



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

Victoria Park Police Station displays a striking aesthetic character through the concentration of contrasting stylistic features in the domestic scale of the building. A degree of consistency is achieved by use of the 'blood and bandages' style across the front facade. (Criterion 1.1)

The place is a familiar local landmark on the main thoroughfare through Victoria Park. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Victoria Park Police Station, built in 1908, reflects the attitude of a period when police stations were considered to be significant public buildings. (Criterion 2.1)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Victoria Park Police Station signifies law and order to the residents of the area it serves. (Criterion 4.1)

The presence of *Victoria Park Police Station* on the main thoroughfare since 1908 contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Victoria Park Police Station is representative of the civic architecture of the Public Works Department and the development of the Federation Free Style under the guidance of the chief architect, Hillson Beasley. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Generally, *Victoria Park Police Station* is in good condition. There is evidence of some deterioration in the brickwork and reported damage from termites but the priority for maintenance is reviewed periodically. The lack of a public presentation to Albany Highway, some inappropriate planting in front of the building and insufficient definition from the neighbouring caryard to the north, prevent the unusual aesthetic character of the police station being fully appreciated. The negative impact of these issues is reversible.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Victoria Park Police Station has moderate integrity. Whilst the building has operated as a police station since construction, the building no longer serves a residential function. In addition, the removal of the original cells has reduced the integrity of the place.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Changes to the form of *Victoria Park Police Station* since construction have predominantly been in additional fabric at the rear of the place. This fabric has not significantly altered the character of the building and could be removed, although this event is unlikely. The original internal layout is still discernible despite alterations to accommodate the modified functions of the police service. The police station has a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Ham-Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Katrina Chisholm, Graduate Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Victoria Park Police Station is a single-storey building constructed in Federation Free Style with a 'blood and bandages' finish.¹ It was built in 1908 to a standard design.

In 1829, the Metropolitan Police Act was passed in Britain. Prior to that, civil order was generally kept by the military, so when James Stirling arrived in the Swan River Colony in June 1829, he brought a detachment from the 63rd Regiment to carry out duties of discipline and protection. It was not until March 1831, that Stirling appointed a Coroner, Justices of the Peace, and Constables, to administer law and justice.²

As a settlement grew large enough to be called a town, a Constable was appointed to it. By 1840, Perth had a full-time paid Constable who also acted as Bailiff. A regulated Police Force was established in 1849, prior to the arrival of the first convicts, but it was not until March 1853, that a superintendent was appointed to administer the entire Force.³

Police in the towns operated on foot, while those in the country used horses, and sometimes camels, to cover their allotted area. Although bicycles were introduced in 1897, many Constables still patrolled on foot. Those with a regular beat were easily avoided by people breaking the law.⁴

The suburb of Victoria Park is two miles from Perth city, on the south side of the Swan River. As early as 1840, a bridge and causeway were under construction across the river and the Heirisson Island flats, between Perth and Victoria Park. From the Causeway, the road went through to Albany. This road was improved by convict labour after 1850, and coaches travelled it to transport mail and passengers between Albany and Perth.⁵

In 1886, there were about 20 houses in Victoria Park. Settlement was isolated around the coaching stop at the site of a natural spring near what is now the corner of Albany Highway and Harper Street. A well and a horse trough were built on the spring.⁶

Victoria Park was declared a Roads Board District in 1894, and the first church was built in 1896.⁷ In 1899, a horse-drawn bus ran from Perth GPO to Victoria Park, and in June that year, the foundation stone of the Victoria Park Town Hall was laid. But it was the advent of the tramway from Perth in 1905, that

¹ Apperly, R., Irving, R. & Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and terms from 1788 to the present* Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1994, p.136-139.

² Lawrence, R. M. (Senior Inspector) *Police Review 1829-1979* Police Dept. Public Relations Branch, Gov. Printing Office, [1979], pp.9-13.

³ *ibid*, pp.13-14.

⁴ *ibid*, pp.27-28.

⁵ Mundy, P. A. *The History of Victoria Park* Bound typescript, 1958, p.2-3.

