



# 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.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

*Melangata* exhibits a well resolved architectural design in the Inter-War Romanesque style. (Criterion 1.1)

*Melangata* is an outstanding example of John Hawes' architectural style in his early Western Australian period. (Criterion 1.2)

*Melangata* has a landmark quality in the flat natural landscape on which it is located. (Criterion 1.3)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Melangata* has a close association with a 'boom' pastoral period in the Yalgoo area. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

*Melangata* has a close association with Father (later Dean, then Monsignor) John Hawes; Hawes was both Architect for the place and the Parish Priest in the area at the time of construction. Hawes' life and works are prominent within the history of the Mid-West Region of Western Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

*Melangata's* design demonstrates the human response to the need for shelter in an extremely hot and arid climatic region with the sheltered ground-hugging form and breezeway features. (Criteria 3.2 & 3.3)

### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Melangata*, with its little chapel, was a significant outpost for visiting Priests to the isolated portion of the region, and has significant value to the Catholic Church and Yalgoo in general. The Williamson and Seaman families have made significant cultural and community contributions to Yalgoo. (Criterion 4.1)

*Melangata* is one of the widely spaced family outposts that contributed to the development of the Yalgoo region, and has been seen as an 'oasis' in a harsh and unforgiving environment. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

*Melangata* is a unique example of private domestic design in Western Australia by the Priest and Architect J.C. Hawes, and an important early indicator of Hawes' response to Western Australian conditions developed in his portfolio of work in this State from 1915 to 1939. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The design of *Melangata* is representative of J.C. Hawes' distinctive style. (Criterion 6.1)

*Melangata* demonstrates a way of life and usage in 'station' homesteads in a hot and arid climate. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Melangata* is in sound condition. The chapel end wall and tower structure require some urgent restoration work. With the stabilisation of this stonework and continued regular maintenance the place would be in good condition.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Melangata* retains a high degree of integrity. It continues to be used for the original purpose for which it was designed.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

*Melangata* retains a moderate degree of authenticity. The dado level grey cement rendering of external walls, grey concrete block verandah balustrade and bathroom walls are unsympathetic elements - but these can be reversed.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence was compiled by John Taylor, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Melangata* was designed for Caleb Charles Williamson (known as Charlie) by the Catholic Priest and Architect John Cyril Hawes, probably in early 1916.<sup>1</sup> Hawes' drawings for the design of *Melangata* have not been located.

Father Hawes had arrived in Geraldton from England on the evening of Monday 8 November 1915. He travelled inland (by train) to temporarily relieve Father O'Neill at Cue on Tuesday 28 December 1915.<sup>2</sup> Hawes was based at Cue, looking after the Parish which included Mt Magnet, Cue, Day Dawn, and Yalgoo.<sup>3</sup> Hawes was recalled to Geraldton in March of 1916 to commence the construction work for his design of the St Francis Xavier Cathedral.<sup>4</sup>

While based at Cue, Hawes undertook regular trips into the 'bush' to minister to isolated 'station' families and gold prospectors and miners at outcamps.<sup>5</sup> It is possible Hawes initially met the Williamson family either at Yalgoo or at Geraldton, and most probably through a Catholic Church activity. Like Hawes, Williamson had previously changed from the Church of England to the Catholic Church and the two men apparently got on well.<sup>6</sup>

It is likely that *Melangata* was built by C.C. Williamson. Williamson would have employed the various tradesmen, including the plasterer, Mr Mooney, who was later employed by Hawes in construction works at the Geraldton Cathedral and Northampton Convent. It is believed that the local Yalgoo contractor Hendry Cutton Jermy painted the intricate pressed metal lounge ceiling at *Melangata*, although it has also been stated that Jermy's wife Phoebe (nee Buckingham) painted that ceiling.<sup>7</sup> Other

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<sup>1</sup> John Taylor's research notes for unpublished manuscript on Hawes' Architecture. Confirming conversations: (i) At *Melangata* between John Taylor Architect and Mr Jim and Mrs Peggy Seaman 29 March 1994. File note in John Taylor Architect file 018/94. Mrs Margaret (Peggy) Seaman nee Morrissey went to school at the Dominican Convent in Yalgoo in the 1920s, and received her First Communion from Father Hawes at St Saviour's Church in Yalgoo. (ii) Telephone conversation between John Taylor Architect and Isadora Dabelstein (a daughter of C.C. Williamson) 3 February 1997. File note in John Taylor Architect file 001/97.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sower*, January 1916, p.9.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Catholic Directory 1916; and Anson, P.F. *The Hermit of Cat Island*. pp.50-52 (based on Hawes' letters to his friend Charles Selby-Hall.) 1957 P.J. Kenedy & Sons New York. 1958 Burns & Oates London.

