HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 6.1 Forming Associations, libraries and institutes for self-education.
- 7.7.1 Providing for the Common Defence
- 7.7.3 Going to War

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 402 Education and Science
- 501 Outside Influences - World Wars and Other Wars

11. 1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Drill Hall, Leederville is a good example of the Federation Free Classical style of public building constructed in the early years of the development of North Perth and Leederville. (Criterion 1.1)

Drill Hall, Leederville is a landmark at the intersection of two important roads and marks the western edge of the Leederville Town Centre along Vincent Street. (Criterion 1.3)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

The evolution of the *Drill Hall, Leederville* site provides an understanding of the changing nature of the Department of Defence training sites over a period of more than eight decades. (Criterion 2.1)

Drill Hall, Leederville was adapted from a 1909 Mechanics' Institute in 1913 and demonstrates the manner in which the emerging defence training needs of the country had to be satisfied in parts of metropolitan Perth at that time. (Criterion 2.2)

Drill Hall, Leederville was one of numerous drill halls that were established in metropolitan Perth during the pre and early years of World War One. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Drill Hall, Leederville contributed to the local community's sense of place; firstly, with the establishment of a Mechanics' Institute for the edification of young men and, secondly, as a focus for the defence training needs of the locality during a time of international war. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Drill Hall, Leederville is a rare example of an extant non purpose-built drill hall from the first decade of the twentieth century in metropolitan Perth. (Criterion 5.1)

Drill Hall, Leederville is one of only two surviving examples in metropolitan Perth of a Mechanics' Institute building converted for the purposes of a drill hall. The other example is Drill Hall, Bayswater. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Drill Hall, Leederville demonstrates the characteristics of metropolitan defence training complexes. Metropolitan training complexes played an important role in the defence infrastructure of Western Australia from the early 1900s to the post-World War Two era. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Drill Hall, Leederville is in a sound structural condition and has been consistently maintained. Apart from the adaptations listed in the Physical Evidence, *Drill Hall, Leederville* retains a high level of authentic fabric in sound condition.

The Department of Defence has carried out a program of maintenance throughout the life of the buildings.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Drill Hall, Leederville demonstrates a low to moderate degree of integrity. It is no longer used as either a Mechanics' Institute or a Drill Hall, but there have been few internal changes.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Drill Hall, Leederville has a high to moderate degree of authenticity. The painted facade to Vincent Street and the inappropriate decorative finishes to the front rooms are capable of remediation. The hall retains a high degree of authenticity retaining most original elements, apart from the changes to its western wall and the post World War Two additions along the western side of the building.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The initial documentary evidence was compiled by Michelle McKeough and Timothy Morrison, Historians and Researchers, and Ian Hocking, Architect. Additional documentary evidence has been complied by Lucy Williams, Historian and Heritage Consultant. The physical evidence has been compiled by Ian Hocking, Architect.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Drill Hal, Leederville is a single storey hall and associated offices and rooms, constructed in brick and galvanised iron. It is located on a lot at the corner of Vincent and Stamford Streets, which forms part of a larger Department of Defence holding.

Some of the earliest settlement beyond the immediate boundaries of Perth town was in the Leederville area. By 1833, the large lake, known by

Aborigines as Kei-er-mu-la, had become known as Monger's Lake, named after a local landowner.[1] As the process of suburbanisation gained momentum, agriculture and horticulture associated with wetlands moved further outwards from the settled areas. Residential development progressed from the 1880s onwards, particularly following the establishment of the railway.

The Gold Boom of the 1890s increased the demand for cheap housing close to the city. As living accommodation in the centre of Perth became over-burdened, suburban land subdivisions took place, initially spreading along the railway, with land quickly being covered by streets of small single-storey detached houses on narrow fronted blocks. There was also a corresponding growth in the number of inner suburban hotels.

In 1890, the Monger Estate was subdivided. The following year, the Leeder Estate, home of the Leeder family, the first European settlers in the area, was sold to developers and 'Leederville's gentle elevation made it a popular choice among members of the city's growing middle class'.[2] While Leederville was a popular suburb, Lake Monger being its central attraction, 'the suburb never lived up to the rosy future forecast'.[3] Leederville developed as a closely settled residential area, with many modest weatherboard dwellings on small allotments.

By early 1895, Leederville residents were anxious to address the needs of their expanding community, in particular the lack of roads and sanitary service. The locality was duly declared a road district in April 1895 and in May the Leederville Road District was gazetted.[4] Reflecting this progression, there was a corresponding development of community organisations, services and facilities throughout the area. While private capital started many services, it was soon apparent that new Perth municipalities, such as Leederville and North Perth, were not equal to the task of providing and managing large-scale capital works of the kind needed to provide gas, electricity, water, tramways and deep drainage.[5]

The 'Greater Perth Movement', which aimed for a uniform rather than a de-centralised approach to suburban growth, eventually resulted in the municipal union of North Perth and Leederville in December 1914. Leederville was then largely regarded as being a model garden suburb, with Monger's Lake thought of as the centrepiece of the suburb, but it was not until after the immediate years of the Depression (1929-32) that further growth in community facilities occurred to match the residential population.

