



## 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)

- 3.4.3 Mining
- 4 Building settlements, towns and cities
- 6.2 Establishing schools

#### HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 110 Resource exploitation and depletion
- 303 Mining (including mineral processing)
- 402 Education and science

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Government School, Cue* is a good example of a three stage development government school in the Federation Free style, with well-proportioned classroom spaces and a small number of well-designed original features, including a fine fireplace and in-wall ventilation system. (Criterion 1.1)

In its lush green setting, *Government School, Cue* provides a welcome green oasis in an otherwise dry and sparsely vegetated environment. (Criterion 1.3)

Cue is a significant historic town with a fine collection of predominantly stone construction buildings and *Government School, Cue* is an integral part of this collection of places. (Criterion 1.4)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Government School, Cue*, has been the centre of schooling in the Cue area since 1896. The 1898 and 1904/5 classroom additions reflect the population growth at the time and the need to provide accommodation for more school aged children. (Criterion 2.1)

Alfred Cox, officer in charge of the Public Works Department in the Murchison goldfields, designed the first stage of *Government School, Cue*. Cox designed several other buildings in the historic town of Cue, as well as other Murchison goldfields towns, Geraldton and, later, Perth. (Criterion 2.3)

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

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### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Government School, Cue*, has played an important role in the education of young Cue residents since it was constructed in 1896. (Criterion 4.1)

Two plaques in the school grounds testify to the social value of the place for local residents. One plaque was erected in memory of a former student, Helen Helga Wilson (nee Mayne), author and historian of the Murchison Goldfields, while the other commemorates the 1996 centenary of the school on the site. (Criterion 4.1)

*Government School, Cue*, is part of group of historic places that contributes to the community's sense of place. The place is highly valued by the local community as a key element of the historic built environment of the town. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

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### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Government School, Cue*, is representative of small, single-teacher schools established as newly settled districts achieved sustainability and growth. It also represents the intermittent growth of such a school and its adaptation to suit contemporary needs. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Government School, Cue*, has been subject to regular maintenance, not all of which was well informed, contributing to the deterioration of some of the stonework. The basic structure of the three principal phases of construction is in good condition, however, the location of some of the garden beds and reticulation, combined with render repairs to stonework have proved detrimental to the stone's condition. The stone is deteriorating where damp has been a constant problem. There is a need to undertake some conservation work to the masonry elements. Overall the place is in fair condition.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The school retains its original use. Overall the place retains a high degree of integrity. The teachers' quarters has been separated from the school.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

There have been many changes to the original three sections of the school. Although the basic format of the three principal rooms remains, there has been much loss of detail with alterations to the roofing, the addition of rooms around the masonry construction rooms, replacement of ceilings, introduction of air conditioning and painting of brickwork. Overall the place retains a moderate to low degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Jacqui Sherriff, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Philip Griffiths, Architect.

Helen Burgess is acknowledged for compiling a list of references relating to Cue Government School while Archival Research Officer for the Heritage Council.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Government School, Cue*, a single storey painted stone, brick and Colorbond custom orb roof building, with timber framed construction minor additions, was constructed over three major stages. Originally built as a single roomed stone and iron school in 1896, classrooms were added in 1898 and 1904/5.

In 1854, Surveyor Robert Austin explored the Murchison hinterland and although he predicted that the area would probably be 'one of the finest goldfields in the world', there was initially no active promotion of the area as a goldfield.<sup>1</sup> The first settlers in the area were pastoralists in the 1870s.<sup>2</sup> Cue is a remote town and is located some 649 kilometres from Perth, with the larger centres close to Cue being Meekatharra 116 kilometres north Mount Magnet 80 kilometres south and the nearest large regional centre at Geraldton 344 kilometres away.

