



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)

- 3.14 Developing an Australian engineering & construction industry
- 4.3 Developing institutions
- 6.1 Forming associations, libraries & institutions for self-education
- 8.5 Forming associations

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 107 Settlements
- 309 Technology & technological change
- 408 Institutions

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Mundaring Weir Hall is a finely constructed example of a simple Federation Arts and Crafts building, featuring English bond brickwork. (Criterion 1.2)

Mundaring Weir Hall is a very simple building which sits well in its bush environment and anchors the north western corner of Hall Road. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Mundaring Weir Hall has historical significance as it is closely associated with the period when Mundaring Weir was a flourishing community chiefly made up of workers who were either employed by the Public Works Department to run the two pumping stations or people carrying out tasks that were associated with the pumping stations. The large majority of these people lived at Mundaring Weir with their families. Once the operations at the pumping stations changed only a small workforce was required and the population diminished. (Criterion 2.2)

Mundaring Weir Hall has historical associations with the Goldfields pipeline as it served the community that existed purely to operate the equipment which supplied the water to the goldfields. (Criterion 2.2)

* 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.

The Mechanics' Institute movement represents an historical phase in Western Australia's history where communities attempted to provide not only a community hall but also a place to learn; the forerunners of public libraries. The buildings constructed by these groups were funded by the community, often with assistance from the Government. *Mundaring Weir Hall* is an important historical reminder of this period of early community education. (Criterion 2.2)

Mundaring Weir Hall is closely associated with Fred Jacoby who not only operated the hotel at Mundaring Weir but was also a benefactor to the local community. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Mundaring Weir Hall is a visible reminder of the small community which once lived and worked at Mundaring Weir and the important role once placed by the Mechanics' Institute. (Criterion 4.2)

Mundaring Weir Hall is held in high esteem by the people of Mundaring as evidenced by its inclusion in the Shire of Mundaring's Municipal Inventory. (Criterion 4.2)

Mundaring Weir Hall provides an important outlet for local craft workers to display and sell their wares. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Mundaring Weir Hall is representative of the style of building constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for use as a Mechanics' Institute. The community at Mundaring Weir was comparatively small and the size of the hall and the simple architectural style reflect both the size of the community and their modest means. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The building displays evidence of movement in the exterior west wall with longitudinal cracks running down below the southern window and central window. The brick arches above both of these windows are also cracked. It is not known if these cracks represent past movement or whether the building is still active. Apart from these problems with the west wall, the building appears to be in a sound condition and is well maintained by the local craft group.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Mundaring Weir Hall has undergone very few changes, with the exception of the demolition of the wooden portion at the rear, which once housed the toilet facilities. This demolition did not interfere with the layout of the hall itself and the present use of the building as a local craft outlet ensures that the

building's original intent is maintained. *Mundaring Weir Hall* has high integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Some alterations have been made to the original fabric of *Mundaring Weir Hall*; however, they have been fairly limited. The alterations include the replacement of the corrugated galvanised roof with Zincalume sheets, plaster board sheets have been used to line the ceiling and the rear elevation has been clad with second hand sheets of corrugated galvanised iron. Taking these alterations of the original fabric into account, *Mundaring Weir Hall* is considered to have high authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled Fiona Bush.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Mundaring Weir Hall is a single storey brick and iron building completed in May 1908. It was constructed as a community hall by the Mundaring Weir Mechanics' Institute Committee.

The locality around present day Mundaring Weir¹ was first settled in 1882 by Walter Jecks who owned the Rose and Crown in Guildford.² Jecks established a vineyard and orchard on his land which lay to the north east of the dam site in the area known today as Jacoby Park. Jecks was soon joined by both his brother, Thomas, and John Allpike who managed Padbury's Guildford stores.³ In 1883, FW Byfield occupied Swan Loc 1324 slightly to the east of the dam site.⁴

The discovery of gold around Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in the 1890s, led to a large influx of people into what was a comparatively arid area. An additional factor to this equation was the development of the Eastern Railway which, while providing access to the goldfields, also required large quantities of water to run the steam locomotives. The Public Works Department, which previously had had no need to provide water to Western Australians, suddenly found itself required to supply large quantities of water for a variety of purposes and across vast distances.⁵ Many of the solutions used were expensive and produced only poor quality water.⁶ During 1895, CY O'Connor (Chief Engineer in the Department of Public Works) had been

¹ It should be noted that the Shire of Mundaring does not at present formally recognise Mundaring Weir as a separate locality from Mundaring. However, the community which lived out at 'the Weir' was once referred to as 'Mundaring Weir' with its own post office stamp and school. For the purposes of this assessment the community which currently occupies the area around Mundaring Weir will be referred to as Mundaring Weir and any references to the water reservoir will be referred to as The Mundaring Weir.

