



**HERITAGE  
COUNCIL**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## **REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES**

### **Register Entry**

1. **DATA BASE No.** 1985
2. **NAME** *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth (1879; 1986)*
3. **LOCATION** 500 Hay Street, Perth
4. **DESCRIPTION OF PLACE INCLUDED IN THIS ENTRY**
  1. Part of Reserve 39908 being portion of Lot 500 on Deposited Plan 65049 and part of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 3157 Folio 84; Part of Reserve 39908 being Lot 502 on Deposited Plan 57040 and the whole of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 3147 Folio 709;
  2. Lot 503 on Deposited Plan 57040 being the whole of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 3147 Folio 710;
  3. Portion of Hay Street Road Reserve;together as shown on HCWA survey drawing 1985 prepared by Midland Survey Services.
5. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA** City of Perth
6. **OWNER AT TIME OF DECISION**
  1. State of Western Australia  
(Responsible Agency: Department of Justice; Management Order: Attorney General; Lessee: Western Liberty Group Pty Ltd)
  2. State of Western Australia  
(Dedicated Road- Responsible Agency: Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage)
  3. State of Western Australia  
(Road Reserve: City of Perth)

## 7. HERITAGE LISTINGS

• Register of Heritage Places:	Interim	16/10/1992
	Amendment to interim	25/06/2019
	Registered	26/11/2019
• National Trust Classification:	Classified	03/12/1984
• Town Planning Scheme:		-----
• Municipal Inventory:	Adopted	13/03/2001
• Register of the National Estate:		-----
• Aboriginal Sites Register		-----

## 8. ORDERS UNDER SECTION OF THE ACT

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## 9. HERITAGE AGREEMENT

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## 10. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

*St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth*, a single storey rendered masonry front wall of a hall (now demolished) and portico in the Victorian Academic Classical style, has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

the place was the first purpose-built hall for public entertainment in Perth until the construction of more elaborate venues in the 1890s following Western Australia's Gold Boom;

the Victorian Academic Classical architectural style of the portico is relatively rare in Western Australia;

the construction of the place symbolises the evolution of Perth and Western Australia from a struggling colonial outpost with limited economic resources and population, into one that had become viable through the introduction of convicts and the assisted migration program; and,

the retention of only the façade and portico of St George's Hall is reflective of the attitude to the conservation of heritage places in Western Australia in the mid-1980s.

Recent landscaping elements, including street trees and benches are of low significance. The new court building is not within the curtilage of this place.



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### **Assessment Documentation**

#### **11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

##### **PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)**

- 3.21 Entertaining for profit
- 4.1.5 Developing city centres
- 4.6 Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities
- 8.1 Organising recreation

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

- 107 Settlements
- 106 Workers (including Aboriginal, convict)
- 307 Intellectual activities, arts and crafts
- 405 Sport, recreation and entertainment
- 407 Cultural activities
- 602 Early settlers

#### **11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history;**

St George's Hall was the first purpose-built hall for public entertainment in Perth. Built in 1879, it was the major venue for theatrical performances prior to the construction of more elaborate theatres during Western Australia's Gold Boom.

The retention of the façade of St George's Hall in the mid-1980s is indicative of the attitude to the conservation of heritage places in Western Australia at this time.

St George's Hall, and its stylistic reference to an elaborate classically derived architectural style, symbolises the growth and increasing sophistication of Western Australia during the late nineteenth century.

#### **11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage;**

The Victorian Academic Classical architectural style is relatively rare in Western Australia.

The façade and portico of St George's Hall are all that remains of Perth's first purpose built hall for public entertainment. As such, it is one of the few reminders of this aspect of Perth's early cultural life.

**11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;**

The façade of St George's Hall is representative of the style of architecture considered appropriate for public buildings in colonial Western Australia.

**11(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;**

*St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* is a landmark on Hay Street and is a reminder of the development of Perth. As such, it has some social value to the community.

**11(f)<sup>1</sup> Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;**

The façade of St George's Hall is a good example of the Victorian Academic Classical style of architecture. The proportions of the portico and the detailing of the Corinthian columns are pleasing to the eye.

