



## 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)

- 3.21 Entertaining for profit
- 3.23 Catering for tourists
- 8.1.1 Playing and watching organised sport
- 8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests
- 8.11 Making Australian folklore

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

- 311 Hospitality industry and tourism
- 405 Sport, recreation and entertainment

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

The buildings at *Subiaco Oval* include the *Subiaco Oval Gates*, which is a small-scale well executed Inter-War Art Deco style building, a well-recognised landmark since its construction in 1935. (Criterion 1.1)

The buildings at *Subiaco Oval* reflect over 25 years of design to accommodate player and spectator facilities and employ a diverse range of design and construction techniques, brought into visual harmony by a uniform approach to the decorative and seating treatments. The more recent stands (1999-2000) achieve a pleasing composition and are visually distinctive set pieces. (Criterion 1.1)

*Subiaco Oval* is a large and imposing set of structures, with the main elements being landmarks on a major rail and road route, while the lighting towers may be seen against the skyline from many vantage points several kilometres away. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from 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.  
For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

*Subiaco Oval*, one of the oldest surviving League Football ovals in Western Australia, has been in continuous use for its intended purpose since 1908 to the present (2017), and served as the premier football oval in the State since the mid-1930s. (Criterion 2.1)

Since Western Australia entered the Victorian, later Australian, Football League in 1986, *Subiaco Oval* has been the prominent football ground in the State used for national league football matches. (Criterion 2.1)

*Subiaco Oval* was established in a period of expansion of league football in the first decade of the twentieth century in the wake of the Western Australian gold boom when the rapid increase in population brought with it an influx of Australian Rules Football enthusiasts from eastern Australia, in particular Victoria, when Subiaco was developing as a suburb of Perth. (Criterion 2.2)

*Subiaco Oval* is associated with the *National Fitness Act 1941*, which aided and funded Clubs of the WA National Football League to use their facilities to conduct national fitness and recreational exercise classes to promote the value of physical fitness and well-being in the community. (Criterion 2.2)

From its inception, *Subiaco Oval* was associated with the Subiaco Football Club (to 2003) and the local government authority now known as the City of Subiaco, and has been closely associated with the Western Australian Football League since the mid-1930s. (Criterion 2.3)

*Subiaco Oval*, through the commemorative naming of grandstands and entry gates to the respective stands, has associations with well-known Western Australian football players, including those whose names are commemorated by the names of stand entrances, and suites within the stands. (Criterion 2.3)

Harold Krantz, well known Western Australian architect, was responsible for the design of the reconstruction of *Subiaco Oval* in 1938. Daryl Jackson and Peter Hunt Architect were responsible for the design of the principal oval facilities in their present form. (Criterion 2.3)

*Subiaco Oval* has undergone more change and has a higher standard of facilities than any other Australian Rules Football oval in the State as a consequence of its role as the State's premier football oval, and the current playing surface has been specifically established to meet the exacting standards of the AFL competition. (Criterion 2.4)

### 11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Subiaco Oval* is highly valued as the State's former premier league football oval, which was the home ground for West Coast Eagles and Fremantle Dockers, the venue for grand final games in the WAFL competition, and the home ground of WAFL team, the Subiaco Football Club, from 1908 to 2003. (Criterion 4.1)

*Subiaco Oval* contributes to the Western Australian community's sense of place as the best known oval in the State, and a well-known local landmark on Roberts Road and Hadyn Bunton Drive. (Criterion 4.2)

## 12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

### 12. 1. RARITY

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## 12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

*Subiaco Oval* is a good example of a major sporting venue designed to accommodate a large number of spectators and reflects stadium design motifs characteristic of the late twentieth century. (Criterion 6.1)

*Subiaco Oval* is representative of the growth of Subiaco and development of the town and later city's facilities, the growth and development of Western Australian and later Australian Football League football. (Criterion 6.2)

## 12.3 CONDITION

*Subiaco Oval* reflects its use as a former major football venue. The cumulative effect of management has been for the almost complete redevelopment of the ground and its facilities. The historic *Subiaco Oval Gates* and facilities at *Subiaco Oval* are generally well maintained. Maintenance practices generally have not detracted from the gates, but will have disturbed archaeological evidence of past iterations of the place. Generally the place is in good condition.

## 12.4 INTEGRITY

Until its closure in 2017, *Subiaco Oval* retained its primary purpose, though it evolved to accommodate its increased use and contemporary requirements, and consolidated as a football oval rather than general sporting ground. In terms of its historic and social values the place retains a high degree of integrity.

## 12.5 AUTHENTICITY

*Subiaco Oval* has undergone much change. While functions remain in a similar configuration to the original intent, the fabric that accommodates the functions is, with the exception of the *Subiaco Oval Gates* and some plantings such as the Hills Figs, the product of a series of construction campaigns that commenced in 1969. Overall the place retains a low degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The supporting evidence is based on the heritage assessment compiled by Robin Chinnery, Historian and Philip Griffiths, Architect, in January 2004, with amendments and/or additions by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and the Register Committee.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Subiaco Oval* comprises the main oval playing surface (1908 and later), *Subiaco Oval Gates* (1935), former Subiaco Oval Football Club (1971), a sequence of two and three tier grand stands (1969-2000), support facilities, car parking, and landscaped areas. *Subiaco Oval* is an oval shaped grass playing surface designed for Australian Rules Football. In 1908, the Subiaco Council established the oval as a cricket and football ground within a wider recreational reserve.

The site of *Subiaco Oval* is located within the area historically occupied by the Whadjuk People, one of the Noongar People of the south west of Western Australia that have occupied the region for at least 40,000 years BP. Whadjuk land covered much of what is now the Perth Metropolitan area north of Kwinana as far as Yanchep and as far east as Bakers Hill. In this area, the Whadjuk engaged in traditional activities such as fishing, camping, collecting and processing the resources of the land and waters, attending gatherings and meetings and teaching young people about Noongar country. They also protected and maintained a range of important cultural sites, men's and women's places, meeting places, and totemic sites and areas associated with the mythological figure and story of the *Wagyl*.<sup>1</sup>

Following the foundation of Perth on 12 August 1829, the townsite was laid out between Mount Eliza and Heirisson Island, facing the Swan River on the south, with a chain of swamps and lagoons to the north.<sup>2</sup> By the 1870s, the city centre of Perth was consolidated on the grid laid out in the early surveys.<sup>3</sup> Construction and opening of the Eastern Railway from Fremantle to Perth and thence to Guildford (1881) resulted in a shift in focus from the river port to the areas in the vicinity of Perth Railway Station.<sup>4</sup> From the 1880s, much of the area in proximity to the Railway Station was developed with small businesses and there was also expansion north of the railway line in the area later known as Northbridge.<sup>5</sup> The initial sub-division for the future suburb of Subiaco lay between the railway and

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- <sup>1</sup> National Native Title Tribunal Registration Test Decision – Whadjuk People 11 October 2011, downloaded on 29 August 2017 from [http://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleClaims/RegistrationDecisionDocuments/2011/October%202011/WC11\\_9-1%2011102011.pdf](http://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleClaims/RegistrationDecisionDocuments/2011/October%202011/WC11_9-1%2011102011.pdf);  
R. H. Pearce, M Barbetti, 'A 38,000-Year-Old Archaeological Site at Upper Swan, Western Australia', *Archaeology in Oceania*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Oct., 1981), pp. 173-178
- <sup>2</sup> Campbell, Robin McK. in Pitt Morrison, Margaret, and White, John (eds.) *Western Towns and Buildings* University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 104 as cited in *Kensington Maternity Hospital - Assessment Documentation*, Heritage Council of Western Australia
- <sup>3</sup> ibid; & Stannage, C. T. *The People of Perth* Perth City Council, Perth, 1979, p. 235 as cited in *Kensington Maternity Hospital - Assessment Documentation*, Heritage Council of Western Australia.
- <sup>4</sup> Pitt-Morison, Margaret in Stannage, C. T. (ed.) *A New History of Western Australia* University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1981, p. 532 as cited in *Kensington Maternity Hospital - Assessment Documentation*, Heritage Council of Western Australia.
- <sup>5</sup> Sewerage, City of Perth, PWDWA 5647/14 and 15, 1896-1902, on microfiche at SROWA as cited in *Kensington Maternity Hospital - Assessment Documentation*, Heritage Council of Western Australia.