² Elliot, I., *Mundaring, a history of the Shire*, Shire of Mundaring, Mundaring, 1983, p.135.

³ Elliot, p. 135.

⁴ Elliot, p. 135.

⁵ Until the 1890s, the provision of water was the responsibility of Municipal authorities. During the gold rushes this responsibility was transferred to the State Government, and administered by the Public Works Department.

LePage, J. S. H., *Building a State, the story of the public works department of Western Australia 1829 - 1985.*, Water Authority of Western Australia, Leederville, 1986, pp. 154-161, 263 & 269.

⁶ LePage, p. 264.

investigating possible solutions to the water problem in the eastern goldfields.⁷ Finally, through Premier Forrest's political acumen and O'Connor's technical expertise, the Coolgardie Goldfields Water Supply Scheme commenced in 1896 and a location on the Helena River was chosen as a dam site.⁸ The first work on the site was the construction of a spur line from the Eastern Railway line to the reservoir site. The branch line was completed in June 1898.⁹

Once the site on the Helena River had been chosen, an embargo on further crown land acquisition in the area was imposed.¹⁰ In 1896, the Jacoby brothers, Matheison and Frederick (a Perth hotelier) acquired both Jecks' and Allpike's properties.¹¹ A shantytown grew up below the site of the dam wall and to the south of the river during the construction of the dam.¹² Several stores were established to supply the workers and sly grog shops also became a feature of the area. The Jacoby brothers provided the legal solution to the problem when they opened a hotel in the area in 1898. Their single storey hotel was located on the site of the present Mundaring Weir Hotel.¹³

Lady Forrest officially started the pumps at the No. 1 Pumping Station on the 22 January 1903 and the worker's camp which had grown up beneath the dam was abandoned.¹⁴ Permanent quarters for the engineers and staff who were required to operate the pumps at the No. 1 Pumping Station were constructed north east of the dam wall across the road from the Jacobys' hotel.¹⁵ A second pumping station was established approximately 300m to the east of the No. 1 pumping station. Accommodation was also provided at this site for the men who were responsible for the operation of this facility. The large numbers that had once laboured on the construction of the dam wall were replaced with sightseers and the employees at the two pumping stations. The Weir spur line was taken over by the government in 1909 and a bi-weekly train was provided to convey goods and passengers. Special excursion trains ran on the weekends. The Jacobys continued to do a thriving trade, extending their hotel in 1906.¹⁶

The small community which continued to live at the Weir consisted mainly of employees (and their families) of the Water Supply Department.¹⁷ In 1906, a small committee was formed by the residents to raise funds for the construction of a Mechanics' Institute building.¹⁸ The members of the committee included Harry Ball, A Eggleston, (engineer in charge of the No. 1 Pumping Station), Fred Jacoby (the hotel owner) and Eli Willis (the local school master). Over a period of two years the committee raised the sum of £70 and were successful in receiving a subsidy of £203 from the government.¹⁹ The hall was constructed by Mr Jordan of Parkerville.²⁰ The

7 LePage, pp 272 – 279.

8 LePage, p. 281.

9 Quicke, E., *Mundaring Weir among the Hills, history, scenic drives, views*. Mundaring & Hills Historical Society, Mundaring, 1996, p. 2.

10 Elliot, p. 136.

11 Quicke, E., p. 2.

12 Elliot, p. 137.

13 Quicke, p. 3.

14 Elliot, p. 137.

15 Elliot, p. 141.

16 Quicke, p. 3.

17 *Swan Express* 16 May 1908 p.4 e.