The first recorded discovery of gold in the Murchison area is attributed to James Burke in June 1887.<sup>3</sup> Other discoveries followed, including those of Connolly and Duglas in 1889, which led to the proclamation of the Murchison Goldfield on 24 September 1891.<sup>4</sup> By the end of 1891, there were between 300 and 400 men on the Murchison Goldfield, centred on Nannine.<sup>5</sup> Amongst them were Tom Cue and Mick Fitzgerald. On New Years Day 1892, Fitzgerald found several large nuggets at what was to become the town of Cue.<sup>6</sup>

Word of the find spread quickly, with about 200 men in the area by March 1892. In April the following year, the Cue Progress Committee was established.<sup>7</sup> The first land sales in Cue were held on 11 November 1893, with 21 lots up for sale.<sup>8</sup> The first public reserves, for the hospital and Public Buildings, were set aside in February 1894.<sup>9</sup> The Municipality of Cue was proclaimed on 30 May 1894, with the first Municipal elections held the following August. As the population grew, services and amenities in the town slowly improved.<sup>10</sup>

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- 1 *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, PWH Thiel & Co, Perth, 1901, p. 274.
  - 2 *The West Australian*, 19 November 1891, p. 3.
  - 3 P R Heydon, *Gold on the Murchison: a tale of twin towns - Cue and Day Dawn - of people, progress and gold*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1986, p. 3.
  - 4 Government Gazette, 1 October 1891, p. 711; M & A Webb, *Golden Destiny: The Centenary of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia*, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, 1993, p. 23.
  - 5 *The West Australian*, 19 November 1891, p. 3.
  - 6 P R Heydon, *Gold on the Murchison: a tale of twin towns - Cue and Day Dawn - of people, progress and gold*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1986, pp. 7-8.
  - 7 George Hope, *Murchison Goldfields: Supplement to the Geraldton Express*, 1897, p. 36
  - 8 *The West Australian*, 5 December 1893, p. 3.
  - 9 *Government Gazette*, 20 June 1894, p. 614.
  - 10 See State Records Office, AN 57, Municipality of Cue, Minute Books of the Municipality of Cue Council, items 1 & 2.

In December 1894, a deputation on behalf of the residents of Cue visited the Municipality of Cue Council to request that a school be established. At the time, there were 35 children of school age in and around the town. As it was determined that the establishment of the school was outside the provenience of the Council, a Mr. Beggs organised a petition to be forwarded to the authorities in Perth.<sup>11</sup>

The Government granted the request in January the following year. The School opened on 1 February 1895 in a rented building. Mr. Armstrong was appointed teacher in charge, with an initial enrollment of 28 students (16 boys and 12 girls).<sup>12</sup> The Cue Government School was classified as a 'special school', a school provided in a sparsely populated district.<sup>13</sup>

In March 1896, the *Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette* reported that:

The new State school will be erected on the northern end of the town – close to Mr. Pallenberg's camp. The site is one of the best in Cue, and the building, which will provide excellent accommodation for 60 scholars, is excellently designed. The schoolroom will be 30ft x 20ft, and the roof 14ft clear, giving abundant ventilation. It will be surrounded by a 10ft verandah and provided with lavatory accommodation, also a four hundred gallon water tank. The eaves will project 3ft and in every conceivable way the comfort and health of the pupils has been considered. Templar Bros. are the contractors, the price of their contract being £533/10s.<sup>14</sup>

Alfred Cox, appointed the Officer in Charge of the Murchison Goldfields for the Public Works Department in 1895 and resident in Cue, supervised the construction of the single-roomed school.<sup>15</sup> Cox was one of the first architects in Cue and designed several public buildings in the town, including the Municipal Chambers (1896) and the Murchison Chambers (1895; now known as the Gentlemen's Club). He supervised the construction of the Cue Public Buildings (1894/5) and designed the 1898 additions. He also designed and/or supervised the construction of a number of public and private buildings elsewhere on the Murchison Goldfields and in Perth and Geraldton.<sup>16</sup>

*Government School, Cue*, was established during a period of major change in the provision of education in Western Australia.<sup>17</sup> The unprecedented increase and spread of the population as a result of the 1890s gold rushes placed massive pressures on the education system. As elementary education

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11 P R Heydon, *Just a Century Ago: A History of the Shire of Cue*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1987, pp. 14-5.