the park reserve (King's Park) and comprised large lots of four to ten acres in area.<sup>6</sup>

In 1883, a survey of allotments near Perth shows the Commonage, Reserve 591A, part of which would be the future site of *Subiaco Oval*.<sup>7</sup> In May 1885, the Western Australian Football Association was formed, but it was transformed in the 1890s, as the influx of population during the Western Australian gold boom brought many men from Victoria who were enthusiastic and skilled footballers. In autumn 1896, a meeting was called to gauge local interest in the formation of a Subiaco football team for the forthcoming season. On 31 March 1896, a large crowd at Victoria Hall, Rokeby Road, unanimously supported the formation of the Subiaco Football Club.<sup>8</sup> The committee elected included President Henry Doyle, first Chairman of Subiaco Roads Board (1896) and first Mayor of Subiaco (1897); among five Vice-Presidents, Charles Hart, Secretary of Subiaco Progress Association (1895-96) and Chairman Subiaco Local Board of Health (1896), who later succeeded Doyle as Mayor; and Treasurer, Sid Grace, Head Teacher at Subiaco School, and later Secretary of the Club. It was decided that a deputation would seek assistance from the Progress Association to obtain 'a suitable site for a recreation ground'.<sup>9</sup>

The newly formed club successfully applied to join the First Rate Junior Association, and Charles Hart sought approval for a permanent recreation area for use as a home ground. The club was advised matches could be held on the western portion of the Commonage, between the railway reserve and Mueller Road (later re-named Roberts Road), the future site of *Subiaco Oval*, 'a sandy, weedy waste', which consequently became known as the 'sand patch'.<sup>10</sup> In this period, Perth City Council administered the commonage and tenure could not be formalised as Subiaco Road Board was still in the process of being established and the needs and wishes of the proposed local government body were not known. During the period that the ground was being prepared, the club practised at a ground near the former Benedictine Monastery (later Catherine McAuley Family Centre) in Wembley in 1896.<sup>11</sup>

On 26 March 1897, Subiaco was proclaimed a municipality. The population of the district continued to grow rapidly. Football and cricket clubs thrived and were well supported by the Council under Doyle, and later Hart, ably assisted by the town clerk and municipal engineer, Alexander Rankin, a former football player for West Perth. The Council applied for a long term lease at Mueller Road, but were offered a term of only 10 years, which was considered too short to warrant the costs of development, so an alternative was sought. Reverend Hewson, one of the club's vice-presidents, led a group which obtained permission from the owner, George Shenton, to utilise part of what was known as Dyson's Swamp (later known as Shenton Park Lake) in West Subiaco (later re-named Shenton Park) for playing fields. The Shenton Park Cricket Club was duly established. Subsequently, the Subiaco Council arranged with Shenton to exchange a parcel of nearby land that was better suited to housing for the low lying recreation area at Dyson's Swamp, which became 'the municipality's major public sporting

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<sup>6</sup> Morison, Margaret Pitt in Pitt Morrison, Margaret, and White, John (eds.), op. cit., p. 48, as cited in *Kensington Maternity Hospital - Assessment Documentation*, Heritage Council of Western Australia..

<sup>7</sup> Suburban Allotments near the City of Perth, marked out and opened for sale, October 1883, drawn by surveyor George Rotton. Copy held at Subiaco Museum.

<sup>8</sup> *West Australian* 1 April 1896.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*; and Spillman, Ken *Diehards: The Story of Subiaco Football Club 1896-1945* (Subiaco Football Club Inc., Subiaco, 1998) pp. 2-4.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*.

facility', and, from 1898, the home ground for the Subiaco Football and Cricket Clubs, the latter merging with Shenton Park Cricket Club in September 1898.<sup>12</sup>

From 1900, the Shenton Park recreation area declined due to the rising water table. In 1901, the Western Australian Football Association (WAFA) expanded from four to six teams with the admission of Subiaco and North Fremantle. Five matches were played at Shenton Park in that season, but the ground was most - unsatisfactory, and was not used for football fixtures in 1902-04.<sup>13</sup> In 1903, a plan of Subiaco shows the future site of *Subiaco Oval* as 'cricket Ground', the purpose for which the site was being used at that period.<sup>14</sup> On 19 August 1904, Reserve A9337 (Subiaco) Perth, Suburban Lots 406 and 446, the future site of *Subiaco Oval*, was vested in the Mayor and Councillors of the Municipality of Subiaco in trust for recreation purposes, with the power to lease the whole or any portion of the said Reserve for a period not exceeding 21 years from the date of the lease.<sup>15</sup>

In 1905, fixtures at Shenton Park were cancelled as the ground was flooded. Subiaco Council, the football club and WAFA recognised that it would not be possible to develop it to the required standard.<sup>16</sup> In 1905, re-growth scrub was cleared from the 'sand patch' at Mueller Road to reduce "the cover for undesirable characters".<sup>17</sup>

In 1906, Subiaco Council secured the land between Axon and Hamilton Streets and Subiaco and Mueller Roads for a multipurpose recreational reserve, which in July 1906 was formally named 'Mueller Park'.<sup>18</sup>

By July 1906, when it was announced that Subiaco Council had agreed to set aside for improvements to Mueller Park, 'with the object of the ground being used for football and cricket', construction of 'the most up-to-date training sheds' had commenced.<sup>19</sup> The *West Australian* noted the ground was convenient to train and tram services, and reported that local sources had 'confidently asserted' the place would become 'an ideal football ground.'<sup>20</sup>

On 11 August 1906, it was reported that £350 was being expended on Mueller Park.<sup>21</sup> In mid-August, tenders were called for excavation and filling at the site, and work duly commenced. It was anticipated that the oval would be ready for senior football matches next season.<sup>22</sup> However, progress was slow, and it was not ready until 1908.<sup>23</sup>

While the oval was under construction, other parts of Mueller Park were also developed. The eastern portion, between Coghlan and Hamilton Street, was fenced late in 1906 and planted as a pedestrian parkland, with gravelled paths

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12      *ibid*, pp. 10-11.

13      *ibid*, pp. 20-21, p. 27 and p. 36.

14      Plan of Subiaco, W. A. Uniform Plan Series, Battye Library Map Collection 292C, 1903.

15      *Government Gazette* 19 August 1904, p. 8.

16      Spillman, Ken *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21 and p. 27.

17      Mayor's Report, 1905, Subiaco Council files, quoted in *ibid*, p. 37.

18      *West Australian*, 26 July 1906, p.9, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/25684245>

19      *West Australian* 21 July 1906.

20      *West Australian* 21 July 1906.

21      *ibid*, 11 August 1906.

22      *ibid*, 18 August 1906.

23      Spillman, Ken *op. cit.*, p. 37.

lined with trees added a year later.<sup>24</sup> Bowling greens and tennis courts for local use were constructed between this park and the oval.<sup>25</sup>

In April 1908, the new oval, was inspected by football league officials, who declared that 'as a recuperative green in wet weather, it ought to prove equal to Fremantle Oval'.<sup>26</sup> The Subiaco Council deferred an official opening pending the erection of a grandstand. On 18 April, Subiaco played Cottesloe (later Claremont) in a practice football match, the first recorded football game at the newly made ground. On 9 May, Subiaco and East Perth played the first league game at the oval, which was attended by 'a large number of local people', and the local Subiaco Fire Brigade, providing 'a festive atmosphere'.<sup>27</sup> In the same year, the name of the Football Association was changed to the Western Australian Football League (WAFL).<sup>28</sup>

In 1908-09, between football seasons, a jarrah timber grandstand to seat 550 people, with change-rooms underneath was built at a cost of £850, a picket fence was erected around the oval, 'a well-advanced carpet of couch grass' was established, the sloping banks were established to provide vantage points for spectators in the outer area, and trees were planted at a total cost to Subiaco Council of £2,000.<sup>29</sup> The timber picket fence served for more than 25 years.<sup>30</sup> Bench-style seats were planned for the area beyond the perimeter fence, and the banks were to be planted with lawn. It was estimated that the overall capacity of the venue was 15,000 to 20,000 people. On 17 April 1909, two weeks prior to commencement of the 1909 season, the grandstand was officially opened.<sup>31</sup> 'Mark' reported in the *West Australian*:

Such a ground as that now claimed by Subiaco was badly wanted in the metropolitan district, which has been notoriously deficient in the number of good playing reserves for any sport. ... it is quite on the cards that the Subiaco Oval will return almost right away a handsome interest on the money spent upon it, particularly if the W. A. Football League can see its way clear to allot it some of the big events towards the end of the winter.<sup>32</sup>

Subiaco Cricket Club also moved to the new oval upon its completion. The team was admitted to the A Grade league in the 1910-11 season, and from 1911-12 to 1929-30 played as Subiaco-Leederville Cricket Club, after which it returned to just 'Subiaco'.<sup>33</sup>

Other State sporting associations also set themselves up within Mueller Park in the establishment period. The WA Croquet Association established its metropolitan centre east of the oval, near the bowling greens, with its lawns opened in May 1910.<sup>34</sup> In May 1911, the WA Lawn Tennis Association opened

<sup>24</sup> *West Australian*, 1 November 1906, p.5, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/25644194> and 24 August 1907, p.3, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/25711114>; *Daily News*, 5 September 1907, p.1, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/77841138>

<sup>25</sup> *West Australian*, 6 August 1908, p.6, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/28848147> and 23 January 1908, p.6, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/28837009>

<sup>26</sup> *West Australian* 25 April 1908.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, 11 May 1908; and Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> *Football Budget* May 1956, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *West Australian* 17 April 1909.