18 Elliot, p. 142.

19 *Swan Express* 16 May 1908 p.4 f.

ultimate cost of *Mundaring Weir Hall* to the community was somewhat more than they had anticipated as during construction work two walls were blown over during a storm.²¹ The final cost of the building was £308 with an additional £60 added to the bill due to storm damage. At the time of the hall's official opening the committee had a debt of £52.²²

Mundaring Weir Hall was officially opened on the 9 May 1908 by Mr Price, Minister for Works. During his opening speech, Mr Price related that,

he had taken a keen interest in the hall, as the majority of those whom it should serve were employees of the Water Supply Department, of which he happened to be the head.²³

He went on to mention that the 'employees of the various pumping stations lived in somewhat isolated places, and such halls as the one they had met at could be made centres of enlightenment and social intercourse.'²⁴ The building was described as

a substantial brick structure, with no unnecessary ornamentation, but erected in such manner as to admirably suit the wants and needs of the residents of the district. It is lofty and well ventilated, and has the necessary accommodation for all requirements of the public. The interior is 40ft x 30ft, and will accommodate 300 people.²⁵

A ball followed the foundation stone ceremony at which a number of speeches were made. Mr AC Gull, MLA for Swan noted that he thought a library should be established by the Institute for the workers and that they should apply to the Government for assistance in purchasing these items. He had also written a list of magazines and papers which he thought the committee could subscribe to.²⁶

Mundaring Weir Hall proved to be a popular venue with the local community and at some stage (possibly the 1920s),²⁷ two tennis courts were constructed on the north-east side of the building. During the 1920s and 1930s, large numbers of tourists flocked to the Weir to enjoy the picnic grounds. In 1921, the Forestry Department (later CALM) acquired its current location (approximately 600m to the north east of *Mundaring Weir Hall*), from Frederick Jacoby and commenced planting pine plantations in the area around Mundaring Weir.²⁸ Several mills operated in the area during the 1920s and 1930s and forestry workers increased the numbers of people living at Mundaring Weir.²⁹ The popularity of the Weir as a tourist destination declined during the Depression years³⁰ and in 1936, the Secretary of the Mechanics' Institute wrote to the Mundaring Road Board requesting assistance in making repairs to the hall.³¹ It is not known if this was forthcoming.

20 Quicke, p. 3.
21 *Swan Express* 16 May 1908 p.4 e.
22 *Swan Express* 16 May 1908 p.4 e.
23 *Swan Express* 16 May 1908 p.4 e.
24 *Swan Express* 16 May 1908 p.4 e.
25 *Swan Express* 16 May 1908 p.4 e.
26 *Swan Express* 16 May 1908 p.4 f.
27 Mundaring and Hills Historical Society files.
28 Quicke, p.2.
29 Quicke, p.4.
30 Quicke, p. 10.
31 Shire of Mundaring Building files.

During the 1950s, the population at Mundaring Weir declined when the steam engines at the No. 1 pumping station were replaced with electric engines and No. 2 pumping station was decommissioned.³² By the 1960s, *Mundaring Weir Hall* had fallen into disrepair and in March 1965 a Health Inspector sent a letter to the Shire of Mundaring noting that the rear portion of the hall, which housed the toilets, was riddled with termites and was in danger of collapse.³³ No internal inspection was made as the hall was locked. However, in general, the building was found to be unsatisfactory. At the time of the visit the Shire indicated that they were not prepared to bear the costs of repairs. At the same time the local publican noted that the hall was necessary to the local community as there was no other similar facility at the Weir.³⁴ It is not known if the tennis courts were still in use at this time.

In February 1969, the Secretary of the Mundaring Weir Institute wrote a letter to the Under Secretary of the Public Works Department stating that the Institute Committee had resolved, at a meeting held on the 22 November 1968, that the building was no longer required by the Institute and that they would be vacating it.³⁵

The Shire of Mundaring was approached to determine if they wished to take the building on at this stage, but it was not until 1971 that *Mundaring Weir Hall* became vested with the Shire of Mundaring.³⁶ In September 1971, a Mundaring Weir Hall Committee was formed by several local residents. The committee wished to use the hall as an art gallery and considered that only minimal expense was required in restoring the building.³⁷ Shire Records indicate that an exhibition of local art was held in *Mundaring Weir Hall* on 27 July 1971.³⁸ During 1971, an Art Co-Op was formed and sought to lease *Mundaring Weir Hall* from the Shire of Mundaring. The Shire would not agree to a lease, however the Co-Op was permitted to hire the hall.³⁹ It was not until January 1973 that the Shire agreed to lease the hall to the Art Co-Op Group on a two year probation.⁴⁰

Mundaring Weir Hall was placed on the National Trust of Australia's (WA) Recorded list in August 1978. The photograph taken at the time of the assessment shows the building much as it appears today with the exception that the original corrugated galvanised roof was still in place.⁴¹ It is not known when the roof was re-clad with Zinalume sheeting.

