



# 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\*

*Perth Oval* as a whole has moderate aesthetic value, mainly because of the many mature trees on the site. In particular, the Pier Street frontage, with its long avenue of Moreton Bay fig trees, has high aesthetic value. (Criterion 1.1)

The aesthetic value of the north-west entry gates, while high, is diminished by the bland expanse of bitumen paving on the corner. (Criterion 1.2)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The purchase of the land for *Perth Oval* by Perth City Council in 1904, is indicative of the institutionalisation of sport as a characteristic of this period. (Criterion 2.2)

*Perth Oval* has been the home of the East Perth Football Club since 1907, and the major venue for the Western Australian Football League. (Criterion 2.2)

*Perth Oval* is associated with William Thorley Loton, whose name is commemorated on a plaque attached to the place. (Criterion 2.3)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Perth Oval* is highly valued by the community for the social and cultural associations of sporting and other outdoor entertainment over the years. (Criterion 4.1)

*Perth Oval*, as the home of the East Perth Football Club, contributes to the local community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

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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.

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

The north-west entry gates building is uncommon and is part of a small group of metropolitan entry gates buildings that were built earlier this century. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Perth Oval* with its variety of building styles, is characteristic of its class, that of home football ground for an Australian Rules Football League side. (Criterion 6.1)

The class to which the north-west entry gates building belongs is quite small; however it is fair to say the building is characteristic of a Inter-War Mediterranean entrance gate building. (Criterion 6.1)

*Perth Oval* as a whole and the north-west entry gates building characterise a way of life and activity - that of community enjoyment of the national football code. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Perth Oval* is in a sound condition. The playing surface is even and firm and it is obvious that it is well maintained. The various buildings at the site vary in condition but all are sound.

The north-west entry gates building while sound, is showing signs of dilapidation, such as 'blown' concrete lintels and missing sections of pressed metal soffit.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

Integrity of *Perth Oval* is high as all the buildings are used for their original purpose.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

Authenticity is moderate. A number of buildings have been replaced but the oval itself is original. The north-west entry gates building has high authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Ham-Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

Curtilage should extend beyond the north-western entry gates building to include the palm trees at the front and the Norfolk Pines at the rear, as indicated on the plan.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Perth Oval*, originally known as Loton Park, was obtained by Perth City Council in 1904, from William Thorley Loton, for use as a public park and recreation ground for the people of Perth.

Australian Rules football was promoted in Western Australia in the 1880s, against the wishes of the Governor and senior gentry. In their opinion, cricket was far better suited to developing the values of the ordered society they knew and sought to conserve. In the 1890s, many Victorians who came to Western Australia during the gold boom entered the game and by 1900, Australian Rules Football was firmly established in Perth.<sup>1</sup> Parks and recreation grounds were needed for the rapidly expanding population and the growing popularity of organised sport, both as something to participate in and something to watch. To fill this need, Perth City Council decided to purchase a paddock in East Perth owned by former Lord Mayor of Perth, William Loton.<sup>2</sup>

William Thorley Loton arrived in Western Australia in 1863 and four years later formed a merchant shipping partnership with Walter Padbury. Loton was soon established in Western Australia, with extensive property holdings in Perth and the north-west and was actively involved in local politics.<sup>3</sup> Loton lived in a large residence, *Dilhorn*, on the corner of Bulwer and Lord streets.<sup>4</sup> His holding on the other side of Bulwer Street (Swan Location 114) was used for market gardening by Chinese tenants.<sup>5</sup> Loton sold this land to Perth City Council on 31 October 1904, for £8,500. The land was to be held in trust by the Mayor and Councillors of the City of Perth

for a Public Park and Recreation Ground in perpetuity for the use and benefit of the inhabitants of the Municipality of Perth both present and future and for no other use and intent or purpose whatsoever.<sup>6</sup>

This Declaration of Trust was varied in 1982, when it was discovered that some of the use made of *Perth Oval* contravened the original purpose. The

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<sup>1</sup> Stannage, C. T. *The People of Perth: A social history of Western Australia's capital city* Perth City Council, 1979, pp. 312-314.

<sup>2</sup> Council to purchase Lotons paddock for a cricket pitch. *West Australian*, November 1903.

<sup>3</sup> He was Mayor of Perth 1901-1902, an MLC 1884-1890, MLA for various seats 1891-1908, and a director of the West Australian Bank from 1882, to his death in 1924. *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australia*, UWA Press, 1988, p. 1902.

