



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

Rotunda displays aesthetic significance. It is well conceived and finely executed. (Criterion 1.1)

Rotunda is significant as a landmark in the town of Cue. Its central and prominent position in the main street makes it a key symbol of both the town and the district. (Criterion 1.3)

The role of *Rotunda* in the streetscape of Cue is significant because it gives a visual focus to the elements of the main street. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The function of *Rotunda* as a memorial to the early pioneers of Cue makes it of significance to the community of Cue and the surrounding districts. It is a reminder of the struggle to establish the town against great physical hardship. (Criterion 2.2)

Rotunda is located over, or very close to, the site of the first well in Cue. (Criterion 2.2)

Rotunda commemorates those particular individuals who established the town of Cue and those who contributed to it in later years through public service.. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Rotunda serves as a meeting place for the community of Cue and surrounding districts and is valued for its role as a site of social and cultural interaction. (Criterion 4.1)

The good condition of *Rotunda* indicates that it is valued by the community. (Criterion 4.1)

Rotunda is a prominent landmark and contributes to the community's sense of place, as evidenced by the representation of *Rotunda* on the Shire of Cue's letterhead. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The form and prominent location of *Rotunda* is typical of its type. (Criterion 6.1)

The foundation stone states that the *Rotunda* is dedicated to the pioneers of the Murchison region. This historic function is combined with that of bandstand and drinking fountain in a civic minded manner representative of the society that produced it. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Apart from the timber handrail deteriorating in a number of places, and a few fixing cleats for the cast iron missing, *Rotunda* is in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

It is unlikely that *Rotunda* is used today as a band stand. Also the way in which the narrow and sparsely landscaped median strip barely contains the width of *Rotunda* suggests a departure from the civic and celebratory motivations of those who commissioned and built *Rotunda*. Integrity in the physical sense is low.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Rotunda has high authenticity. All the materials appear original or part of the 1935 modifications.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Prue Griffin, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

Curtilage should extend to the outer edge of the surrounding concrete paving, as indicated on the dotted line on the floor plan.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Rotunda is a timber and cast iron construction with a corrugated iron roof that serves as a podium in the main street of Cue.

Cue was established as a result of a gold find reported by Tom Cue in 1892. The location known colloquially as 'The Patch' rapidly filled with prospectors. In 1892, up to one thousand men were fossicking in an area approximately 3 kilometres by 2 kilometres. Conditions were tough, water was scarce and enteric fever swept the camps. A hospital committee was formed to care for the sick but real relief came on 13 May 1892 when water was finally struck in a well dug at, or very close to, the site of the future *Rotunda*. A Progress Committee was formed in 1893 and the townsite of Cue was gazetted on 17 August 1893.¹ From 1893, the townsite rapidly expanded with substantial public and private buildings being erected.² Government had proved its faith in the town by undertaking the construction of its public buildings at the end of 1894.

Early in 1897 the town well ran dry and was closed down.³ Photographic evidence shows the site had a raised platform and balustrading around it.⁴ This site was used as a meeting place for public addresses. Perhaps this was the reason why in 1898, when electricity was to be supplied to the town, it was proposed that an experimental electric arc lamp be installed at the old well.⁵

A request was made in 1899 to erect a bandstand at the site of the old well.⁶ This request probably came from a young man named Maurie Fienburg, a member of the town's juvenile band. For the construction of a rotunda, Fienburg claims to have gained the support of Mr. E. L. Lloyd, a local prominent citizen and his father, who was a town councillor.⁷ Alfred Edward Cox designed the bandstand in 1899 but the idea must have lapsed.⁸ Photographic evidence shows a group of men on the site of the old well in June 1904 without *Rotunda*.⁹ By August 1904, plans of *Rotunda* were on view in the offices of *The Murchison Times* for comment.¹⁰

¹ Conversation with June Gronow of the Geographic Names Section of the Department of Land Administration, 17 March 1997.

² Heydon, P. R. *Just a Century Ago A History of the Shire of Cue*, Hesperian Press, 1987, p.6-7.

³ *ibid*, p. 33.

⁴ Battye Library photograph 5219B.

⁵ Heydon, P. R. *op. cit.*, p.34-36.

⁶ *ibid*, p.36.

⁷ 'Weekend Magazine', in the *Weekend News* 29 October 1966 p.5-8.