Little information has been determined about the formation of the Mechanics' Institute at Leederville. The Institute may have been established around 1905 but was not active until 1909.[6] The increased activity of the association may have been a result of the £500 grant received from the State Government for

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1 Nicholls, D 'A Community History of Leederville', in *Western Ancestor*, Vol 1. No.4 December 1979.

2 Cooper op.cit. Chapter 5, Part 4

3 Harrold, R. "Leederville- A Study in Land Use and Demographic Change in an Inner Residential Area of Perth", in *Economic Activity, in WA*, Vol 8, April 1965. p.31

4 *The Western Mail* 16/2/1895; 18/5/1895

5 Webb, M 'Urban expansion, town improvements and the beginning of town planning in metropolitan Perth, 1899-1914' in Gentilli, J ed *Western Landscapes*, UWA Press, 1979. p.370.

6 The Leederville Mechanics' Institute is listed in the 1905 Statistical Register but not the 1904, 1906, 1907 or 1908 registers. *Blue Book*, 1904-1909, Part X: Education.

the 1908-09 financial year.[7] The State Government provided some assistance to Mechanics' Institutes for the cost of buildings.[8]

Mechanics' Institutes originated in Scotland in the early 1800s to provide instruction for tradesmen (mechanics) with the objective of 'improving the working classes'. In practice, they were usually organised and administered by the 'gentry'. The Institutes were very popular and evidence of how quickly they spread is demonstrated by the six hundred Institutes that were operating throughout England by the 1850s.[9]

Mechanics' Institutes, sometimes referred to as 'schools of art' or 'literary institutes', were established in most parts of Australia. The Mechanics' Institutes were effectively the first libraries in the colonies, in addition to hosting a range of cultural activities.[10] The first Mechanics' Institute in Perth was established in 1842 on an informal basis. The first formal meeting of the Swan River Mechanics' Institute occurred in 1851.[11]

Mechanics' Institutes were established at Fremantle (1851) and Albany (1852). The number of institutes continued to grow steadily and by 1889 there were 19 institutes around the State. Twenty-two institutes were established in the 1890s, throughout various areas of the State, a result of the population explosion arising from the goldrushes. Despite the establishment of the public library in Perth in the late 1890s, the number of institutes continued to grow into the twentieth century with 19 being established between the years 1900 and 1905.[12] By 1905, there were 71 institutes in Western Australia. The number of institutes had swelled to 90 in 1910 but by 1914 had dropped slightly to 81.[13]

Other Institutes to follow Perth, Fremantle and Albany included York (1861), Busselton (1861), Guildford (1862), Geraldton (1863), Northam (1864), Bunbury (1867), Katanning (1894), Kalgoorlie (1895), East Fremantle (1902),[14] Midland Junction (1904), Leederville (1909), Subiaco (1909)[15] and Onslow (1912).[16]

> The establishment of Mechanics' Institutes has followed in the wake of the development of Western Australia, and every locality worth the name of town includes such an institute amongst its public buildings. As indicative of the literary tastes of the population, and the evident desire manifested to acquire knowledge of a useful and scientific character, it is satisfactoy [sic] to note that in nearly all cases

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7 *Blue Book*, 1909, Part X: Education.

8 Thiel, P.W.H. & Co., *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, (1902), Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 2000, p. 99.

9 Gray, Laura and O'Mara, Gillian, 'Register Assessment for Mechanics' Institute, Guildford', Heritage Council Register, p. 3.

10 Rose, P., Birman, W. and White, M., 'Respectable and Useful: The Institute Movement in Western Australia', in Candy, P.C. (ed.), *Pioneering Culture: Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia*, Adelaide, Auslib Press, 1994, p. 126.

11 ibid., p. 127.

12 Ibid., p. 139. There were 71 institutes by 1905. Of these 71, dates of establishment were not determined for 11 institutes.

13 *Blue Books*, 1950-1914, Part X: Education.

14 Heritage Council (W.A) files: P 0788 and P0789 'East Fremantle Town Hall

15 K. Spillman *Identity Prized: A History of Subiaco* (UWA Press, 1985) p 122. Spillman quotes the Mayor of Subiaco's annual report for 1909 as follows "…the Council have already decided to devote the old Council Chamber and Mayor's parlour to the purposes of a Mechanic's Institute. The institution will be furnished with books, magazines and newspapers free to the public, besides which a lending library will be maintained". Whether this Mechanics' Institute actually developed or not would take further research.

