⁵⁹ Certificate of Title Lot 6 Witchcliffe, Vol. 968 Fol. 23, 28 January 1964.

⁶⁰ Certificate of Title Witchcliffe Lot 6, Vol. 1299 Fol. 599, 10 June 1965.

⁶¹ National Trust of Australia (W. A.) Nomination Form, 11 August 1987.

⁶² Bill Darnell op. cit.

⁶³ Shire of Augusta-Margaret River Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places, compiled between January 1995 and May 1996.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *Augusta Margaret River Times* 12 August 1998.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Bill Darnell conversation with Robin Chinnery op. cit.; and Sally Hays, Shire of Augusta-Margaret River, and Secretary, Augusta-Margaret River Historical Society, telephone conversation with Robin Chinnery, 11 May 2000.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Shire of Augusta-Margaret River Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places, compiled between January 1995 and May 1996.

Margaret River, for his support through the tough times, for his service in his store, and as a member of the Roads Board for 33 years.⁷⁰ He continues to operate *Darnell's General Store* as a store in 2000.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Darnell's General Store is a group of buildings comprising a general store and post office in the main structure, outside water closets, chemical store (former single men's quarters building), seed store, and loading dock. The buildings are all constructed of timber, with corrugated iron roofs, timber floors and verandahs of timber construction.

Setting

Witchcliffe is a small hamlet located 7.5 kilometres south of the Town of Margaret River, on the Bussell Highway. The hamlet comprises mainly timber framed shops and houses that relate to the period of Group settlement and development of the timber mill. The majority of the remaining structures are located along the Bussell Highway, north of the Redgate Road. *Darnell's General Store* is one of the places that forms part of the group of buildings that make up the core of the hamlet, though its not part of the main street, being located on the south-west sector of the hamlet on the Redgate Road. *Darnell's General Store* is very much part of the precinct and contributes to the precinctual qualities of the hamlet.

Siting

In common with the other shops and commercial premises in Witchcliffe, the main building of *Darnell's General Store, Witchcliffe* is sited on the front boundary of the site and its verandah extends over the pavement to the kerb edge. The store is located at a point roughly in the centre of the property boundary and extends away to the north, normal to the street, making the plan askew in relation to the side boundaries. There are two other major buildings on the site. The first is the chemical store (a former single men's quarters) and this is set to the west and north of the store, and the second is a seed store with a loading dock and this structure is set to the north of the chemical store. There is a chainlink fence along part of the front boundary, a single gate though the western section of the fence, and an irregular assortment of fences along some of the other boundaries to the east and north of the lot.

The site is covered with gravel on the trafficked areas and wild grasses elsewhere. There is little evidence of deliberate landscaping or planting.

Darnell's General Store

The store is rendered in a simple vernacular manner, occasionally using elements of the Federation Bungalow style, and comprises four major elements: the gable roofed main space, the two lean-to flanking spaces, and the verandah. The main store is a double volume timber framed structure with a gabled corrugated iron roof, without gutters and the roof runs along the north-south axis. Clerestories comprising fixed glass lights and translucent sheeting run the full length of the east and west flanks of the main building structure. The front of the building has a full-length verandah with a bitumen-paved floor, timber posts and a low pitched iron roof. The front of the shopfront is symmetrically disposed with a pair of glazed and panel doors at the centre flanked by large fixed glazed shop windows then double hung

⁷⁰ Cresswell, Gail op. cit.

sash windows and two four panel doors, once leading into the post office and the other to the office. The whole of the front of the building is clad with painted jarrah weatherboards. There is a metal mail box on the pavement and various signs on the building, including an old baked enamel Mobil Oil emblem. The main shop sign is a painted sign that reads 'Darnell's Trading Post and Post Office', though this is not the name of the business, nor is it a name used by the owners.

The eastern and western flanks of the building are weatherboard clad and this cladding is in fair condition. The eastern side has few windows in it, and at a point midway along its length there is what remains of a brick oven, with the flue removed. The west elevation has a series of doors and windows along its length, with clear evidence of many alterations to the location and size of openings in the length of the elevation. There is a pair of sliding timber framed and boarded doors on the rear elevation.

There are two primitively constructed water closets adjacent to the west side of the store.