<sup>4</sup> Evans, A.G. *The Conscious Stone*. p.87 - citing the *Mt Magnet and Lennonville Leader* newspaper, Mt Magnet, 25 March 1916.

<sup>5</sup> Anson, P.F. op. cit. pp.50-52.

<sup>6</sup> Telephone conversation between John Taylor Architect and Isadora Dabelstein (a daughter of C.C. Williamson) 3 February 1997. File note in John Taylor Architect file 001/97.

<sup>7</sup> Conversation at *Melangata* between John Taylor Architect and Mr and Mrs Seaman 29 March 1994. File note in John Taylor Architect file 018/94.

ceilings at the station homesteads Noongal, Carlaminda, Bunnawarra, and Barnong are attributed to Jermy.<sup>8</sup>

*Melangata* is located on an old track between Yalgoo and Cue that was more prominent in earlier times - prior to the completion of the railway from Yalgoo to Mount Magnet (and then later lines north and east from Mount Magnet) in the late 1890s.

Most of the land surrounding *Melangata* had been taken up well before 1880. Besides having Warra Warra to the south, Arthur Lacy had several other blocks on either side which later became part of the adjacent properties to *Melangata* in Jingemarra and Dalgara. To the north, the Murchison Pastoral Co., the forerunner to Meka station, occupied most of the country up to and beyond the Sanford River by 1875.<sup>9</sup>

There was a low range running through the centre of this vacant land ending at a high peak called Murdanna making it fairly rough country. There were also patches of poison bush, a further detraction. Edwin Townsend and Fred Lavory were the first to move onto *Melangata* as late as 1897. They took up lease 67/1278 of 8,000 hectares on the very southern corner but had abandoned it after a few years. The old Cue Road No. 400 ran across the corner of this lease alongside which they established a humpy. It is on this block that the present homestead stands.<sup>10</sup>

Not until 1905 was there any further movement and then 46,500 hectares, pastoral lease 3422/102, was registered to C.C. Williamson, which included the earlier lease of Townsend and Lavory. Caleb Charles Williamson, born in Victoria in 1875, made his way to W.A. in his early twenties. By 1898, he had opened a store in Gibbons Street, Yalgoo. The following year he married Catherine Elizabeth Meggison, also from Victoria. In 1901, he was elected to the Yalgoo Road Board, being elected chairman the following year, a position he held for four of the ten years he was a member of the Board. His business prospered and diversified over the years, one such lucrative enterprise being the government contract to supply the Aborigines with tea, flour and sugar.<sup>11</sup>

In 1905, Williamson took up *Melangata* and began developing the station whilst running the store. By 1915, the station was registered in his wife's name, C.E. Williamson, and soon after, work commenced on the construction of a new homestead to replace the outcamp that had sufficed up till then. The home took several years to complete, and by 1917, Mrs. Williamson and children were living in Geraldton awaiting its completion. It was about this period that Williamson sold his store and business to Clark and Coyne and moved out to the station which had been transferred into both his and his wife's names. The family remained there

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<sup>8</sup> Material produced for the Yalgoo Centenary in 1996 by Mrs Lorna Morrissey of Noongal Station, and still on display at the Shire of Yalgoo offices in January 1997. Also telephone conversation between John Taylor Architect and Harry Jermy (son of H.C. Jermy) 3 February 1997. File note in John Taylor Architect file 001/97.

