



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

The design is notable as a clear artistic expression of the Modernist ideals of architectural involvement in social engineering, simplification to permit application of industrialised technology, and abstract, non-historic-derived form; all ideals from a particular era of the Modern Movement, sometimes called the "Heroic Period". As such the building conforms to exemplars and acts as a local exemplar of its type. The flats are possibly a part of such urban social engineering agendas as well as a late example of the "house above the shop" phenomenon, as the dweller here is not the shop keeper. (Criteria 1.1, 1.2)

The clarity of the aesthetic agendas lends an immovable landmark quality to the building in its own right. (Criterion 1.3)

The building is a notable exemplar of the once common aesthetic idea of an obligation for street-corner buildings to "turn the corner" in the plastic three dimensional sense. Its two-storeyed street facades contribute to the aesthetic scale of the streetscape, maintaining the street alignment as an articulate and lively edge to an urban space. This is despite there being little commercial value in upper floors in such contexts and the flats were a logical excuse for this aesthetic scale to be maintained within the rural seaside holiday town that Bunbury once was. (Criterion 1.3)

The contribution to the streetscape of this and other contiguous sites has left an urban centre surviving for at least two street blocks about the Store. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Cronshaws Store is one of a relatively small number of places of such architectural style and accomplishment of agendas (places of low density) and it has such presence that it distinguishes itself from other exemplars, so that it contributes to a strong degree of diversity of cultural achievement within both the City and the State. (Criterion 2.1)

The site has a prominence deriving from the fact that the intersection at which it sits forms a gateway and channel for the patrons of the former railway station of 1904. Its design lives up to the promise that earlier investors in

banks and hotels at that intersection had banked upon, figuratively and literally.

Its origins in 1937 reflect the localised post Great Depression recovery that occurred in the State of Western Australia, as a consequence of the value that the Depression gave to the State's gold resources, and also it reflects the economic and political conditions that led to the development of the Port's wheat silos and terminus (now mostly demolished). It betrays an unawareness of the coming events of World War II. With the loss of the wheat silos, its value as evidence of these times and events is heightened.

Its stylistic influences and residential type, coming from socialist intentions in the twenties in Europe, are also indicators of the rate of spread of ideas and of local understanding and misunderstanding (or blissful ignorance beguiled by aesthetic values) of the social agendas of the Modern Movement.

It is a building telling of many complex events, phases and activities of historic importance. (Criterion 2.2)

It is closely associated with its architect, the notable O.V. Chisholm. (Criterion 2.3)

It is historically important evidence of the good state of technical and creative excellence and innovation at large in the State at the time of its design, being not only an accomplished work of design and construction, but also an heroic jump for its draper owner, Smith, into the modern world of commercialism hard on the heels of a depression of unprecedented depth. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Cronshaws Store has a clarity of architectural, commercial and social agendas that makes this building a valuable research, teaching and benchmark site with respect to all heritage values. (Criterion 3.1)

Its importance includes its propensity to provide an understanding of the human occupation of the locality, region and State. (Criterion 3.2)

It is an example of innovation in urban planning and commerce in its period. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Cronshaws Store is valued by its community for aesthetic associations as evidenced by its inclusion in Schedule 1 of the local town planning scheme. (Criterion 4.1)

It contributes strongly to a precinct of the town centre that is vital, as a gathering place, to the local community's sense of place and social cohesion. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The incidence of buildings that have the landmark stylistic importance and architectural achievement of *Cronshaws Store* is low, and allied with the commercial, and social agendas, it is rare. The nineteenth century townscapes which it echoes and reinforces are everywhere rare and endangered by development, as is evident by out-of-scale intrusions into same. (Criterion 5.1)

"Living above the shop" is a distinctive way of life, custom, and land-use, that is largely no longer practised and in danger of being lost, as evidenced by the vacant flats in this example, but the building offers the propensity for rejuvenation of this practice as part of the main street rejuvenation programme instituted in Victoria Street by the City of Bunbury. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The building demonstrates the principal characteristics of a range of landscapes or environments, including inter alia:

- * street-related (i.e. non shopping mall type), dedicated, specialty, retail shop design;
- * harmonious modern intervention in nineteenth century streetscape, adaptation;
- * early, inner city low rise, medium density, multiple dwelling design in the State;
- * Early twentieth century Modern Movement architecture. (Criterion 6.1)

The building demonstrates the principal characteristics of a way of life, custom, and technique, inter alia including:

- * manchester retailing as a focussed commercial business specialty;
- * town centre, street oriented retailing. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The current state of the fabric in relation to each of the cultural heritage significance values is very good, the cumulative effects of management and environmental effects having been the conservation of the fabric in well maintained fashion, despite fire and asbestos deterioration problems.

Past management has added to the place by interested conservation being self-evident. Remodelling for marketing fashion is little in evidence and the consequence is that time has vindicated this management, with the shop having a marketing cudos related to its authenticity of period.

Current programmes of management are principally conservation through timely maintenance of fabric.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The degree of viability is high. The original intention and uses of the building prevail and the condition and nature of the fabric are such as to convey indefinite sustainability, subject in part to the roof being repaired and a commercially viable residential or other compatible use being installed in the upper floor.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The fabric is predominantly in its original state with the exception of the well maintained surface protective coatings and of the replacement shopfront frames, and is therefore in a high state of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence and physical evidence has been compiled by Ian Molyneux, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Cronshaws Store is a two-storeyed structure of rendered and painted brickwork including ground floor retailing and first floor stores and workrooms constructed about 1938 for the manchester retailer, one Smith, of Bunbury. Additions have subsequently been made to unite two structures on the site.