16 *Pioneering Culture…* pp 139-146

> the institutes are in a flourishing and healthy condition. This is all the more gratifying when it is borne in mind that the Government has not been too lavish in its assistance to these bodies, principally confining its aid to the small grant towards the cost of the building, and a trifling annual subsidy to each institute in connection with the up-keep thereof.[17]

The Mechanics' Institutes in Perth and Fremantle were prototypes for the suburban institutes that followed. The Institutes were intended 'to benefit the mechanics and young men of the colony, affording them an unobjectionable mode of recreation and improvement', in an attempt to improve the 'moral and intellectual character of the operative classes'.[18] They were predominantly supported by the local upper class as attempts to 'preserve the social distinctions so necessary for the achievements of internal peace'.[19] The Institutes were intended to keep the lower classes away from unseemly leisure activities such as drinking and gaming, and to provide access to the kind of learning considered respectable by the upper and middle classes. The Institutes attempted to raise the standards of the less genteel members of the community, as the genteel could not easily remove themselves in a small and insular new settlement.

The success of individual institutions depended on the extent to which the programs interested the members. The Swan River Mechanics' Institute operated as a 'gentlemen's' club' and failed to appeal to the working classes. It transformed itself into the 'Perth Literary Institute' in 1909. It continued to act as a library and provide lectures until 1957 when the Perth City Council absorbed the Institutes' collection. Likewise, in 1886 the Fremantle Mechanics' Institute became known as the 'Fremantle Literary Institute'. In 1948, the Fremantle City Council absorbed the resources and liabilities of the Institute and soon after joined the Library Service of Western Australia.

In addition to Mechanics' Institutes, there were similar associations such as Miners' Institutes, Working Men's Associations and Railways Institutes. Facilities such as agricultural halls were also used as centres of learning in some country areas.[20]

It has not been determined when plans were first proposed for the construction of a Mechanics' Institute in Leederville; however Edgar J Henderson was preparing plans for the building in May 1908.[21]

Henderson was an architect originally from Melbourne. He arrived in Perth in 1896, one of many architects at the time who made the trip west in search of work.[22] Victoria was experiencing an economic downturn and the economic prosperity and increase in population arising from the goldrushes provided an incentive for many architects to move to Western Australia.[23] Henderson established offices in the Exchange Club Buildings, the corner of Barrack Street and St George's Terrace, Perth and also in Cliff Street, Fremantle. He was a fellow of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects and

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17 Thiel, P.W.H. & Co., *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, (1902), Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 2000, p. 99.

18 Ibid, p 128

19 Stannage, C.T *The People of Perth: A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City*. Perth City Council (1979) p 76

20 Ibid., pp. 147-149.

21 *Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, 16 May 1908, p. 20.

22 *West Australian*, 5 May 1896, p. 5.

23 Pitt Morison, Margaret, 'Immigrant Architects in Western Australia, 1885-1905', c.1982, Battye Library, PR 13589; and Kelly, Ian, 'A Tale of Two Cities: The Impact of Victorian Immigrants on the Architecture of Perth (1895-1905)', *Fabrications*, 7 August 1996, pp. 51-75.

also an honorary member of the South Australian Institute.[24] By 1908 he was on the Council of the WA Institute of Architects.[25]

Tenders for the Leederville Mechanics' Institute were called on 13 June 1908 and it was anticipated that the first portion of the building would cost in the vicinity of £1,000.[26] While details of the tender acceptance do not appear to be included in the *Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, S.B. Alexander submitted the lowest tender.[27]

The tender was awarded to Franklin and Finlay on the 23 Nov 1908.[28] It is possible that the delay in awarding the tender was due to the need to raise half the tender price through donations, as the government had funded half of the cost. The choice of contractor may have been influenced by this process.

The Leederville Mechanics' Institute hall and rooms were constructed to 'Plans of Proposed Hall and Rooms for the Trustees of the Leederville Mechanics Institute', approved by the Leederville Municipal Council on 18 July 1908 [29]. The plans do not appear to carry the name/s of the designer. The plans accord in all basic respects with the extant fabric and can be taken to show what was originally constructed, apart from the adaptations listed below.

The building presented a tall single storey parapeted and pedimented facade to Vincent Street. The facade consisted of a central entry bay and flanking bays. The bays were articulated by rendered pilasters. The two central pilasters were capped by a triangular pediment containing the name Leederville, which is still extant. The two side pilasters and the peak of the pediment were intended to be capped with urns. No urns currently exist. The facade was constructed of face brickwork, laid in stretcher bond with irregular keying to the brickwork behind. The brickwork was articulated by rendered sill and headbands. The latter followed the arch head of the windows and the lunette fanlight above the double leaf front doors, which varies from the plans. At ceiling height and roof level the facade was enlivened with projecting profiled stringcourses. Between the upper stringcourse and the pediment a rectangular rendered panel carried the words 'Mechanics Institute'.

