



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

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 408 Institutions

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The main building (1898) of *Railway Institute, Northam* is a fine example of Federation Free Classical style of architecture in Northam. (Criterion 1.1)

Railway Institute, Northam is an integral element in the railway environment of West Northam. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Railway Institute, Northam was established in 1898, to provide for the educational and recreational needs of railway workers following the development of Northam as a major railway town at the junction of the Great Southern and Eastern Goldfield Railway lines and the home of several hundred railway workers. The facilities added to the place in 1940, were a result of the ongoing function of the place, and its later declining use reflected the changed location of the railway's centre of activities in the town. (Criterion 2.1 & 2.2)

The establishment of *Railway Institute, Northam* in 1898, with the active support of prominent citizens of Northam and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, is indicative of the social attitudes of the period when workers were encouraged to take up sober and mentally stimulating activities in their free time in order to 'improve' themselves. (Criterion 2.2)

Railway Institute, Northam was associated with George Throssell and his wife Anne, who both played an active role in establishing the place, and with the railway presence in Northam from 1898 to 1996. (Criterion 2.3)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R. and Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Railway Institute, Northam is highly valued by the Northam community in general and the railway community in particular, for its social associations, and its association with the railway history of the town. This is reflected in the inclusion of the place on the Northam Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places and various offers for leasing with intent to restore. (Criterion 4.1)

Railway Institute, Northam contributes to the local community's sense of place as a remnant of the town's railway history, and as a substantial and attractive building which has stood on the corner of Morrell and Wellington streets since 1898. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Railway Institute, Northam was the first Railway Institute established in Western Australia.

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Railway Institute, Northam is a singular example of its type, representing the development of the facility from 1898 through to the 1940s and beyond, and has had the longest use for its original purpose of any Railway Institute in the State. The main building is a fine example of Federation Free Classical style of architecture in Northam, and within the railway environment throughout the State. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Railway Institute, Northam is in fair condition. It has been vacant and unused for several years and vandals have damaged some fabric, and tagged graffiti over much of the internal fabric. No maintenance has been undertaken for many years.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Railway Institute, Northam functioned as a railway facility until 1996, with declining use following the relocation of railway activities from West Northam in the 1960s. The place is currently unoccupied and has a low to moderate degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The place has minimal evidence of any intrusions to the original fabric except for the obvious extensions in 1940. The railway cabins are intrusive. *Railway Institute, Northam* displays a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Conservation Consultant.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Railway Institute, Northam is a single-storey brick and iron building constructed in 1898 for use as a reading room for railway employees. A billiard room and library were added in 1940. The place is currently vacant and unused.

The fertile Avon Valley district was settled in the 1830s, and the townships of Northam, York and Newcastle (Toodyay) developed. The Northam townsite was surveyed in 1856, and the Northam Town Municipality was established in 1879. A more efficient and faster means of transport from the region to the coast was required, and the residents requested a railway. The Fremantle-Guildford line was completed in 1881, and was then constructed through Chidlow to Spencer's Brook. The residents of both York and Northam wanted the line extended to their town. In the event, both towns achieved their aim. The Great Southern line, on its route to Albany, linked Spencer's Brook with York in 1885, and the Eastern Railway line was extended six miles from Spencers Brook to a terminus at West Northam in 1886, opening on the 13 October.¹ A timber and iron railway station was built in the same year, by local builder James Byfield.

The discovery of gold at Southern Cross and the subsequent declaration of the area as the Yilgarn goldfield in 1888, prompted the State Government to commence construction of a railway to serve the area. Northam was chosen as the head of the line, being slightly closer to the destination than York. Before the line had reached Southern Cross, the Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie gold finds were made. The line to Southern Cross was opened on 1 July 1894, and work began on the extension of the line to Coolgardie. Before that section had been completed, the construction contract was extended to include the extra 24 miles to Kalgoorlie, which was reached in September 1896. Northam went from a sleepy terminus to a thriving rail centre supplying the goldfields in the space of a few years.²