⁶ *ibid*.

⁷ *ibid*, p.4.

signalled the dramatic development of the area. From a population of 1800 in 1909, Victoria Park had 5000 residents by 1917.⁸

The first police presence was established in Victoria Park on 1 November 1897, in rented premises.⁹ The growth in population after the opening of the tramway however, meant that a permanent police station was eventually required. On 1 January 1908, the Acting Commissioner of Police, W.C. Lawrence, advised the Under Secretary of Works that provision had been made for a Police Station and quarters at Victoria Park in the current year's estimates. The plans of recently erected police stations at North Perth and the Causeway were to be used. In February, the plans were altered to allow a doorway between the fireplace and charge room while the arrangement of the cells, kitchen, pantry and bathroom were to remain the same.¹⁰

As the layout of *Victoria Park Police Station* does not resemble the layout of North Perth Police Station it is assumed that the plans used must have been those for the station at the Causeway.

The contract to build *Victoria Park Police Station* was won by J. G. Fettes with a price of £961.1.0, which included the construction of stables.¹¹ Constable William Lewis was the first to occupy the quarters.¹²

In December 1939, *Victoria Park Police Station* was reported as being grubby and shabby, and 'the fences were in a state of collapse'. At some point, the former exercise yard was converted to an office, and on 27 July 1943 it was requested that the concrete floor be boarded over as the room was 'like an ice chamber' in winter and the stove did not keep the office warm.¹³

The accommodation for the Officer in Charge was considered far from ideal by Sergeant Henry Tempest Davies, who was in charge of *Victoria Park Police Station* from 1948 to 1959. On 14 January 1949, he requested that the doorway between the police office and the bedroom of the quarters be bricked up as he and his wife were awakened at all hours of the night when the CIB brought in prisoners for questioning. The doorway was blocked in with timber.¹⁴

The Victoria Park Council, and other interested bodies, appear to have been dissatisfied with the level of police protection in the area.

In May 1921, the Town Clerk complained that while one officer was on duty at the station, the other was required to patrol Victoria Park, Welshpool, Cannington, part of Jandakot, Queen's Park, Wattle Grove, Kenwick and Maddington. On 4 August 1925, a deputation from the Victoria Park Progress Association visited the Minister for Police complaining about the lack of a night patrol. The Commissioner of Police received another deputation from the Women's Service Guild on 25 July, 1926, also concerned with the lack of protection.¹⁵

⁸ *ibid*, p.5-11.

⁹ *Police Gazette, Western Australia* Wednesday 23 March 1898, p.3.

¹⁰ *ibid*.

¹¹ *Western Australian Government Gazette* 26 June, 1908, p.1738.

¹² Victoria Park Police Station File op. cit., p.2.

¹³ *ibid*.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p.3.

¹⁵ *ibid*.

In the first nine months of 1926, there were 77 crimes in a population of 27,000 which included Belmont and Rivervale, but it was not until 1930 that the District got a night-time motor cycle patrol. That year, staff numbers at *Victoria Park Police Station* were increased from 5 to 7 in 1930, and by 1935, there were 9 staff members, made up of 1 sergeant, 6 constables and 2 detectives. Commissioner Hunter did not consider additional staff warranted at the time, as the Causeway, South Perth and Rivervale Police Stations were adjacent, and Central only 'a stone's throw away'.¹⁶

In 1948, there were 11 staff consisting of 1 sergeant, 7 constables (1 full time on the Police Boy's Club), 1 mounted constable, 1 detective sergeant and 1 detective.¹⁷

In 1957, a new police station was built on Lichfield Street, just around the corner from *Victoria Park Police Station*, making one large Police Department site. Public access moved to the new building, and *Victoria Park Police Station* was used as offices. It is not known exactly when the living quarters ceased to be used as such.

A 1985 report on *Victoria Park Police Station* by the Officer in Charge noted that:

although reasonably well maintained by the Public Works Department, the layout of the premises leaves a lot to be desired and is identified for re-organisation as soon as funds permit.¹⁸

Currently, *Victoria Park Police Station* operates as a suburban traffic office.

