



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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)

- 4.5 Making settlements to serve rural Australia
- 4.6 Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 107 Settlement
- 401 Government and politics
- 605 Famous and infamous people

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam features a complex roofline, tall decorative chimneys, an array of projecting bays, tuck-pointed brickwork and contrasting rendered detailing, typical of a substantial and well-designed Federation Queen Anne homestead. Much of the external and internal detailing is intact, but the replacement of the verandahs in brick and concrete has detracted from the authenticity of the facades. (Criterion 1.1)

The elevated location of the house provides extensive views to the north/north-east, overlooking the town of Northam and the wider rural setting of the Avon valley. This setting is an integral part of the aesthetic qualities of the place and its importance is reflected in the design of the house, with an elevated ground floor, return verandahs and a strong engagement between the main rooms and framed views through bay windows. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

* 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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam, constructed in 1897, is associated with the development and growth of the Northam region in the late nineteenth century following the extension of the Fremantle to Guildford railway to Northam in 1886, and Northam becoming the terminus of the rail line to the Eastern Goldfields in the 1897. (Criterion 2.1)

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam was the home of George Throssell, a significant figure in Western Australian history, particularly for his role in the extension of the Fremantle to Guildford railway to Northam in 1886 which resulted in it becoming one of the largest and most important regional centres in the State. As well as being appointed the second Premier of Western Australia in 1901, Throssell was a founding member of the Northam Municipal Council in 1879, mayor of Northam for nine years between 1887 and 1894, and following the granting of Responsible Government in 1890, he represented Northam in the new Legislative Assembly until 1904. (Criterion 2.3)

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is indicative of the higher socio-economic classes residing in Northam in the late-nineteenth century. The size, grandeur and hill-top location of *Fermoy House fmr), Northam*, is a visual statement of the wealth, power and higher socio-economic status held by George Throssell at that time. Other equally grand residences were built in the nearby area, which following the construction of *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam*, became the most prestigious part of Northam. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam has the potential, through archaeological investigation, to reveal further information about the use of the place. Sub-floor and inter-floor deposits may contain artefactual material relating to the use of the place as a Premier's residence. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is highly valued by the community of Northam for its association with George Throssell, an important figure in local and state politics, who was one of the region's most successful businessmen and was termed the 'lion of Northam'. (Criterion 4.1)

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam has social value for those patients, their families and decedents, who were treated at the place between 1913 and 1947 when it functioned as a private hospital. (Criterion 4.1)

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam has social value to the teachers, students and individuals who have associations with the place since its opening as a school in 1947 to the present. (Criterion 4.1)

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is sited on the hill above the eastern end of town, known as 'nob hill', where a number of equally grand residence are located. The former residence is valued by the local community for its contribution to the character of this area as the most prestigious part of Northam. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is one of only a few Premier's residences extant in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is a substantial and well-designed example of a Federation Queen Anne residence. (Criterion 6.1)

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is representative of the development and growth of the Northam region in the late nineteenth century, following the extension of the Fremantle to Guildford railway to Northam in 1886, and Northam becoming the terminus of the rail line to the Eastern Goldfields in the 1897. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is currently well maintained and is in good condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam was only used as a private residence for approximately 16 years. After that it was used as a hospital for approximately 33 years and, since 1947, as part of a school. Despite these changes of use, the layout and detailing of the original house remains largely intact and its original design and use can still be readily understood. The integrity of the place is therefore moderate.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam has been adapted to suit changing uses and requirements over time but has, none-the-less, retained much of its original architectural detailing (both internally and externally). Overall, the former house retains a moderate level of authenticity.

The grounds of *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* have been extensively altered and redeveloped and, other than the extensive views from the house, the setting retains a low degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place was prepared by the State Heritage Office in December 2013.

The physical evidence was completed by Greenward Consulting in October 20013.

Amendments and/or additions have been carried out by the State Heritage Office and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is a large Federation Queen Anne residence constructed in 1897 for George Throssell, the second Premier of Western Australia.

Shortly after the establishment of the Swan River Colony in 1829, settlers were quick to discover that the settlement was not as lush, fertile or productive as expected, and by 1830 explorations in to the colony's interior were underway in search of better land.

