



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 ^{1*}

Old York Fire Station is a good example of a Federation Free style building. A characteristic of this style was the use of contrasting colours and materials. The designer of *Old York Fire Station* has contrasted cream coloured rendered areas and stucco mouldings against dark red brickwork, resulting in a vigorous and mildly celebratory front facade. The addition of the Fire Station garage and the subsequent insertion of a door and window into the garage have been done in a sympathetic manner. The aesthetic value of *Old York Fire Station* is high. (Criterion 1.1)

Old York Fire Station contributes to the aesthetic qualities of the streetscape by complimenting the double gabled roof of the former York Motor Museum. In addition, the balustraded parapet over the porch bears an affinity to the balustraded parapets of the adjacent Westpac Challenge bank. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Old York Fire Station represents the beginning of the accelerated growth of York, due to the gold boom of the 1890s. Although the Municipal Council was formed in 1871, it was not until 1896-97 that funds were available to build a Council Chamber. It remained the Council Chambers until 1911 when the ambitious new Town Hall was completed. The place was the headquarters of the York Volunteer Fire Brigade from 1914 to 1989. (Criterion 2.2.)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Old York Fire Station is highly valued by the York community for its

^{1*} 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.

association with the York Volunteer Fire Brigade and more recently for its role as a community centre. (Criterion 4.1)

Old York Fire Station contributes to the community's sense of place in that it exemplifies the red brick Federation Free style in building, which occurred in the 1890s, along Avon Terrace. It is a reminder to the community of the growth made by the town during the gold boom. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Old York Fire Station is an early surviving example of a council office building. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Old York Fire Station is characteristic of its class, that of a Federation Free Style office. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Old York Fire Station is in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of *Old York Fire Station* is high. While the use of the building has changed, the original intention, that of offices and meeting rooms for the civic good of the town, is preserved.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The authenticity of *Old York Fire Station* is high. Apart from the insertion of a door in the front porch archway, new tiling to the foyer floor, and the provision of modern lighting and heating, the original fabric is intact.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Natasha Georgiou, History Researcher. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Old York Fire Station is a single-storey Federation Free style red brick building constructed for the York Municipal Council as Council Chambers in 1897. After the completion of the York Town Hall in 1911, the building was sold and later converted for use as a Fire Station.

York was first settled in 1831.² By 1836, the nucleus of the township was in place, consisting of army barracks and a store with outbuildings, five houses and about 50 acres of cleared land on the banks of the Avon River.³

The York Municipality was gazetted on 4 March 1871 and the first election was held on the 15 March 1871.⁴ Council Meetings were held in the Oddfellow's Hall and the Mechanic's Institute for a period of 26 years. In 1897, it was recorded by Mayor W. Dinsdale of York that:

Some twelve years ago the matter of a Town Hall was mentioned and with characteristic generosity the late J. H. Monger offered to give a block of land for the purpose. Party feelings ran high at the time...(however)...nothing definite was done. Six years ago we made it our study to endeavour to get a site and upon the representation made to the Government we obtained a grant of £520.⁵

In 1892, this grant enabled the Council to purchase Lot 3 of York Sub Lot D from the Trustees of the Wesleyan Church.⁶ In November 1896, The Town Clerk received a letter from the Under Secretary for Works, stating that the 'sum of £500 was available to be placed to the credit of the York Municipality for the purpose of erecting council chambers.'⁷ It was decided by the Mayor to erect a 'Municipal Chamber' instead of a Town Hall as he believed that a Town Hall was not needed by the Municipality at that time.⁸ A Mr. J Butterley won the tender for the erection of the new Council Chambers in Avon Terrace for £425.2.0.⁹ The foundation stone was laid by Mayor Dinsdale on 18 March 1897.¹⁰ The building was completed by July and opened by the Governor, Sir Gerard Smith, on 8 September 1897. After being shown the three-roomed Council Chambers, the Governor voiced concern that the 'importance of York should quickly outgrow the accommodation of the building. In time it was sure to become too small...'¹¹ This prophesy became a reality. In 1911, the York Town Hall was completed following several years of design and construction.

² *York Heritage Trail* HCWA, 1988, p.1.

³ Bunbury, H.W. *Early Days in Western Australia* Oxford University Press, London, 1930, p.28.

⁴ *Government Gazette* 7 March 1871, p.57.

⁵ *Eastern Districts Chronicle* 9 January 1897, p.5.

⁶ *Eastern Districts Chronicle* 11 June 1892, p. 3; Enrolment No. 1074.

⁷ *Eastern Districts Chronicle* 7 November 1896, p.4.

⁸ *ibid*, 21 November 1896, p.4.

⁹ *ibid*, 9 January 1897, p.3.

¹⁰ *ibid*, 20 March 1897, p.3.

¹¹ *ibid*, 3 July 1897, p.3; 18 September 1897, p.5.