The east and west facades were constructed in stretcher bond brickwork with irregular keying to the brickwork behind. The drawings indicate solid brickwork, whilst the stretcher bond indicates the possibility of cavity wall construction. All openings to the side elevations were double hung timber windows or double leaf entry/exit framed and ledged timber doors. The north facade had return brick piers for stability, but the greater part of the

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24 *West Australian*, 5 May 1896, p. 5.

25 *Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, regular advertisements for the Institute of Architects are included in this journal. This journal would also reveal projects that Henderson worked on.

26 *Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, 23 May 1908, p. 20 and 13 June 1908, p. 22. The *Blue Book* for 1909 suggests that the cost of the building was £1,194. An additional £152 was spent on furniture.

27 *Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, 20 June 1908, p. 20. All journals between June 1908 and January 1909 were examined.

28 Signatures on *Plan of Proposed Hall and Rooms for the Trustees. Leederville Mechanics Institute*, dated 23.11.1908.

29 Copy of plans for the Leederville Mechanics Institute, held at the National Australian Archives, as part of file: Series Number K273, Barcode 857218, Title - Leederville Drill Hall Site - Army.

wall was temporary, being timber framed and lined to allow for future expansion. The original toilets were located against the north boundary.

Internally the building was almost symmetrical in its organisation with a 10'0" wide entry hall off which opened four rooms, or 3 rooms and a store. Each room was 20'0" deep but of varying widths. The two rooms on the eastern side had back to back fireplaces. The large front room on the western side had a corner fireplace. The rooms were constructed with ceilings 12'6" above suspended timber floors. The entry hall opened directly into the large hall, which was 6 bays, or 75'0" in length. At its northern end was a raised timber platform with a dressing room to either side, which occupied a full bay depth. Five of the six bays were marked by double hung windows, the sixth bay contained double leaf exit doors. All openings in both walls were directly opposite. The hall had a timber floor, face brick or painted brick walls and a tongue and grooved timber boarded ceiling, which followed the rake of the lower truss legs and the horizontal tie rod. A steel tensioning rod formed the bottom chord of the truss at springing height, of 15'0".

Apart from the external toilets no external works were documented for the Mechanics' Institute.

The foundation stone in the lower east corner of the Vincent Street façade was laid by John Veryard Esq JP on the 8th December 1908, and showed FJ Fowler, JB Fraser and GH Reece as Trustees, and AV Gurner as Hon Sec.

The former Leederville Mechanics' Institute (1909) was located in the south west corner of the now L shaped Department of Defence site, which occupies two lots having an area of 5,638 sq m, at the intersection of Vincent Street (formerly Redan Street) and Stamford Street (formerly Frogmore Gardens). The original holding on which the former Mechanics' Institute was constructed was quite small and it is possible that the site, between the town centre and Lake Monger, was seen as a first stage development.

The Mechanics' Institute building was completed during 1909. It was constructed of brick, with trussed roof and timber lined ceiling over the hall, and skillion roof construction, above patterned metal ceilings, over the three offices, store and central hall facing the street. The hall was a substantial space 75'0" long x 35'0" wide, with a stage and two dressing rooms at its north end. The offices, hall and store were contained in a block 50'0" wide x 30'0" deep, built to the Redan Street building line. Interior spaces were simple but well crafted. Externally the building had a tall stylish façade to Redan Street in a rendered Federation Free Classical style. Behind this façade the external construction was straightforward brick construction, in stretcher bond, with galvanised iron roofs

No information has been found about the operations of the Leederville Mechanics' Institute although presumably it was similar to other Mechanics' Institutes of the time. In 1910 and 1911, the Honorary Secretary was Frank Hazeldine and in 1912 the Honorary Secretary was Thomas L Martin.[30]

The Mechanics' Institute operated from the premises for only a short time. The Commonwealth acquired the place in 1912-1913 for use as a Drill Hall. The place was jointly used by the Mechanics' Institute and the Commonwealth Military Forces in 1913, but no references to a Mechanics'

30 *Post Office Directories*, 1910-1912.

Institute in Leederville exist after this date.[31] The initial area officers for the Military Forces were Lieutenant PG Edwards (1912 and 1913) and Lieutenant ETH Knight (1915).[32]

The subsequent roles taken on by other Mechanics' Institutes was provided in Leederville by facilities such as the Leederville Technical College.