12 Education Department, Annual Report, 1895, p. 16.

13 Education Department, Annual Report, 1895, pp. 1, 13.

14 *Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette*, 11 March 1896, p. 2.

15 Public Works Department, Annual Report 1895/6, p. 56; *Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette*, 11 March 1896, p. 2.

16 J S Battye, *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, 1913, p. 628; I P Kelly, 'Architectural Biography, 1890-1915', prepared as part of MA Thesis, Department of Architecture, UWA, 1991. For information on other buildings designed/supervised by Cox in Cue, see Considine & Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Jacqui Sherriff, Historian, 'Conservation Plan: Cue – Gentlemen's Club, Municipal Chambers, Old Cue Gaol, Railway Station, Rotunda, Pensioners' Cottages', commissioned by the Shire of Cue with the financial assistance of the Heritage Council of Western Australia, December 2000.

17 Jenny Gregory and Lisa Smith, 'A Thematic History of Education in Western Australia', Centre for Western Australian History, prepared for the Building Management Authority, 1995, p. x. The period 1871 to 1902, during which time *Government School, Cue*, was constructed, is labelled 'The Demographic Imperative' in this study.

for children between the ages of six and fourteen was compulsory, the Education Department had to provide schools in all districts where there was demand. The gold rushes also provided loan funds with which to fund this infrastructure, and there was more than a three-fold increase in the number of schools in the 1890.<sup>18</sup>

Town Lot 116 (Reserve 4280) was set aside for the Cue school site on 6 August 1897.<sup>19</sup>

The following year, a new classroom was added, doubling the size of the building. The additions were also designed by Alfred Cox.<sup>20</sup>

Little and McInnes built urinals at the school in 1904 at a cost of £64.<sup>21</sup>

Additions and alterations were made in 1904/05 to provide places for another 50 children.<sup>22</sup> These included the addition of a classroom and associated verandah.<sup>23</sup> The school quarters was fenced and other repairs made in 1906.<sup>24</sup>

In 1908, pepper trees were planted in the school grounds following a request from the Schoolmaster.<sup>25</sup>

Further renovations were made to the school building in 1910. New flooring was placed in the original and 1898 classrooms, the verandah enclosed and new highlights installed in some of the windows.<sup>26</sup> It is thought that one of the classrooms was converted to a manual training room at this time.<sup>27</sup> G McInnes was the contractor for this work, at a cost of £260.<sup>28</sup>

In 1946, the school consisted of a senior room, hat room, junior room and manual room. Other buildings on the site were a shelter shed, store and girls' and boys' latrines.<sup>29</sup>

Part of the verandah was enclosed with asbestos sheeting to form an office in 1966. At the same time, internal improvements were made and new toilets and septic tank installed.<sup>30</sup>

Demountable classrooms were erected on the western corner of the site in 1967/8.<sup>31</sup>

In 1975, buildings on the site included the school building of three classrooms, the demountable classrooms, and the head masters office, a shelter shed and toilets.<sup>32</sup>

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18 Ibid.

19 Government Gazette, 6 August 1897, p. 1579.

20 PWD 6235, School Additions, 3 May 1898; drawn by A E Cox.

21 Government Gazette, 2 September 1904, p. 2387.

22 CAMS Heritage Database, 'Cue Primary School', c. 1999.

23 PWD Plan 11135, School Additions, 26 November 1904.

24 Government Gazette, 22 June 1906, p. 1963.

25 P R Heydon, *Just a Century Ago: A History of the Shire of Cue*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1987, pp. 47.