<sup>30</sup> Photograph from Barry Strack collection, 1934, reproduced in Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Spillman, Ken *ibid*, pp. 43-44; and *The Football Budget* 1 March 1939, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> *West Australian* 17 April 1909.

<sup>33</sup> Subiaco Floreat Cricket Club webpage <http://www.sfcc.asn.au/About-History.aspx?rw=c> accessed 1 May 2015

<sup>34</sup> *Western Mail*, 7 May 1910, p.36, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/37405022> ; *West Australian*, 3 May 1910, p.7, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/26256021>



an extensive complex of courts, along with a clubhouse, within the reserve west of the oval.<sup>35</sup>

The move to Mueller Park and development of the oval opened opportunities to Subiaco Football Club, which won its first premiership in 1912. Subiaco Council might be well pleased with its investment, as revenue for the oval increased from £69 in 1910, to £723 in 1912, enabling the Council to budget for annual improvements to the place. In 1913, additional seating was fitted in the grandstand, extra showers and communal hot baths were installed in the change-rooms, the banks in the outer were developed, and new goal posts, 35 ft. high, purportedly the tallest in Western Australia, were erected.<sup>36</sup>

Subiaco Council decided at its meeting of 26 July 1916 to rename Mueller Park as 'Kitchener' and Mueller Road as 'Roberts', the latter after a former Council member on active service at the time.<sup>37</sup> It is believed the change of name was due to anti-German sentiment in response to World War One. During the war, the oval and parts of Kitchener Park were used for rifle drills and as a rifle range.<sup>38</sup>

Prior to this, Subiaco Oval was sometimes referred to as 'Mueller Park', especially in newspaper notices of football fixtures. However, once the wider reserve was renamed 'Kitchener Park' the oval appears to have been exclusively referred to as 'Subiaco Oval'.<sup>39</sup>

In August 1921, the Council agreed to a request from their newly appointed municipal gardener to set aside about half an acre of Kitchener Park as a street tree nursery.<sup>40</sup> This was soon known as the 'Municipal nursery' and gardener Mr Bruce tended several hundred seedling trees as well as seed beds for flowers and a tobacco bed.<sup>41</sup> The nursery, northeast of the oval, appears to have been removed in the 1950s.<sup>42</sup>

By 1922, the original grandstand at *Subiaco Oval* had fallen into disrepair. A local referendum of ratepayers approved the Municipality of Subiaco raising a loan of £5,000 to provide better accommodation for spectators and players with the construction of a new pavilion, to accommodate 1,500 people, which was built at a cost of £6,500 in 1923. The pavilion, predicted to be 'a great asset to that natty little ground', was completed in time for *Subiaco Oval* to host the football final between East Fremantle and East Perth on 29 September 1923.<sup>43</sup>

Through its early years, Subiaco Football Club was well served by several notable men, some of whom served also on the Subiaco Municipal Council, and who exerted considerable influence on the development of Subiaco Oval. Henry Daglish, politician and Premier of Western Australia, after whom the suburb of Daglish was named, was Club president 1903-06 and 1911. Lionel Boas, Mayor and councillor of Subiaco, was treasurer, secretary, and vice president at various periods. John Scaddan, Premier of Western Australia and president of the Club 1912-19 and 1921-26, and William Allanson, who had played for Richmond in

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35 *West Australian*, 22 May 1911, p.7, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/26340685>

36 Spillman, Ken op. cit., pp. 45-61.

37 *Daily News*, 27 July 1916, p.8, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/84649002>

38 *Daily News*, 25 August 1915, p.2, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/80923603> and *West Australian*, 1 March 1917, p.3, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/27291591>

39 Various newspaper articles and notices, 1910s-1940s.

40 *West Australian*, 16 August 1921, p.8, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/28000681>

41 *Daily News*, 22 October 1923, p.6, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/78325117>

42 Aerial photographs, 1953 and 1965, Landgate mapviewer

43 *W. A. Footballer* 30 June 1923, quoted in Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 93; and *The Football Budget* 1 March 1939, p. 8.



1895 and served as vice-president, secretary and president at various periods, were also most influential figures.<sup>44</sup>

From the outset, *Subiaco Oval* was used for much more than just football. It was the home ground for the Subiaco Cricket Club until 1964. The ground was used for both school and amateur athletics training and meets, hockey games and training, baseball, boxing, wrestling, band competitions, marching girls, church services, cultural events and charity concerts. Rugby was played at Subiaco Oval when particularly large crowds were expected, but WA Rugby Union was based at Prowse Park.<sup>45</sup>

In 1932, the State football league changed its name to West Australian National Football League (WANFL), the name it retained until reverting to WAFL in 1980.<sup>46</sup>

Over the years, numerous complaints had been made to the Subiaco Council about the inadequacy of the turnstiles at *Subiaco Oval* for the number of spectators, and although stop-gap measures were adopted in efforts to alleviate the situation, the problem continued.<sup>47</sup> In 1935, the Council decided that 'the provision of a modern entrance to the Subiaco Oval would be an appropriate work' to commemorate the Jubilee of King George V in the town.<sup>48</sup> On 13 August 1935, tenders were presented to the Council.<sup>49</sup> The location selected for the proposed entrance gates was at the south-west corner of the ground, at the corner of Townhsend (now Hadyn Bunton Drive) and Roberts Roads. The architect of the building was A. R. Wright, and the builder was F. Hahn.<sup>50</sup> The two limestone gate houses, with the brick entrance way between them, with concrete floors, and with a Marseilles tile roof, were constructed in the spring of 1935, at a cost of £1,000.<sup>51</sup> Twelve 'state-of-the-art' turnstiles were installed.<sup>52</sup>

On 5 October 1935, the *West Australian* announced:

New entrances to the oval have been erected on the corner of Townshend-road (sic) and Roberts-road (sic) and other gates will be closed. The Mayor of Subiaco (Mr. H. L. Downe) will declare the new turnstiles open at 1.30.<sup>53</sup>

On 8 October, the Mayor reported that 'everything went off satisfactorily, the crowd being dealt with without the least congestion.'<sup>54</sup> This entrance served as the main entrance to Subiaco Oval until the construction of the new stands in the late 1980s, and continues as a secondary entrance to the present (2015).

By late 1935, *Subiaco Oval* was recognised as one of the finest sporting venues in Western Australia, and had hosted numerous football finals and interstate games.<sup>55</sup> The WANFL and the Subiaco Council negotiated to establish the

<sup>44</sup> Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 100 and pp. 188-192.

<sup>45</sup> Subiaco Council Minute Books, SROWA Cons 1330 Items 39-43 and Cons 1900 Items 10-12.

<sup>46</sup> Christian, Geoff, *The Footballers: from 1885 to the West Coast Eagles*, St George Books, Perth, 1988, p.20; West Australian Football League Annual Report, 1979, p.23; WAFL Annual Report, 1987, p.15.

<sup>47</sup> Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>48</sup> Mayor's Report, 1935. Quoted in Spillman, Ken *Identity Prized: A History of Subiaco* (University of Western Australia, Nedlands, 1985)p. 257; and *W. A. Footballer* 5 October 1935; Minutes Book, Subiaco Council, 1932-36, op cit., 9 July 1935. Note: as the report is no longer extant, it has not been possible to ascertain the details of what it comprised.