The former Council Chambers were then sold to William Thomas Davies, a member of the Municipal Council, who in 1914 sold it to the West Australian Fire Brigades Board.¹² The building was then occupied by the York Volunteer Fire Brigade, which was led by Prunster family members who not only organised fire control but also a very successful football team.¹³ The Fire Brigade firstly erected a garage for their vehicle, which was built onto the former Mayor's office. They recessed into a horizontal rendered band the words 'Fire Station' on the front of this extension, which can be seen clearly from Avon Terrace.¹⁴ Other additions were made at the rear of the property, including a toilet block and adjoining storage area, which according to physical evidence seem to have been built in the 1930s and 1950s respectively.¹⁵

In 1989, because a new fire station had opened in York, the Fire Brigades Board sold the property to the Shire of York.¹⁶ The Shire Council then converted it to a Community Centre and it was renovated with more storage spaces and extra rooms added to the rear and a playground facility erected in the back yard. The Fire Brigade's garage door was also removed and replaced with a door and window. These renovations and additions were made possible with a grant from the Lotteries Commission of \$25,000.¹⁷

In 1993, the Shire had planned to develop and extend the present buildings so as to meet the needs of the groups that used it but as yet the proposed plans have not eventuated.¹⁸ In 1998, *Old York Fire Station* is used by the following groups: Occasional Child Care, Playgroups, Department of Community Development, Senior Citizens, and an Arts and Craft group.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Old York Fire Station is a single-storey brick building with a corrugated iron roof. It is located on the western side of Avon Terrace, between McCartney and Harvey streets. To the south of *Old York Fire Station* is the two-storey Westpac Challenge Bank. To the north is a vacant single-storey building, the former York Motor Museum. On the opposite side of Avon Terrace is a two-storey building partially occupied by Leon Baker Jewellers.

Immediately behind or west of *Old York Fire Station* on the same block of land and on the southern boundary is a small narrow building aligned east-west. It was built in two stages. The eastern smaller section, a toilet block, was built in the 1930s and the pottery studio adjacent appears to date from the 1950s. Also in the back yard, from east to west, is a shed, pergola, a barbecue area, three swings, a climbing structure and two more sheds near the back fence. Double gates in the back fence provide access to vacant land to the west.

Old York Fire Station is essentially built in a Federation Free Style, as

¹² Certificates of Title, Vol. 533 Fol. 44; Vol. 590 Fol. 118.

¹³ *York Heritage Trail* op. cit., p.9.

¹⁴ Physical Evidence by John Loreck.

¹⁵ *ibid.*; Conversation with Shirley Lutz, York Society member, 22 February 1998.

¹⁶ Certificate of Title, Vol. 1857 Fol. 766.

¹⁷ *Avon Valley Advocate* 10 July 1991, p.1.

¹⁸ *Avon Echo* May 1993, p.15.

indicated by the steep pitch of the pediment, the decorative accents, the semi-circular openings, the strong contrast between the stucco mouldings and the tuckpointed dark red brickwork, and the somewhat unexpected decorative balustraded parapet over the front porch.

The floor of the foyer consists of terracotta tiles with smaller green tiles. The pattern is authentic but the tiling dates from recent times. The flush panel front door with a translucent fixed glass window over appears also to have been inserted in recent times. The flush plasterboard ceiling is recent.

By turning right or north through a four panelled door, one enters a meeting room, which was probably originally the Mayor's office. The timber floor is carpeted, the walls plastered and the four metre high original lathe and plaster ceiling while lacking cornices, does have a small decorative rose. Centrally located in the east or front wall are a pair of windows with semi-circular heads. At each window, a transom is located at the springing point separating the sliding sash window below from the fixed stained glass window above. The stained glass is arranged in a grid of squares, with each square being a different colour from its neighbour, and being red, yellow or blue. Opposite the windows on the western wall is a fireplace with a semi-circular arch and an original mantelpiece supported by scrolled brackets. North of the fireplace is a doorway which has been converted to a shelf in recent times but originally led to what was the council chamber beyond, and is now the community centre hall.

In the north wall there is a four panelled door leading to what is now an office. The office was originally the garage for the York Volunteer Fire Brigade, judging by the concrete floor which falls towards Avon Terrace. File photographs show a roller shutter where a front door and window are now and a vertical crack in the brickwork on the outside of the building, between the meeting room and the office, indicates that the room is an extension.

The doorway and window both have semi circular heads. Externally, on the front facade, the words 'FIRE STATION' are recessed into a horizontal rendered band that is located over the door and window. The window has sliding sashes similar to the meeting room windows, with a fixed clear semi-circular pane over. The flush panel door adjacent also has a fixed pane over. In the west wall is a sliding sash window. A ledged and braced door in the south wall appears to have originally provided egress from the council chamber beyond. In the west wall is a sliding sash window, however the glazing to the bottom sash has been replaced by masonite. The plasterboard ceiling to the offices rakes from a height of about 3.3 metres on the south wall to about 2.7 metres on the north wall.

The original council chambers, now the community centre hall, are entered from the foyer through a pair of glazed doors which have the monograph of the York Volunteer Fire Brigade painted on the back.

The floor in the hall consists of 100mm wide tongue in groove timber. The walls are plastered, with a caneite notice board to the southern wall. The ceiling curves in section to all four sides, commencing from a springing height of about 4.5m up to a central flat ceiling plane about six metres high. The ceiling consists of timber boards 180mm high.

Suspended from the central ceiling are three fluorescent light fittings and four electric heaters. Four iron tie rods approximately 20m in diameter run at window head height to all four walls. A centrally located rod runs north-south at cornice height, where at mid span it is tied with another rod running vertically into the roof structure beyond the ceiling.

The kitchen has a lino floor on 150mm wide tongue in groove timber boards. The walls are plastered. In the east wall is a window, on the other side of which is the office. The sill falls to the kitchen side, indicating that the kitchen was built later. The windows to the north are louvred. The ceiling is fibrous cement, with a bare light bulb. A Metters Improved Stove No 2 is in the north-west corner.

The verandah at the rear of the place has been enclosed at the sides to form two rooms. The southern room, which appears to have been formed first, was probably originally a store, but has been fitted out as a baby change room in recent times. It has a small casement window in a wall that is lined internally with compressed cement sheets and externally with corrugated iron. The floor is concrete and the raking ceiling, is plasterboard. The northern room is used as a store and clad in corrugated iron. Internally it has a concrete slab and fibrous cement internal linings.

13.3 REFERENCES

No key references.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