<sup>9</sup> Palmer, Alex. *Yalgoo*. p.148. Lap Industries 1985.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

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

for the next decade during which time the property reached its peak in carrying capacity.<sup>12</sup>

McKenna Bros. and Broad of Carlaminda and Wagga purchased the station in 1927 at the very apex of the booming twenties. A figure of \$24,000 [£12,000], a large sum for those days, has been mentioned but cannot be confirmed. Unfortunately it was only another couple of years before the bubble of the twenties burst and the pastoral properties were amongst the worst hit. During the ensuing depression years there was no one on Melangata; it became neglected and was taken over by the Bank of New South Wales. Cyril H. Ross, who had been employed by the McKenna Bros. on Carlaminda for a number of years, took over the licence of the Yalgoo Railway Refreshment Rooms in 1935. This he ran until the early forties when he then purchased Melangata from the Bank. Once again, an unconfirmed figure as low as \$3,000 [£1,500] has been quoted.<sup>13</sup>

In 1944, Ross, having purchased the adjacent larger station of Dalgaranga in 1942, decided to sell to the Seamans of Wurarga and Tardie. In October 1944, following Tom Seaman's death, Melangata was transferred to his two sons O.J. (Jim) and R.J. (Reg). They ran both properties for some years and in 1965 Tardie was sold to Yuin station. Melangata was registered to Jim and his wife M.M. (Peg) in December as lease 394/1044.<sup>14</sup> The Seamans raised five children at Melangata; Jim and Peggy Seaman were extremely active in Yalgoo affairs including Jim's representation on the Road Board. One of the Seaman's sons, Reggie, now runs Murgoo Station and another, Tom, runs Mt Wittenoom Station, both to the north-west of Melangata on the Sanford River. Jim is now approximately 90 years old and Peggy approximately 80 years old, and new management at Melangata is likely in the near future.<sup>15</sup>

Melangata is the smallest 'station' in the area, and it is possible that it will be absorbed into a larger adjacent property, posing some uncertainty as to the future usage of the homestead.

Heavy cyclonic rainfall caused the partial collapse on Sunday 26 February 1995 of the already precarious tower at *Melangata* after rain fell all that weekend (the rain was generated by Cyclone Bobby).<sup>16</sup> Efforts were made to document restoration works required, and some funding was obtained from the Heritage Council of W.A. to assist this work but to date a stonemason has not commenced work.<sup>17</sup>

*Melangata* is the only built private (not for church or related bodies) building and the only private residential building designed by John Hawes

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<sup>12</sup>     ibid, pp.148-149.

<sup>13</sup>     ibid, p.149.

<sup>14</sup>     ibid.

<sup>15</sup>     Conversation at *Melangata* between John Taylor Architect and Mr Jim and Mrs Peggy Seaman 29 March 1994. File note in John Taylor Architect file 001/97.

<sup>16</sup>     Telephone conversation between John Taylor Architect and Mrs Margaret (Peggy) Seaman of *Melangata*, 8 March 1995. File note in John Taylor Architect file 018/94.

<sup>17</sup>     File notes and documentation in John Taylor Architect file 018/94.

in Australia.<sup>18</sup> Hawes only designed one other private residence, the Dean house at Nassau (1941).<sup>19</sup>

### 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

A homestead may be defined as: a house with outbuildings, farm, (Aust.) owner's residence on sheep or cattle station.<sup>20</sup> Thus the *Melangata* homestead may be seen to be a portion of a larger working built environment, and is important in the context of that environment. This assessment refers to the homestead primarily as it is the highly significant portion of all the built structures at Melangata 'station'.

*Melangata* is generally approached from the south. The centrally placed stone gable end with archway of the entry passage dominates the south elevation. A partially collapsed castellated viewing tower is located to the north-east corner of the building, and with the large corrugated 'galvanised-iron' sheet roofing are the highly visible elements of the structure - on what is generally a very flat surrounding landscape.

The style of the building can be described as Inter-War Romanesque<sup>21</sup>, characterised by the load bearing masonry walls and the solid massing of the long low ground-hugging form. This style description would generally fit in with the style of the majority of Hawes' work in W.A. The arch head for the entry gable wall is slightly pointed (more characteristic of Gothic influence than the rounded arch heads of Romanesque style), although the remainder of the arch heads in the breezeways and chapel windows are very rounded. *Melangata* is the first of Hawes' designs drawn in his Western Australian residency from 1915 to 1939 (the design for the Francis Xavier Cathedral at Geraldton was first drawn in Rome in December 1913, and construction of the Cathedral commenced in late 1916).<sup>22</sup>

The design of *Melangata* can be seen as a transitional one, from Hawes' previous northern hemisphere work to his preference for designs suitable for the hot Mid-Western Australian climate, and would have had significant response to his observation of the places he visited upon his arrival in the Murchison Goldfields at the hottest time of the year. Hawes later (in the mid-1930s) developed a more modernist style but he still retained many eclectic influences.