<sup>4</sup> Stannage, C. T. op. cit., p. 255.

<sup>5</sup> Bold, W. E. Perth 'The first hundred years. The story of the Municipal development of Our City' Bound typescript, by W. E. Bold, Town Clerk of Perth, 1938, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Declaration of Trust, No. 8 1904; Transfer of Land, from William Thorley Loton to Perth City Council, 31 October, 1904. (See supporting material)

variations involved those areas of *Perth Oval* occupied by the Loton Park Tennis Club and the grandstand and football club premises, and gave Perth City Council more flexibility in determining the recreational use of other parts of the place.<sup>7</sup> These variations were little more than legal fine tuning and were due to recreational requirements not foreseen in the Declaration of Trust of 1904.

For the first few years after its purchase, the place was known as Loton Park, and although an extract from the Lord Mayor's report of 1909/10 acknowledges the change of name from Loton Park to *Perth Oval*, the reason for the change is not available.<sup>8</sup> However, between 1906 and 1910, Perth City Council resumed or purchased other pieces of land to add to William Loton's section, to form the current size and shape of *Perth Oval*, and this may have had some bearing on the change of name of the place.<sup>9</sup>

East Perth Football Club originated in 1902, when workers of the Union Soap Factory joined with those of the nearby Excelsior Confectionary Factory (both in East Perth) to form the Union Football Club. The Club initially played in the Third Rate Association (juniors) and won the premiership in their debut season. After winning the flag again the following year, the Club was promoted to the First Rate Association in 1904; again they won the premiership. Although the Club lost the grand final to the Midland Locos in 1905, their form over the previous years was enough to convince officials to promote them to the Western Australian Football Association (WAFA) as the East Perth Football Club. East Perth Football Club's home ground was Wellington Square until the Club moved to *Perth Oval* in 1910. With the advantage of a better ground and training facilities, East Perth played in their first WAFA premiership in this year, although they lost to rivals East Fremantle.<sup>10</sup>

East Perth Football Club's use of the grounds included presenting cinematograph entertainment during the summer months 1911-1921, to raise funds for the club, as well as charities and other worthy causes. In 1922, Perth City Council called for tenders for the lease of *Perth Oval* for evening picture shows and East Perth Football Club tendered unsuccessfully. They opened a rival show on Mr McDonald's block, a vacant lot on Bulwer Street, and forced the successful tenderer to relinquish his lease as being uneconomic. Perth City Council then agreed not to lease out *Perth Oval* in opposition to the East Perth Picture Garden, which was still operating in 1927.<sup>11</sup>

Other sporting bodies that called *Perth Oval* home at various times included North Perth District Cricket Club, Perth and West Perth Football Clubs, Loton Park Tennis Club and a lawn bowls club. Other sometime users of *Perth Oval* included charitable and benevolent organisations, societies, social clubs,

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<sup>7</sup> Perth Oval - Valuation of Trust, 22 April 1982, and Drawing 3591, 27 October 1967. (See supporting material)

<sup>8</sup> Perth City Council, File 500/82, correspondence with Loton family, 20 October 1980.

<sup>9</sup> DOLA Certificates of Title, Vol. 409 Fol. 180, Vol 183 Fol. 169, Vol. 407 Fol. 110, Vol. 414 Fol. 72, Vol.12 Fol. 147, Vol. 15 Fol. 389, HCWA File 2992; Perth Oval - list of land titles with map, PCC File G/P/1. (See supporting material)

<sup>10</sup> Christian, G, *The Footballers: From 1885 to the West Coast Eagles*, St George Books, Perth, 1985, pp. 19-20; Glossop, M, 'East Perth 1906-1976', East Perth Football Club, Perth, 1976, pp. 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> Perth City Council, File 205, 1909-1927.

schools, bands, other sporting bodies such as League football, soccer, baseball, cycling, hockey, etc - in short, anyone who wanted to hold an event, pageant, display, demonstration, competition, championship, sports day or Christmas tree function in Perth. Perth City Council allowed an average of ten such hirings of *Perth Oval* each year on top of the regular sporting events scheduled, taking 30% of gross takings as a hiring fee.<sup>12</sup>

*Perth Oval* was taken over by the Commonwealth for use as a military depot for a few months in 1943. A sum of £54-6-6 was later paid by the army for cost of repairs and, in 1945, *Perth Oval* was the scene of victory celebrations when World War Two ended.<sup>13</sup>

