



1. **DATA BASE No.** 1235
2. **NAME.** *Dongara Police Station (fmr)* (c.1870)
3. **LOCATION.** 3 Waldeck Street, Dongara
4. **DESCRIPTION OF PLACE INCLUDED IN THIS ENTRY.**  
The whole of Reserve 38885.
5. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.** Shire of Irwin
6. **OWNER.** Minister for Works
7. **HERITAGE LISTINGS.**
  - Register of Heritage Places: Interim 25/05/1992
  - National Trust Classification: 02/11/1981
  - Town Planning Scheme: 04/02/1992
  - TPS N° 4 Schedule N° 2 item 16
  - Register of National Estate: 30/04/1982
8. **CONSERVATION ORDER.**  
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9. **HERITAGE AGREEMENT.**  
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10. **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE.**  
*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:
  - the place contributes to the streetscape of Dongara and forms part of a precinct of nineteenth century public buildings in the town;
  - the place was the first police station built in Dongara and was the original centre of public administration for Dongara;
  - the place is a good example of a multi-purpose complex of nineteenth century rural administration buildings;
  - the place has had a significant role in the Dongara community. Until 1983, as a police station and, subsequently, as a tourist information office; and,

the building form and materials used are representative of the construction of the period.

## **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**

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* is constructed of simple materials - stone, timber and corrugated iron - and has a pleasing visual and architectural massing that contributes to the streetscape of Dongara. (Criterion 1.1)

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)*, together with *the Dongara Hotel* (1867), the *Post Office* (1870), and the *Uniting Church* (1884), forms part of a precinct of nineteenth century buildings in the town. (Criterion 1.4)

### **11.2. HISTORIC VALUE**

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* illustrates the style of public administration established in rural areas in Western Australia in the nineteenth century and illustrates the importance of Dongara as a regional centre. (Criterion 2.1)

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* demonstrates to both residents and visitors to Dongara, the nature and type of legal administration and law enforcement found in nineteenth rural towns in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

### **11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* yields information about nineteenth century building and security techniques and about the scale and type of administrative buildings in Western Australia at the time of its construction. (Criterion 3.3)

### **11.4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* has had a close association with the legal and judicial administration of the Irwin valley for over 100 years. As a tourist information centre, *Dongara Police Station (fmr)* continues to contribute to the social and cultural significance of the town. (Criterion 4.1)

As an element in an historic precinct, *Dongara Police Station (fmr)* contributes to the community's sense of place by providing a physical and social link to European settlement of the area. Financial appeals for the restoration of *Dongara Police Station (fmr)* have been supported by the Dongara community. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1. RARITY**

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## 12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* is a good example of the Victorian Georgian style of architecture and displays the major characteristics of the style. (Criterion 6.1)

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* is representative of the design of a rural police station with attached gaol and courthouse. (Criterion 6.2)

## 12. 3 CONDITION

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* has had a program of regular maintenance since 1983. The building is structurally sound; however, there is evidence of rising damp and salt deterioration, particularly in the vicinity of the cell block and ground water seepage is a concern in this area. The west verandah currently has a concrete floor, which is trapping moisture with resulting failure to verandah posts and limestone walls. This area is in poor condition.

Some external timberwork is displaying signs of distress due to damp and insect damage and, in these areas, is in a poor condition.

The north and east verandah are in good condition, with butt jointed jarrah boards that have received regular maintenance. The jarrah posts are in sound condition, as is the exposed roof structure. The roof cladding and rainwater goods are in sound condition.

The stable block and boundary walls are in sound condition, with isolated areas of defective pointing.

The building is well cared for by the present tenants, whose program of maintenance will retain the cultural heritage significance of the place.

For a further description of the condition of *Dongara Police Station (fmr)* refer to Palassis Architects: 'Draft Conservation Report and Outline Scope of Works, Old Police Station, Dongara' (for the Dongara-Denison Tourist Committee, Dongara, 1993).

## 12. 4 INTEGRITY

The former exercise yard, indicated on the 1898 Public Works Department drawing has been demolished as has the postmaster's office and dwelling. The stable on the west boundary exists only as consolidated ruins.

The boundary walls are no longer intact, and the south wall has been replaced by a fence which lies on the line of the original wall, but does not provide the same degree of enclosure as the wall once did.

The place is moderately intact and further conservation works will reinforce this situation, but it is unlikely ever to be considered of high integrity due to the condition of the stables and the removal of the exercise yard and postmaster's office and dwelling.

The current use is compatible with the place, and retains a community use of in the building.

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* has moderate integrity.

## 12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* has been altered over a number of years to meet the changing requirements of a police station. A significant amount of external fabric has been altered, including insertion of a concrete floor to the west verandah (c.1950), re-roofing and re-placement of gutters and other rain water goods (1988), and insertion of new windows and flush panel doors.

Some of the adaptations have been carried out in a manner dissimilar to that of the original design, but these changes are readily identifiable and some have been removed by the current tenants. Sufficient evidence, both documentary and physical, exists to enable the removal of elements which are not original and to guide reconstruction of elements that have been altered, should this be necessary.