The store is comprised of the main retail space, the post office to the west, and office to the eastern side of the front entry, together with storage space. The main retail space has an irregular timber floor, sawn timber columns, plaster board lined walls and ceilings and perimeter carpenter style shelving. The window displays are similarly simply constructed. There is a 'U' shaped counter constructed of timber and a timber construction and metal screen clad safes, together with a number of timber and glass display cabinets in the centre of the floor. The whole atmosphere is traditional in tone and rich in detail. Wares are displayed on open shelves in a manner that was common in the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The glass cabinets display some ware from a bygone era.

The office section on the eastern side of the building is similar in its finishes to the store. The post office is similarly finished and has a carpenter's construction counter with a mixture of standard post fittings arranged around the perimeter walls. Unlike the rest of the store, the floor is carpeted.

The storage space is unlined and reveals the nature of the building construction. The main posts are rough-hewn poles that have been squared up with lining boards to give the appearance of large squared columns. The walls are stud framed between the columns. The roof is trussed with purlins spanning between the trusses and the underside of the corrugated iron can readily be seen from the store. The sheeting has deteriorated badly at the laps. Floors are boarded and the boarding runs in different directions in various locations. There has been a good deal of subsidence of the bearers resulting in the floor being very uneven. The floor is reputed to have been built direct onto bearers laid on the ground and, given the ground to floor clearances around the building, this seems likely to have been the construction method used. The main feature of the store's north wall is the remains of an oven of brick construction.

Other features in the storage area include a rich variety of carpenter's construction shelving and the use of recycled timber crates, some of which are many years old. There is an amenities room on the west side of the storage area and this area is basically fitted out with a sink, cupboard and loose tables.

It would appear that the entire space was constructed as a single volume and that the shop section, together with the other partitions are a later alteration, as suggested in the documentary evidence. It is also clear that four sawn

timber columns in the shop section are later additions. The whole of the interior of the place, together with some of the exterior of the place would appear to be the product of continuous and incremental change, resulting in rich overlays of the history of the place.

Roof sheeting, rainwater goods, floors, and some sections of weatherboards are in fair to very poor condition in some instances. There has been a good deal of minor subsidence and this has resulted in the floors being uneven throughout the building. Overall the place is in fair to poor condition. The place continues to function as a general store and post office.

Chemical Store (former single men's quarters)

This is a simple single room building with a low-pitched roof, an extension to the north, and open sided extension to the east. It is all of timber construction and unlike the store is raised on stumps. The walls are timber framed and unpainted jarrah weatherboard clad. There is a single board faced door in the south elevation and a small square awning sash window in the east elevation. The interior is unlined and is used for storage. All finishes are in fair to poor condition. The structure contributes to the visual richness of the site.

Seed Store

This is a simple single room building with a corrugated iron clad gable roof, and a loading platform that extends along most of the east elevation and south to the Chemical Store. It is of timber construction and is raised on stumps. The walls are timber framed and unpainted jarrah weatherboard clad. There is a single board faced door in the south elevation, a pair of three pane casement windows, and a large timber framed and clad sliding door in the east elevation. The interior is unlined and is used for storage. There is a rainwater tank against the western wall. All finishes are in fair to poor condition and the platform is in very poor condition. The structure contributes to the visual richness of the site.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Darnell's General Store, is similar to a number of buildings located in timber towns and Group Settlement centres. It is timber framed with a lightly trussed timber framed roof, corrugated iron roof cladding. The plan is a simple rectangular shape and the elevation treatment almost without decorative treatment. Comparable examples include the theatre in Balingup, the former cinema in Pemberton, both of which have been adapted for alternative use. Timber construction district and agricultural halls are similar in design, though their street elevations are quite different to the shop front adaptation of *Darnell's General Store*.

The construction type is quite common throughout the south west of the state and the only unusual construction feature of *Darnell's General Store* is the use of rough hewn timber columns that were later clad with boards to look like sawn timber columns.

The type of fit-out is also be seen in William's Drapery in Northampton.

13.4 REFERENCES

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research may give a better insight into the original uses of the place,

before it was put to use as a general store, rather than a series of mixed uses that were characteristic of its first years of operation, as the documentary evidence suggests.

Physical evidence indicates that there have been some alterations and additions to the fabric of the place post 1927; however, no documentary evidence of these changes has been located. The date at which the baker's oven was constructed has not been established, nor has it been established whether bread was made for sale.

Further research should be undertaken into the history of Bill Darnell senior and George Shervington. (Note: Bill Darnell was apparently the instigator of the Tourist Bureau in 1953.)