Passengers had a thirty-minute refreshment stop at Northam in 1897, but this was reduced to fifteen minutes in 1898. Passengers from Albany to the goldfields changed trains at Northam, but the number of travellers from Albany was reduced considerably when the new harbour at Fremantle came into operation. Northam could eventually have become a town through which trains passed, and little more, except for the decision, taken in 1897, to establish major railway yards and maintenance workshops at West Northam. Northam resident George Throssell is credited with influencing the outcome in Northam's favour, through his involvement with the Forrest government.³

George Throssell opened a store in Northam in 1862, after marrying Anne Morrell, daughter of a Northam farmer. He was involved with the School Board, Road Board, and Settler's Association, and was a foundation member of the Northam Mechanic's Institute and the local temperance movement and lodges. He was a member of the Northam Municipal Council from 1879, and

¹ Battye J. S. *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Hussey & Gillingham, Adelaide, 1912; Gunzberg, A. & Austin, J. *Rails Through the Bush*, Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Melbourne, 1997, p. 206.

² Gunzberg, A. & Austin, op cit; Appleyard, R. T. 'Western Australia: Economic and demographic growth, 1850-1914', in Stannage, C. T. (ed) *A New History of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth, 1981, pp. 218-219; Webb, M. & A. *Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of WA*, Hocking & Co and St George Books, Perth, 1995, p. 208-211.

³ Garden, Donald S. *Northam: An Avon Valley history*, Melbourne, OUP, 1995, p.138.

Mayor from 1887-1894. From 1890 to 1904, he held the Legislative Assembly seat for Northam, and was Commissioner for Crown Lands from 1897. Throssell was Premier of WA for two and half months in 1901.⁴

The reconstruction and expansion of the railway yards at Northam resulted in an establishment of over 200 railwaymen, many with families, making up a considerable proportion of the town's population in 1897. Housing estates at West Northam, such as the Gregory Estate, Habgood Estate and West Northam Station Estate, were established with many blocks taken up by railway and mill workers so that the area developed as Northam's 'working class' section. The congregation of such a large railway workforce prompted George Throssell's wife, Anne to suggest the construction of an institute for railwaymen, similar to the Mechanic's Institute, which her husband had been active in promoting for Northam some years earlier. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, with which the Throssell's were involved, also supported the establishment of an Institute.⁵

The railway institute movement in Western Australia had begun in 1888, when a Railway Employees' Reading Room was constructed in Wellington Street. A few years later, when the Railway Department needed more office space, it paid out the remaining loan on the Reading Room and took it over to house the staff of the Electrical Engineer.⁶ An institute for railwaymen was not established in Perth until the WA Railway Institute was formed at a meeting held on 12 November 1897. The move was claimed to be prompted by the establishment of several similar institutions in the eastern states, but the establishment of an Institute in Northam and the laying of the foundation stone for its new headquarters on 28 July 1897, was probably a major factor.⁷

The Throssells promised £25 toward construction, and then lobbied the government for a grant of land and money. They obtained the land, helped no doubt by George Throssell's influence as Commissioner of Crown Lands, and a monetary contribution of £125. On 26 March 1897, Lot 179, on the corner of Wellington and Morrell streets, was gazetted Reserve 3938 for the purpose of a railway reading room, and a Certificate of Title for the land was issued to the Commissioner and General Manager of Railways as a Crown Grant in Trust.⁸ The DOLA Reserves Enquiry indicates that George Throssell and Alfred Watts were the trustees, but the title to *Railway Institute, Northam* was not transferred to their names until 1910.⁹

The foundation stone of *Railway Institute, Northam* was laid on 28 July 1897.

On Wednesday afternoon last the foundation stone of the Northam Railway Institute was laid by Mrs G. Throssell, the wife of the Hon. the Commissioner of Crown Lands. This important function was conferred on Mrs Throssell owing to her being the first lady to suggest the advisability of having such an institution established for the benefit of the large number of

4 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 12, Melbourne, MUP, p. 223.

5 *Northam Advertiser*, Saturday 31 July 1897, p. 3; Garden, Donald S, op cit, p. 150-151.

6 'The Railway Institute, past and present', Part 1, *The W.A. Railway and Tramway Magazine*, November 1929, pp. 11-12.