With the allocation of the Olympic Games to Melbourne in 1956, Perth City Council planned to hold sporting fixtures at *Perth Oval*, following the Games, and a new grandstand and upgraded facilities were planned. The opening of the new grandstand on 9 June 1956, also commemorated the jubilee year of East Perth Football Club's occupation of *Perth Oval*. In the game that followed the opening ceremony, East Perth fittingly beat South Fremantle by one point.<sup>14</sup>

On 3 October 1981, a plaque commemorating the history of *Perth Oval* and perpetuating the Loton name, was unveiled. This was done at the request of the Loton family, who were afraid their connection with *Perth Oval* would be lost if plans for the West Australian Football Commission to take over *Perth Oval* went ahead.

The West Australian Football Commission leased *Perth Oval*, as well as Lathlain and Leederville Ovals, from the Perth City Council, in 1982. Perth City Council hoped this would solve its problem with ongoing and preventative maintenance for the ovals. In the past, the Council's Buildings Department had to make frequent inspections and provide the football clubs with lists of work that needed to be done.

In the late 1980s, the West Coast Eagles used *Perth Oval* for evening training sessions, and in 1992, there was great debate on whether the place should be redeveloped as the premier football oval. Plans were drawn up, but Subiaco Oval was chosen instead. The decision was probably based largely on cost as Subiaco Oval already had better facilities.

With the restructure of the City of Perth local government area, the Town of Vincent was established on 1 July 1994 and *Perth Oval* was fully transferred to its control the following year. The Town of Vincent has listed *Perth Oval* in their draft Municipal Heritage Inventory.

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<sup>12</sup> Perth City Council, Files on Hire of *Perth Oval*, 1911-1991.

<sup>13</sup> File 97/56 Parks & Reserves, Perth Oval Hire Jan 1952-Dec 1955.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, File 59/1967.

## **Buildings and other facilities.**

Construction of the original timber grandstand was completed in 1909.<sup>15</sup> It is not known when the north-west entry gates on Bulwer Street were constructed, although the style does suggest c. 1930.<sup>16</sup>

The timber grandstand was removed on 7 November 1955, by Bayswater Roads Board, to make way for a new grandstand. The Roads Board paid £300 for the timber grandstand, in opposition to others who offered to demolish it for a fee.<sup>17</sup> The grandstand was rebuilt on Bayswater Oval, headquarters of the WA Soccer Football Association.<sup>18</sup>

A bowling green and pavilion were constructed beside the Loton Park Tennis Club courts prior to 1920, but these are not extant.<sup>19</sup>

The new grandstand was designed by Forbes & Fitzhardinge and constructed by W. Fairweather & Son. Total cost of the building was £104,777-1-6. The grandstand was opened by Lord Mayor H. R. Howard, on 9 June 1956.<sup>20</sup> *Perth Oval* amenities were also upgraded at this time.

In 1966, £112,000 worth of extensions were carried out to the grandstand under architects Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown, and covered terraced seating was constructed in 1978, by Associated Engineering Services<sup>21</sup>

A brick and concrete turnstile building was constructed on the south-west corner of *Perth Oval*, possibly by Perth City Councils engineering department, in 1982.<sup>22</sup>

Lighting was updated and increased in 1988, when the West Coast Eagles used *Perth Oval* for training.

### **13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

*Perth Oval* is located on the block of land bounded by Bulwer Street to the north, Lord Street to the east, Brewer Street to the south and Pier Street to the east. The north-west corner of the site is truncated by a short section of Brisbane Street.

*Loton Park Tennis Club* is on the corner of Lord and Bulwer streets. The oval itself is aligned with the long axis running north-south, which is roughly along the diagonal of the ninety degree street grid in the vicinity of *Perth Oval*.

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> The PCC file pertaining to the construction could not be located. However, that part of the land on which the gates are situated was not resumed by the PCC until 1926, and that this land (marked on Plan 2849 as 1) was Mr McDonald's block on which EPFC were holding their summer picture shows. The other lot (marked 2) had a house on it and was occupied by Albert Liddelow. (*West Australian Government Gazette*, 12 February 1926, p. 245.) Furthermore, Yvonne Geneve stated that her father claimed the entry gates were built in 1929 (WA Centenary Year), but no mention could be found in the index to *The West Australian* for 1927-1930.