In late 1830, explorers were successful in their search and found productive agricultural land beyond the area of initial settlement in the region now known as the Avon Valley. In November 1830, the Lands and Surveys Department set aside land in this area for the townsites of Northam, York and Beverley.¹

Despite its early foundation, the Northam district did not immediately develop owing to the majority of its land being owned by absentee land owners. However, after the townsite was surveyed in 1836, the settlement became more established with a small number of pastoralists settling in the region.²

Little development occurred until the 1860s, when Northam started to grow due to improvements in agriculture and the establishment of a commercial steam flour mill. Northam also started to change from the 1860s following the arrival of George Throssell, the man who was later termed the 'lion of Northam',³ and who, in 1897, constructed *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam*.

George Throssell arrived in Western Australia aged ten with his father George Michael, his mother and two siblings aboard the first convict ship to arrive in the colony, the *Scindian*. Throssell's father, a retired private of the 17th Dragoon, was a Pensioner Guard, who, in exchange for providing a military escort to prisoners on the convict ship, was granted free passage to the colony for himself and his family, as well as an allocation of land upon arrival. George Michael was

¹ Garden, Donald S., *Northam: An Avon Valley History* (1979), p.4.

² Garden, *Northam: An Avon Valley History* (1979), p. 6, 12., and O'Brien Planning Consultants, *Town and Shire of Northam Municipal Heritage Inventory* (1998), p.2.

³ Throssell was popularly known as the 'Lion of Northam' for his luxuriant silver hair and ferocious advocacy of the interests Northam and of the local farmer. Garden, Donald. S., 'Throssell, George (1840-1910)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, sourced from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/throssell-george-8805>. Accessed on 5 March 2013. 'From the Inside', *The Daily News*, 18 May 1946, p. 20.

employed as a gatekeeper at the Convict Establishment in Fremantle as well as a police inspector in Perth until his death in April 1855.⁴

Following his father's death, Throssell joined the mercantile firm of Walter Padbury, where he gained valuable experience in operating commercial businesses. In 1861, Throssell married Annie Morrell, the granddaughter of John Morrell, the first settler and acknowledged founder of Northam, and together George and Annie moved to Northam.⁵

Soon after his arrival, Throssell became heavily involved in the commercial, social and political life in Northam. He opened his first store in 1862, and worked as the postmaster from 1864. From there, Throssell gradually became one of the region's most successful businessmen with substantial property, pastoral and agricultural holdings.⁶

From 1879 Throssell played a significant role in local and State politics, when he became a founding member of the Northam Municipal Council. He was the mayor of Northam for nine years between 1887 and 1894, and following the granting of Responsible Government in 1890, he represented Northam in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly until 1904. In 1901, following the resignation of Western Australia's first Premier Sir John Forrest, Throssell was appointed Premier, thus becoming the State's second Premier, albeit for just three months.⁷

Due to his involvement within the political sphere, Throssell was instrumental in ensuring that the extension of the Fremantle to Guildford railway went to Northam, rather than York, in 1886. He promoted the benefits of Northam in parliament, he gained support of the local people, and eventually persuaded the Legislative Council to route the railway to Northam. In addition, Throssell was pivotal in the decision for Northam to become the terminus of the rail line to the Eastern Goldfields in 1897.⁸ The decision to link these two railway lines with Northam resulted in drastic development for the townsite, which led to it outstripping both York and Toodyay in terms of size and importance.

In addition to his political life, Throssell was an important figure within the local community. He was a foundation member of Northam Mechanics' Institute and sat on the Northam School Board, he was also the Chairman of the Roads Board and Farmers' Club for some time, as well as establishing the Northam and Newcastle Settlers' Association.⁹

4 Broomhall, F. H., *The Veterans: A History of the Enrolled Pensioner Force in Western Australia 1850-1880* (1989), B277, p.1-2., and Pitt Morison, Margaret., and White, John., *Western Towns and Buildings* (1979), p.28.

5 Battye, J. S., *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia* (1913), volume 2, p. 522., and Garden, Donald S., *Northam: An Avon Valley History* (1979), p.69.