7 'The Railway Institute, past and present', Part 2, *The W.A. Railway and Tramway Magazine*, December 1929, pp. 10-11; *Northam Advertiser*, Saturday 31 July 1897, p. 3. **Note:** The Railway Institute Building, Surry Hills, NSW and the Railway Institute Hall at the Ipswich Railway Workshops Complex, Queensland are registered places on the National Estate, while the Victorian Railways Institute Building, Ararat, Vic is listed as an indicative place.

8 DOLA Reserves Enquiry, Reserve 3938; Certificate of Title, Vol. 118 Fol. 111, 24 July 1897.

9 Certificate of Title, Vol. 455 Fol. 92.

railway employees in our midst. She laboured untiringly to have her suggestion carried into effect...[The committee] had to obtain subscriptions and it was also necessary that they have a good site for their building. Mrs Throssell contacted the Commissioner for Public Works and obtained the site and £125 towards cost of building.

The Hall when completed would be 72 feet overall; height, 18 feet to ceiling; 16 feet wall, 21 feet in width; stage, 10 feet; length of Hall, 50 feet. An engraved trowel was presented to [Mrs Throssell] for the occasion. The foundation stone reads:

This foundation stone of the Northam Railway Institute was laid on 28th July 1897, by Mrs. G. Throssell, wife of the Commissioner of Crown Lands. Committee: J.T. Reilly (Chairman), Messrs. T.A. Smith, C. Clough, C. Stephens, A. McGrouther, R.A. Smith, H. Breuer, K.W. Dunn, treasurer; H. Sayers, secretary; F. Mytton, architect; S. Millington, builder.

The stone was put in position and in the cavity beneath a bottle containing two copies of the Northam Advertiser and coins was inserted.¹⁰

George Throssell indicated the need for the Institute, and the sort of services it could provide, in his speech at the foundation stone ceremony:

The railway department in this colony was manned by many intelligent men who hailed from the other colonies, where educational advantages were much better than the old West Australian people could boast of, and in the Hall they would find a place where they could retire for the purposes of mental culture. While it may be used for dances and other innocent amusements, he hoped the employees would take a still higher stand and aim at their own mental improvement, otherwise the Hall would miss the object for which it was instituted. He hoped they would have a good library, which was the possession of the wealthy. It was such which placed the wage earner on a level with the Governor.¹¹

Railway Institute, Northam was designed by architect F. Mytton, who did not charge for his services. The place was constructed by S. Millington. The building cost £485, partly paid for with a £200 loan. The opening, performed by Railway Inspector Horan, took place on 30 March 1898, and was followed by a concert and social.¹² *Railway Institute, Northam* was sited in a handy location near the West Northam railway station yards. A railway footbridge was built in Morrell Street in 1908, and workers who lived in West Northam passed the Institute when using the footbridge on their way to and from work. The place provided a library service and a venue for social events for railwaymen and their families.

Although the Northam Institute was independent of the WA Railway Institute, arrangements were made for the interchange of books and periodicals and the transfer of membership. The railway institute movement began to spread across the State, with branches opening at Kalgoorlie in 1902, and Bunbury, Brunswick Junction and Wagin in 1904.¹³ The disadvantages of independence quickly became evident, especially in the matters of finance, and in February 1903, the Kalgoorlie Institute became the first to amalgamate with the WA Railway Institute. A new constitution was enacted, setting up an executive body of President and Council, headquartered in Perth, and branch bodies comprising a Chairman and Committee to administer each branch

10 *Northam Advertiser*, Saturday 31 July 1897, p. 3.

11 *ibid.*

12 *Northam Advertiser*, Saturday 2 April, 1898, p. 3.

13 *ibid.*, 16 June 1904, p. 4.