⁸ Morison, Margaret Pitt 'Immigrant Architects in Western Australia 1885-1905' Unpublished 1983, Battye Library PR 13589.

⁹ Battye Library photograph 5219B.

¹⁰ *The Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette* 13 August 1904 p.2.

At the ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone the Mayor, Mr. J. Patterson, stated that Council had conceived the idea of a rotunda in commemoration of the pioneers. Mr. Lloyd contributed £25 toward the cost of the project. The foundation stone for *Rotunda* was laid by the Lady Mayoress, Mrs. Patterson, at a ceremony on 14 September 1904. The complete inscription reads:

Erected to commemorate the site of the Old Well. Foundation stone laid by the Mayoress (Mrs. J. W. Patterson), and presented by Mr. E. L. Lloyd, in honour of the Pioneers of the Murchison.

"With water bag and pick they conquered an inhospitable desert and carved out happy and prosperous."

Cue, Sept. 14, '04.

Available evidence does not reveal if *Rotunda* was built over the exact site of the old town well or very close to it. In 1908, seats were added to *Rotunda* by contractors Crooks and Brooker for a cost of £4-12-6.¹¹

The sudden death of the Chairman of the Cue Roads Board, Sammy Mahood, in 1934 prompted the remainder of the Board to erect a memorial.¹² It was decided to place a drinking fountain in the centre of *Rotunda* and a collection of £40 enabled this gesture to take place. The new fountain was opened on 11 May 1935 and the Anglican Minister, Mr. Warlow, gave a dedicating service.¹³

The town band played in *Rotunda* for many years on Saturday evenings during late night shopping hours. Other bands have played there over the years, notably members of the Melbourne Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1984, whilst in town for performances, some younger members of the orchestra gave an unrehearsed Jazz session in the early hours of the morning.¹⁴ *Rotunda* has continued to be a site of public meetings and community gatherings throughout the century. Photographic evidence shows groups gathered to listen to speakers in what appears to be the 1950s.¹⁵

A survey in 1985 by architect R. McK. Campbell suggested that the tiled floor probably replaced an original timber floor.¹⁶ In 1989 Westrek retiled the floor in addition to repainting and other repair work.¹⁷

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Rotunda is located on the median strip of Austin Street. Opposite, on the north-west side of Austin Street, is Dorset's Guest House. On the other side of Austin Street is a vacant lot. Diagonally opposite, to the north, is the *Fmr. Bank of NSW*.

The Victorian Filigree styled *Rotunda* bears an affinity to Dorset's Guest House, as the two places are the only structures in Austin Street which make use of cast iron. The cast iron work of Dorset's Guest House consists of

¹¹ Heydon, P. R. op. cit., p.46-47.

¹² Cue Roads Board Minutes, Public Records Office, AN 57, Cons 896, Item 26, 4 August 1934.

¹³ ibid, Item 27, 18 May 1935.

¹⁴ Heydon, P. R. op. cit., p.144.

¹⁵ Battye Library photograph BA 602/5.

¹⁶ Campbell, R. McK. 'Conservation Survey of the Austin Street Precinct at Cue' May 1985, p.9.

¹⁷ Shire of Cue Municipal Inventory, 1995, place no. 25.

decorative verandah post brackets and infill balustrade panels. In *Rotunda*, however, the cast iron elements are integrated to a far greater degree.

The median strip on which *Rotunda* is situated is only about a metre wider than *Rotunda* itself. The area within the median strip immediately to the north-east and south-west of *Rotunda* is grassed. This somewhat mean setting is not in keeping with structures of this type, which generally enjoy landscaping of some generosity and substance.

The octagonally shaped *Rotunda* is oriented so that it aligns with the kerbs to either side. The entry steps are positioned on the North-East side, so that short axis of the steps aligns with the centreline of the median strip and *Rotunda* itself.

Rotunda consists of a rendered masonry octagonal base, a perimeter cast iron balustrade, which typically runs between and is partly supported by eight equally spaced cast iron columns, and a hipped roof, octagonal in plan.