*Dongara Police Station (fmr)* has moderate authenticity.

## 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The former *Dongara Police Station* is a limestone built structure constructed in 1870. It is part of an historical precinct containing the *Dongara Hotel* (1867) on Moreton Terrace and the *Post Office* (1870) and *Uniting Church* (1884) on Waldeck Street.

In 1834, the Irwin River, separating the neighbouring towns of Dongara and Port Denison, was identified and named by Lieutenant George Grey who was journeying south to Perth from Gantheaume Bay. In 1850, the first land releases were granted on the Irwin River. As the population of the area increased, a petition was sent to the Governor for a port to service the population. In 1852, a port was established at Irwin and the town of Dongara, originally called Dhungarra, an aboriginal word meaning "Meeting place of seals", was surveyed.<sup>1</sup> In 1869, a police constable, was appointed to the Irwin Valley and was stationed at Strawberry, a settlement to the east of Dongara. The constable had a native assistant, and their duties included checking on convict ticket-of-leave men working in the Irwin Valley and supervising the activities of two hotels operating in Dongara.<sup>2</sup>

In October 1870, the Governor General of Western Australia authorised the release of £1,200 for the construction of police quarters at Dongara. *Dongara Police Station* was constructed by Mr. Joseph Walton, who was the owner of the *Irwin Arms Hotel*, now known as the *Dongara Hotel*.<sup>3</sup> According to Palassis, it is not clear whether *Dongara Police Station* was constructed in totality immediately, or whether the place developed over several closely linked stages of development.

Examination of the earliest identified plan of the place, described as *Public Buildings* (1898), shows a variety of public administrative functions which formed a cohesive and contained administrative complex. The place accommodated a police office, a court house and magistrates room with attached dwelling, four cells, a postmaster's quarters, stables and a forage store. In the garden was a well and a freestanding galvanised iron kitchen, and a toilet enclosure.<sup>4</sup>

The use of the place over time is shown in Public Works Department drawings dated 1991, 1920, 1927, 1950 and 1958. A drawing, of 1911, showed the postmaster's quarters converted to police offices and a kitchen in the room previously used as a day room. Two of the rooms in the dwelling attached to the courthouse, were used by the police administration.<sup>5</sup>

On a drawing of 1920, the postmaster's quarters were marked on the plan 'for demolition'.<sup>6</sup> However, further amendments to the drawing, in 1927, indicate the construction of a wash house with an elevated tank stand and other minor

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<sup>1</sup> *UBD Street Directory Western Australia*, (UBD W. A. Pty. Ltd., Subiaco, 1986), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Dongara*, (Tourist information leaflet).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Public Works Department, *Site Drawing*, (1898).

<sup>5</sup> Public Works Department, *Plan Drawing*, (1911).

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

additions, including the fitting of fly screens to the still extant postmasters quarters.

A 1950 drawing indicates the magistrates room had been converted to a kitchen, and connected to the adjacent dwelling which was separated from the court room by a full height screen on the verandah. Service facilities had been improved with provision of a new water closet, laundry and water storage tank.<sup>7</sup> The same drawing specified a new picket fence to the south boundary, and a new paling fence to the east boundary facing Waldeck Street.

A 1958 drawing details general maintenance works including replacement of floors and partial re-roofing. The plan doesn't show the existence of the postmaster's quarters, the large native cell and prisoners' exercise area, so presumably these had been demolished between 1950 and 1958. [date unknown].<sup>8</sup>

The building continued to be used by the police, until 1983, when the police force relocated to a new building on an adjacent site.<sup>9</sup> The place was leased to the Dongara-Denison Tourist Information Committee by the Building Management Authority. The building was used as a Tourist Information Centre with an historical display. In 1984, the 'Dongara Old Police Station Restoration Committee' was formed and raised over \$15,500 by public subscription to restore the building.<sup>10</sup> In 1984-1985, the committee and volunteers removed intrusive vegetation, asbestos structures, floor coverings and treated termite damaged areas.<sup>11</sup>

In 1986, with financial assistance of \$818 from the Western Australian Heritage Committee, work was done to replace rainwater goods, realign the rear verandah to improve drainage and to install a new soak well.

In 1987, a major program of conservation works of the place was undertaken with the financial assistance of \$13,200 from the Western Australian Heritage Committee. A further \$14,738 was contributed by the Dongara Old Police Station Restoration Committee. Much of the work was done by local volunteers under the direction of Kevin Palassis Architects and included:<sup>12</sup>

removal of intrusive additions and modifications to the place;

conservation work to stonework including re-pointing, partial re-construction and replacement of certain modern doors and windows;

re-roofing of the main building;

interior and exterior painting of the building;

removal of asbestos ceilings and replacement of hollow core plywood doors; and,

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<sup>7</sup> Public Works Department, *Drawing*, (1950).

<sup>8</sup> Public Works Department, *Drawing*, (1958).