Institute.¹⁴ The later Institutes automatically established themselves as members of the larger group, while the Northam Institute, although the first to be established, remained an independent entity until 18 April 1917, when it too became a member of the WA Railway Institute.¹⁵

In 1906, to facilitate its growing function, the Perth Institute was given the use of the whole building in which it had its rooms, as well as the two adjoining buildings then occupied by the Audit Branch. A new façade was constructed across the front of the three buildings, inscribed with the words 'W A Govt Railways and Tramways Institute.'¹⁶

In 1918 it was reported that the WA Railway Institute:

[H]as again had a successful year. There has been a very satisfactory increase in membership, and the facilities afforded for recreation and education have been well availed of by the staff. The Institute has been particularly valuable to the Department and staff alike, for the reason that it enables the latter to become proficient in the various phases of railway working. Under existing circumstances, which have necessitated the engagement of a large number of new hands to fill the places of experienced members of staff who are absent with the Expeditionary Forces, it is necessary that an institution such as this should be readily available for training purposes. The institute is worthy of every encouragement and assistance which can reasonably be given.¹⁷

The Institute was described as 'the school room of the present generation of railway men, classes being conducted by trained men in all branches.'¹⁸ The educational curriculum covered 'safe working, time-table, and rostering, telegraphy, station accounts, locomotive mechanics, internal combustion engine, and shorthand', and provided 'facilities in all essential railway subjects to enable staff to become efficient in their particular spheres of the service.' The Institute also managed the railway employees' Death Benefit Fund and Provident Fund.¹⁹

In 1927, membership of Railway Institutes in the state had reached 6,655, which represented 83% of total railway staff. The Commissioner was stressing the need for enlarged facilities for Merredin and Narrogin.²⁰ The aim of the Institute was 'to raise the standard of efficiency in the Service by promoting intellectual, social and physical welfare of its members.' It did this by 'diffus[ing] literary and scientific knowledge by means of circulating and reference libraries and reading rooms, oral and correspondence classes relating to railway and tramway working.' In 1939, the Institute had ten branches and sub branches at larger centres, and twenty sectional libraries at other railway towns.²¹

In 1940, a library and billiard room were added to *Railway Institute, Northam* but in 1946, these were already considered too small. *Railway Institute, Northam* had over 3,000 books on the shelves and a membership of 495.²² In 1963, a new Institute building was proposed, to be situated on the Institute

14 *ibid*, 16 November 1903, pp. 9-10; 'The Railway Institute, past and present', Part 2, *op cit*.

15 'The Railway Institute, past and present', Part 2, *op cit*.

16 *The Western Australian Railway Gazette*, 19 June 1906, p. 2.

17 *WAGR Annual Report*, 1918, p. 12.

18 *Northam Advertiser*, 12 October 1946, p. 10.

19 *WAGR Annual Report*, 1924, p. 19.

20 *ibid*, 1928, p. 19.

21 *ibid*, 1939, p. 31.

22 *Northam Advertiser*, 12 October 1946, p. 10

Sports Ground on Great Eastern Highway. The sportsground was in the process of being established, the land having been acquired in 1959.²³ *Railway Institute, Northam* was considered to be on the wrong side of town to get any financial return from outside bookings, and its position was of little value to railway personnel and their families, who now mainly resided on Great Eastern Highway, which was where the post World War Two railway housing had been constructed. The construction of the standard gauge line was also about to make the existing Northam station yard redundant.²⁴

A new Institute building was not forthcoming, however, and *Railway Institute, Northam* continued to be utilised, despite its shortcomings. The place continued to be the venue for social events, as well as provide an administrative function, and to offer its 'four great services' - discount purchasing, a credit union, holiday homes and travel discounts. In later years, a video library was also established.²⁵

By 1986, the Northam Institute committee believed *Railway Institute, Northam* was no longer effective in servicing member's needs because of its condition and location. Several rooms on the ground floor of the District Administrative Office Building at Northam station, on the standard gauge line, were available, and the Institute's operations were moved there, including the video library. This position was considered more suitable as it provided better premises, economy of operation, and better access for members who already visited the station to discuss pay, housing and other matters.²⁶

Various groups made use of *Railway Institute, Northam* over the next decade, and some, such as the Avon Valley Country and Music Club, attempted some maintenance.