<sup>17</sup> File 59/1967.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*; Old building, new site, *West Australian*, 28 April, 1956, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> Photograph Batty Library, 3538 B/2b, Perth Oval c.1920; Metropolitan Sewerage plan, Sheet 100 & 100A, 1953. (See supporting material)

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, File 59/1967.

<sup>21</sup> File 271/81.

<sup>22</sup> File 500/82, Perth Oval - General.

The street grid is skewed slightly clockwise, marginally more than that of the CBD.

*Perth Oval* is an 'A' class reserve and traditionally the home of the East Perth Football Club, and also in recent times, Perth Glory and Aspire Fitness Gymnasium.

The buildings on the site are, in chronological order, the north-west entry gates (c.1910), the northern male toilet block (c.1920), the northern female toilet block (c.1930), the south-western entrance building (c.1950), the main grandstand, administration clubroom, building (1956 with extensions 1966), the snack shop adjacent to it on the north side (c.1960), the scoreboard (c.1960), the private residence immediately west of Lotion Park (c.1960), the south-western change rooms (c.1960), the south-western toilet block (c.1960), the eastern store (c.1970) the north and north-eastern stands (c.1970), and the south-east entrance building (c.1980).

Around the oval is a grassed bank which is continuous except for where it is interrupted by the three spectator buildings. Near the top of the grassed bank are ten prefabricated kiosks, seven to the north of the oval, two to the south, and one at the back of the grandstand building, in the bitumen carpark off Pier Street. Two large shipping containers, possibly used for temporary storage and each about ten metres long, are located south of the tennis club, facing Lord Street. To the west of the shipping containers is a gravel and sand compound, presumably used to condition the playing surface of the oval. An access road links the compound to the oval. One caravan is parked near the residence and two more are near the eastern end of the north-western entry building, adjacent to a small shipping container.

The oval itself is grassed and has a low chain link perimeter fence. At the time of inspection, the oval was set up for the Perth Glory Soccer Club, with temporary spectator stands to the east and the south, and goal nets to the north and south. The two sets of Australian Rules goal posts were removed. The Pier, Brewer and Lord street frontages *Perth Oval* are lined with mature Moreton Bay Fig trees.

The north-western entrance building is almost exactly symmetrical in plan about an axis which bisects the intersection of Brisbane-Smith Street and Bulwer Street, on a north-west-south-east line. The entrance gates building is in fact three buildings; two small pavilions used for providing change equally spaced about a central ticket office, which has two long turnstile porches, one to each side, each with four semi-circular arched openings in the front wall, and four flat arched openings in the rear wall. Between each of the turnstile porches and the two change pavilions to each side is a brick wall, each about seven metres long with four evenly spaced sliding gates.

Adjacent to each change pavilion are double gates, a short length of wall which changes direction to address Pier and Bulwer streets and another set of double gates. The terminating walls are of different lengths, the only non-symmetrical elements of the building. The final section of wall facing Bulwer Street is about 13 metres long, whereas the corresponding wall facing Pier Street is only about 2 metres long.

The entire structure of walls, gates, offices and porches appears to date from the same period and is built in a Inter-War Mediterranean style. The walls are constructed of brick and rendered on the front. On the sides of the offices the upper sections of the walls, from a height equal to the adjacent walls up, are rendered, however for the lower section, the walls are not rendered and the face brickwork is painted.

The back of the turnstile porches and the back of the walls from the change offices to the ends is face brickwork, in an English garden wall bond. Concrete lintels support the brickwork over the rear openings, and some are in poor condition, as steel reinforcement is corroding, expanding and causing the concrete to deteriorate. Internally, the porches have most of the original cast iron turnstiles in place, in a poor to fair condition. The original pressed metal soffits are missing in places.

The 1956 salmon brick Post-War International style grandstand building consists of changerooms and social facilities on the ground floor and a large social area and bar on the first floor, with tiered seating facing the oval. An administrative wing was added to the rear in 1966, matching the grandstand building in style and materials, so that the two read as one building. The design exploits the strong horizontal line of the cantilevered roof, by returning the fascia to the sides, where they are terminated and visually balanced by prominent vertical brickwork elements that serve as ventilation ducts. The design has been compromised however by unsympathetic extensions such as enclosed verandahs to the front, unsightly escape stairs and wall mounted air conditioners.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

No key references.

### **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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