Cronshaw's Manchester House was formed by Mr. James ("Jim") Cronshaw.

1937 Land Transfer 5183/1937 granted right of carriageway over the rear portion of Lot 194 to neighbours. perhaps in anticipation of the pending construction, and caveats were lodged over presumably the same portion in 1965.

1937-38 Mr. Ross Chisholm, architect, recalls assisting his father, the late O.V. ("Ossie") Chisholm, F.R.A.I.A., F.R.I.B.A., a prominent Perth architect, to survey the ground levels of the site in preparation for the design of the building.¹

From the above it is estimated the building construction would have occurred circa 1938.

(O.V. Chisholm was born in Perth in 1903 and died in 1989. He joined Powell Cameron and Chisholm in 1930 and this firm changed its name to Cameron Chisholm and Nicol in the 1950's.²)

The Building was named "*Smiths Buildings*", and a sign of this name is still extant in the coir door-mat in the Victoria Street entry to the eastern staircase leading to the flats.

The building originally had the following components, which survive:

- * the corner, ground floor, main drapery shop,
- * the Victoria Street entrance to first floor flats,
- * a side street pair of smaller specialty shops in Wellington Street, and
- * a cantilevered street canopy extending about all the above.

1966 Cronshaw Pty Ltd trading as Cronshaws bought *Smith's Buildings* from "Smith's Drapery" for £36,000 The above mentioned caveats of 1965 were presumably lodged in anticipation of this sale. ³

c 1969 Cronshaws purchased *Austral Chambers* (1912) in Stephen Street, the strategy being to obtain a foothold in that street in case of

¹ Chisholm, Ross. personal comments to Ian Molyneux, March 1996.

² *The Architect* No. 1 of 1965. Perth. 1965.

³ Molyneux, Ian. *Bunbury National Estate Study 1978*. Nedlands 1978 and Battle, Peter, personal comments to Ian Molyneux, February 1996.

competitors building up away from the Victoria Street store, but this did not eventuate and he sold the premises to Home Building Society in 1974. In the interim *Austral Chambers* was occupied by *Cronshaws House of Gifts*.⁴

In due course the firm acquired an additional retail building in Victoria Street, opposite *Cronshaws Store* (that is ; the former *Smith's Buildings*) and next to the *Rose Hotel*, from where the firm's businesses are now managed.

- 1972 The firm had been restructured and its land holdings were in the name of Cronshaw's Properties Pty. Ltd. to which a new title was issued (Volume 599 Folio 28A) on 17 January, in replacement of Volume 1015 Folio 142.
- 1981 Pursuant to the Public Works Act 1902-1953, on 20 February the resumption of the right of way (to which previous caveats presumably referred), at the western boundary, was registered on the land title and vested in the City of Bunbury.
- 1996 Mr. Peter Battle, who joined the firm as a young man, as an assistant, now directs the company

The use of the place has continued as that for which it was constructed; a drapery or manchester shop in the main Victoria Street ground floor. Two small specialty shops at the rear in Wellington Street have been amalgamated and extended at the rear to take up the rear yard of the site. This combined area has been further amalgamated with the main corner shop by a roofed delivery bay behind the original connecting facade. First floor-level flats above the main shop have ceased to be used for such purposes and are used as storage and work areas, albeit the deterioration of the asbestos roof and consequently of the ceilings has put limits on such uses. The frames of the glazed shop fronts have been rebuilt.⁵

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The building is the last built of the four that form the strongly defined intersection of Victoria Street (the "main" street) and Wellington Street (the axis leading from the former railway station of 1904), all of which sit at the virtual heart of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, town centre of Bunbury.

It shares with those other buildings a debt, at least in part, to the relationship with the railway station, for their dominance and prosperity. "Inter-War Functionalist" is the style-name closest of those provided by 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).

It has the cubist forms, ribbon windows and continuous horizontal emphasis of the Modern Movement works of the 1920s, by such avant garde architects as the Dutchmen, Dudok and Oud. The building is one of the most consistent examples of Inter War Functionalism in Western Australia.

⁴ *The Western Times* .5 November 1974, p.1.

⁵ Battle, Peter, personal comments to Ian Molyneux, February 1996.

It includes an asbestos cement roof, red fair-face clay brickwork walls in the utilitarian rear internal elevations, painted cement rendered walls to the street elevations, recessed balconies with projecting painted and rendered concrete balcony floors and balustrades, incised string courses in the wall planes, steel windows with horizontally proportioned panes and cantilevered concrete sun hoods, and a sheet and pressed-metal clad and lined, cantilevered street canopy, suspended by steel rods.

The first floors are ceiled with timber battened plasterboard (water damaged) and have plastered brickwork walls and timber floors. The ground floor interiors are plastered.

The building is well maintained except in the first floor flats, where the commercial use of these areas is diminished by water leakage which in turn is aggravated by a hesitation to repair the roof above because of asbestos related concerns. Conservation incentives might well be applied to assist in the management's plans to ultimately repair such areas, given the daunting combination of commercial-use land-rating and likely asbestos clean-up costs.

13. 3 REFERENCES

No key references.