The club members have undertaken to renovate the hall while they use it for their monthly club nights. Volunteers will repair the white-ant eaten floorboards, patch up walls, fix the leaking roof, paint the interior walls and put security screens on windows to prevent vandalism, according to club president Charis Griffiths... Volunteers will renovate the old railway carriage as a kitchen and a mural will be painted along the walls of the main hall building.²⁷

For some people it is just another old building that needs to be fixed, but for others it is a pocket of memories from yesterday of dances, billiards and social gatherings.²⁸

In July 1996, *Railway Institute, Northam* was formally handed back to Westrail. Interest was expressed by several organisations and groups, including the Town of Northam, in leasing or purchasing the building with the intention of preserving it, but complications with the title had to be resolved before Westrail could involve itself in any formal arrangements. The title remained in the names of George Throssell and Alfred Watts, both long dead.²⁹ In 1999, the land was re-surveyed and renumbered as Lot 453.³⁰

23 WAGR, Northam Railway Institute property file 01364, Vol. 1.

24 WAGR file, Northam Railway Institute, Vol. 1, SRO, WAS 1208 CONS 4780 Item R4975.

25 WAGR file, Railway Institutes general, Vol A, SRO, WAS 1208 CONS 4780 Item R4108.

26 WAGR, Northam Railway Institute property file, Vol. 1, op cit.

27 *Northam Advertiser*, articles [1990s] from WAGR, Northam Railway Institute property file, Vol. 1, op cit.

28 *ibid.*

29 WAGR, Northam Railway Institute property file 01364, Vol. 2.

30 DOLA Diagram 94103, 4 March 1999.

A heritage assessment of the place has been commissioned as a precursor to disposal. *Railway Institute, Northam* has been largely unused since 1996, and has been subject to damage by vandals.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Railway Institute, Northam is located on the north corner of the intersection of Wellington and Morrell Streets in Northam. The place fronts Wellington Street, with the main building on the north east of the frontage and the subsequent additions towards the corner and west side. The site is a wedge shaped portion of land, and the smallest boundary on the north west adjoins the railway reserve and former railway line. Morrell Street ends at the railway line in the north, but formerly there was a railway cross over for pedestrians to access Fitzgerald Street, and a direct connection to the Poole Street pedestrian bridge over the Avon River, and across to Great Eastern Highway. The site slopes from the Wellington Street front boundary down to the rear boundary against the railway reserve. The grounds are undeveloped and unkempt. There are a number of Eucalypt trees at the rear of the buildings, on the Morrell Street side.

The main building displays characteristics of Federation Free Classical style. The billiard room, library and ablutions additions are more in a functional vernacular style in response to function and the resources available at the time.

Railway Institute, Northam is a single storey brick and iron, and timber and iron building. It comprises several elements: 1898 main building; 1940 billiard room extension; 1940 library extension, 1940 ablution extension; and, railway cabins. The main building and subsequent extensions each have separate roofs, except for the ablution extension at the rear of the main building. Although the roofs are separate, the different elements are connected by a corridor. The railway cabins are in place on the east side of the main building and also adjoin with a short corridor connection.

Main building (1898)

The main building is a brick and iron construction on a stone foundation. It is a simple rectangular building with the 1940 ablution extension at the rear. The front façade is symmetrical with a central double door flanked by a window each side. The face brick is laid in an English bond. The gabled roof is clad with corrugated iron. The roof forms a skillion towards the rear of the main building and continues over the ablution extension. There is a double face brick chimney with corbelled detail central at the rear of the original skillion roof. The front facade forms a pediment parapet and features rendered design elements including moulded parapet edge and cornice line, fluted pilasters on the external edge of the frontage, and fluted rendered window and door surrounds. The windows and doors have an arched detail with fixed fanlights. The front wall has been rendered to a height of approximately 1.2 metres from the ground, but shows evidence of render to 0.900 metres, and a further render to the existing height. Both stages of render are most likely a later intervention to the original face brick fabric. The side walls have also been rendered to a height of approximately 0.900 metres from ground level. The foundation stone is set into the front wall beneath the window on the right side (north east). The double front doors are ledged tongue and groove timber doors with a decorative vent detail across the header beam. The single door each side of the hall is the original four-panel door, with an arched header detailed in a two-course brick header. There are windows along each side of the building at regular intervals. All

the windows are timber framed double hung sashes. The side windows have an arched header detailed in a soldier course. The rear extension is 'toothed' into the original brickwork, and finished in stretcher bond brickwork on a brick foundation.