26 PWD 15080, School Additions, 20 August 1910. This plan is signed by Hillson Beasley, Chief Architect.

27 CAMS Heritage Database, 'Cue Primary School', c. 1999.

28 Government Gazette, 30 September 1910, p. 3020.

29 PWD File 190/45, School and Quarters Repair and Renovations, 13 August 1946.

30 PWD File 1594/49, School Additions and Repair and Renovations, 13 January 1966.

31 CAMS Heritage Database, 'Cue Primary School', c. 1999.

By 1995 a demountable classroom had been erected to the east of the school building.<sup>33</sup> This classroom was an additional room and the 1967/8 demountable rooms remain in their place in the western corner of the site.

Two plaques have been erected in the school grounds, one in memory of Helen Helga Wilson (nee Mayne), 'author and first historian of the Murchison Goldfields', who began her schooling at Cue School in 1905.<sup>34</sup> The other was laid in September 1996 to commemorate the centenary of schooling on the site. A time capsule, to be opened in 2046, is located under the plaque.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the remoteness of Cue, the pastoral, mining, and prospecting activities, together with its function as a centre for the surrounding area and its indigenous people, *Government School, Cue* has not had to defend itself against closure.

In 2001, *Government School, Cue*, continues to operate as the local school. The school is attended by 64 children, including pre-primary age children. Other buildings on the site include two demountable classrooms housing the library and computer room and lavatories. The School Teacher's quarters, on an adjacent site, is also extant and is privately rented.

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Government School, Cue* is a collection of elements principally comprising a single storey painted stone, brick and Colorbond custom orb roof building in the Federation Free style<sup>36</sup>, with timber framed construction minor additions, constructed in three major stages. Originally built as a single roomed stone and iron school in 1896, classrooms were added in 1898 and 1904/5. The former teacher's quarters is now on a separate lot and is privately owned. It is not part of this assessment.

*Government School, Cue* is located to the north of the town centre on a reserve located at the corner of Simpson & Richmond Streets, that is bounded by Richmond and Dowley Streets to the north-west, east and south, and other landholdings on the remaining sides of the reserve. The school is physically and visually removed from the town centre. The former teacher's quarters is located on the contiguous lot to the south of the school playgrounds.

The site is landscaped and has a number of mature trees along the Richmond Street boundary, around the early school buildings and in the eastern corner of the site. There is a paved playing surface in the northern corner, brick paving linking buildings, and a broad brick paved entrance path at from the boundary to the school entrance at the Richmond and Dowley Street junction. The sides of the site that abutt other landholdings are fenced with steel tube framed fencing with linkmesh panels. The plantings include a range of *Eucalypts*, *Casuarina*, *Brachychiton*, and *Schinus*. There is a school bell mounted near the entrance to the covered area and a flagpole. Other internal features include a centenary plaque unveiled by Jean Pigeon located near the flagpole and a further plaque fixed to a cairn located by the grounds entrance commemorating Helen Wilson, as noted in the documentary evidence.

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<sup>32</sup> Job #15080, School Repair and Renovations, 1975. By this time, the reserve had been regazetted as Reserve 4280.

<sup>33</sup> DOLA, 'Cue Primary School', aerial photograph, November 1995.

<sup>34</sup> Site visit, July 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Site visit, July 2001.

<sup>36</sup> Apperly, R. et al. *ibid* pp136-139.

In the context of Cue, the overall impression of the site is that of a lush green oasis in an otherwise sparsely vegetated environment. The lawns, garden beds flanking the entrance path and plantings of trees and shrubs contribute significantly to the general amenity of Cue.

The first part of the school to be completed (Room 1) was constructed of stone externally and face brickwork internally and the roof is a gable format corrugated iron roof. Its style could best be described as Federation Free style. The stone was quarried locally and is a weathered granite, which was easy to quarry, but high in feldspars and other clays, resulting in its being susceptible to damage from constant wetting and drying. The external and internal walls are now painted. The roof has been replaced with a Colorbond steel finished roof. Doors are four panel and windows double hung sashes. The main internal feature is the substantial fireplace set on the south wall. The ceiling is tiled and air conditioning has been installed. The timber floors are covered with carpet and there is no trace of the seating platforms that were part of the original design. The chalk and pinup boards are not original. The room has been upgraded through time. Garden beds about the building and the stone work has been painted. These two actions have encouraged rising damp and cause damage to the stonework. Render has been applied as a repair strategy and this has exacerbated the damage to the stone without resolving the damp.