*St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* is a landmark on this section of Hay Street, where the majority of the colonial and federation architecture has been replaced by concrete and glass high rise developments.

**11(g) Any special association it may have with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in Western Australia's history;**

The prominent legal firm of Edward Stone and Septimus Burt funded St George's Hall, and the portico was designed by Henry Charles Prinsep. All three men were prominent in the public and social life of colonial Perth.

**11(h) Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;**

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

The high degree of technical excellence in the column capitals is an achievement of note, particularly considering the size and isolation of Perth in the 1870s.

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1 CONDITION**

Overall, *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* is in good condition

### **12.2 INTEGRITY**

As a remnant of a former building, *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* has a moderate to high degree of integrity. The purpose for which the façade and portico of the building was retained, as a reminder of Perth's cultural heritage and a past architectural style, remains intact. However, the demolition of the hall has detracted from the integrity of the place as its former function, that of a purpose built entertainment venue, is no longer readily discernable.

### **12.3 AUTHENTICITY**

Notwithstanding conservation works, *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* is largely intact and therefore has a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage in July 2008, and updated physical evidence completed by Stephen Carrick, Carrick & Wills Architects Pty Ltd, in 2010 with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Settled in 1829, Western Australia developed slowly and the number of colonists had risen to only 4,654 by 1850 when convict transportation commenced to help alleviate labour and infrastructure shortages.<sup>2</sup> As part of the agreement to becoming a penal colony, Western Australia also received an equal number of assisted migrants, as part of a program provided by the British government.<sup>3</sup> By the time transportation ceased in 1868, population figures had increased considerably, and natural population growth, as opposed to transportation and immigration, became the major determinant of growth.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1870s Perth's population had increased enough that the 'respectable classes' had grown large enough to warrant the construction of a theatre, with this group finding the time for leisure activities.<sup>5</sup> The construction of *St George's Hall* followed other prominent events such as the foundation of the Weld Club (1871), and the construction of P2095 *Government House* (1863) further solidifying the powerful position of the colonial gentry.

Built in 1879, *St George's Hall* was the first purpose built theatre in Perth, although by this time amateur theatricals were performed in the Mechanic's Institute (1852) and the P1953 *Perth Town Hall* (1870), with plays and performances having been one of the main forms of public entertainment since the foundation of the Swan River Colony in 1829.<sup>6</sup>

The legal firm of Stone and Burt, who had their offices next door, funded the construction of the hall. The land was actually owned by Edward Stone, who had inherited it from his father, George Frederick Stone, a few years earlier.<sup>7</sup>

Septimus Burt (1847-1919) was born in the West Indies and educated at a private school in England and from 1861, at Bishop Hale's school in Perth. He was admitted to the Western Australian Bar in 1870 after serving as an articled clerk to G F Stone. He was taken into partnership by (Sir) Edward Stone, the son of his former mentor, in 1876. Stone & Burt soon became one of Western Australia's leading legal firms. Septimus Burt served as a member of the Legislative Council in the 1870s, the City of Perth Council in the 1880s and the Legislative Assembly

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<sup>2</sup> Bush, Fiona, *The Convicts' Contribution to the Built Environment of colonial Western Australia between 1850-1880*, PHD Diss., Bentley: Curtin Univ., 2012, p.49.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Bush Fiona, 2012, p148.

<sup>4</sup> Appleyard, R.T., *Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth, 1850-1914*. In Stannage, C.T. (ed) *A New History of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, p. 216

<sup>5</sup> C T Stannage, *The People of Perth: a social history of Western Australia's capital city*, Perth City Council, 1979, p. 152.

<sup>6</sup> C T Stannage, *The People of Perth: a social history of Western Australia's capital city*, Perth City Council, 1979, passim.

<sup>7</sup> 'St George's Hall: a conservation study', prepared by the Building Management Authority of Western Australia, 1991. Edward Stone and Septimus Burt became joint owners of the property in 1898.

in the 1890s. He was also appointed a QC in the late 1880s. Septimus Burt was appointed Attorney-General after Western Australia achieved Responsible Government in 1890. He effectively retired from politics and public life in 1897 to concentrate on his legal practice and pastoral holdings.<sup>8</sup>

Edward Albert Stone (1844-1920) was born in Perth and educated at Chigwell Grammar School in Essex, England. After being articled to his father, George Frederick Stone, and E W Landor in Perth, he was admitted to the Western Australian Bar in 1865. Edward went into partnership with his father, and then in 1876 joined Septimus Burt to found the firm of Stone and Burt. Edward Stone also had a long career as a politician and public servant, holding several positions including attorney general, chief justice and puisne judge of the Supreme Court. He was knighted in 1902 and was Lieutenant Governor from 1906 to 1920.

Edward Stone was chairman and part-time editor of the *Western Australian Times* in the 1870s and was a prominent member of the St George's Cathedral congregation. He also helped found the Perth Musical Union, sang in orations and was an amateur actor.<sup>9</sup>

Research to date has not revealed who designed the hall, although David Gray was the builder. Henry Prinsep, then a draughtsman at the Lands Department, is credited with designing the Corinthian columns and pediment. The columns are of painted, smooth finished stucco with cast cement rich capping details, which were cast locally by an Italian by the name of Guidetti or Guidelli. Alfred James Hillman recorded in his diary that the Corinthian capitals at the front of the hall were the first to be cast in the Colony, and that Prinsep was delighted with them.<sup>10</sup>

Henry Charles Prinsep was born in Calcutta in 1844 and was schooled in England. He was orphaned at a young age and was placed in the care of his uncle, Toby Prinsep, a keen patron of the arts. Harry (as he was known) had passing and firm relationships with many artists, actors and poets, including Alfred Tennyson. As a teenager, Harry was keen to become an artist himself, and attended the Dresden School of Art. When aged 21, he left England to tour his family estates in Singapore and Western Australia, arriving in Fremantle in May 1866. He soon introduced himself into colonial society and made a firm and lasting friendship with the Burt family. After meeting and then marrying Josephine Bussell, Harry decided to stay in Western Australia, but the economic conditions of the day proved too strenuous and he was forced to abandon the family estate in the south-west. On returning to Perth, Harry found employment as a draughtsman in the Department of Lands and Surveys. He rose to the position of Chief Clerk of the Lands Department and when the Department of Mines was created in 1894, he was appointed its first head. In 1898, he was put in charge of the Aborigines Department, a position he held until 1907.

Throughout this time, Harry Prinsep continually drew and sketched. Many of his drawings were published in the newspapers and periodicals of the day. He also read widely, sang and taught himself to play the guitar. He had interests in operatic and stage productions and was regularly involved in producing scenery and curtain

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<sup>8</sup> [www.abd.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070499b.htm](http://www.abd.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070499b.htm), access 16 June 2008.

<sup>9</sup> [www.abdonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120114b.htm](http://www.abdonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120114b.htm), accessed 16 June 2008.

<sup>10</sup> A J Hillman, *The Hillman Diaries 1887-1884*, Perth, 1990, pp. 236, 248. Carlotta Brockman (nee Prinsep) also stated that her father designed the columns. [See Letter to the Editor, *West Australian*, 22 December 1945] Gray

drops for Perth's theatrical productions. The building of St George's Hall provided increased opportunities for those interested in theatre, including Harry Prinsep who is credited with designing many of the scenery and act drops used in the hall.<sup>11</sup> Harry Prinsep died in 1922.

David Gray arrived in Western Australia as a convict aboard the *Belgravia* in 1866. He gained his Ticket of Leave in 1870 and his Certificate of Freedom in 1876. During the 1870s he was listed as a bricklayer and mason in Perth. His other works include the Theatre Royal & Hotel Metropole and the Roebourne Residency.<sup>12</sup>

Another convict, by the name of Joseph Gairdelli came to Western Australia aboard the *Hougoumont* in 1868. Gairdelli was granted a conditional pardon in 1876 and worked in various occupations, including a plasterer and stone mason. While it has not been confirmed with certainty that he was the Italian craftsman named who fabricated the columns for St George's Hall, it is highly likely. There was no other Italian of that or a similar name in the Colony at the time. Gairdelli had worked for David Gray as a labourer and a plasterer in 1872 and 1873 as a Ticket-of-Leaver.<sup>13</sup>

While there appears to have been little press coverage regarding the building of the hall<sup>14</sup>, advertisements in the *Inquirer and Commercial News* on 26 November and 3 December 1879 announced the 'inauguration of St George's Hall under the patronage of His Excellency, Sir Harry Ord'.

St George's Hall opened on 4 December 1879. The *Inquirer* reported on the opening night:

The formal inauguration of the handsome and commodious Hall which has been erected by Messrs. Stone and Burt on a piece of vacant land contiguous to their offices, in Howick [Hay] Street, took place on Thursday evening last. That the ceremony should be becoming the propose for which the Hall was intended a number of ladies and gentlemen of Perth kindly gave their services in producing Boucicault's well known three-act musical melodrama 'Collen Bawn', for which a really excellent cast was made; the piece being placed on the boards in a really excellent manner, worthy indeed of the great and popular dramatist, and with no discredit in imitation of its first appearance in London at the Adelphi nearly twenty years ago. His Excellency the Governor graciously extended his patronage to the performance, which drew a full audience. On Monday evening the piece was repeated with similar satisfactory results and a further and final repetition is announced for this evening.<sup>15</sup>

*The West Australian* also reported on the Collen Bawn, but made no comment on the hall itself, other than to commend Henry Prinsep's scenery:

We cannot conclude this piece without saying that the scenery was as good as possible and as varied ... Not only had Mr Prinsep carefully considered the requirements of the

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11 A C Staples, 'Henry Charles Prinsep', *Early Days*, Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society, Vol 5, part 1, 1955, pp. 31-47.

12 Rica Erickson, *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre-1829-1888: Volume II D-J*, University of Western Australian Press, Nedlands, 1988, p.1250.

13 'St George's Hall: a conservation study', prepared by the Building Management Authority of Western Australia, 1991. See also, Joseph Gentili, *Italian roots in Australian soil: Italian immigrants to Western Australia 1929-1946*, p. 7.

14 There appears to have been much more interest in the building of the new Perth Ice Works.

15 *Inquirer*, 10 December 1879, p. 3.

piece, but the different portions were in thorough working order and there was not the slightest hitch or delay in movement.<sup>16</sup>

Henry Prinsep also composed the prologue for this play (though the *Herald* was critical of his delivery). He went on to design many other theatre sets for performances in St George's Hall that followed.<sup>17</sup>

Despite a report in the *Herald* a few days later describing the hall as 'a place of amusement' (rather than calling it a theatre)<sup>18</sup>, throughout the 1880s and into the 1890s St George's Hall was well used by visiting and local performers. It was an institution for the 'respectable classes', and according to Stannage, it was a 'clear sign that there were now in Perth enough people to enjoy such a cultural life'.<sup>19</sup>

St George's Hall consisted of a rectangular, single-storied hall 12 metres wide and 27 metres deep. The walls were constructed of solid bonded red brickwork, two bricks thick, and set in lime mortar on a shallow stepped brick footing. There were large timber windows at regular intervals along each side elevation. The timber floor was flat, with a small stage at the northern end. The roof was hipped and the ceiling flat. Inside, a small lobby was provided at the southern end of the building, with rooms on both sides. A staircase led up to the gallery.<sup>20</sup>

However, just over a decade after it was built, the *West Australian* argued that Perth was in desperate need of a purpose-built theatre and that none of the existing venues (Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall and St George's Hall) were up to standard. The paper stated:

The Muses who preside over the drama have been too long insufficiently housed in Perth. The only place in which the semblance of propriety such performances may take place is St George's Hall, where there is much that is unsuitable and hardly anything which is suitable for the purposes, for which, in default on another building, it has to be used. Everything is really wanting there, and when the day comes when something more appropriate is provided – a day we may hope which is now not far distant, the old home of the drama in this city we may be assured will be pointed out with wonder and amusement as the most significant proof of the old time backwardness and poverty of Western Australia. One advantage and one only, the existing building in its meagre proportions, and its confined [stage] has conferred upon the dramatic art. It has enabled theatrical performances to be given at a moderate cost, and especially permitted our amateurs to limit their expenses. As a consequence, scenery, furniture and the crowd of super numeraries, apparently indispensable to modern entrepreneurs, have to be brought within modest dimensions. For it can be said that the sitting room provided by the Hall has been very severely taxed on most occasions. But these excuses belong to the primitive and pioneer times, and we see such performances as those by the "Sorcerer", "Iolanthe" and the "Yeomen of the Guard" by the Operatic Society, such actors as come to our shores in the TAYLOR CARRINGTON and STACEY troupes, and above all, such a one as in the person of Miss Achurch about to visit us, and finally when we notice the difficulties which all of them, with the various Variety Companies, distinctly labour under in the miserable proportions off the stage, it is a patent fact that a new theatre is one of the wants which can be least readily postponed.

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16 *West Australian*, 9 December 1879.

17 *Herald*, 13 December 1879; Ray and John Oldham, *Western Heritage: a study of the colonial architecture of Perth, Western Australia*, Lamb Publications Pty Ltd, Perth, 1961, p. 73.

18 *Herald*, 13 December 1879.

19 Stannage, p. 152.

20 'St George's Hall, Perth: Conservation Plan', prepared by Duncan Stephen & Mercer Architects for the Building Management Authority, 1995, p. 16.

We have now reached such a point that if the dramatic art is to make an advance commensurate with the colony and our fast growing prosperity, a better building for its local habitation will have to be provided. Even now, when a full company is on the stage, movement is next to impossible except by a species of “dodging” the other performers, which is hardly dignified, and is certainly inconsistent with fine acting. Grouping is almost out of the question, and if any kind of an impression is to be produced the getting about among the various members of the company without their tumbling in each other’s way, is as much a matter of drilling as the scenes whose success depends upon the absolute quality of the acting. In short there can be but one opinion as to the necessity of a proper theatre for Perth. The trouble is to find someone who has sufficient confidence in the future of the drama in this colony to invent the money required.<sup>21</sup>

Answering this call, TAG Molloy had the Theatre Royal built in 1897. Other theatres followed and St George’s Hall was soon abandoned. The Post Office directories give an accurate picture of the hall’s demise. In 1897, it was listed as ‘St George’s Hall’ and in 1898 as ‘Old St George’s Hall’. In 1899, the Engineering and Survey Branch of the Public Works Department occupied the building and in 1900, the newly created Government Photo-Lithographic Department moved in.<sup>22</sup>

Alterations were made to the hall in 1907 in order to accommodate the Photo-Lithographic Department. The works included the removal of the gallery and entrance lobby walls to allow for the installation of a two storied alteration at the southern end of the hall. The roof was raised by increasing the height of the walls in order to provide the required head room to both levels. The heads of the two windows in the south wall (front) were lowered to accommodate the new floor levels. Fireplaces were built against the western wall (one on each level) and new windows were installed on the side walls in the area of the alteration. Major additions in the form of new buildings were built to the rear of the hall c.1919.<sup>23</sup>

In 1920/21, the Lithographic Department was moved elsewhere and the Child Welfare Department and the State Charities Department moved into St George’s Hall.<sup>24</sup> Between 1923 and 1932, the Perth Children’s Court was also located at 508 Hay Street. The State Charities Department continued to share the building until 1924/25.<sup>25</sup> The Child Welfare Department was accommodated in the building until the early 1980s and St George’s Hall was extended and refurbished several times during this time.<sup>26</sup>

In 1961, Ray and John Oldham reported in their book, *Western Heritage*, that the Western Australian Historical Society judged St George’s Hall to be ‘an early building of architectural value associated with the cultural life of Perth’. The Society recommended that the façade be preserved and the rest of the building

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21 *West Australian*, 27 August 1891.

22 *Wise’s Post Office Directories*, 1897 to 1900. The land was not officially transferred to the Western Australian government until December 1919.

23 Duncan Stephen & Mercer Architects, ‘St George’s Hall – Conservation Plan’, prepared for the Building Management Authority, 1995, p. 16.

24 *Wises’s Post Office Directories*, 1920 and 1921.

25 *Wises’s Post Office Directories*, 1922 to 1933.

26 Archives at the State Record Office of Western Australia detail this work. They were not accessed for this report as the built material is no longer extant.

remodelled. An alternative recommendation was that the face be re-erected in a 'more commanding position'.<sup>27</sup>

St George's Hall opened as a display centre of the Health Education Council of Western Australia in the late 1970s. It also provided a venue for lunchtime meetings for volunteer groups interested in health education.<sup>28</sup> In 1979, St George's Hall briefly opened its doors as a theatre venue again. A season of "Swan River Saga" by Dame Mary Durack and Nita Pannell opened on 17 May in celebration of the Hall's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>29</sup>

In the early 1980s, the Burke Labor Government decided that the buildings around St George's Hall would be demolished for either an extension to the Central Law Courts (on the opposite side of the road) or as a new headquarters for the Department of Land Administration. Demolition of the 1879 hall was considered necessary so that a substantial underground car park could be built.<sup>30</sup>

St George's Hall was classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) in 1984 and the following year Premier Burke announced that Cabinet had decided to retain St George's Hall in situ after considering a proposal to relocate and rebuild it on another site. Despite the Hall being on the site of a proposed \$29 million Government office complex development, Cabinet decided that the Hall's 'historical significance was such that it should be retained in Hay Street'.<sup>31</sup>

The following year, the Government decided that the site would be used to house the headquarters of the Department of Land Administration (DOLA) and the Building Management Authority (BMA) prepared plans for the site. Demolition of the hall behind the portico and the buildings around St George's Hall was completed in late 1986. However, the Government then decided to build the new DOLA headquarters at Midland and the land around the portico was leased by the City of Perth as a car park.

When the Heritage Council of Western Australia was formed in 1992, *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* was one of the first places to be entered in the Register of Heritage Places. The BMA wrote a submission to the Heritage Council against permanent entry in the Register as the portico was not the first theatre in Perth (the theatre itself had been demolished and the remaining fabric was not the theatre), the fabric was in poor condition and the streetscape context had been lost through the 1986 (and earlier) demolition works.<sup>32</sup> Although the place did not progress to Permanent registration at the time, the Heritage Council determined in December 1992 that the significance of the place 'was attached to the site and its geographical location as much as to the structure itself'.<sup>33</sup>

Structural reports prepared in 1991 and 1992 recommended demolition of the portico due to continuing deterioration, with the possible exception of the columns,

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<sup>27</sup> Oldham and Oldham, p. 73. No information could be located at the State Library regarding why the National Trust had an interest in the building at this time. Research in the National Trust of Australia (WA) archives may provide further information.

<sup>28</sup> *West Australian*, 15 February 1977.

<sup>29</sup> Living Today supplement, *West Australian*, 22 February 1979, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from HCWA to the Minister for Heritage, 27 August, 1983, HCWA file P1985, vol. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *WA Government Notes*, vol. 24, 29 April 1985, p. 3. A brief perusal of the WA Government Votes and Proceedings of Parliament failed to provide any further information on the debate surrounding the decision to retain the façade of St George's Hall.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from BMA to HCWA, 27 November 1992, HCWA file P1985, vol. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from HCWA to BMA, 19 January 1993, HCWA file P1985, vol. 1.

which appeared to be in good condition. Further 'temporary' bracing had been added to the portico in 1992 and by 1993, it was considered that urgent remedial action was required. Another structural report in 1993 confirmed that the masonry was deteriorating to such an extent that any restoration would be a virtual rebuild. The pediment leant outwards towards Hay Street, with a bow in the centre and cracks in several places. The central columns leant out at the top and the ornamental corbels were cracked, presenting a hazard.<sup>34</sup>

With ongoing inaction by the State Government and City of Perth, in late 1993, the Heritage Council of WA suggested that the portico be restored, that a new enclosure be built at the rear to act as a stabiliser and that the portico be integrated with the car park through landscaping. Although the car park had generated over \$1.2 million over the previous six years (shared by the State Government and the City of Perth), and the cost of the works was only \$200,000, the City of Perth responded that although they supported restoration of the portico, they could not divert the funds received from the car park. The State Government responded that the City of Perth had a responsibility to the portico and should have restored it as part of the development of the car park.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the protestations over responsibility for the site, the BMA prepared plans for the restoration, stabilisation and construction of a canopy at the rear in 1994. The Government considered the estimated cost of \$300,000 too expensive and the plans were revised. The Premier's Capital City Committee provided \$500,000 for the project in 1994/95. The plans subsequently developed by the BMA and the Heritage Council were for 'temporary development' of the site and included the construction of a café and rotunda adjacent to the portico. The project architects were Oldham Boas and Ednie Brown. Restoration work was completed by October 1995. The rotunda was to provide a performing arts venue to revive the site's theatrical tradition.<sup>36</sup>

In anticipation of the CBD Courts project in 2004, the Black Swan Café, office building, car park and Pocket Park (all part of the 1994/95 works) were demolished.

On 21 August 2007 the then Minister for Heritage, Michelle Roberts, certified a Heritage Agreement between the Heritage Council of Western Australia and Western Liberty Pty Ltd for *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth*. The Heritage Agreement outlined immediate and medium term conservation works to be completed. These works were based on works identified in a 1995 Conservation Plan for *St George's Hall* by Ronald Bodycoat, Duncan Stephen & Mercer Architects prepared for the Building Management Authority.

The CBD Courts project, a major initiative of the State Government houses the District Court and Supreme Court criminal jury trials, as well as the State's first permanent high-security court. *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* was incorporated into the development which was completed in 2008. The architects for the project were Fernando Faugno, Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> 'St George's Hall Portico – Structural Condition', op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Correspondence dated 1993, HCWA file P1985 vol. 1. The terms of the car park lease agreement stipulated that the City of Perth arrange for the façade of St George's Hall to be secured in situ, at its own cost and in close liaison with the National Trust and the BMA.

<sup>36</sup> *West Australian*, 23 October 1995, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> Multiplex Projects – District Court Building, Perth Available: <https://www.multiplex.global/projects/district-court-building-perth-australia/>. [Accessed 15/11/2018]

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*St George's Hall Portico and Facade, Perth* was constructed in 1879 and consists of a portico on an elevated podium, the single storey south facade of the Hall and short returns of the east and west walls. The main section of the Hall was demolished in 1986 and the remaining structure was entered in the State Register of Heritage Places in 1992. Conservation work was completed in 1995 and further conservation work was undertaken in 2007/08 as part of the District Court of Western Australia building development.

*St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* is located on the north side of Hay Street (between Irwin and Pier Streets) immediately to the west of the intersection of Pier Street in the central business district of Perth, Western Australia. On the north east of the intersection is a newly constructed hotel (2018) built on the site of the former Fire and Emergency Services Headquarters, to the south east is Irwin Chambers and to the south west is the Central Law Courts. Located behind the facade, but not physically connected, is the District Court of Western Australia.

The District Court of Western Australia building comprises a glass clad podium and a precast textured panelled clad tower that is set back from the podium. *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* sits proud and independent from the District Court Building at a distance of approximately one metre. There is a 1500mm high glass balustrade that extends from the west and east return walls of the facade to the face of the District Court Building. The building alignment of the facade is consistent with structures dating from the late nineteenth century further west along Hay Street. The structure contains interpretive material explaining both the history of the building and the 2007/08 conservation programme as part of the development and construction of the District Court Building. The facade faces south.

*St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* is designed in the Victorian Academic Classical architectural style. The remaining structure comprises an elevated base structure with six Corinthian columns supporting a triangular pediment. The symmetrical facade has short return walls to the east and west and two windows positioned either side of a central doorway.

The elevated floor plane of *St George's Hall Portico and Façade, Perth* addresses the slight fall from west to east along Hay Street through four concrete steps from the pavement level to the portico level. A fifth step is located to the entry threshold of the former Hall. The flooring to the portico is concrete rectangular flagstones.

The facade is English bond brickwork with a painted stucco (cement render) finish. Pilasters are located at the end of the facade extending beyond the length of the portico. Painted stucco mouldings, including a string course and dentils, decorate the facade, entablature and pediment. The stucco is stripped back on both return walls for interpretive purposes and there is some evidence of timber dowels to the west wall. Two painted timber framed six pane double hung windows are symmetrically located either side of a central doorway. The doorway is frameless glass with a painted timber three pane fanlight window.