The interior is a spacious hall with a built up timber stage at the north end. Half way along each side of the hall is a doorway. The door on the north east side opens into a short corridor connecting two railway cabins. On the other side, the double doors open into the main corridor with the front door, rear door, and access to the library and billiard room. Each side of the stage is a door entering into a room. The rooms each have a back-to-back corner truncated fireplace and have an infilled panel between them that previously connected the rooms. The ceilings are lined on the rake with painted matchboards and the mantelpieces remain intact. The rear ablutions extension is accessed through each of the rooms, with ladies toilets on the north east side, and gents toilet facilities on the south west side. The toilet areas could not be inspected due to minimal visibility caused by the boarded windows and no power connection for lighting.

The interior fabric is mostly in place. The floors are replacement 0.075 metre (3") tongue and groove jarrah boards. The hard plaster walls have a moulded chair rail detail at windowsill height and a moulded picture rail at window head height. The flat plasterboard ceiling has a double length of decorative air vents along the length of the hall. The ceiling is coved along the sides of the hall and detailed in a zigzag motif cornice. The stage is a timber structure with vertical tongue and groove build up. The doors from the hall, at the rear, are replacement flush panel doors.

Main building - Condition

Structurally the building appears to be sound although there are a number of cracks in the brickwork, predominantly on the front façade. There is considerable evidence of rising damp in the rendered dados, and on the north west side the render has fretted and was seen to be obviously wet during a February inspection and the bricks beneath are fretted. On the opposite side, there is considerable fretting beneath the rear side window and evidence of previous repairs in grey cement. The roof sheets need refixing. The timber detailing is badly weathered. The gutters are rusted and full of debris and the downpipes are either missing or ineffective. There is no evidence of adequate water discharge from the roof, or any ground level drainage. The windowpanes are broken throughout. The two front windows have security mesh fixed on the exterior and the remaining windows have been boarded on the exterior. Each panel of the east side door is split and the hardware has been removed. There is evidence of termite activity.

The interior fabric is in fair condition despite the obscene graffiti that covers most surfaces.

Library (1940)

The library extension is a brick and iron construction on the south west side of the main building, on the double street corner of the site. The face brick is laid in a stretcher bond. The north west and south west walls are rendered to a height of 0.900 metres. The gambrel hipped roof, clad with corrugated iron, extends in a skillion across the connecting corridor, to connect to the south west side of the main building. The brick chimney is detailed with moulded stucco. The library is a simple rectangular building with a corridor on the north east side, connecting to the adjoining billiard room and the main building and with access to the front and rear of the site. The two street

facades are brick construction. They are balanced facades with regular openings, mostly windows, except for a door at the west end of the Wellington Street frontage. The main entry door is recessed between the main building and the library, with a weatherboard wall detail in line with the Wellington Street library frontage. The door is a four-panel door with sidelights and fanlights. All the windows are timber framed double hung eight pane sashes with an arched header detailed in double header courses, with rendered sills. Security mesh has been installed to the exterior of all the windows.

The interior comprises two rooms. The first room is accessed from the door on the left of the corridor, and the second room is accessed from the first. The interior fabric is mostly in place. The floors are 0.100 metre (4") tongue and groove jarrah boards. All the walls, except the one on the north west that is common with the billiard room, are hard plaster against brick. The other wall is plasterboard on a timber stud frame. The ceiling is lined with battened plasterboard. There is a back-to-back fireplace with no mantle or surround details remaining.

Library - Condition

Structurally the building appears to be sound. There is considerable evidence of rising damp on the interior and exterior walls. The roof sheets need refixing. The timber detailing is badly weathered. The gutters are rusted and full of debris and the downpipes are either missing or ineffective. There is no evidence of adequate water discharge from the roof, or any ground level drainage. Many of the windowpanes are broken. The interior fabric is in fair condition except for areas that have been vandalised, namely, floorboards that have been burnt and a plasterboard wall with a hole broken through it. Most wall surfaces are covered in graffiti. There is evidence of termite activity.