In May 1994 the Victoria Park Historical Society removed a wall which had been added between two of the porch pillars during some previous renovation work.¹⁹ It was also reported that the bronze figures giving the date of construction of *Victoria Park Police Station* were missing from above the entrance arch.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Victoria Park Police Station is a single-storey brick building with a corrugated iron roof, located close to the building line along Albany Highway and constructed in the Federation Free Style.²⁰ A small grass verge separates the front of the police station from the footpath with a low brick wall enclosing the area in front of the north verandah. A bitumenised driveway is situated along the south boundary and car yards are located on each side of the station. The site extends through to Lichfield Street where another police building, constructed in the latter half of the twentieth century is situated. Public dealings with the police are directed through the Lichfield Street office.

The front facade of *Victoria Park Police Station* is asymmetrical and heavily modelled. Distinct expressions have been adopted to differentiate the former

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid*, p.6.

¹⁹ Memo, Telephone conversation between David Crann of the Victoria Park Historical Society, and Irene Ham-Sauman, 10 February 1997; Photographs, 1987 and 1994, HCWA File PD2219.

²⁰ Apperly, R. Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *op. cit.*, pp.104-107.

private and public entrances to the building but continuity in the composition is lent by the use of contrasting stucco bands in the 'blood and bandages' style across the front facade. The two entrance verandahs on either side of the south-west elevation are set back from a prominent central bay. The northern verandah provided public access to the police station while the opposing verandah to the south contained the entrance to the police residence. The broad opening of the public entrance is defined by wide, striated, brick columns supporting a castellated parapet forming an L-shape around the verandah edge. A low-pitched, corrugated iron roof is obscured from view behind the parapet. The middle portion of the front facade is dominated by a gable roof with a half timbered effect in the infill. A central window opening with elaborately moulded surrounds punctuates the wall below. The southern verandah is divided into three bays, by similarly striated, brick columns with a crow stepped gable, smaller in scale than the main gable, over the middle bay. The remaining roof is composed of a series of corrugated iron hipped forms with brick chimneys rising above. The original drawings feature decorative finials at the intersections of the roof forms but these are no longer evident.

The brickwork behind the front facade of *Victoria Park Police Station* is less ornamental and constructed in fair face, stretcher bond. Arched, brick lintels feature above the original window and door openings. External security screens have been fitted to the timber sash windows.

When first constructed the offices of the police station were situated on the north side of the building and comprised a charge room, two cells and an exercise yard. The residential section consisted of a central passage giving access to bedrooms and a sitting room at the front of the building, and a kitchen and another bedroom at the rear. A bathroom was accessed via the rear verandah. This original layout is clearly discernible although the building no longer fulfils a residential function and former bedrooms have become office accommodation. Many of the original features and finishes are still evident and characteristic of domestic construction. These include the timber surrounds to fireplaces, picture rails, and door and window architraves. Of particular interest is the timber panelled ceiling in the former cell area which displays the original room divisions and features two round metal ventilators. The external wall in the cell area is thicker than the remaining external walls, presumably for added security.

It is unclear when the cells were converted to an office. The exercise yard had been transformed into office accommodation in 1939. By 1971, drawings prepared by the Public Works Department for additions to *Victoria Park Police Station* no longer show the cell divisions, while the two high level windows had been replaced with a central opening. The office behind, in the former exercise yard, had become toilets and storage. The residential accommodation had been removed and the public were received through french doors opening onto the south verandah. An additional office with a concrete floor was located at the east corner of the building. This addition was extended in 1975 to provide a female toilet and the former bathroom became a cell with a grille gate. Since then, an interview room has been located in one of the former bedrooms accessed from the passage and also with an external door from the rear verandah. An acoustic ceiling has been

installed and audio recording equipment enclosed in a plasterboard closet. A brick wall screened the north verandah, obscuring the former public entrance to the station, but this was removed in 1994.

The building is in good condition. Maintenance requirements are reviewed periodically and awarded priority by the Department of Contract and Management Services.

13.3 REFERENCES

No key references.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