<sup>49</sup> Minutes Book, Subiaco Council, 1932-36, op cit., 13 August 1935.

<sup>50</sup> Plaque at Subiaco Oval Gates, site visit by Robin Chinnery, 19 August 1999.

<sup>51</sup> Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *The West Australian* 5 October 1935, p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> Minute Book, Subiaco Council, 1932-36. PROWA Cons. 1330 An 305 Item 39, 8 October 1935.

<sup>55</sup> Spillman, Ken op. cit.

headquarters of the League at *Subiaco Oval*. On 7 April 1936, it was agreed that the Council would erect 'a Grandstand and Club premises', which would be leased on completion to the League for 21 years, with an option of renewal, and also that the League would be granted a 'limited licence to use the playing oval'.<sup>56</sup> It was "the outcome of a long and cherished ideal to place the control of football, both socially and financially, on a basis commensurate with the greatness and popularity of Australia's national game."<sup>57</sup> Prior to this arrangement, the WANFL had to regularly reapply to Subiaco Council to use Subiaco Oval for games and training, and although preference was usually granted to football over other uses, this was not universally the case.<sup>58</sup> The league headquarters and a new members' stand were duly erected. On 19 September 1936, on the day of the semi finals, the new stand was first used, and the stand and headquarters were officially opened on Grand Final Day, 10 October 1936.<sup>59</sup> The WANFL was unique in Australia in the pre-World War Two period, as the 'Only Football Authority with Its Own Headquarters'.<sup>60</sup> *Subiaco Oval* has continued in use as the headquarters of the League through to the present (2015).

On 9 March 1937, the Indenture was signed whereby *Subiaco Oval* was leased to the WAFNL as agreed in 1936. The League became responsible for the repair and maintenance of 'the demised premises but more particularly all buildings thereon and all fences and gates appertaining to the demised premises'.<sup>61</sup> The League commenced a programme to develop the oval with the eventual aim 'to have adequate provision ... for ... crowds up to 80,000'.<sup>62</sup>

In March 1938, Harold A. Krantz, Architect, drew plans for the Proposed Reconstruction of *Subiaco Oval* for Subiaco Municipal Council, which show the oval gates at the corner of Roberts and Townshend Roads, with new fencing to be erected from the northern gatehouse to extend along the Townshend Road block, and an existing stone wall along Roberts Road from the aforementioned gates.<sup>63</sup> The major work proposed was a semi-underground tunnel to be erected in front of the main grandstand whereby spectators would be able to pass from one end to the other without interfering with the occupants of the stand.<sup>64</sup> In 1939, a street plan shows *Subiaco Oval* with the two grandstands to the north and north-west of the oval, the main entrance, and the minor entrance gate from May Avenue, near the corner of Roberts Road.<sup>65</sup>

In the late inter-war period, the timber picket fence around the oval perimeter was replaced with a tube and cyclone wire fence.<sup>66</sup>

In July 1941 the federal government passed the *National Fitness Act 1941* making federal funds available at a local level through state based national fitness

<sup>56</sup> Indenture between Municipality of Subiaco and the Western Australian National Football League (Incorporated), 9 March 1936.

<sup>57</sup> *The Football Budget* 4 May 1936, quoted in Spillman, Ken op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Subiaco Council Minute Books, SROWA Cons 1330 Items 39-43 and Cons 1900 Items 10-25.

<sup>59</sup> *The Football Budget* 1 March 1939; and Spillman, Ken ibid.

<sup>60</sup> *The Football Budget* 22 July 1939, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> Indenture between Municipality of Subiaco and the Western Australian National Football League (Incorporated), 9 March 1936.

<sup>62</sup> *The Football Budget* 22 July 1939, p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Harold A. Krantz, Proposed Reconstruction of Subiaco Oval for Subiaco Municipal Council, March 1938. PROWA Cons. 1901 AN 305 Item 1901/11.

<sup>64</sup> Harold A. Krantz Proposed reconstruction of Subiaco Oval, and Specifications for construction of a tunnel at Subiaco Oval ... SROWA Cons. 1903 AN 305 Items 1903/11 and 1903/2, 1938, respectively.

<sup>65</sup> Advertisement in *The Football Budget* 8 July 1939, reproduced in Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>66</sup> Photograph from Allan Wilkinson collection, reproduced in Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 160.

councils which coordinated promotional campaigns, programs, education and infrastructure for physical fitness. The Commonwealth Council for National Fitness administered the funding for the six state councils.<sup>67</sup>

In Western Australia, the Act enabled the coordination and expansion of services and organisations concerned with physical fitness in order to promote the value of physical fitness and cooperate with local authorities in the provision of recreational and training facilities. Clubs of the WA National Football League began conducting national fitness and recreational exercise classes at the Claremont, Subiaco, Leederville, Perth and Bassendean Ovals and the WACA.<sup>68</sup> As part of the program, demonstrations were given at Subiaco Oval by leaders in national fitness and community folk dancing.<sup>69</sup> These activities continued until the 1970s when National Fitness Councils were phased out.

WANFL matches were not held between 1942 and 1944, as so many players had joined the armed forces. An underage competition operated in their place until the League competition resumed in 1945.<sup>70</sup>

In the post-World War Two period, the income from *Subiaco Oval* increased markedly, with League dividends more than doubling in the period 1948-55. Various other sporting events were held at the place outside the football season, including Inter-State lacrosse games in 1947. In 1955, professional tennis and boxing events were held at *Subiaco Oval* between football seasons, and income from catering rights increased accordingly.<sup>71</sup>

Subiaco Council maintained turf wickets for cricket at *Subiaco Oval* throughout this period despite the WANFL lobbying for their removal. Council considered the ground a 'strong centre of cricket' in the State.<sup>72</sup>

In 1953, the oval at *Subiaco Oval* was dug up and then re-surfaced.<sup>73</sup>

In 1957, a Sewerage plan shows *Subiaco Oval* and the entrance gates little changed since the late 1930s. The central oval playing ground is bounded by a perimeter fence and surrounded by grassy slopes, with the Members' Stand and Public Stand at the north and north-west, with various small associated buildings, including lavatories. At the north-east, there are tennis courts, the care-taker's residence and minor buildings, including a shed, garage and shade house.<sup>74</sup> East

<sup>67</sup> Julie Collins and Peter Lekkas, 'Fit for purpose': Australia's National Fitness Campaign', *Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol. 195 (11) 2011, pp. 714-716

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2011/195/11/fit-purpose-australia-s-national-fitness-campaign#8>

<sup>68</sup> *West Australian*, 21 June and 12 July 1941

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/47152208?searchTerm=fitness%20subiaco%20oval&searchLimits=l-state=Western+Australia>

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/47149107?searchTerm=national%20fitness%20subiaco&searchLimits=l-state=Western+Australia>

<sup>69</sup> *West Australian*, 19 October 1945

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/47848198?searchTerm=lathlain%20housing%20oval&searchLimits=l-state=Western+Australia>

<sup>70</sup> Christian, Geoff, *The Footballers: from 1885 to the West Coast Eagles*, St George Books, Perth, 1988, p.37.

<sup>71</sup> Spillman, Ken *Diehards: The Story of the Subiaco Football Club 1946-2000* (Subiaco Football Club, Subiaco, 2000) p. 30; and Inter-State Lacrosse, Southern Cross Newsreels, in Battye Library.

<sup>72</sup> *The West Australian*, 27 August 1945, in Subiaco Council newspaper clippings files, SROWA Cons 1330 Item 32, p.124.

<sup>73</sup> Spillman, Ken *ibid*, p. 23.

<sup>74</sup> Metropolitan Sewerage Municipality of Subiaco SROWA Cons. 4156 Item 172A, March 1957.

again, there are tennis courts and bowling greens with their associated buildings at Kitchener Park.<sup>75</sup>

In the period 1953-63, league football thrived, attendances records were set annually, and in 1963, more than 250,000 people attended matches at *Subiaco Oval*.<sup>76</sup>

From 1956, the WANFL exercised its option for a further 21 year lease on the *Subiaco Oval*, thereby confirming the status of the place as the headquarters of football in Western Australia. As attendances increased, pressure grew for the provision of more seating and better facilities. Proposals were made for new change-rooms in association with plans to build a new grandstand. In spring 1961, after Subiaco Council voted to raise a loan for this purpose, a petition of ratepayers forced a referendum on the issue, which rejected the proposed loan, perceiving the proposed new grandstand as primarily serving the community beyond Subiaco.<sup>77</sup> In 1963, Subiaco Football Club requested Subiaco Council consider separate provision for new change-rooms. The Council approved the design and construction of a new 'club pavilion' comprising change-rooms, secretary's office, medical room and committee room, built at the Council's expense, at a cost of \$30,000. The new flat topped building was officially opened by Joseph Abrahams, Mayor of Subiaco, on 1 June 1963.<sup>78</sup>

Turf wickets at *Subiaco Oval* were removed in time for the 1965 football season, following Subiaco Cricket Club relocating to Rosalie Park.<sup>79</sup> Around the same time, the courts of the WA Lawn Tennis Association, west of the oval, were removed, and some of the croquet and bowls playing greens and clubrooms to the east were also removed.<sup>80</sup>

In the 1960s, temporary seating had to be erected to accommodate finals crowds at *Subiaco Oval* as the stands were inadequate, an unsatisfactory situation for the WANFL. In 1967, WANFL began negotiating with the City of Perth for use of *Perth Oval* in future finals and interstate football matches, with WANFL prepared to raise a loan to finance development there.. However, in December 1967, League delegates voted to retain *Subiaco Oval* as League headquarters.<sup>81</sup>

On 7 June 1968, it was advised in the *Government Gazette* that the Subiaco Council 'may lease portion of Reserve A 9337, Perth Suburban Lots 406 and 466 without calling public tenders', allowing the further lease of *Subiaco Oval* to the WANFL.<sup>82</sup> The use of *Subiaco Oval* as the headquarters of the WAFNL brought status and ensured maintenance of the playing surface and improvement of spectator facilities. However, the WANFL's operation of licensed premises excluded Subiaco Football Club from the lucrative source of income that other clubs enjoyed from the liquor trade. After unsuccessful efforts to amalgamate with Scarborough Sportsmen's Club, a strong campaign was waged to establish the Club's own licensed premises at *Subiaco Oval*. In 1968-69, the Club applied to Subiaco Council to build a licensed social hall. The Council rejected the proposal

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<sup>75</sup> Metropolitan Sewerage Municipality of Subiaco SROWA Cons. 4156 Items 172 and 178, March 1957.

<sup>76</sup> Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>77</sup> Spillman, Ken ibid, pp. 97-98; and *Subiaco Gazette* 26 October 1961.

<sup>78</sup> Spillman, Ken ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Works and General Purposes Committee, 22 September and 13 October 1964, Subiaco City Council Minute Book, Cons 1900 item 15, July 1963-Dec 1964, pp.475-76 & 499.

<sup>80</sup> Aerial photographs, 1965 and 1974, Landgate mapviewer

<sup>81</sup> Spillman, Ken ibid, p. 138.

<sup>82</sup> *Government Gazette* 7 June 1968; and Secretary for Local Government to Town Clerk, Subiaco, 13 June 1968.

as the WANFL's plans for development of *Subiaco Oval* included renovations to the members' stand and improvements to the bar area at a cost in excess of \$30,000.<sup>83</sup> In June 1968, it was reported that the WANFL and Subiaco Council had agreed that a new stand be erected at the western end of *Subiaco Oval*, for which the Council would raise a loan of \$500,000, with the WANFL responsible for repayments.<sup>84</sup> The tiered concrete stand, with three levels of seating to accommodate more than 7,500 spectators, was duly built. On 30 August 1969, at the last qualifying match of the season, it was opened to the public for inspection and a free trial, before the official opening by the Minister for Works and Water Supplies, Ross Hutchinson, on 31 August.<sup>85</sup>

In 1970, concrete terracing was built at a cost of \$37,000 on the Roberts Road side of *Subiaco Oval* to provide seating for 14,000 people.<sup>86</sup> In May 1970, the construction of a new two storey building, comprising a social hall, dining room, bar areas and sporting facilities, on a site adjoining the existing clubrooms, was approved. Subiaco Council provided a \$200,000 loan to Subiaco Football Club, to be repaid over 20 years. Commencement of work was delayed until after provisional licence was granted by the Licensing Court in January 1971. 'Subiaco Football and Sporting Club Inc.' opened for trading in the new building on 7 July 1971.<sup>87</sup>

Subiaco Football Club recognised that use of *Subiaco Oval* as the venue for football finals and Inter-State games offered opportunities to increase their income. In addition, the place was used in the non-playing season as a venue for various events, including pop concerts. In July 1977, it was reported that the WANFL was considering a long-term lease of the place. In late November 1978, it was reported that the WANFL proposed expending \$5 million on improvements to the place.<sup>88</sup> In spring 1979, the club agreed to lease the ground to the WANFL, who would re-develop the ground, and the WANFL became the official ground manager of the oval in December. It was the first time in Western Australia that a football league ground had passed out of the control of the local government authority.<sup>89</sup> In January 1980, the WANFL awarded a tender for \$3.16 million for a major development project of the place to J. O. Clough & Co., which increased to \$4 million by July that year.<sup>90</sup>

In July 1980, Subiaco Council renamed the eastern portion of the original recreation reserve, which had remained a park since it was first laid out in 1906, as 'Mueller Park'.<sup>91</sup>

In 1980, Subiaco Football Club acquired signage rights to the oval, although it met with some resistance from the WAFL and other league clubs. The acquisition brought large increases in sponsorship income from \$27,000 in 1980, to \$123,000 in 1983, enabling the Club to return a profit.<sup>92</sup> Signage became a highly visible feature of the place.

<sup>83</sup> Spillman, Ken *ibid*, pp. 137-140.

<sup>84</sup> Spillman, Ken *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>85</sup> Spillman, Ken *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>86</sup> Spillman, Ken *ibid*, p. 140.

<sup>87</sup> Spillman, Ken *ibid*, pp. 137-141.

<sup>88</sup> *West Australian* 12 July 1977 and 29 November 1978.

<sup>89</sup> *Subiaco City News* Vol. 7, 21 December 1979; *Subiaco Post* 28 November and 5 December 1979; and *West Australian* 27 and 28 September and 6 December 1979

<sup>90</sup> *West Australian* 17 January and 12 July 1980.

<sup>91</sup> State Heritage Office, preliminary review for P17469 Mueller Park, April 2007

<sup>92</sup> Spillman, Ken *op. cit.*, pp. 213-214.

A review of the WAFL in 1983-84 recommended that Subiaco Oval become a State Government financial responsibility, which was subsequently adopted.<sup>93</sup>

In 1986, Western Australia elected to join the Victorian Football League, with West Coast Eagles the initial team. The Eagles were based at *Subiaco Oval* and played their first game in the VFL competition at the ground on 29 March 1987. As the headquarters of Western Australian football, *Subiaco Oval* became the venue for matches in what became the Australian Football League (AFL). As the national competition came to the fore, interest in the WAFL declined.<sup>94</sup>

Following reconstitution in 1989, the Western Australian Football Commission (WAFC) endeavoured to extend its control over *Subiaco Oval*, enabling it to increase returns generated through majority ownership of West Coast Eagles. The State Government agreed to the Commission's request to intervene 'to cancel all previous contracts affecting operations at the ground', and announced its intention to introduce legislation accordingly.<sup>95</sup> At the insistence of Subiaco Football Club, the Commission agreed in principle that the Club's rights would be 'no less than what they enjoyed before', whereby the Club's tenure would continue to 2001.<sup>96</sup> Under the Heads of Agreement executed on 6 February 1991, 'Subiaco Football Club would continue to hold a licence to play at Subiaco Oval until 2011 - an extension of ten years.'<sup>97</sup> In return for an indexed annual payment, the Club relinquished its signage rights.<sup>98</sup>

On 8 September 1991, the West Coast Eagles played Hawthorn at *Subiaco Oval* in the first AFL finals match to be played in Western Australia.<sup>99</sup>

In 1992, the WAFC's planning document *W. A. Football 2000: A Plan for the Development of Australian Football in W. A.* envisaged a re-distribution of football clubs throughout the metropolitan area. As the Commission undertook development of *Subiaco Oval* for AFL use it was obvious that "Subiaco Football Club does not fit into the W.A.F.C.'s future plans for Subiaco Oval."<sup>100</sup> Accordingly, Subiaco Football Club investigated alternate future options.

Around this time, Hadyn Bunton Drive was created west of *Subiaco Oval*, and Axon Street terminated at Roberts Road. The new road lay diagonally across the land used in earlier years by the WA Lawn Tennis Association.<sup>101</sup> Hadyn Bunton Drive honours Hadyn Bunton Snr. Played football for Subiaco Football Club 1938-41, and his son, Hadyn Bunton Jnr. played football for the Club 1968-71, and was coach 1968-72 and 1984-92, made a life member of the Club in 1988.

In the mid-1990s, the master plan for the re-development of *Subiaco Oval* included the restoration of the oval gates.<sup>102</sup> In 1995-96, restoration works on the gates included removal of the moulded lettering and most of the original 1935 turnstiles were replaced with new ticket and turnstile fittings.<sup>103</sup>

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- 93 Christian, Geoff, *The Footballers: from 1885 to the West Coast Eagles*, St George Books, Perth, 1988, p.154.
- 94 Spillman, Ken op. cit., pp. 236-237 and p. 254.
- 95 Spillman, Ken op. cit., p. 254.
- 96 *ibid.*
- 97 *ibid.*, p. 255.
- 98 *ibid.*
- 99 *Sunday Times* 30 March 1997, p. 2.
- 100 Ernst & Young 'Draft Report: Relocation Review: Subiaco Football Club Inc.' July 1998, quoted in Spillman, Ken *ibid.*, p. 270.
- 101 Aerial photographs, 1985 and 1995, Landgate Mapviewer
- 102 Jeffery Ovens, Western Australian Football Commission, conversation with Robin Chinnery, 19 August 1999.
- 103 Jeffery Ovens and Wayne Bradshaw with Robin Chinnery, 19 August 1999.

In 1995, the *Subiaco Oval* entrance gates were included in the City of Subiaco's Municipal Heritage Inventory.<sup>104</sup>

West Australian's second AFL team, the Fremantle Dockers, entered the competition in 1995. Although based at Fremantle Oval, the team used Subiaco Oval as its 'home' ground for AFL games.<sup>105</sup>

The remaining sporting facilities between *Subiaco Oval* and Mueller Park were removed c.1995. The area was subsequently lawned and used for overflow parking, and is known as Kitchener Park.<sup>106</sup>

In 1997, installation of lights at *Subiaco Oval* by Transfield Construction at a cost of \$3.75 million to enable night games was an innovation in this State, 'to propel football in WA into the next century.'<sup>107</sup> Construction of the four 65 metre high light towers was 'perhaps the most high profile' of the company's projects and was entered in the Master Builders' Excellence in Construction Awards.<sup>108</sup>

In November 1997, after a proposal to build a new \$40 million soccer and rugby stadium was put in doubt by the demise of the Perth Reds rugby league team, the WAFC advised the State Government it would host soccer games at *Subiaco Oval*, provided some funding was contributed towards the re-development of the place.<sup>109</sup>

In July 1998, it was reported that the WAFC was awaiting government approval for a scheme whereby a mortgage-style loan, which involved the AFL, West Coast, BankWest and the State Government, would finance the \$35 million re-development of *Subiaco Oval*, which would include demolition of the existing WAFL Members stand, and construction of a new, enclosed, two-tier stand stretching from the southern stand to the two-tier concrete stand on the northern side of the ground, increasing the seating capacity of the place to 43,500.<sup>110</sup> The planning, design and contract documentation work was undertaken by Daryl Jackson and Peter Hunt Architect. Subsequently, in October 1998, John Holland was awarded the contract to build the new \$33 million grandstand at the eastern end of the ground, to seat 15,000, which also incorporated offices, an indoor swimming pool, changing facilities, function rooms and catering facilities.<sup>111</sup> The grandstand removed the last standing room spectator area at the ground.<sup>112</sup>

On 12 January 1999, Swan Location 12732 on Land Administration Plan 19514, part Reserve 41874, the site which includes *Subiaco Oval* and the entrance gates, was reserved for the purpose of Sporting Ground, Telecommunications Facility, Entertainment and Ancillary or Beneficial Uses, with the care, control, and management vested in the City of Subiaco, with the power to lease for any term not exceeding 99 years, subject to the consent of the Minister for Lands.<sup>113</sup> Subsequently, the place was leased again to the Western Australian Football

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<sup>104</sup> City of Subiaco Municipal Heritage Inventory, 1995.

<sup>105</sup> Fremantle Dockers website <http://www.fremantlefc.com.au> accessed 30 April 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Aerial photographs, 1985, 1995, 2000, Landgate Mapviewer

<sup>107</sup> *West Australian* 31 March 1997, p. 1; and *Sunday Times* 30 March 1997, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> *West Australian* 27 May 1998, p. 64.

<sup>109</sup> *West Australian* 11 November 1997, p. 3.

<sup>110</sup> *West Australian* 15 July 1998, p. 150.

<sup>111</sup> *West Australian* 21 October 1998, p. 60.

<sup>112</sup> Domain Stadium website <http://www.patersonsstadium.com.au/about/history> accessed 1 May 2015

<sup>113</sup> Certificate of Crown Land Title, Swan Location 12732 on Land Administration Plan 19514, Vol. 3093 Fol. 159, 12 January 1999.



Commission Incorporated (formerly the Western Australian National Football League) for the period from 11 June 1999 to 22 August 2090.<sup>114</sup>

Members of the community voiced concerns regarding the future of *Subiaco Oval* and the entrance gates, including the Subiaco Past Players Association' and Officials' Association, which wrote to the Heritage Council of Western Australia in early 1999, requesting that the place should be considered for entry in the State Register of Heritage Places.<sup>115</sup> Tom Dixon, President of the Subiaco Past Players' Association, wrote:

It is my belief that the old Subiaco entrance gates have a type of beauty and architectural design which of the same time reminding us all of the wonderful bygone days also supply a beautiful contrast with the not so beautiful "modern concrete stands".<sup>116</sup>

In 2000, the entrance gates were entered on the State Register.<sup>117</sup>

In early 2000, video screen scoreboards were erected at *Subiaco Oval* at a cost of \$3 million.<sup>118</sup> In 2000, for the first time the Western Australian soccer team Perth Glory played its home games at *Subiaco Oval*.<sup>119</sup>

In March 2001, a new 28 square metre mural painted by Gina Moore, comprising 13 panels highlighting the history of *Subiaco Oval*, entitled 'Grass Roots', was unveiled at the place. A WA 2001 Community Centenary Project, it was 'a collaboration between the City of Subiaco and the football commission'.<sup>120</sup>

In August 2001, Subiaco Football Club agreed in principle to a proposal that it move its home ground from *Subiaco Oval* to Leederville Oval, which it was proposed would serve also for home games for the East Perth Football Club, and for Perth Glory to be based at Perth Oval. In October, the Town of Vincent approved this proposal.<sup>121</sup>

In 1998-2001, the hardness of the playing surface at *Subiaco Oval* came under scrutiny after a spate of serious knee injuries to players, and requests were made to soften it. Consequently, after the playing season finished, the ground was scarified followed by a large coring programme in October, and rye grass was sown in December. In March 2002, the ground general manager was able to report that the aim had been achieved, and the surface was softer than at any time since it had been re-laid. He noted that the ground was 'one of the most heavily used in the AFL', and would become harder during the season.<sup>122</sup>

In 2003, the State Government refused a request from the Western Australian Cricket Association (WACA) for \$2 million for up-grading media facilities, which would duplicate existing facilities at *Subiaco Oval*. The government proposed to rationalise sport at Perth's two major sporting stadiums with the establishment of two 'drop-in' cricket pitches at *Subiaco Oval* for the playing of international cricket

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114 Certificate of Crown Land Title, Swan Location 12732 on Land Administration Plan 19514, Vol. 3093 Fol. 159, Second Schedule, 11 June 1999.

115 Tom Dixon, President of Subiaco Past Players' Association, to the Manager, HCWA, February 1999.

116 Tom Dixon, President of Subiaco Past Players' Association, to the Manager, HCWA, February 1999.

117 Media statement, 13 April 2000. Battye Library 354.94107 MED.

118 *West Australian* 19 January 2000, p. 152.

119 *West Australian* 10 May 2000, p.158.

120 *West Australian* 5 March 2001, p. 6; and Media statement, 2 March 2001. Battye Library 354.94107 MED.

121 *West Australian* 16 August and 31 October 2001, p. 58 and p. 10 respectively.

122 *West Australian* 15 July 1999, p. 66, 19 July 2001, p. 58, and 21 March 2002, p. 69.

matches; however, the WACA rejected the proposal.<sup>123</sup> An artist's impression shows an aerial photograph of *Subiaco Oval* with the proposed cricket pitch super-imposed at the centre of the playing ground.<sup>124</sup>

In 2003, mobile telephone company, Crazy John's offered \$5 million to the WAFC for naming rights sponsorship of *Subiaco Oval*. However, this did not eventuate following much public outcry over the proposal, and the Subiaco City Council's unwillingness to allow external signage at the ground.<sup>125</sup>

The Subiaco Football Club played its last home game at *Subiaco Oval* in 2003, before re-locating to *Leederville Oval* from the 2004 season.<sup>126</sup> Subsequently, WAFL games were no longer played at *Subiaco Oval*, with the exception of the grand final and occasionally other finals.

An Australian national rugby union competition was initiated in 2004, with the Western Australian team 'Western Force' based at *Subiaco Oval* from 2005 to 2009. From 2010, the team relocated to Perth Oval, but international Rugby matches continued to be played at *Subiaco Oval*.<sup>127</sup>

Structural reports in 2010 suggested structural deterioration of the oval gates, and a conservation plan for the 1936 gates was subsequently prepared.<sup>128</sup>

In 2011, the WA State Government announced a commitment to construct a new major stadium at Burswood, with AFL football and other major events to be relocated from Subiaco to the new facility. Earthworks for the new stadium began in 2014 and the ground is scheduled to be formally opened early in 2018.<sup>129</sup> Negotiations between the Perth Stadium operator (Venues Live), AFL users, the WAFC and the State government were protracted. In October 2017, the WAFC announced that negotiations with the State Government had been finalised resulting in a medium term commitment for accommodation of the WAFC at Subiaco Oval.<sup>130</sup>

From 2010 to 2014, *Subiaco Oval* was known as 'Paterson's Stadium' as a result of a naming rights contract with stockbroker Paterson's Securities.<sup>131</sup> From 2015, a three-year contract with real estate company The Domain Group saw the oval renamed as 'Domain Stadium'.<sup>132</sup>

In January 2015, a stolen car fleeing police crashed into *Subiaco Oval Gates*, causing significant damage. Heritage advice was sought and, in March 2015, the Heritage Council approved proposed conservation works to rectify the damage.<sup>133</sup>

On 13 June 2017, the State Government announced that it will construct a new inner city secondary school at Kitchener Park, adjacent to *Subiaco Oval*, as part of a wider plan to transform the area into a new community precinct. The new

<sup>123</sup> *West Australian* 21 June 2003, p. 176.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid*, p. 172.

<sup>125</sup> Reports in *West Australian*, *Sunday Times* and *Claremont -Nedlands Post* winter 2003, including *West Australian* 5 September 2003, p. 3.

<sup>126</sup> Subiaco Football Club webpage [www.sfcions.com.au](http://www.sfcions.com.au) accessed 30 April 2015

<sup>127</sup> [www.rugby.com.au](http://www.rugby.com.au) accessed 30 April 2015

<sup>128</sup> Stephen Carrick, Conservation plan for 'Gate 19, Subiaco Oval', 2011 (draft)

<sup>129</sup> WAFC, *Annual Review*, 2011, p.2, and 2014, pp.4&18.

<sup>130</sup> WAFC webpage <http://www.wafootball.com.au/news/13559/state-government-negotiations-finalised>, accessed 6 December 2017

<sup>131</sup> WAFC, *Annual Review*, 2010, pp.3-4

<sup>132</sup> WAFC, *Annual Review*, 2014, p.4

<sup>133</sup> ABC news online, 'Subiaco Oval heritage-listed gates damaged in crash', <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-01-04/subiaco-oval-heritage-listed-gates-damaged/5999112> 4 January 2015 accessed 1 May 2015; SHO file P05478vol2

precinct will include new housing, mixed-used developments and the retention of the Subiaco Oval playing field.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Subiaco Oval* comprises the main oval playing surface (1908 and later), *Subiaco Oval Gates* (1935), Subiaco Oval Football Club (1971), a sequence of two and three tier grand stands (1969-2000), support facilities, car parking, and landscaped areas, surrounding an oval-shaped grass playing surface designed for Australian Rules Football. In 1908, the Subiaco Council established the oval, then slightly smaller and without stands etc. as a cricket and football ground.

*Subiaco Oval* is located to the north-east of the city centre and is on two major transport routes, with the Perth to Fremantle railway to the north, and the one-way east-bound road artery Roberts Road to the south. It is in a residential and parkland context, with Kitchener and Mueller Parks to the east, residential property and the railway to the north along Roberts Road, and parkland associated with the Subiaco Redevelopment Authority area to the west of Haydn Bunton Drive, and finally residential development on the south side of Roberts Road.

The oval has four major light standards and these features can be seen from a great distance in most directions. Once in the vicinity of the oval, the stands and light standards are visually dominant elements, with the landscape context playing a minor visual role, while providing some local amenity for passers-by and patrons.

The immediate setting of the oval includes the oval and stands that occupy the majority of the site, the north-west entry gate, former Subiaco Football Club to the west of the stands, an expanse of car parking to the west of the football club, the *Subiaco Oval Gates* (1935) in the south-east corner of the site, the road reserve to the south, parking and access to the east, together with Kitchener Park and Coghlan Road, and the Subiaco Road road reserve to the north.

The car parking to the west of the oval is a mix of barrier kerbs, bitumen and slab pavings, with plantings of Hills Figs (*Ficus hillii*), Marri (*Eucalyptus calophylla*), Peppermint Trees (*Agnois flexuosa*), and Spotted Gums (*Eucalyptus maculata*). There are slab paved areas along Haydn Bunton Drive together with a small number of plantings, including Box Trees, a group of Hills Figs inside the linkmesh oval fence, a Fiddlewood (*Citharexylum fruticosum*), Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*) and Tamarisk (*Tamarix spp.*).

Roberts Road is a two lane east bound road with bus setdowns along the north side and street plantings in groups that include Spotted Gums (west), Illawarra Flame Trees (*Brachychiton excelsia*) (centre), Weeping Figs (*Ficus bengimena*) (centre), Marri (east), and Paperbark Trees (*Melealeuca spp.*) (far east). The oval buildings are built right up to the road reserve and shade the footpath for much of the length of the southern boundary. Paving is generally two tone brick and is associated with the construction of the stands.

Subiaco Road is a cul-de-sac road, with residences on the north side, a two way road and slab paved footpaths, and plantings of Ash Trees, Spotted Gums and the like. Paving for much of the length of the road is plane red brick, with in situ concrete paving at the western end of the road.

The elements are arranged with a central playing surface surrounded by two and three tier stands and continuous pitched seating stands in concrete construction, a series of entrances, some of which are named after prominent past players and football officials (Whinnen-Dempsey, John Todd, Peter Tannock, Merv

MacIntosh, Steve Marsh and Jack Sheedy) and others simply named by their purpose (Two and Three Tier Stand Entrance, Two Tier Stand Entrance, Subiaco Oval Gates Entrance). Gates are also numbered, so that Subiaco Oval Gates are 'Gate 19' and the entrance to the WAFC's offices is Gate 6. One of the stands (south) is named ANZ stand. There is a major entrance to the playing surface from the streets in the north-east corner. There are facilities built into the stands under the seating including The Eagles and Dockers Shops and Administration (south-east), Oval Administration (north-east), Caterer's facilities, and players and umpires facilities.

The internal plan arrangement consists of the playing surface with goal posts at the eastern (city) end and western (Subiaco) end, with a vehicle access in the north-east corner, then a spectator barrier, and stepped spectator stands with flip up plastic shell seating, concrete aisles and gangways and galvanized steel handrails. The seating is divided into aisles, with access ways connecting under the stands, and discharging to either ground enclosures or the street. The seating tiers are not continuous and are broken on the northern side by private boxes, lounges, suites and media suites, and on the southern side by private boxes and suites. There is a large electronic scoreboard over the southern side of the ground.

The grandstands were constructed over a 30 year period and reflect a variety of planning and architectural solutions, employing a range of materials. During the course of the upgrading in the latter half of the 1990s, these structures were given a common decorative treatment, so that the main colours are provided by polychromatic brickwork, the uniform palette of paint colours and standard pattern seating. These treatments produce visual harmony.