The second part of the school (Room 2) was added to the south wall of Room 1 and it too was constructed of stone externally and face brickwork internally. The roof is a gable format corrugated iron roof. The external wall is now painted and the internal wall plastered. The roof has been replaced with a Colorbond steel finished roof. Doors are four panel and windows double hung sashes. The ceiling is tiled and air conditioning has been installed. The timber floors are covered with carpet and there is no trace of the seating platforms that were part of the original design. The chalk and pinup boards are not original. At the same time as the classroom was built, a timber framed cloak and wash room was built (Room 3) on the east side of the room. This is still in place, but all the fittings have been removed, the walls and ceilings lined with asbestos cement sheet, and carpet fitted over the granolithic finish floor. The rooms have been substantially upgraded over time. The stonework suffers in the same way as the stonework on Room 1 and for the same reasons.

The third part of the school (Room 4) was added to the east wall of Room 1. It differs from the first two teaching spaces in a number of ways. It was constructed of brickwork and the roof is a gable format corrugated iron roof. The external wall is now painted. The internal wall is plastered. The roof has been replaced with a Colorbond steel finished roof. Doors are four panel and windows double hung sashes. The ceiling is a replacement plasterboard type with a coved cornice. The timber floors are covered with carpet and there is no trace of the seating platforms that were part of the original design. The chalk and pinup boards are not original. The features that distinguish this room from its two preceding teaching spaces comprise the fireplace, located in the corner of the room rather than a side wall, the inclusion of flumed wall vents that were characteristic of many of John Grainger and Hillson Beasley's designs, and the stack vents through the roof, though the latter have been removed. The room details have been simplified through time.

Since the completion of these principal elements, two administration spaces have been added in a lean-to format to the south and east walls of Room 4, in

light framed construction and a computer studies room added in similar construction to the north of Room 5.

A covered assembly area has been added to the southern side of the building, and this is simply a framed structure with a lean-to roof, open to the south and east.

Other minor and more recent buildings on the site include two transportable buildings to the north of the school that provide storage and the school library space. A bagged brick toilet block has been constructed to the south of the surfaced playing court, west of the school and a transportable classroom and sheds placed in the far western corner of the site.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

*Government School, Cue* commenced construction at a time when a major program of school construction was beginning to take place. The influx of people seeking their fortunes in the goldfields of the Pilbara and the Eastern Goldfields brought about increased prosperity and pressure for education. One-room schools were a common starting point for country town schools and were expanded as required. The larger schools developed around a school hall, which was integrated into classroom construction as the needs arose.

Schools were generally built to patterns developed by the Public Works Department. Under G.T. Poole a standard size and patterns of classroom was developed, with a standard pattern of double hung sash windows, seating platforms, and fireplace on the side wall of the classroom. The same plan type continued in use through John Grainger's initial period as Chief Architect. The first two classrooms at *Government School, Cue* follow this pattern.

In the latter part of Grainger's time, and during the time following Hillson Beasley's appointment, the pattern was changed with the relocation of the fireplace to a corner, changes to improved natural ventilation and the re-orientation of the seating to face along the long axis of the room. The third classroom at *Government School, Cue* follows this pattern.

### 13.4 REFERENCES

Department of Contract and Management Services (CAMS), Heritage Database, 'Cue Primary School'.

Heritage Council of Western Australia, 'Register of Heritage Places Interim Entry: Government School', 5 May 1992.

Gregory, J. and Smith, C., 'Thematic History of Public Education in Western Australia', Department of Contract and Management Services (CAMS) 1995.

### 13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

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