<sup>9</sup> Palassis Architects, *Draft Conservation Report and Scope of Works, Old Police Station*, (for The Dongara-Denison Tourist Committee and The Old Police Station restoration Committee, 1983), no pagination, circa p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Palassis, circa p. 11; National Trust of Australia, *Dongara File*, (Unpublished records 1976-1984).

<sup>11</sup> Palassis, circa p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Palassis, circa pp. 12-13.

improvements to the electrical wiring.

In 1991, the restoration committee undertook further work to arrest the ingress of damp into the cell block, including removal of underfloor debris and the reconstruction of a subfloor ventilation channel discovered whilst the floor was lifted.

In 1993, further conservation work was carried out subsequent to the granting of a Heritage Council of Western Australia administered Conservation Incentives Program grant of \$2,950 in 1993. Work to conserve the exterior of the south wall to the cell block was undertaken, along with maintenance work to the gutters and the verandah timbers. In 1994, maintenance involved the removal of cement render from interior cell walls, and the re-siting of stormwater drainage.<sup>13</sup>

The former *Dongara Police Station* is currently used as the Dongara tourist information office, with some rooms furnished as an historic display, including a museum displaying artefacts and interpretation material relevant to the former use of the place.

### 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The former *Dongara Police Station* is sited on a flat grassy area with limited vegetation in close proximity to the Irwin River. The place makes a strong contribution to the streetscape of Waldeck Street, which is one of the principal streets in Dongara.

The place consists of a number of separate rooms combined into one L-shaped building, that forms the larger part of two walls of a slightly skewed courtyard enclosure of overall dimension approximately 44.0m x 28.0m. As such it forms a well defined precinct.

The architectural style is typical of the Victorian Georgian style, with simple rectangular and prismatic shapes.<sup>14</sup> The buildings are constructed of rubble limestone, with simple gabled and duo-pitched corrugated galvanised iron roofs. There are verandahs to the north, east and west. The cell block is characterised by small, high level windows and buttresses to the walls.

The separate elements can be readily identified on site and, according to a PWD plan of 1898, originally comprised:<sup>15</sup>

a four room dwelling attached to the court house (app. 9.5 x 9.5m);

the courthouse (7.5 x 4.5m) and magistrates room (4.0 x 3.5m);

police office and day room (9.5m x 5.0m);

three cells (3.0 x 2.5m);

one native cell (4.0 x 2.5m);

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<sup>13</sup> Verbal information supplied by Dongara Old Police Station Restoration Committee, (1983); cited in Palassis Architects, *Draft Conservation Report and Scope of Works, Old Police Station*, (for The Dongara-Denison Tourist Committee and The Old Police Station restoration Committee, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*. (Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 42-45.

<sup>15</sup> 1898 PWD plan.

exercise yard, with toilet (6.1 x 3.0m);

three roomed postmaster's quarters (approx. 12.2 x 3.7m).

A stable (8.4m x 4.2m) and forage store (7.5m x 4.2m) originally stood as a lean-to at the corner of south and west boundary walls. A water closet (4.5x 3.3m) stood on the west boundary near the stables.

Full height remnants of the enclosing wall remain on the west boundary only, the south boundary was replaced with a fence in the 1950s. The former exercise yard is identifiable from the remnants of external walls, now truncated, which form buttresses to the western end of the cell block.

Internally, the cell walls are painted rubble, with the lower portion smooth cement rendered. One small, high level window, with security bars, illuminates each cell. The roof structure is exposed in these areas. The ledges and lining to the doors of the cells display early joinery techniques and still have original security ironmongery.

Floor boards throughout the place are jarrah, with the exception of some manufactured board material.

The former court house and dwelling do not contain any fittings which demonstrate the former usage of the place, but the buildings demonstrate early construction and finishes.

Internal walls are plaster on the hard, and ceilings are ripple iron, typical building materials of the late nineteenth century in Western Australia.

Externally, the stable and forage store are conserved as a stabilised ruin, unroofed and in sound condition; however, there is indication of minor fretting and deterioration to the limestone due to rising damp.

The outside water closet on the west boundary has been conserved as a stabilised ruin with partial reconstruction to the limestone walls and corrugated galvanised iron roof.

The courtyard well, indicated on the 1898 PWD drawing was reconstructed during the 1987 conservation works and is a simple limestone structure covered by a protective metal grid.

No remnants of the postmaster's quarters remain which site is now occupied by a flat roofed toilet block. [no date]

For further information regarding the conservation of the place refer to Palassis Architects: 'Draft Conservation Report and Outline Scope of Works, Old Police Station, Dongara' (for the Dongara-Denison Tourist Committee, Dongara, 1993).

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

Bodycoat, R., Palassis, K., & Worthington, M. 'Former Police Station Complex' National Trust Assessment Exposition, (for The National Trust of Australia, Perth, 1983).

Palassis Architects: 'Draft Conservation Report and Outline Scope of Works, Old Police Station, Dongara' (for the Dongara-Denison Tourist Committee, Dongara, 1993).