### **Oval Surface (1908 to present)**

Established in 1908, the oval surface was oriented on an east-west axis and this layout has been maintained. The grass surface, substrate, dimensions of the playing surface, goal posts and boundary definition methods have changed on numerous occasions over time. Spectator viewing banks and concrete standing areas have been removed to make way for the present stadium format.

### **Subiaco Oval Gates (1935)**

The gates are located on the south-west corner of the site, on the corner of Haydn Bunton Drive and Roberts Road in a concrete paving slab setting. *Subiaco Oval Gates* is a single storey limestone, brick and tile building designed in the Inter War Art Deco style. The façade is arranged in an A, B, A, C rhythm and the central bay is further divided into major and minor bays. There are eight gates that feed the turnstiles, arranged in a central pair at then three each side, then two sets of limestone construction ticket offices. The principal flanking elements are the symmetrical ticket offices, which are limestone clad with a limestone plinth, plain raised corner stops and a stepped parapet. The limestone is pillow faced and tuck-pointed. The roof is covered with Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles.

### **Three Tier Stand (1969)**

The Three Tier Stand is located on the western side of the ground and is the tallest building at the oval, though it is dwarfed in height by the four lighting towers at the eastern and western ends of the ground. The stand is predominantly concrete construction, with concrete columns, pre-cast concrete tiers, concrete access stairs, and a metal deck roof. The roof is pitched off the external structure via columns that extend above the parapet line and a suspension structure picks

up the load of the inclined main roof beams, leaving the stadium side column free. The seating is arranged on four levels, three above the ground and the backs of the seating tiers is left open and unadorned. During the course of upgrading, the previously unpainted concrete structure has been painted to match the other stands around the ground. The seating is part of a seating system that has been installed all around the ground and it comprises a fixed back and flip up seat.

### **Subiaco Football and Sporting Club Inc (fmr) (1971)**

The club is located on the north west corner of the site and is set a short distance off the Two Tier Stand. The former Subiaco Football and Sporting Club building is a two-storey concrete framed and concrete infill block building with a near flat metal deck roof, with aluminium framed windows, metal fascia's, and concrete stairs with concrete balustrades. The style is based on International Style principles, with the floors divided into a series of plates that translate on the exterior as a recessed predominantly solid ground floor, with the first floor cantilevered over it, comprising a solid eastern end and a banded western end comprising a spandrel panel, a strip of glazing and a fascia panel. Stairs on the western end and a cantilevered terrace on the southern side provide some sculptural relief to the otherwise restrained building lines.

The ground floor is a tall structure designed to accommodate gym facilities and squash courts, while the first floor structure is lower scaled, accommodating bars and social rooms.

### **Two Tier Stand (1980)**

The Two Tier Stand is located on the north western side of the ground and abuts the Three Tier Stand. Like the latter, the stand is predominantly concrete construction, with concrete columns, pre-cast concrete tiers, concrete access stairs, and a metal deck roof. The roof is pitched off the external structure. The seating is arranged on three levels, two above the ground. The top tier soffit is unlined, but the remaining outer face is enclosed, with strip and roof light style windows providing lighting to the galleries, toilets and spaces under the seating. The concrete structure has been painted to match the other stands around the ground.

There is a simple single storey gate complex associated with the stand, built to a flattened 'U' shaped plan fading on to Subiaco Road. It comprises gate, turnstiles, and a large forecourt area and on the interior a broad set of steps that lead up to the stands. There are player and service facilities under the stand.

### **Light Towers (1997)**

There are four light towers in the ordinal 'corners' of the ground. These comprise a tall tapered internally accessible tower, and a fan-shaped lighting gantry with four tiers of horizontal access ways. The four towers focus lights over the whole playing surface.

### **City End Stands (1999-2000)**

These stands are designed to a very similar pattern, providing seating, private boxes, and suites. They are concrete construction stands, with shrouds to the outer faces in polychromatic brickwork, with aluminium joinery and metal faced wall panels. The stands are largely open to the interior, with the exteriors being composed of more solid than void. The stands are made of precast concrete, with perforated columns extending above the roof line to provide a point of attachment for a suspension member that carries the cantilevered roof. The upper tier is mainly solid, with porthole type windows providing some visual relief. Galleries under the stands are enclosed with glazing. At the eastern end of the building,

there is a series of ramps that are enclosed with metal cladding and mesh. These elements are designed to reflect the function, so that the geometry of the building envelope comprises a number of inclined planes that follow the ramp slopes. At the base of much of the perimeter of the stands, there is a two-storey polychrome brick structure that provides the principal entrance access, suites, the rear of private boxes, and service spaces. There is vehicle access under the stands in the north-east corner.

### Temporary Structures

There are numerous transportable structures located near entrances at a number of points around the ground. They are generally small, metal sheet clad and readily re-locatable.

There is no physical evidence of the earliest work noted in the documentary evidence. Given the large amount of ground disturbance that was required to achieve the present playing surface and buildings, it is unlikely that there is any significant archaeological evidence to be revealed. The earliest surviving structure is *Subiaco Oval Gates* from 1935.

Generally the place is maintained to high standards and the condition appears to be good.

## 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

From the first decade of the twentieth century, football ovals were developed in Perth, Fremantle and suburbs, and grandstand facilities were built at those which were used for the league competition. The most notable extant timber grandstands are the Victoria Pavilion at *Fremantle Oval* and the Bill Walker and R. A. McDonald grandstands at *Bassendean Oval*, which have been entered on the State Register. In the latter half of the twentieth century, at most football ovals the early timber grandstands were demolished when new masonry construction grandstands and supplementary shelters of steel and cladding were developed similar to those at Subiaco. Likewise, few of the original oval gates have survived into the twenty-first century. The exceptions include those at *Perth Oval* (P02992) and *Bassendean Oval* (P07403) and *Subiaco Oval Gates* (1935), entered on the State Register of Heritage Places (P05478) as an individual place.

The standard form of football ovals established in the early to mid-twentieth century was a central playing ground, surrounded by a relatively narrow flat area for standing spectators and/or timber bench seating, then grassed banks on which most spectators sat to view the game, with a grandstand built in a prime location to provide covered seating at a higher admission cost and/or for club members. *Subiaco Football Oval* followed this pattern for much of the twentieth century.

There are four football ovals or places associated with football ovals, entered on the State Register:

- P02992 *Perth Oval*, (currently known as nib Stadium) dating from c. 1910,
- P07403 *Bassendean Oval*, dating from 1927; and
- P15464 *Fremantle Oval*, constructed from 1897,
- P05478 *Subiaco Oval Gates* (1936).

*Subiaco Oval* was not only the home ground for Subiaco Football Club (until 2003), but the premier ground for the Western Australian football competition, and the home ground for the clubs participating in the AFL competition, namely

West Coast Eagles and Fremantle Dockers. Consequently, the playing surface at *Subiaco Oval* and the various facilities, including grandstands, have been progressively up-graded and re-developed in the late twentieth century to meet the standards necessary for this role, which sets it apart from other Australian rules football ovals in Western Australia.

The Western Australian Cricket Association Ground in East Perth is a similar facility to *Subiaco Oval*. However, it has a smaller playing surface and although used for Australian Rules Football in the early days of the national competition, it was found to be too small for the game in the context of other facilities used for the game. The ground is lit for night use in a similar manner to *Subiaco Oval*. The WACA Ground has a smaller seating capacity than *Subiaco Oval*. It reflects similar design and construction techniques to *Subiaco Oval*.

*Perth Oval* and Leederville Ovals received major upgrades in the early part of the twenty-first century, the former to accommodate the requirements of soccer and rugby and the latter to accommodate the requirements of the WAFL. The former significantly altered the playing surface and the manner in which spectators view the game, while the latter maintains the form of the ground and significantly improves player and spectators facilities.

#### 13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

#### 13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research on the original purpose of Commonages, as land held in common, often used for the purpose of pasturing animals may provide useful additional information. Further research specifically on the establishment and role of the Subiaco Commonage may reveal additional information about earlier passive and active recreational activities at the place.

Further research in records held by the Subiaco City Council, Subiaco Football Club and the WAFC would reveal further information about the place.

Further research may reveal whether *Subiaco Oval* has particularly strong associations with specific player groups, e.g. Aboriginal players, players from migrant backgrounds, women's AFL players, and umpires etc.