Today the hall is leased from the Shire of Mundaring by the Eastern Hills Arts and Crafts Inc.⁴² This is the same group as the Art Co-Op. They decided at some stage to change the name of the group to one that better reflected the group's location.⁴³ The craft group display and sell local arts and crafts to tourists and maintain the building. The Mundaring Weir continues to be a

32 Kattamorda Heritage Trail , W.A. Heritage Trails Network, 1988, p. 7.

33 Shire of Mundaring Building files.

34 Shire of Mundaring Records.

35 Shire of Mundaring Records.

36 Shire of Mundaring Records.

37 *Swan Express* 9 September 1971.

38 Shire of Mundaring Records.

39 Shire of Mundaring Records.

40 Shire of Mundaring Records.

41 National Trust Assessment documentation.

42 A search was made for the building license records of this building however none were found.

43 Shire of Mundaring Records and telephone conversation with Doug Bastock member of the Eastern Hills Arts and Crafts Inc. 2 March 2001.

popular tourist destination and in 1988 it was estimated that approximately 2.4 million people visited the place yearly.⁴⁴

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Mundaring Weir Hall is a single storey brick and iron building completed in 1908 as a Mechanics' Institute for the community of Mundaring Weir.

A comparatively small community lives at Mundaring Weir which lies to the south of Mundaring. The 'village' is mainly home to support personnel for CALM who are responsible for the State forests surrounding the Mundaring Weir and some private residents. *Mundaring Weir Hall* is located on the corner of Weir Village Road (north-eastern) and Hall Road. Several residences are located on the south-eastern side of Weir Village Road, while on the south-western side of Hall Road is the Mundaring Weir Hotel. Both *Mundaring Weir Hall* and the Hotel are located close to the entrance of the public park at Mundaring Weir.

The site, which slopes downwards at the north-western and north-eastern ends, has been terraced at the front (south-east side) to provide a flat area for parking. Two terraces are also located on the north-eastern side of the building. These terraces were formed to create the two flat areas for the tennis courts.

The ground around the front of the building has been paved with recycled bricks. This paving extends down the south-west side of the building to form a path. The brick paving terminates approximately halfway down the side of the hall, however the path continues using hard packed gravel in a clay matrix. This path leads across to the Hotel. The car park at the front of *Mundaring Weir Hall* is separated from the hall by a treated pine log fence. The surface of the car park is unsealed pea gravel.

The building has a simple rectangular form and stylistically could be termed as a fairly plain version of Federation Arts and Crafts. The brick walls, laid in English bond, sit on an undressed stone foundation which is approximately 30cm above ground at the front. This gradually increases in height towards the rear, as the ground slopes away, reaching a height of nearly 2 metres at the rear. The stone is local granite. Above the stone foundation are three courses of brickwork which form a plinth for the brick walls which rise above.

The building has a gable roof clad with Zinalume and there are no gutters. Stylistically, the Arts and Crafts elements are to be found on the front wall. The apex of this wall is decorated with pebble-dash into which has been set three narrow, rectangular ventilation louvres. The front façade has a centrally located entrance with a fanlight above sheeted, ledged and braced double doors. A new yale lock has been fitted to one door. The original, metal door knob has been retained. On either side of the door are fixed, timber framed windows with three panes and fanlights. The door and window openings feature brick arches with a metal arch band.

A marble foundation stone is fixed just below the window on the western side of the front facade. The stone records the following details:

This stone was laid by the Hon. James Price MLA Minister for Works 9th May 1908.
Committee: H. Ball, Chairman, A.G. Eggleton, Fred W. Jacoby, E.S.A. Willis Hon. Sec.

⁴⁴ Kattamorda Heritage Trail, W.A. Heritage Trails Network, 1988, p. 7.