Each side of the base is approximately one and a half metres long. The three entry steps are rendered and painted to match the base, and are about one and a half metres wide at the bottom and a metre wide at the top. The resultant gap between the top step and the columns to each sides occupied by short timber handrails and a matching bottom rail between which there once was an infill cast iron lace panel, similar to the remaining seven extant balustrade panels, judging by rebates in the underside of the handrail and the top of the bottom rail. The ends of these rails are supported by the main cast iron columns at each side. Where the rails are interrupted by the stop step, they are supported by approximately 50mm pipes which appears to be original, but due to their plainness, are not in keeping with the rest of the structure. The top of the base, which is also the floor to *Rotunda*, consists of 150mm by 150mm fully vitrified tiles, coloured ochre and burgundy in a contrasting chequerboard pattern. At the perimeter, the tiles are contained by a concrete strip, painted cream, about 400mm wide and flush with the tiles. The concrete strip returns vertically at the outside edge of *Rotunda* to form a concrete rendered moulding which surmounts and contrasts with the grey concrete base.

At the centre of *Rotunda* is a drinking fountain, consisting of a cast iron octagonal base, column and capital, on which sits a copper bowl, with a modern stainless steel nozzle and tap, screw fixed to the capital by eight screws, one screw per side. The octagonal sides of the base, column and capital are aligned with the sides of *Rotunda* itself. The drinking fountain has an iron base plate about twenty mm thick, square in plan, oriented so that two of it sides are parallel to the long axis of the entry steps, and bolted to the floor by four bolts, one in each corner. On the north eastern side of the drinking fountain column is a plaque which states that the fountain was erected in August 1934 although Roads Board Minutes confirm that it was actually erected early in May 1935.¹⁸ It is possible that the floor of *Rotunda* was originally timber and replaced with the aforementioned tiles at this time.

Each of the eight cast iron columns of *Rotunda* consists of an octagonal base, about 200 mm high and 75mm to each side, on which is a 100mm diameter column, rising to a height of about 2100mm above floor level, on top of which

¹⁸ Cue Roads Board Minutes, Public Records Office, AN 57, Cons 896, Item 27, 18 May 1935.

is a capital derived from the Corinthian order. The column continues above the capital but is octagonal in plan, with each side about 50mm wide, and terminates at a height of about 2700mm above the floor, by tapering out slightly and forming a cornice, octagonal in plan, with each side about 75 mm wide. The entire column, from base to cornice, appears to be a single cast.

The balustrade that spans typically between columns consists of a timber handrail about 100mm wide and 40mm deep which is attached by an iron plate located inside *Rotunda* and bolted through, with the domed bolt end to the outside of *Rotunda*. In a number of places the rails are deteriorating due to water ingress at the bolt locations. Spanning vertically between the timber rails is a cast iron balustrade panel, formed in two pieces, with a total of five main uprights and three cross rails, with decorative cast iron elements in between. The joints between the panels occur just off centre so that the smaller panel has cantilevering horizontal rails, and is bolted to the larger panel by means of small cleats. In one location a cleat is missing and the connection is weak.

A similar, though not identical system, is used for the jointing of the cast iron perimeter valance that occurs between the narrow octagonal columns, directly above the capitals. A central cast iron pendant is bolted to the underside of a 100mm by 75mm timber plate which spans between columns, in the roof plane. A short cast iron valance is bottom fixed by means of a locking ring to the central pendant and also the adjacent valance; one to the short section and two to the longer valance and bracket piece. Thus, what appears to be a continuous valance is actually five different sections; central pendant, two short valance pieces and two larger valance and bracket pieces.

The ceiling of *Rotunda* is lined with painted timber boards, each about 125mm wide. Aligned parallel to the sides, six boards of reducing length rake parallel to the medium pitched roof. The central part of the ceiling is horizontal and about three metres above floor level, with the ceiling boards aligned parallel to Austin Street. A central timber pendant about 400mm long marks the centre of the soffit. A bare incandescent light bulb is fixed directly to the underside of the soffit, immediately adjacent to and North-East of the central pendant. Exposed cabling is clipped to the soffit and runs from the light bulb to an electrical bracket located on the eaves over the steps.

The roof has eight hips, reflecting the arrangement of the base below. A timber finial surmounts the crest of the painted corrugated iron roof. The roof is drained by means of ogee metal gutters, which discharge into two spitters located centrally on the south and west eaves.

13.3 REFERENCES

Campbell, R. McK., 'Conservation Survey The Austin Street Precinct at Cue' prepared for the WA Heritage Committee, May 1985.

National Trust Assessment Exposition 2 March 1982.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