The establishment of a Drill Hall in Leederville was part of a Commonwealth program, prior to World War One, to establish a network of Drill Halls throughout the state and within the metropolitan area.[33]

At the end of the nineteenth century, there were several drill halls in the state. These existed in Perth (Francis Street, 1896), Fremantle (Holdsworth and Queen Streets, 1896), Geraldton (Cathedral and Lester Avenues, c.1880s / 1890s) and, possibly, Albany (Spencer Street, c.1890s).[34] At this time, defence was organised by volunteer corps. A growing concern for defence arising from world events led to an increase in volunteer memberships. The establishment of drill halls around the state reflects the interest in having organised defence forces.[35]

The drill halls were used predominantly to provide training facilities but were also used for various social activities. For example, the Perth and Fremantle Drill Halls were used for balls and also provided facilities for 'reading and indoor pastimes'.[36]

With the advent of Federation in 1901, defence became a Commonwealth Government responsibility. Existing defence facilities, such as drill halls, were gradually transferred to the Commonwealth Government.[37]

In 1911, compulsory universal military training was introduced throughout Australia. Additional facilities were required to provide accommodation for military training. The Commonwealth Government commenced a program of acquiring, leasing or constructing drill halls. By 1919, the Commonwealth Government owned thirteen drill halls in the metropolitan area and nine in the country, in Western Australia. In addition, there were at least another eight leased drill halls in country areas.[38]

During World War One the drill halls were used to recruit and train military personnel. The need for drill halls decreased after the war and by 1929 compulsory training was suspended. Drill halls were again heavily used

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31 *Post Office Directories*, 1913-1915. The last mention of the Leederville Mechanics' Institute in the *Blue Books* appears in 1912. It is not mentioned in the 1913 report and from 1914, individual Mechanics' Institutes are not listed.

32 *Post Office Directories,* 1913-1915.

33 Ibid

34 Peet, Lindsay, 'Our Disappearing Defence Heritage', *Trust News: The National Trust of Australia (WA)*, vol. 208, September 2000, p. 17. It is also likely that other drill halls operated from existing facilities such as halls in country areas. Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Conservation Plan: Artillery Drill Hall, Holdsworth Street, Fremantle, WA', prepared for the Building Management Authority, May 1994, p. 32.

35 Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Conservation Plan: Artillery Drill Hall, Holdsworth Street, Fremantle, WA', prepared for the Building Management Authority, May 1994, p. 22.

36 Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Conservation Plan: Artillery Drill Hall, Holdsworth Street, Fremantle, WA', prepared for the Building Management Authority, May 1994, p. 32.

37 Peet, Lindsay, 'Our Disappearing Defence Heritage', *Trust News: The National Trust of Australia (WA)*, vol. 208, September 2000, p. 17.

38 Peet, Lindsay, 'Our Disappearing Defence Heritage', *Trust News: The National Trust of Australia (WA)*, vol. 208, September 2000, p. 17.

during World War Two, mostly for recruiting and training.[39] Drill halls underwent another revival from 1951 when compulsory national service was introduced.[40]

In October 1912, the Department of Defence recommended that the Leederville Mechanics' Institute building be bought for the purpose of use as Drill Hall. Some of the metropolitan halls used in World War One were bought with the intention of using the existing buildings as drill halls.[41] The Minister of Defence approved the purchase of the Institute building for the price of £1,600. The land was acquired officially by the Commonwealth on the 23rd January 1913 under the Lands Acquisition Act of 1906.

The site was acquired in two stages (23.01.1913 & 31.05.1915). The first acquisition was the smaller lot adjacent to the intersection, on which the Institute was located.[42]

In this case the Drill Hall was 'ready made', by purchase and conversion of the existing Mechanics' Institute. This building consisted of a large single space, approached through an entry annexe of hallway, opening to Vincent Street, and four offices. Post World War Two the Drill Hall was modified by the addition of a rank of offices along the western side of the hall and an extension to the annexe.

In 1915, the block adjoining the Drill Hall site was acquired for defence purposes by the Commonwealth. The Certificate of Title is dated 31 May 1915. On the land at the time of acquisition was a weatherboard and jarrah cottage and shed, and the owner is recorded as J.M Drummond.[43] This block then became the parade ground site.

The acquisition procedure, documented above, is consistent with the Defence Department's acquisitions of properties suitable for defence training needs prior to World War One. Five other properties were purchased in the Perth metropolitan area in the period 1910-1915. The National Australian Archives hold files or plans on the drill halls at Highgate, East Perth, Claremont, Midland Junction, Bayswater, Victoria Park and Subiaco, which were established in this period.[44]

In 1922/23, the cottage and shed on the parade ground site were removed.[45] In 1941, three store huts were erected with padlocks and secure measures to windows.[46] In July 1960, repairs to hardstanding areas were undertaken and

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39 Peet, Lindsay, 'Our Disappearing Defence Heritage', *Trust News: The National Trust of Australia (WA)*, vol. 208, September 2000, p. 17.

