



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

State Hotel (fmr) is a fine example of Federation Filigree style, combining solid classical details with delicate decorative timber elements, typical of the traditional Australian pub at the turn of the century. (Criterion 1.1)

State Hotel (fmr) with its wrap around verandah, is the dominant focal point in the streetscape. (Criterion 1.2)

State Hotel (fmr) is the most imposing building in Gwalia, and as such it establishes the visual identity of the town. (Criterion 1.3)

State Hotel (fmr) is an important component of what has been described as a nationally significant townsite. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

State Hotel (fmr) was the Western Australian Government's first venture into the construction and management of hotels, and as such the place demonstrates an important shift in State Government policy. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

State Hotel (fmr) contributes to the community's sense of place, being the most substantial and imposing building in Gwalia, a town that is becoming increasingly more popular as a tourist destination, serving as a demonstration of the layout and function of a gold mining township. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

State Hotel (fmr), one of a few brick buildings in Gwalia, is the most substantial building in the town. (Criterion 5.1)

State Hotel (fmr) demonstrates rare aspects of the cultural heritage significance at a national level because the historical importance of the mine, the social distinctiveness of the community, and the diversity of physical evidence within a small area, are a combination not equalled in Australia.

(Criteria 5.1, 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

State Hotel (fmr) is representative of the prominent two-storey verandah pub traditionally located on a corner site. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

State Hotel (fmr) has undergone recent conservation work and, it is in sound condition. The outbuildings have been maintained since occupied by the current lessees and are in good condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The upper level of the hotel no longer serves its original function of accommodation, it is being used for office accommodation. The lower level has also been converted to office accommodation and is, generally, inaccessible to the public. With the exception of the removal of the bar counter, alteration to the interior has been minimal. As the exterior and internal spaces remain largely intact, *State Hotel (fmr)* retains a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

In the early 1980s, *State Hotel (fmr)* underwent some alteration during conservation work to meet changes in functional requirements. The lower level bar counter was removed and the electrical and plumbing services were upgraded. Apart from general repair and restoration work to the interior and exterior, including reinstatement of the verandahs, the changes were minimal. The work was carried out sympathetically, and therefore, *State Hotel (fmr)* has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

State Hotel (fmr) is a two-storey brick and iron building, with a two-storey verandah, constructed in 1903 by the State Government to provide a controlled hotel facility for the miners of Gwalia.

According to the 'Gwalia Conservation Study', carried out by the South Australian Heritage Branch in 1985, the townsite of Gwalia (as well as the mine site) is of national significance:

The historical importance of the mine, the social distinctiveness of the community, and the amount and diversity of surviving physical evidence both within a small area, are a combination not equalled elsewhere in Australia.¹

Gwalia is located 235km north of Kalgoorlie and approximately 2km south of the Leonora township. European settlement of the district commenced in 1896, following the discovery of gold.

The economic mainstay of the surrounding area was the 'Sons of Gwalia' mine, which operated from 1896 until 1963, raising seven million tons of ore to produce 2.5 million ounces of gold.²

While other mines soon declined, 'Sons of Gwalia' steadily grew, employing a workforce of 500 during its construction boom of 1899. As the surveyed town site of Leonora was inconveniently distant from the mine site, the majority of the mine workers pitched their tents on the company's leases, and the community gradually divided into the defacto twin towns, Leonora and Gwalia, with Gwalia characterised by its large population of Italian immigrants, serving the mine.³

The town of Gwalia was surveyed in 1901, but lots were offered only on a leasehold basis.⁴

In 1902 a railway line connected both towns to Coolgardie.

As Gwalia took on a more substantial form, there arose a struggle between the two towns for the location of services. For example, the decision as to where to establish a school proved difficult, and a school was built in each community.

In order to attract custom to the commercial premises of Leonora, the Municipal Council established a steam tram service between the two townships in 1903. However, this did not quell the community demand for separate facilities.

In 1903, this combination of circumstances led the State Government to take the unusual step of building the *State Hotel (fmr)* to provide Gwalia with a licensed premises, and to lessen the sly-grog trade. "...as a last resource, the Government decided to initiate the experiment of a State-

¹ State Heritage Branch, SA, 'Gwalia Conservation Study', (for Perth Gwalia Committee, July 1985), n.p.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

owned hotel."⁵ It was the Government's first involvement in such a venture.

Mr W. E. Robertson, an architect in practice in Perth, was asked to prepare plans, which were accepted. The building was more elaborate and expensive than the Government had envisaged, 'but the licensing bench insisted that if the Government wished to obtain a licence it was but fair that the hotel they proposed to erect should equal in every way the plans submitted by other applicants.'⁶

Robertson practised in Melbourne in the late 1880s and early 1890s before migrating to Perth. He is first listed in private practice in Perth in 1903.⁷ A local goldfields newspaper makes the following mention of the work of Robertson, "Mr Robertson, the Government's architect and supervisor, has had long experience in this class of work, and in this case studied well ventilation, light and sanitation."⁸

The hotel was opened to the public on 3 June 1903, the cost of construction, including furnishings, amounting to £5,429/14/0.⁹ The hotel was described at the time of opening as follows:

The hotel is two-storeyed, and is built of brick, with a 10ft. balcony running around the front and eastern sides. At the rear there is a private balcony for the use of the boarders. On the ground floor are nine rooms. The bar opens towards the railway station. Its counter is of polished jarrah, and is pilastered, and panelled artistically. The saloon bar has been created similarly. The Government has evidently given precedence to West Australian woods, the staircase in the main hall being an elaborate piece of work of polished jarrah, and the contractors have in the whole of these fittings shown what expert tradesmen can do with colonial woods.¹⁰

A description of the layout of the hotel is provided in another newspaper:

... to contain a billiard-room 25ft. x 20ft., bar-room 25ft. x 18ft. saloon bar which, however, was subsequently deemed superfluous, and was used as a smoking-room for guests and as an office, dining room 25ft. x 18ft., pantry, store-room, kitchen, and scullery on the ground floor; while on the upper storey provision was made for a drawing-room, three single and three double bedrooms with separate quarters for servants over the dining-room, as well as a bathroom.¹¹

The yard was enclosed with galvanised iron, within which were sited a stable and out-offices. Contractors for the job were Messrs. Gamel and Trim (sic), the contract price being £4,800.¹² The painter in charge was Mr James Blight. Upon opening, the hotel was under the management of Mr Robins, who, with his wife, selected the furnishings.

Owned by the State Government, the hotel operated under strict rules and regulations: opening hours were strictly adhered to; alcohol quality was monitored so as to retain a high standard; prices were regulated; and, drunken behaviour was not tolerated. Despite the popularity of the *State*

⁵ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 5 June 1903, p. 3.

⁶ *Morning Herald*, 28 September 1903, p. 5.

⁷ Kelly, I., 'The Development of Housing in Perth (1890-1915)', (Masters Thesis, UWA, 1991).

⁸ *ibid.*, *Kalgoorlie Miner*.

⁹ *Votes and Proceedings*, 'Report of the Auditor General for the Year ending 30 June 1903', p. 177.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, *Kalgoorlie Miner*.

¹¹ *ibid.*, *Morning Herald*.

¹² The contractors could also be known as Gamble & Trimm.

Hotel (fmr) the conditions were not always viewed as acceptable by certain patrons.

In August 1911, an addition to the Station Street elevation, together with new latrines, was completed.¹³ Although designed for use as a library and reading room, it was thought the new room could be better utilised as a public bar and billiard room, with the small parlour converted to a library.

In the final days of the 1912 Parliamentary session Premier Scaddan introduced a Government Trading Concerns Bill, which empowered the Government to obtain money to start commercial enterprises of its own.¹⁴ The Labour Party, elected in 1911, then commenced a number of state owned enterprises which it believed were in the best interests of the wage earning classes. These included a state shipping service, hotels, saw mills, dairy, ferries, abattoirs and butcher shops, fish shops, quarries and brickworks, implement works, and tramways (purchased in 1912).¹⁵ The existing Dwellingup Hotel was acquired in 1912.

The *State Trading Concerns Act* (1916) repealed the 1912 Act, and authorised the continuance of existing trading concerns and further defined their management.

In the meantime, other Government financed and operated hotels were established in Kwolyin (1913), Bruce Rock (1913), Wongan Hills (1914), Corrigin (1915) and Bolgart (1915).¹⁶ This venture was described as, '...not so much essays in State ownership as efforts to provide public facilities in areas which could not attract private enterprise.'¹⁷

In March 1919, *State Hotel (fmr)* was subject to a 'beer strike' when a group of miners agreed to boycott the hotel until their demands for improved conditions were met.¹⁸ These included: two beers always being on tap; price of bottled beer; need for an additional barman; sprays to be installed for glass washing and the transfer of the manager. The boycott had a detrimental effect on the hotel's trading and closure of the hotel was considered. It was not until September 1919 that the boycott was called off; however, it appears that 'beer strikes' continued to pose problems for goldfields publicans.¹⁹

During this time, Gwalia was feeling the effects of the influenza epidemic and, in June 1919, a large section of *State Hotel (fmr)* was closed and taken over by the Health Department for use as a temporary hospital. As the use of the State School was found to be unsuitable, the *State Hotel (fmr)* was the only other option.²⁰ Mention is not made as to how long the *State Hotel (fmr)* was used for this purpose, before reverting fully to its function as a hotel.

¹³ Acc 981, An 15/1, 566/1914, 'Gwalia State Hotel, Building File', (BL).

¹⁴ *West Australian*, 22 November 1960, p. 5.

¹⁵ Le Page, J.S.H., *Building a State: the Story of the Public Works Department of Western Australia 1829-1985*, (Water Authority of Western Australia, Leederville, 1986), pp. 385-86.

¹⁶ *West Australian*, 22 November 1960, p. 5.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Acc 981, An 15/1, 11/1919, 'Gwalia State Hotel, Beer strikes and industrial troubles', p. 14. (BL)

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 149.

²⁰ Acc 981, An 15/1, 59/1919, 'State Hotel Gwalia, Hospital Accommodation', p. 3. (BL).

In June 1959, Gwalia residents signed a petition against the State's proposed sale of the *State Hotel (fmr)*. In the early 1960s, the Government's interest in hotels waned and a number of communities looked to taking over the hotels themselves. This occurred in Dwellingup and Wongan Hills. In Gwalia, after protracted negotiations, the Gwalia Community Co. Ltd bought/leased the hotel in 1960, for £18,000.²¹ The *State Hotel (fmr)* continued to be used as a hotel up until the mid-1960s.

After the mine's closure in December 1963, Gwalia was nearly deserted, although a number of its buildings remained. Leonora also declined in size, surviving as a transport and service node for a sparse pastoral industry.

State Hotel (fmr) closed on 17 January 1964, in a town that by then had only 40 residents. Its closure was recorded in the *Kalgoorlie Miner*:

The old State Hotel at Gwalia closed its doors for the last time to-night after residents had helped to drink the last of the beer remaining on the premises. The closing of the hotel follows the departure from the district of most of the Gwalia residents as a result of the closing of the Sons of Gwalia mine.²²

The building is believed to have been unoccupied until the early 1980s.²³

In the 1980s there was a revival of gold extraction around Leonora by open cut methods, notably at the 'Tower Hill' and 'Harbour Lights' leases. In 1982, mining operations resumed when a new company, Sons of Gwalia N.L., commenced large-scale open cut extraction of the orebody.²⁴

The resurgence of mining at 'Sons of Gwalia' led to the restoration and conversion of the *State Hotel (fmr)* by lessee Western Mining Corporation, for its use as an administration office by Sons of Gwalia N. L.²⁵ The first floor provides office accommodation. On the ground floor the bar counter has been removed to accommodate modern office requirements. The bar fittings and fixtures were removed by vandals during the time the building was unoccupied.

In 1994, the *State Hotel (fmr)* is still the most imposing building in Gwalia. The building is a focal point in a town that is fast becoming a tourist destination, providing visitors with an insight into the layout and function of a turn-of-the-century gold mining township.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

²¹ *West Australian*, 22 November 1960, p. 5.

²² *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 18 January 1964, p. 2.

²³ Conversation with Chris Lalor, Managing Director, 'Sons of Gwalia' and the Heritage Council staff, 14 December, 1994.

²⁴ State Heritage Branch, SA, 'Gwalia Conservation Study', (for Perth Gwalia Committee, July 1985), n.p.

²⁵ Prior to the restoration, photographic evidence indicates that the building was named *Community Hotel*, presumably dating it from 1960, when it was purchased by the local community.

The *State Hotel (fmr)* is a two-storey building in Federation Filigree style,²⁶ located at the building line on the corner of Kane and Station Streets.

The building is constructed of brick, with its corrugated iron roof concealed behind a heavily moulded parapet.

Both street facades are treated in a similar manner, each with a centrally located entrance, emphasised by a segmental arch pediment. The truncated corner provides a secondary entrance and is emphasised by a triangular pediment. An additional single-storey wing extends the Station Street elevation.

The words "Community", "Gwalia" and "Hotel" decorate the pediments of Kane Street, the truncation and Station Street respectively.

A two-storey verandah wraps the Station Street facade and half the length of the Kane Street facade that extends over the footpath. It is covered by a bull-nosed roof that is supported on paired slender timber posts, regularly spaced, which divides the facades into bays. The verandah features a plain timber valance of vertical members and a curved decorative timber frieze.

In 1911, a single-storey wing was added to the Station Street facade, although designed to accommodate a library, the area housed a bar and billiards room. The area was used as a kitchen when 'Sons of Gwalia' first occupied the building. The space is now used for storage.²⁷ Latrines were also built further south along Station Street in an outbuilding.

A single-storey addition extended the Kane Street facade.²⁸ The lower level window openings which are elliptical arches with curved sashes are protected behind the verandahs. The windows are divided into three lights. Their frames are recessed behind the outer face of the building. The upper level openings are French doors. The entry door at the building's truncation is slender and has a semi-circular fanlight. Slender semi-circular arched sashes complete the Kane Street facade at both levels.

The hotel comprised four bars, a dining room, lounge room and kitchen facilities, located on the lower level. Ten bedrooms were located above.²⁹ A beer garden is at the rear, in front of the staff accommodation.

Hotel staff were accommodated in an outbuilding at the rear. Stables and out-offices were also located at the rear.

The interior features a variety of pressed metal ceilings and carved timber joinery.

In the early 1980s, restoration work on *State Hotel (fmr)* was carried out by 'Sons of Gwalia'. The works included reconstruction of the verandahs, re-wiring, general repainting, upgrading the plumbing, removing the ground floor level bar counter and general restoration and repair.

²⁶ Apperley, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, (Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989), pp. 108-110.

²⁷ Conversation with Chris Lalor, 'Sons of Gwalia' and Heritage Council staff, 14 December, 1994.

²⁸ Date of the addition is unknown but photographic evidence shows the addition existing in 1982.

²⁹ Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

The outbuildings comprising stables, out-office, latrines and staff accommodation have been maintained and are being used for storage.

13.3 REFERENCES

State Heritage Branch, S.A., 'Gwalia Conservation Study', (for Perth Gwalia Committee, July 1985).

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.