The rear wall is timber framed and clad with painted, sheets of corrugated galvanised iron. These sheets were probably placed here sometime after 1965 when the rear toilet section was demolished. The exact date of this demolition is not known. As this side is half a storey higher than the front, a storage area has been created beneath the floor area. The iron cladding covers this wall to floor height. Below this cladding the wall is undressed stone. A pair of ledged and sheeted doors are located at the western end of this wall, at floor height, and a staircase leads down to ground level. These stairs have a pipe balustrade and timber treads. A pair of double doors is centrally located in the stone section of the wall providing access to an under floor storage area. The opening is faced with brickwork.

The two side walls are identical. Three windows are evenly spaced along these walls. The windows are the same style as those found in the front elevation. Wall vents have been placed between the windows and under floor ventilators are located at intervals, down both sides of the brickwork, above the stone foundation.

The south-west wall has several long cracks which run down the wall from the centre of the southern and central windows. The brick arches above both these windows also show evidence of past movement. Without the benefit of monitoring it is not possible to determine if movement is still occurring in this wall. The north-eastern wall shows no evidence of movement.

The interior of the hall is basically a rectangular open space. The timber floor is covered with carpet. The ceiling is plasterboard with the gaps between the sheets covered with plastic cover strips. The rear wall is clad with painted, tongued and grooved boards (laid underside up). Timber picture rails have been fitted around the walls, however these are not original.

The current fittings are all modern and the shelving which is used to display craft items are free-standing and could be easily removed.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Mechanics' Institutes were the equivalent of today's adult education classes or community centres. They were often a community's only source of library books or other reading material and these institutes, like agricultural halls, were often supported by the State Government. They were intended to benefit the working or lower middle classes as the term mechanics meant tradesman or artisan.⁴⁵ In comparison with the eastern states, the movement in Western Australia did not begin in any systematic way, but rather was limited to the three early towns of Perth, Fremantle and Albany. The limited numbers of Institutes was largely due to the slow development of new towns in Western Australia and the impoverished nature of the colony. Once towns became established in country areas in the 1860s and 1870s, the numbers of Mechanics' Institutes in Western Australia grew.⁴⁶ The first Institute was established in Perth in 1851, the Swan River Institute. Fremantle and Albany constructed Institutes shortly afterwards in 1851 and 1852, respectively. By the end of 1905, sixty Institutes had been established in various centres throughout Western Australia.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Candy, P. C. & Laurent, J. (Eds), *Pioneering Culture: Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia.*, Auslib Press, Adelaide, 1994, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Rose, P., Birman, W. & White, M., 'Respectable' and 'Useful': The institute movement in Western Australia' in Candy & Laurent, p. 127.

⁴⁷ Rose, Birman and White, p. 139.

The size of building constructed was probably governed by the money raised by the local community, and the style chosen appears to have been stylistically appropriate for the period in which it was constructed. The Mechanics' Institute at Guildford (1865)⁴⁸, is a fairly simple brick building designed in a simple form of Victorian Romanesque. In comparison, the Mechanics' Institute at Katanning (1897), is much grander in scale, the more ornate Victorian Free Classical Style. This style reflects the growth that the town was experiencing at the time of the Institute's construction.⁴⁹ The town of Pinjarra built their Institute building sometime in the 1880s.⁵⁰ The scale of the building was similar to that of Guildford's, although stylistically the building is similar to Katanning's hall. The Pinjarra Institute was enlarged in 1927 although the extension to the original façade remained faithful in style to the original 1880s section.⁵¹

The Mundaring Weir Hall follows a similar pattern to these Institute buildings. The Federation Arts and Crafts style belongs to the period in which it was constructed and the size is what one would expect for the small community who lived at Mundaring Weir.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment. 13 August 1973

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Monitoring tags should be placed in various key locations on the building to determine if there is still movement occurring in the western wall.

⁴⁸ Bourke, M. J., *On the Swan, a history of the Swan district, Western Australia*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1987, p. 216.

⁴⁹ HCWA database.

⁵⁰ Richards, R., *Murray and Mandurah: a sequel history of the old Murray district of Western Australia*, Shire of Murray and City of Mandurah, 1993, p.142.

⁵¹ Richards, p. 448.