40 Peet, Lindsay, 'Our Disappearing Defence Heritage', *Trust News: The National Trust of Australia (WA)*, vol. 208, September 2000, p. 18.

41 Claremont and Leederville Drill Halls are examples of selecting suitable existing buildings for the projected use as Drill Halls.

42 National Australian Archives, Perth, *Title: Leederville Drill Hall Site-Army, Series Number K273, Barcode 857218.*

43 National Australian Archives (NAA): K273 Leederville Drill Hall Site - Army, Item No. 1912/6

44 National Australian Archives, Perth Files,
Title: Highgate-Army-Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857243.
Title: Claremont-Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857217.
Title: Midland Junction-Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857545.
Title: Bayswater-Army-Extensions to Army Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857227.
Title: Victoria Park-Army-Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857229.
Title: Subiaco-Drill Hall Site-Army; Series Number K273, Barcode 857236.

45 NAA: K273 Item No. 1912/6 Memorandum to the Secretary of Department of Defence 18 Jan. 1923

46 NAA: K1/41/1 Leederville Drill Hall, Item No. M 1940/41/452

in August of that year the parade ground was resealed and sewerage repaired.[47]

Unfortunately, between the years 1922 and 1960, very little documentary evidence has been located to reveal alterations, additions and general activities on the drill hall and parade ground sites, apart from those described above.[48] However, a 1953 block plan exists which shows the existing buildings and structures on the sites at that time.[49] From 1960-1961, alterations were made to 'Building 3', which appears to be one of the barracks buildings along the Vincent Street frontage, by Mr JA Kaptein.[50] The Drill Hall site and parade ground was at this time referred to as the 'Western Command Signal Squadron Depot'.[51] In 1968, a building in the north-east corner of the parade ground was referred to as 'Building 143' and was converted for use as 'Q' building, with timber framed masonite partitioning, sliding door, security grills to windows and repainting throughout.[52] Building 143 is not shown in the 1953 block plan so, therefore, must have been built between 1953 and 1968. (According to block plan M 1960/61/47, the 'Q' office in 1953 is located in the drill hall itself). At the time of the conversion of 'Building 143' in 1968, the site's interior road was extended.[53]

It is worthy of note that the location of the Mechanics' Institute hall and rooms would have occupied the western half of the Mechanics' Institute site leaving the eastern half of the site available for parade ground purposes if required, until the neighbouring property was purchased in 1915.[54] The records refer to the parade ground being located on the second site acquired. The date at which the location and extent of the present parade ground has not been established, however, the 1953 site plan indicates the parade ground established in its current location at that date.

Over the course of the past 87 years as a defense establishment, alterations have been made to the original building, additional structures have been erected and external works undertaken. Many of the structures are temporary or transportable in nature, as shown in the accompanying site plan and photographic survey.

These other structures on the site have been added subsequently to the establishment of the Drill Hall. Apart from the Drill Hall no other structure on the site dates from pre World War One and most, if not all, of these structures appear to date from World War Two, and later, in their establishment on the site.

Between 1912-1913 and the late 1970s, the place was in continual use by the army. The former Mechanics' Institute building was taken over by the RAAF c.1979 for use as an Air Training Corps. Army records show the following occupants of the place, which is not a comprehensive list but indicative of its use during the time of military ownership:

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47 NAA: PP 280/1/0 Army Leederville - Repairs to Hardstandings Item No. 1960/61/28

48 Although the researchers have gone to some lengths to find all possible material, this has not been by any means an exhaustive search, and further research could reveal more plans and archival material on the Leederville Drill Hall site. Post 1968 Defence Department documentation is exempt from public access under the Archives Act, 1983.

49 NAA PP280/1/0 Leederville Training Depot, Item No. M 1960/61/47

50 NAA: PP 280/1/0 Leederville Training Depot, Item No. M 60/61-047

51 NAA: K273/13 Leederville-Air, Item No. 76/218

52 NAA K283/1 Works Project Leederville, Item No. W 13/3

53 NAA K283/1 Works Project Leederville, Item No. W 13/3

54 National Australian Archives, Perth, *Title: Leederville Drill Hall Site-Army, Series Number K273, Barcode 857218,* Certificate of Title dated 31.05.1915.