Billiard room (1940)

The billiard room extension is a timber framed, weatherboard clad construction on brick piers, with a gambrel hipped roof, clad with corrugated iron, that extends across the connecting corridor. The brick chimney is revealed on the exterior of the Morrell Street frontage, and is detailed with moulded stucco at the top. The billiard room a simple square building with a corridor on the north east side, connecting to the adjoining library and the main building, and also the front and rear of the site. The three external facades are clad with painted weatherboards. The facades are balanced with regular openings. The Morrell Street façade has the central brick chimney flanked by a window each side, and the rear has two windows. All the windows are timber framed double hung eight-pane sashes with an arched header detailed in double-header courses, with rendered sills. Security mesh has been installed to the exterior of all the windows. The windows on the external sides have a timber awning with minor roof cladding. The rear corridor door is detailed as for the front door, being of four panels with sidelights and fanlight. The door into the billiard room is four panelled with the top two panels glazed, and there is a fanlight above.

The interior is a single room accessed from left of the corridor. The interior fabric is mostly in place. The floors are 0.100 metre (4") tongue and groove jarrah boards. All the walls are vertical tongue and groove jarrah to dado height with plasterboard above, with a picture rail at window head height. The ceiling is lined with plasterboard. Two rows of decorative air vents run

the length of the room. The mantelpiece and surround has been removed from the fireplace.

Billiard room- Condition

Structurally, the building appears to be sound. The weatherboards and timber detailing are badly weathered with flaking paint, split boards and bare timber. The roof sheets need refixing. The gutters are rusted and full of debris and the downpipes are either missing or ineffective. There is no evidence of adequate water discharge from the roof, or any ground level drainage. Many of the windowpanes are broken. The interior fabric is in fair condition with no graffiti, although one wall is damaged and the back entrance door and fanlights have been badly damaged and are boarded up. There is evidence of termite activity.

Cabins

On the north east side of the main building are two railway cabins end to end with a central connecting corridor that accesses the side door of the main building. The central corridor is also the only access into each of the cabins. The cabins are timber framed and weatherboard clad. They are elevated from the ground and supported on timber and railway line stumps. They each have a curved corrugated iron roof. The interiors are lined with timber on the floors, walls and ceilings. The windows are timber framed double hung sashes. A kitchen unit has been fitted into the north cabin (1990s).

Cabins - Condition

Structurally the cabins appears to be sound. The external weatherboards and timber detailing are badly weathered with flaking paint, split boards and bare timber. The roof sheets need refixing. There are no gutters or evidence of adequate water discharge from the roof, or any ground level drainage. The windows and door are boarded. The interior fabric is in fair condition with no graffiti.

Overall, the place is in fair condition. It is vacant. Structurally the place appears to be sound although the front of the main building shows some evidence of differential settlement. Internally, the place is mostly intact and in fair condition. There is evidence of termite activity and rising damp, but the most damage has been caused by vandals who have been able to access the place and inflict wilful damage and graffiti.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION³¹

Railway Institute, Northam is the oldest dedicated Railway Institute building in the State, having been constructed for the purpose in 1898. The Perth Railway Institute building in Wellington Street was constructed in 1897, but it was built to house the Metropolitan Water Works Board and was not occupied by the Institute until 1979.

Other Railway Institute buildings constructed in Western Australia included Kalgoorlie (1900), which burnt down and was rebuilt in 1934; Midland (1910); Merredin (c.1920); Narrogin (1929); Bunbury (new building in 1959); Collie (new building in 1956); and Geraldton (1900, not extant). The association of Railway Institutes still operates with active branches at Northam, Geraldton, Narngulu, Merredin and Bunbury, and headquarters in Perth.

³¹ HCWA assessment documentation No. 2146, Railways Institute Building (fmr); WA Railway Institute journal published under various titles; *WAGR Annual Reports*; HCWA database.

13. 4 REFERENCES

WAGR, Northam Railway Institute property file 01364, Vols. 1 & 2.

National Trust assessment prepared by Julia Ball and David Kelsall, July 1997.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH
