



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr), is an exceptionally well designed and solidly built stone building, in the Federation Italianate style. (Criterion 1.1)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr) is significant for its association with the Great Fingall Consolidated Gold Mining Company which, during its period of operation from 1898 to 1918, was largely responsible for the growth of the town of Day Dawn. The former mine office, the only substantial building still standing in the former Day Dawn townsite, is a reminder of the historic importance of the wealth of the mine and town. (Criterion 2.1)

it is an important reminder of the cycle of growth and decline of mining towns associated with the State's gold boom at the turn of this century. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr) is a unique demonstration of the combination of mine office and assay room purposely built for a prosperous mining company during Western Australia's gold boom. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr) , the only substantial building remaining within the former townsite of Day Dawn is representative of the historic mine and the township in Murchison region. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

The building, abandoned since 1918, has suffered from vandalism and exposure to the elements of nature. Present mining activity, involving an open cut excavation within 5 metres of the building, is posing a threat to the condition of the building. The condition of the building is poor.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Although disused for decades, *Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr)* retains a high level of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

While there have been no additions and little has been replaced, some fabric has been removed, including the verandahs and many interior fittings.

Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr) retains a medium degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr) is located on the Common of the former townsite of Day Dawn, a "sister town" to nearby Cue in the Murchison Goldfields some 650km north of Perth. A single-storey stone building constructed in 1902, it housed the administrative offices and assay room for the Great Fingall Consolidated Gold Mining Company.¹

Gold was discovered at Day Dawn in 1891 by Mr Ned Heffernan who pegged out what became known as the Day Dawn Reef. The settlement that sprang up at the find was originally known as the "Four Mile", being situated about that distance from Cue.² Once a design of government lots had been laid out, the townsite was gazetted, first on 2 March 1894 as "Bundawadra",³ then renamed Day Dawn on 25 May 1894.⁴ Day Dawn was proclaimed a Municipality on 24 May 1895.⁵

A description of the settlement was published in June 1896 as follows:

The town itself is small and unpretentiously built, but the sanitation is dreadful. There are three fairly stocked stores, and one chemist shop, albeit the chemist is taking 'a well earned rest' in the hospital, suffering from typhoid, and the shop is closed. There are three licensed houses and with a few dwelling houses, hessian camps, and 'brush humpies', the township is complete. The prominent feature is the big mine situated on the hillock or rise at the end of the town. This is called the Day Dawn, which is consolidated with the Rubicon and Day Dawn West. This mine is both conscientiously worked and developed, but up to the present no dividends have been paid. They employ 200 men and have been working over two years. ...This is one great mine of the Murchison, so far as opening out the country is concerned.⁶

The mine produced phenomenal amounts of gold and was a major factor in the extension of railway facilities to the region in 1897.⁷ In 1898, the mine was taken over by the Great Fingall Consolidated Gold Mining Company and was thereafter known as the Great Fingall Mine.

Development continued under the new owners, including the construction of *Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr)*. In June 1902, the *Murchison Advocate* reported 'Amongst the many improvements which are going on are new stone offices, included in them being a strong room which is regarded as the largest in these parts.'⁸

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- ¹ Feggelen, A.J. (compiler) 'Conservation Plan Great Fingall Mine Office Relocation Program Day Dawn - Cue' (for the Great Fingall Mine Office Management Committee, March 1996), p.1.
- ² *Mt Alexander Mail*, 8 June 1896.
- ³ *Government Gazette*, 2 March 1894, p.229.
- ⁴ *Government Gazette*, 25 May 1894, p.493.
- ⁵ Feggelen, A.J. (compiler) 'Conservation Plan Great Fingall Mine Office Relocation Program Day Dawn - Cue' (for the Great Fingall Mine Office Management Committee, March 1996), p.9.
- ⁶ *Mt Alexander Mail*, 8 June 1896.
- ⁷ Feggelen, A.J. (compiler) 'Conservation Plan Great Fingall Mine Office Relocation Program Day Dawn - Cue' (for the Great Fingall Mine Office Management Committee, March 1996), p.10.
- ⁸ *Murchison Advocate*, 7 June 1902, p.2.

A later description stated that the offices were;

... built of dressed stone and evidently no expense has been spared in making them not only an architectural beauty to Day Dawn, but also an object lesson for the Murchison in mason work. The new rooms are lofty, windows numerous, and the whole structure is surrounded by a wide and massive verandah.⁹

In 1910, production at the Great Fingall Mine dropped below the level of previous years, and an economic decline set in at Day Dawn and Cue. By 1916, partly because of World War One, operations at the mine were slowly grinding to a halt. It was apparent by early 1918 that the management would soon have to make a decision as to how long they could continue to operate profitably. The following article was published in early April.

During the week, rumours were in existence that the tributers at the Great Fingall Mine had an unsatisfactory clean-up from about 1800 tons. But the public were not prepared for the announcement which came on Wednesday afternoon to the effect that all tributing work would cease immediately and that only the stone broken to date would be crushed. This is generally intended to mean the closing down of the mine ... It is considered probable that in a fortnight the Great Fingall will close, but there is still some hope that some system to keep the old mine going will be determined.¹⁰

The following week, on 12 April 1918, it was confirmed that the mine had closed.¹¹ Despite attempts by the business sector to keep going, gradually the town was deserted. Effectively, the closure of the mine meant the end of Day Dawn. By October 1921, the abandoned mine had completely collapsed¹², and the town had disappeared altogether by the 1930s.¹³

In the mid 1990s, the mine was re-activated as an open cut operation, and *Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr)* was threatened by the location of an open mine pit within 5 metres of the building. The Great Fingall Mine Office Management Committee was established with the intention of conserving the former mine office by reconstructing the building in Cue. However, the management of Great Fingall Mine has recently stated its intention to re-roof and restore the building in-situ for the purpose of using the building as a mine museum.¹⁴

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr) is a large single-storey structure, designed and built in 1902 as an administrative office and assay laboratory for the Great Fingall Consolidated Gold Mining Company .

The building is situated on a flat area with the ground sloping gently away all around. The finished floor level is 500mm higher than natural ground level, with the verandah 100mm lower than the interior floor level and sloping away from the building.

⁹ *Murchison Advocate*, 23 August 1902.

¹⁰ Heydon, P.R. *Gold on the Murchison* (Perth, Hesperian Press, 1986), pp.106-108.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *Murchison Times* 14 October 1921.

¹³ Feggelen, A.J. (compiler) 'Conservation Plan Great Fingall Mine Office Relocation Program Day Dawn - Cue' (for the Great Fingall Mine Office Management Committee, March 1996), p.7.

¹⁴ Telephone conversation 30 May 1996 between P. Bennett and the management of Great Fingall Mine.

Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr) is designed in Federation Italianate style and constructed of locally quarried solidified porphyry stone, cut and formed into rectangular rock faced blocks, and with each corner stone edged. The external walls, laid in lime and sand mortar with tuck pointing to joints, are built up with a granite type of rock rubble internally and cement rendered to a solid wall of 480mm thick. Internal walls are constructed from rock and rubble, cement rendered to a solid thickness of 335mm. The window and door openings are edged in brick. All windows and window frames, doors and door frames, architraves and mouldings are of imported oregon pine.

The roof is designed with four gable ends and four valleys. In the centre of the pitch, evenly spaced throughout, are ten distinct triangular roof vents with galvanised iron louvres. The four gable ends feature additional round louvred vents. All of the roof structure, including barge and fascia boards, is of imported pine. The roof decking is of galvanised corrugated iron with soft lead flashings to the chimneys, etc. The roof structure of the gold room has four large 'barn style' trusses with steel bolt and timber web all made from heavy pine. This section of roof has a raised roof skylight which incorporates tilting windows on both sides for ventilation over the full length of the gold room with its own small gables on each end. The place also features four tall cement rendered chimneys with cement filigree collars. One chimney is from the gold room furnace with the remainder of the fire places, two double and one single chimney, from each of the offices. Both cross pitched roofs at each end of the place are raised, one higher than the other. This has the effect of reducing the horizontal and flat emphasis, presenting a balanced composition of architectural form.

The verandahs have been removed, however the pigeon plate is still affixed, indicating the size and spacing of the rafters and the height to the wall. There is evidence of the spacing and size of the verandah posts at the edge of the concrete floor of the verandahs. This data, together with a careful study of photographic evidence, would allow a determination to be made of the design of the verandahs.

The internal layout comprises a large gold processing room at the NE end, with a brick gold smelting furnace. Access to the gold room is from the front or rear verandahs. Adjacent to the gold room is a sample crushing room accessible from the gold room or the rear of the place. The assay laboratory and assay office are also adjacent to the gold room at the front of the place and are accessible only from the gold room. All these rooms are isolated from the remainder of the place.

The SW portion of the building comprises what is believed to be a board room, an administration office with a large walk-in vault, a manager's office, a clerk's office and a work foreman's office. These offices are accessible internally and from the verandahs. The ceilings of all rooms and offices, with the exception of the gold room, are of galvanised standard ripple iron with pine moulded cornices.

Apart from the removal of the verandahs and general vandalism, there have been no alterations to the building.

The structure of *Great Fingall Mine Office (fmr)* is generally in sound condition. However, all the main decorative details have been either removed or have

deteriorated. Present mining activities temporarily threatened to further erode the condition of the building, either by the effects of 'flyrock' from daily blasting or the possibility of wall collapse due to the proximity of the open cut pit, but the threat appears to have passed.

13.3 REFERENCES

The Great Fingall Mine Office Management Committee (compiled by A.J. van Feggelen): 'Conservation Plan Great Fingall Mine Office Relocation Program Day Dawn - Cue' (for The Great Fingall Mine Office Management Committee, March 1996).

Kevin Palassis Architect: 'Report on the Restoration of the Great Fingall Mine Administration Building' (December 1988).