- from 1931, place used by 10th Light Horse;
- from 1940, place was used by militia (this is a very general term and could be 10th Light Horse or some other standard battalion);
- from 1941, place was used by Western Command Signals;
- from June 1946, place was used by WA Lines of Communication, (possibly state depot but abbreviation not determined);
- from 1952, placed used by Western Command units;
- place was used by 123 Signal Squadron until 1974, i.e., air force;
- place used by 109 Signals Squadron until 15 November 1974;
- place used as Air Training Corps from 17 February 1978.[55]

The place was listed in the Town of Vincent's Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places on 27 November 1995.[56] In the late 1990s, the Commonwealth Government identified that the place was surplus to requirements, and it was put up for public tender c.2000.[57]

In August 2001, *Drill Hall, Leederville* is vacant, awaiting a approval for a development application.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The former Department of Defence property occupies an "L" shaped site on the northern side of Vincent Street (formerly Redan Street) stretching east from Stamford Street (formerly Frogmore Gardens). The property is made up of two sites, which remain unamalgamated.

The Drill Hall is located on the western half of the smaller site which fronted Vincent Street and Frogmore Gardens (now Stamford Street), which the Mechanics' Institute formerly owned.

A larger site, having a depth of 500 links (100m), has a 40m frontage to Vincent Street. The interior of this deep site is served by an access way in about the same position as the present entry gates and driveway through the site, shown on the original title document, accompanying this report.

There are 15 structures on the site:

1 The Drill Hall, converted from the original Mechanics' Institute.

2 Toilet block similar to many other post World War Two structures of this type, to the north and north east of the Drill Hall.

3 Containerised aluminium transportable with verandah north of the Parade Ground. It replaces an earlier building in this location.

4 A permanent galvanised iron shed at the corner of the Parade Ground and driveway, similar to many other post-World War Two structures of this type.

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55 Information cited from Army Museum of Western Australia, 'Military Sites Project (draft)', information accessed February 2001. This requires further research.

56 Heritage Council's Register, #8764.

57 Peet, Lindsay, 'Our Disappearing Defence Heritage', *Trust News: The National Trust of Australia (WA)*, vol. 208, September 2000, p. 18.

5 A containerised aluminium transportable west of the driveway, of comparatively recent origin. It replaces an earlier building in this location.

6 Utilitarian galvanised iron garage, west of the driveway, similar to many other post World War Two structures of this type.

7 Utilitarian shed, west of the driveway, constructed of lime silica bricks, which were a product of the pre-Mineral Boom building material shortage.

8 Post-World War Two transportable timber and asbestos barracks which is similar to other structures of this type, situated parallel to the north boundary and relocated to this site and this location in the pre Mineral or Mineral Boom period. It replaces a wireless mast formerly located near this location.

9 A transportable timber clad barracks located parallel to the eastern boundary which, whilst differing from the other form of transportables on the site, is also of comparatively recent origin.

10 A containerised aluminium clad transportable located parallel to the east boundary, of comparatively recent origin and the third example of this type of transportable on this site.

11 An aluminium clad transportable garage structure located east of building 12 adjacent to the east boundary.

12 A permanent steel portal framed garage located east of the driveway, of comparatively standard construction, similar to many other structures of this type. It replaces an earlier building in this location.

13 A timber clad transportable barrack of the same type as Building 9 located east of the driveway and south of Building 12. It replaces a miniature rifle range formerly on this location.

14 Older model transportable galvanised iron barracks, with added verandah, located east of the driveway and parallel to the Vincent Street frontage. Detailing of the barracks indicates it to be of World War Two or Post World War Two origin. Internally it has been considerably adapted.

15 A transportable galvanised iron barracks, with added verandah, located west of the driveway and parallel to the Vincent Street frontage.

Siting

The current relationship of the buildings is shown on the attached site plan and photographs.

The Drill Hall provided the front door for pedestrians to the complex, as it was located on the Vincent Street frontage, at its western end. The other principal organising elements of the site plan are:

a) the Vincent Street frontage with its vehicular access restricted to midblock;

b) the Parade Ground located on the eastern side of the Drill Hall; and

c) the north-south driveway leading from the Vincent Street gateway to the northern retaining wall and fence.

Most of the buildings / structures are directly related to these elements, apart from the three barracks buildings located in the northeastern corner around the largest green space on the site.

Chronological Order of Development

The age of the buildings has been determined partly from documentation and partly by visual inspection and does not necessarily reflect when these were located on the site. The periods of the development of the existing buildings is considered to be as follows:

1909 Building 1, Drill Hall (former Mechanics' Institute) constructed;

World War Two and Post World War Two (1940-1953)

Building 1, Extensions to the west side of the Drill Hall;

Toilets, Buildings 2A and 2B, to the north of the Drill Hall;

Buildings 4, 6, 7, 9, 14 and 15.