The six Corinthian columns to the portico are of painted, smooth finished stucco with cast cement rich capping details and taper from the base to the top. The columns sit on a square pedestal. The ceiling is painted timber boards with two downlights. The triangular pediment has decorative mouldings including dentils. A

rainwater header and circular downpipe on the east elevation discharges into a stormwater sump at ground level.

Six street trees are planted on the west side and three street trees are located on the east side of the facade. A 900mm high garden wall with low shrubs is located to the east of the facade.

The place contains interpretive material in three separate locations. A plaque is located on a 900mm high garden wall to the east of the facade. The stainless steel plaque is titled: 'St George's Hall Portico Remains of St George's Hall Est. 1879 – Heritage Registered'. It contains text explaining the history of the place. The same text has been applied to the frameless glass door to the south facade. Three free standing vertical panels are located between St George's Hall facade and the facade of the new District Court of Western Australia building. These panels interpret three distinct phases of the place's history, being: 1879 St George's Hall Theatre for dramatic performances; 1907 Alterations to Lithograph Office and Medical Department and 2007 Restoration.

A Heritage Agreement between the Western Liberty Group Pty Ltd and the Heritage Council of Western Australia was signed in August 2007 and a schedule of immediate and medium term conservation works was agreed and subsequently undertaken in 2007/08. As part of the Heritage Agreement a maintenance schedule was also agreed upon.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

St George's Hall is one of the few colonial buildings in Western Australia to be built with a classical portico and is a relatively rare example of the Victorian Academic Classical style of architecture.

There are 3 places on the WA Historic Heritage Database constructed in the Victorian Academic Classical style, all of which are on the Register;

- P00892 *Warehouse (fmr)*, (1880) (RHP) Henry Street, Fremantle - Constructed c.1860 in stone with brick quoins and with a recessed gabled portico facing the pavement. The portico and dormer windows are restrained and Georgian in character. The building's original use is not certain: the details of its design suggest that it was something other than a warehouse, possibly a public meeting house.
- P00935 *Victoria Hall* (1896) (RHP) – a double volume limestone and brick building with a classically detailed stucco facade and large interior hall. The place is a very good example of both the Victorian Academic Classical style employed on public buildings during the Gold Boom period, and of the work of prominent architect John Talbot Hobbs.
- P2105 *Trinity Uniting Church Group* (1865) (RHP) – includes Trinity Hall (1865) - a simple building constructed out of handmade bricks laid in a flemish bond pattern, with a timber roof. The building is constructed in a modest rendition of the Victorian Academic style of architecture and is decorated externally with modest tourelles in cement render and has a rendered string course. A large trefoil window faces south.

The imposing façade of St George's Hall, with its decorated Corinthian columns and pediment, has been compared to both the Haymarket Theatre and the Lyceum Theatre in London.<sup>38</sup>

A search of the database returns nine other places constructed between 1865 - 1875 in the City of Perth. Of these five are on the Register:

- P1953 *Perth Town Hall* (1868) (RHP)
- P1973 *Central Government Offices* (1874) (RHP)
- P2003 *Wesley Church* (1870) (RHP)
- P2105 *Trinity Uniting Church Group* (1865) (RHP)
- P2124 *St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral* (1865) (RHP)

Although the majority of the above places would have hosted various social events none were specifically constructed as a theatre or entertainment venue.

A search for 'theatre' in the database suggests that St George's Hall was the only purpose built theatre in Western Australia prior to the construction of P1993 *Theatre Royal & Metropole Hotel (fmr)* Hay Street Perth, c.1895, which is also on the State Register.

#### **13. 4 KEY REFERENCES**

'St George's Hall: a conservation study', prepared by the Building Management Authority of Western Australia, 1991.

'St George's Hall, Perth: Conservation Plan', prepared by Duncan Stephen & Mercer Architects for the Building Management Authority, 1995.

#### **13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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<sup>38</sup> Stannage, op. cit., p. 152; Carlotta Brockman (nee Prinsep), Letter to the Editor, *West Australia*, 22 December 1945.