It is likely Hawes inspected the construction very periodically or even only after its completion - as he was very busy in Geraldton (the Cathedral 1916-1918), Mullewa (as visiting Parish Priest 1916-1919), and at Northampton (a Convent in 1919). Hawes is only listed as presiding at one Yalgoo funeral

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<sup>18</sup> John Taylor's research notes for unpublished manuscript on Hawes' Architecture. Evidence has been found of Hawes designing a commercial premises fitout (probably in Geraldton) but there is no evidence of work for a body other than a church related institution having being built.

<sup>19</sup> John Taylor research notes for unpublished manuscript on Hawes' Architecture.

<sup>20</sup> The Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary 2nd Edition 1989.

<sup>21</sup> Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> John Taylor research notes for unpublished manuscript on Hawes' Architecture.

(in 1918) around this time.<sup>23</sup> Hawes spent a year overseas in 1920, and then returned to look after the Mullewa and Yalgoo areas in 1921.

The plan form of *Melangata* is 'U' shaped, with sleeping areas to the south frontage; kitchen, dining, pantry (under the tower), and office in the east wing; large lounge and chapel in the west wing. The Chapel features hand painted glass windows (mostly faded and in urgent need of restoration), a Hawes-made altar, and moulded cement tracery type holy water niches.

Two bathrooms (one with toilet and shower - the other with hand basin and bath), a store, and a laundry have been added on to the west wing over time. The original bathroom was located beside the dining room, on a verandah that has been enclosed along its length after the demolition of the bathroom. The original toilet was located to the north of the homestead.<sup>24</sup>

A verandah protects the east, south, and west elevations. Enclosed verandahs form two sides of the north facing courtyard and these form part of a 'breezeway' system linked by entry points into the building and by which access to each room is gained.

The roof is relatively steep, and is provided with relief ventilators to allow the escape of heated air contained over the pressed metal ceilings (at 3.4 metres above floor level). There are adjacent outbuildings for machinery and vehicle storage - generally these are metal clad structures and not of high significance other than that they form part of the working homestead. The shearing shed and shearers' quarters are located several hundred metres to the south-east of the homestead and are constructed of grey concrete blocks.

The walls of the homestead are constructed of local stone with local sand and lime mortar joints, there are concrete lintels and sills to the timber framed windows, the internal walls are rendered and painted, the internal floors are timber boards, and the verandah/breezeway floors are concrete. Electrical power is supplied from a diesel generator, and water from collection tanks.

Cement rich renders have been applied to the bases of the external walls in an attempt to deal with rising damp problems. There is a grey concrete block balustrade height wall to the south verandah, and the external bathroom is also constructed in this material.

Maintenance has been continued on a regular basis, and the main portion of the homestead is generally in sound condition. The obvious exceptions to this statement are the gable end wall of the chapel - a highly significant element which is in an unstable condition with obvious cracking and dislocation of stonework; and the tower which partially collapsed in February 1995. The cracks in the tower stonework were noted in a 1985

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<sup>23</sup> Yalgoo Cemetery Record at Yalgoo Shire Offices. Material produced for the Yalgoo Centenary in 1996, and still on display at the Shire of Yalgoo offices in January 1997. Further examination of the Yalgoo Catholic Church Baptism and Marriage Registers for the period would reveal further details of Hawes' presence at Yalgoo.

<sup>24</sup> Conversation at *Melangata* between John Taylor Architect and Mr Jim Seaman 30 January 1997. File note in John Taylor Architect file 001/97.



National Trust of Australia (W.A.) assessment, and a simple metal frame placed in an attempt to prevent further deterioration of the tower stonework was obvious in an April 1994 inspection. The tower roof (being a flat roof enclosed by parapet walls) requires regular maintenance; it is likely that infrequent observation and maintenance of this area over the years lead to the roof plumbing allowing destructive water penetration into the stonework - and thus the partial collapse.

### **13. 3 REFERENCES**

National Trust of Australia (W.A.) assessment exposition.

Taylor, John. 'The Art and Architecture of John Cyril Hawes - The Priest/Architect.' unpublished manuscript.

### **13. 4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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