



# 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.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Wesley Church* is important for its aesthetic quality imparted by the Federation Gothic detailing of the lancet windows with the intricate tracery, the articulation of the elevations provided by the buttresses and the harmony of the unpainted cement dressings against the soft texture of the limestone walls. (Criterion 1.1)

*Wesley Church* is significant for the quality of the internal space created by using thin cast iron columns to support the clerestory giving a sense of openness and light. (Criterion 1.2)

*Wesley Church* is important for its landmark quality, standing at the apex of the three-way intersection of Market Street and Cantonment Street. (Criterion 1.3)

*Wesley Church* is important as a strong contributing element in the streetscape. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The site of *Wesley Church* is significant as the site of the first Methodist Church in the Fremantle area that was constructed in 1840 and demolished in 1928, after co-existing with the present church over a period of 40 years. (Criterion 2.2)

*Wesley Church* is important for its association with the growth of the Methodist Church and latterly the Uniting Church in the Fremantle district. (Criterion 2.3)

The place was designed by architect A.M. Bonython. (Criterion 2.3)

The place is associated with Henry Trigg the first Western Australia born and trained architect. Trigg was also influential in the development of the Institute of Architects. (Criterion 2.3)

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

### 11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Wesley Church* contributes to the community's sense of place as a landmark on the corner of Market and Cantonment Streets and as a reminder of the early development of Fremantle. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

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### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The place is representative of Methodist churches in Western Australia.  
(Criterion 6.1)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

The cracks noted during a previous site inspection in 1996 have been repaired. The corrugated asbestos roof has been coated and the gutters and down pipes have been replaced in copper. There are problems with the stained glass leadlight windows with the lead sagging and some of the steel bars having rusted. The window at the north-west is temporarily propped.

There is a program in place to address these problems. The work carried out in the past together with the work planned is maintaining the place in a sound condition.

Future work planned includes extensive renovation of internal surfaces and repainting in the original colours.<sup>1</sup>

The problems do not impact upon the significant values at the moment but further deterioration will have a deleterious effect.

The condition of the building fabric is sound as there has been extensive remedial work carried out with much work remaining to be done.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Wesley Church* has a high degree of integrity. It is still in its original use and it is likely to remain so in perpetuity.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

The panelling lining the north wall internally is introduced and the roof cladding is not original. Nevertheless, most of the building fabric is in its original condition giving the place a high degree of authenticity.

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<sup>1</sup> John Pidgeon, conversation with Mr Arthur Smith, date.  
**Register of Heritage Places - Assessment Doc'n**  
**05/11/1999**

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The supporting evidence has been prepared by consultants from the Centre for Western Australian History. The documentary evidence has been compiled by Julia Ball, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Pidgeon, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Wesley Church*, a stone and corrugated asbestos cement (originally iron) church, was constructed in 1889 to cater for a growing Methodist congregation in Fremantle.

Methodism in Western Australia dates back to the founding of the Colony. There were Methodists amongst the early settlers including Mr James Inkpen and family who arrived on the ship *Gilmore*, and those aboard the *Tranby* which was chartered by two Wesleyan families, the Hardeys and the Clarksons.<sup>2</sup> In 1834, a decision to erect a place of worship was made and a small building was erected on land in Murray Street, Perth, donated by James Inkpen. However, the first Methodist minister did not arrive in the colony until 1840. One of the first tasks of Rev. John Smithies was the erection of a chapel in Fremantle.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, the first Wesleyan Chapel was built in Fremantle in 1840 and the foundation stone was laid on 16 September 1840, by Governor Hutt.<sup>4</sup> The building was completed around April 1841 and was opened for services on 24 May. It faced Cantonment Street and occupied the site immediately east of the present *Wesley Church*.