Pre Mineral Boom Period (1954-1969)

Building 8

Mineral Boom Period (1975-1990)

Buildings 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

Description of Development

Building 1

The extant fabric is largely as described in the Documentary Evidence apart from the following adaptations:

- The front (Vincent Street) facade has been painted over the face brickwork. The Mechanics' Institute name has been covered with a painted metal sign for "Western Australian Squadron, Air Training Corps, arrayed around a coat of arms, the urns have been removed from the parapet and pediment.
- The entry hall retains most of its original elements apart from the changes to the dividing wall to the hall, and replacement architraves to internal doors.
- The two rooms at the southeast corner have been considerably adapted for mess purposes. The fireplaces have been stripped back and the surrounds reconstructed in the front room, doorways cut on both sides of the shared fireplace, decorative finishes inappropriate to the original character have been applied to all surfaces. Some original joinery and pressed metal ceiling remains intact.
- The two rooms to the west of the entry hall could not be viewed as these were locked for security purposes. It is understood that superficial changes have been made to the larger front room, whilst the small room has been extended and functions as a store.
- Along the Stamford Street side of the Drill Hall the small room of the western side has been extended into the setback space and a rank of offices has been constructed along the western side of the hall. The original double hung windows along the western side of the hall have been removed and the openings blocked in. Double doors have been cut through the former external western wall and the former double

doors have been removed to permit ease of access to a passage, which provides an exit to Stamford Street and enquiry spaces for the offices. These changes date from the post World War Two period.

- The stage and dressing rooms have been removed from the rear wall. The temporary wall has been internally braced by two timber trusses spanning between floor and ceiling. The doorway through the north wall has been replaced by a double hung window. These changes appear to date from the Inter War period.
- Two areas have been partitioned off at the southern end of the hall to door head height.
- In most respects the hall retains its original elements and character, including finishes, windows and doors to the eastern wall, ventilator details, ceiling roses.
- The original toilets have been replaced by two ranks of external toilets constructed post World War Two.
- The east facade remains extant with only a replacement door leading to the mess area and the removal of the original washhouse abutting the north east corner.

The Drill Hall is a fine example of a Mechanics' Institute of its day, which was readily adapted to its changed use as a Drill Hall. It is also a competent example of the Federation Free Classical style[58], which was used extensively in the Gold Boom period of development for public buildings in Perth. The building has a quite high degree of intactness and is in good condition. It remains a prominent building in an area that has undergone extensive change, particularly related to the planning and construction of the Mitchell Freeway.

Buildings 2-15 are of low significance. The site and its buildings, however, should be archivally recorded as an example of a metropolitan drill hall complex within Perth, which survived beyond the twentieth century.

13.3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Defence Department utilised a number of methods to achieve the establishment of drill halls. It constructed drill halls of weatherboards on timber frames to standard designs where it acquired 'green field' sites. Midland Junction (1910), Victoria Park (1913) and Subiaco (1916) are examples of this kind of construction in the metropolitan area. The National Australian Archives hold plans for these three places, but only the Victoria Park Drill Hall is still extant.[59] Swan Barracks and Fremantle are examples of prefabricated Defence Department buildings.

Where it acquired existing properties the Defence Department sought to purchase places which required little adaptation. Leederville and Bayswater are the only metropolitan examples identified that fit this model. Bayswater

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58 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)

59 National Australian Archives, Perth Files: *Title: Midland Junction-Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857545.*
National Australian Archives, Perth Files: *Title: Victoria Park-Army-Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857229..*
National Australian Archives, Perth Files: *Title: Subiaco-Drill Hall Site-Army; Series Number K273, Barcode 857236.*

Roads Board hall, a brick construction on the corner of Murray and Crowther Streets, Bayswater, was acquired for defense purposes in October 1913.[60] It is classified by the National Trust, and assessed by the Heritage Council of WA in September 1999 as Below Threshold.

Where suitable places were not readily available, the Defence Department acquired suitable locations and considerably adapted the existing places. East Perth / Highgate and Claremont were two metropolitan examples of this approach, but they are no longer extant. The East Perth / Highgate facility was a two-storey timber-frame structure, acquired in 1915.[61] In Claremont the Skating Rink, a brick and iron structure, was adapted for defence purposes in 1913.[62]

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

National Australian Archives file: Series Number K273, Barcode 857218, Title - Leederville Drill Hall Site - Army.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

The Defence Department policies related to the establishment and operation of drill halls in Western Australia and metropolitan Perth during the 20th century.

More comprehensive information regarding occupants and usages of the building while owned by the Defence Department.

60 National Australian Archives, Perth Files: *Title: Bayswater-Army-Extensions to Army Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857227.*

61 National Australian Archives, Perth Files: *Title: Highgate-Army-Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857243.*

62 National Australian Archives, Perth Files: *Title: Claremont-Drill Hall Site; Series Number K273, Barcode 857217.*