It was a modest building that, by 1887, was said to have become too small for a steadily growing congregation and the Church authorities decided to erect, '...an edifice more suitable to their wants'.<sup>5</sup>

When the foundation stone for the new church was laid by Mrs Shenton on 8 March 1888, the press reported:

... the trustees submitted to Mr. A.M. Bonython, the local representative of Messrs Terry & Oakden, the task of preparing plans and specifications for the new building. The designs submitted by that gentleman meeting with approval, tenders were called for, and in November last, the tender of Mr James Halliday, of Perth, to erect the building for the sum of £1,987 12s 0d, was accepted. The work was started immediately, and since then has progressed in a very satisfactory manner.<sup>6</sup>

A bottle, containing an outline of the circumstances of the construction of the church, daily newspapers of Perth and Fremantle and coins of the day, was placed in a special cavity. In his speech on the occasion, the Mayor of Perth, Mr George Shenton, commented that in erecting the new building the Trustees hoped it would not only be a credit to Methodism in particular, but also to Fremantle.

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<sup>2</sup> Jenkins, C.A. *A Century of Methodism in Western Australia 1830-1930* Methodist Book Depot, 1930, pp. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *West Australian* 8 March 1888, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

There were delays in the course of construction, including a change of contractor and the building was not completed until December 1889. The press reported on Monday, 2 December that:

Today the new Wesleyan Church at Fremantle will be handed over to the trustees, the contractors, Messrs Davey Bros., having made extra exertions in order to complete the building on Saturday night. The work has been considerably delayed, owing to the difficulties with the previous contractors, and it is satisfactory to know that Messrs. Davey Bros. have been successful in completing a sacred edifice, in every respect a credit to the town. The exterior of the church is plain and substantial stonework. The principal entrance commands a view of Market-street, Leake-street, and Adelaide-street, and the whole building is surrounded by a low wall, with suitable entrance gates. Inside is a large lobby, and from this the main building is reached. The church is large and commodious, and has appropriate stained glass windows, and the seating accommodation is in every respect in keeping with the general appearance. At the far end is the pulpit, below which is the communion table, surrounded with artistically carved flowers, the whole being enclosed with ornamented railings. The public opening takes place on Wednesday afternoon.<sup>7</sup>

The formal opening on 4 December was recorded in the *Daily News* the following day and provided more details on the materials and fittings in *Wesley Church*:

The style of the building is Gothic, the ceiling being diagonally panelled in clear pine with massive moulding and clear story supported on cast-iron columns, finished in solid gold bronze, which adds greatly to the ornamentation of the edifice. The communion rail is polished jarrah, with frieze in clear pine patresses above, which is the rostrum, in circular form with jarrah handrail, highly polished resting on a cast-iron palisading, picked out in gold leaf. Inside the rail is model reading desk, a rare piece of workmanship in clear pine, carefully varnished. The flooring is well laid, in jarrah, with a fall from the communion rail to the back of the building of fully 16 inches. The aisle ceilings are in diagonal jarrah, varnished. The windows are in stained glass, the mouldings of which are in cement. The building is lighted with two pendants having 24 burners each and six side brackets.

The seating is at present only temporary, and will accommodate 400 or 500 persons; the entire space being 74 feet long by 75 wide. The walls were built of stone from the Government quarry, being handsomely dressed with good face and black prepared lines.

All dressings are in cement with massive mouldings and roofed with 24 gauge iron. The doors, which are very strongly made, are in jarrah, painted to correspond with the ceilings. The vestry room is entered from each side of the rostrum and is of commodious dimensions. The building is a great addition to the architecture of the town, and is a credit alike to the builders as well as to the Wesleyan body, for whom it was erected. Messrs. Terry and Oakden were the Architects, who are at present represented in the colony by Mr. H.S Trigg.<sup>8</sup>

From this last comment it appears that not only had the contractors changed during the course of construction, but the architects' representative had also.

Henry Stirling Trigg (b. 27/07/1860) was a local man who had trained in the eastern states, become an Associate of the Victorian Institute of Architects, and returned to set up practice in Perth in 1884. In the 1880s he appears to have had few commissions, and it was not until the 1890s that

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<sup>7</sup> *West Australian* 2 December 1889, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Daily News* 5 December 1889, p. 3.

he became involved in major projects like Trinity Congregational Church in St Georges Terrace and large commercial buildings in the city.<sup>9</sup>

Very little is known about Alfred M. Bonython, the agent at the beginning of the Church design and construction, except that he also acted as agent for Architects, Terry & Oakden on other projects in Perth in 1887, including a four-storey office building for the National Mutual Life Assurance Company, a residence for E.C. Shenton, a Wesley Manse, and a Wesley Church in York.

The firm of Terry & Oakden was, however, well known in Melbourne. It was established by M. Leonard Terry in the 1850s, and he was joined by Percy Oakden in 1874. Both men had experience in designing and supervising churches as well as a variety of commercial works. In 1880, Leonard Terry's son joined the firm; G.H.M. Addison in 1885, and Henry Kemp in 1887.

The achievements of the firm are recorded in *Victoria and its Metropolis: Past and Present* (1888). The works listed include Queen's College, Melbourne University; the Wesleyan Churches at Toorak, Ballarat and Brunswick; St Matthews Church, Prahan; St Barnabas' Church, South Melbourne. As diocesan architects, the firm superintended the erection of the first portion of St Paul's Cathedral, Swanston Street.

In 1896, improvements to the interior of *Wesley Church* were carried out and a detailed description was again published in newspaper. It provides particularly useful information about the colour scheme used:

During the past few weeks Wesley Church, Fremantle, has been temporarily closed to allow several improvements being effected and the redecoration of the building. ... Yesterday, however, re-opening services were conducted in the church, and in the alterations that have been made in the interior designs of the building, many improvements are to be noted. The middle aisle has been dispensed with, and there are now two commodious side aisles. This arrangement provides for the accommodation of 50 more people than has been the case hitherto. The benches have all been re-seated with kauri and cedar wood, and a new platform has been created for the Choir, on the left of the pulpit. A great improvement has also been effected in the lighting of the church, the gas jets which formerly illuminated the building have been replaced with 16 pendants with incandescent burners. The whole of the decorations present a quiet and harmonious appearance, and much credit is due to Mr. J. Ross-Anderson - who, we understand, is also completing the decorations at the Perth Church - for the skill and taste displayed by him in the various designs and colours.

The scheme of colour to the body of the church is terra cotta, cream and green drab, with an effective dado ornamented with a design representing a conventional rose and thistle leaf in deeper tones of colour. The transept is carried out in a more elaborate manner, there being a handsome Gothic diaper design, worked over the whole of the recess behind the pulpit, forming a canopy in soft blues and old gold colour. A painted ribbon in old gold and cream runs over this design, with the appropriate text 'Enter into His Courts with Praise', written thereon, the arch framing the whole being decorated in delicate vellum grey ornamented in gold colours. Running around the transept from the springing of the arch is an ornamental frieze, representing pomegranates and acanthus scroll in Gothic character. The filling of the arch is painted in soft salmon colour, and on either side is a unique and

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<sup>9</sup> R. & J. Oldham, *George Temple Poole* UWA Press, Nedlands, 1980; Erickson, R. (ed) *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians* Vol. 4. UWA Press, Nedlands, 1988, p. 3104.

chaste pair of tablets executed in light turquoise blue, cream and terra cotta colours. On these are inscribed in gold letters, the Commandments and Lord's Prayer, and Creed, and underneath a rich dado is traced in citron and deep chocolate colours. The balustrading in front of the platform is treated in cream, blue and gold, and presents a most attractive appearance.<sup>10</sup>

A photograph in the Fremantle Local History Collection (2702) shows part of the north wall and the elaborate decoration described above. In 1991, a painted frieze of simple rose and acanthus leaf design could still be seen on the aisle walls under the staircase.

In 1898, the congregation was still increasing and a gallery was installed at a cost of £464.

Other photographs of the time show the building very much as it is now, apart from the roofing which was then corrugated galvanised iron with ventilating dormers, a cross on the peak of the main entrance gable and a stone wall around the whole site, including the earlier Chapel beside it. The old Chapel served as a Sunday School and meeting hall after *Wesley Church* was constructed and the added rooms (of the Chapel, 1897) for Young Ladies and Young Men's Bible classes.

Further alterations to the interior include those to accommodate the organ. It is said the organ was built in 1896 by Joseph Freeman in Ballarat who offered it to the Fremantle Wesley Church when he came to Western Australia to work on the Railway Workshops.<sup>11</sup> The organ was shipped from Ballarat and installed in 1902. At first it occupied an elevated position behind the Choir. The Choir gallery was raised a few feet above the general floor level and was enclosed across the front by a polished wooden railing over wrought-iron work. The pulpit was situated at the front of the Choir gallery and in a central position.

Some years later this was remodelled. The Choir gallery was lowered, the seats arranged in tiers and the organ console was brought forward to its present position. The wrought-iron was replaced by jarrah panelling.

In 1928, the original Wesley Chapel was demolished to make way for up-to-date mission premises. During the demolition of the old building, a careful watch was kept to discover the first foundation stone in the hope of recovering any records laid there. The stone was found; however, the receptacle had been broken into and the contents removed.<sup>12</sup> At the same time the stone wall around the site was demolished and the ivy on the Church walls was removed. The foundation stone of the old Chapel and those set into the side rooms added in 1897 were reset in the new premises.

There is little documentary evidence to account for changes since then. The memorial windows record their maker as Alan Sumner, Melbourne and are dated 1949. They commemorate Church officers Herbert John and Charles James Locke 1899-1947 and those who rendered service during World War Two.

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<sup>10</sup> *West Australian* 20 April 1896, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, N. & Forrest, R. 'History of Wesley, Fremantle' prepared for the Church centenary, 1989, held by the Vestry. Noted in Campbell, R. McK. & van Bremen, I. 'Wesley Church Fremantle: Maintenance and Restoration' February 1991, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> Jenkins, op. cit., p. 20.

The Church history records that the interior of the Church was renovated in 1957 and that the painted decorations on the north wall were flaking off the damp wall. They were painted over and the whole wall was covered with synthetic panelling.<sup>13</sup>

In the early 1970s, preparations commenced for major rebuilding program. This involved the demolition of the Mission premises in Cantonment Street as well as a number of shops in Market Street. The final result was the arcade and complex known as Wesley Way which was opened in c.1974.

On 22 June 1977, the Uniting Church of Australia was inaugurated with the amalgamation of most of the Presbyterian parishes, the Methodist Church and the Congregational Church.<sup>14</sup> The inauguration reflected more than 20 years of negotiation, each church seeking to redress a decline in numbers. The transition was not without difficulties.

The Presbyterian Church allowed greater liberty in congregational terms and, because of the greater division within the Presbyterian community about the proposed Uniting Church, only sixty-four percent of congregations elected to go into the union. This varied from state-to-state, with Western Australia having the highest congregational uniting element (87%).<sup>15</sup>

In 1981, a storm blew off part of the roof.<sup>16</sup>

City of Fremantle Planning and Development files contain no recent development applications. It should be noted that there is a National Trust of Australia (WA) restrictive covenant on the place. The covenant was created in favour of the National Trust for a period of twenty five years from 1 August 1990.<sup>17</sup>

In January 1999, *Wesley Church* continues to be used for religious purposes.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Wesley Church* stands on the north corner of Cantonment Street and Market Street with its axis running parallel with Market Street at approximately 20 west of north. Cantonment Street converges with Market Street at an angle forming a wide expanse of road at the intersection onto which the church faces. The west side elevation of the building is exposed to Market Street.

Opposite the church, the west side of Market Street is lined with a variety of two-storeyed Federation Free Classical buildings. The east side of Market Street, both to the north and south of the Church, is lined with single-storey buildings with modern shop fronts. Cantonment Street running away to the north-east has the single-storey church arcade development adjacent to the place with a cantilevered awning

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<sup>13</sup> Campbell, & van Bremen, op. cit., p.5.

<sup>14</sup> Bentley, P. & Hughes, P. *The Uniting Church in Australia* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Fremantle Local History Collection, Wesley Church File, 726.587.

<sup>17</sup> Certificate of Title, Vol. 1346, Fol. 296.



overhanging the footpath. Beyond this is a contemporary two-storey building set back from the street. On the opposite side of Cantonment Street are the single-storey shop front buildings curving round into Market Street with a three-storey Federation Warehouse red brick building to the north-east.

Externally, *Wesley Church* presents as a Federation Gothic structure built on a cruciform plan with aisles south of the transepts with clerestories between the levels of the aisle and the nave and transept roofs.

Internally, however, the traditional division between the aisles and the nave and the aisles and the transepts has been dissolved by the use of slender cast iron columns to support the clerestory, so that the interior presents as a single volume with a large niche at the northern end housing the organ behind the altar.

The walls of the church are stone and the steeply pitched roof is clad with super-six corrugated asbestos cement, recently coated.

The facade, facing out onto the intersection of Market and Cantonment streets, is expressed as a parapeted gable flanked by angle buttresses. Each side of, and set back from the parapeted gable, are the parapeted walls masking the lean-to roofs of the aisles. Angle buttresses cluster at the corners. Centrally placed in the facade are the timber entrance doors set in a lancet opening. Over this is a large lancet containing stained glass and tracery featuring a wheel window over three lancets. There is similar window in the centre of the parapeted gable transept wall facing west to Market Street. This is again repeated in the balancing transept wall facing the east.

The side elevations of the aisles are divided into lancet windowed bays by a series of buttresses.

At the north end the transept roof runs at right angles to the nave roof between parapeted gables. The facades of the transept facing Market Street and facing the arcade development on the other side are replicas of the south facing facade except for the omission of the entrance doors and, in the case of the Market Street facade, the addition of a small, stone porch with a lean-to roof contained between parapeted walls, a pair of lancets facing Market Street and a south facing door in a lancet opening.

The interior of the place is illuminated by leadlight lancet windows in the external walls of the aisles each side and by porthole leadlight clerestory windows over and by large trefoil leadlight windows at the gables of the transepts.

The walls are rendered and the ceiling is of pine boarding between timber beams shaped to a shallow vault by a series of straight segments. Steel tie rods running from the east side of the nave to the west tie the feet of the segmented and vaulted beams.

The floor is covered with a blue carpet.

At the south end, over the entry porch, is a gallery with a tiered floor. The gallery is reached by means of timber staircases with carved balustrades in the south-eastern and the south western-corners of the building. The entry porch, under the gallery, is screened from the nave with the glazed

timber framed polished timber partitions of a crying room. Access to the nave from the entry porch is gained by passages each side of the crying room.

The north wall, containing the organ niche is lined with timber veneered ply and the niche has a shallow arch over the proscenium opening. In front of the organ is the altar with an altar rail in front.

Each side of the altar is an area enclosed by door height plywood lined partitions. These enclosures are of a later date than the original construction and arise from the changing requirements of the use of the place.

The carved timber pews form a block down the centre of the nave. These are separated from short runs of pews under each of the aisles.

The place is in sound condition. Work has been carried out in a program of progressive restoration and there are plans to continue this work.

The cracks noted in 1996 have been repaired. The corrugated asbestos roof has been coated and the gutters and downpipes have been replaced in copper. These are some problems with the stained glass leadlight windows with the lead sagging and some of the steel bars have rusted. The window at the north-west is temporarily propped.

The original building fabric is largely intact with some modifications such as the replacement of the corrugated iron roof cladding with asbestos cement cladding and the enclosure of the rooms each side of the altar.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The plan of *Wesley Church* is somewhat similar to *Wesley Church* in Hay Street, Perth and *Trinity Church* in St George's Terrace, Perth, in that the separation between the nave and the aisles is reduced to a row of slender cast iron columns rather than a solid stone wall punctuated with arches standing on a colonnade. The slenderness and wide spacing of the cast iron columns give the impression of a single space which is underlined in the two Perth Churches by the fact that the columns support a gallery and the whole is covered by a gable roof. In the case of *Wesley Church*, Fremantle, the columns support the high end of the aisle roofs and a masonry clerestory. In this case, the aisles are present in the traditional form, but the division between them and the nave and the transepts is expressed in a very subtle way.

### 13.4 REFERENCES

Campbell, R. McK. & van Bremen, I. 'Wesley Church Fremantle: Maintenance and Restoration' February 1991.

### 13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

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