6 Garden, *Northam: An Avon Valley History* (1979), p.69, 70., Erickson, *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914, Volume 4, R-Z* (1987), p.3062.

7 Garden, 'Throssell, George (1840-1910)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, sourced from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/throssell-george-8805>. Accessed on 13.08.2013.

8 Garden, 'Throssell, George (1840-1910)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, sourced from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/throssell-george-8805>. Accessed on 13.08.2013., and Garden, *Northam: An Avon Valley History* (1979), pp. 113, 114, 115,

9 Garden, 'Throssell, George (1840-1910)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, sourced from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/throssell-george-8805>. Accessed on 13.08.2013., Erickson, *The*

By the 1890s, Throssell had become a significantly wealthy man, and in 1897 he constructed a grand residence for himself and his family in Northam. This residence, which was located on a hill overlooking the town, was named 'Fermoy' by Throssell, after the Irish town of his birth.

Following the construction of *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam*, the hill above the eastern end of town where it was located, known as 'nob hill', became the most prestigious part of Northam, with a number of equally grand residence being constructed by influential townspeople, including George and Annie's son George Lionel who built *Uralia* in 1902-03 and James Byfield's *Byfield House* in 1904.¹⁰

The elevated location of *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* provided extensive views of Northam and the wider rural setting of the Avon valley. This setting is an integral part of the place and its importance is reflected in the design of the house, with an elevated ground floor and a strong engagement between the main rooms and framed views through bay windows.

Once complete, *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* became an important social venue for the Northam community. Throssell hosted official events at the residence, including events with the Governor General of Australia, the Governor of Western Australia, his political colleague Sir John Forrest, as well as non-political events such as women's temperance meetings and family weddings.¹¹

Throssell resided in the grand residence for thirteen years before his death in August 1910 following a fall.

Despite being survived by five sons and six daughters, Throssell's business empire collapsed following his death, as his eldest son George Lionel had borrowed heavily to keep the business solvent.¹² Just three months after his death, *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* was advertised to let, and within a year all its furniture was put up for auction.¹³

From c.1913 *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* was used as a private hospital. The neighbouring residence, *Uralia*, was also used as a private hospital from 1943 until 1947.¹⁴

For some time during the 1940s, part of *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* was taken over for use by the military.¹⁵

Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914, Volume 4, R-Z (1987), p.3062., and Garden, *Northam: An Avon Valley History* (1979), p.119.

10 Heritage Council of Western Australia, State Register of Heritage Places Assessment Documentation, P1876 *Uralia* (1996), p.3.

11 'Northam -', *The Inquirer & Commercial News*, 16 December 1898, p1., 'The Official Program', *Western Mail*, 9 September 1905, p.20., 'Commonwealth and the State: Sir John Forrest at Northam. An Interesting Speech. The Surplus Revenue Act. Amendment of the Constitution Deprecated', *The West Australian*, 9 July 1908, p.5., 'Woman's Christian Temperance Union: Meeting of Executive', *The West Australian*, 27 December 1899. p.7., 'Weddings', *The Daily News*, 7 February 1895, p.3., and 'Weddings: Callaghan-Throssell', *Western Mail*, 2 October 1909, p.40.

12 Heritage Council of Western Australia, State Register of Heritage Places Assessment Documentation, P1876 *Uralia* (1996), p.4.

13 'To Let', *The West Australian*, 29 November 1910, p.8., and 'Genuine Unreserved Clearing Sale of Valueable Furniture', *The West Australian*, 22 July 1911, p.2.

14 'Mainly About People', *The Daily News*, 10 November 1913., 'Fermoy Hospital Closing: Historic Building At Northam', *The West Australian*, 29 November 1947, p. 15., Heritage Council of Western Australia, State Register of Heritage Places Assessment Documentation, P1876 *Uralia* (1996), p.5.

15 Place Record for 'Fermoy House', in *Town of Northam Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places* (2004).

The Throssells maintained ownership of *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* until 1947 when it was sold to the Martist Brothers.¹⁶ The Martist Brothers used the residence as a school, which became known as St Paul's Marist Brothers College.¹⁷

In 1971, ownership of *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* was transferred to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth.¹⁸ The former residence continued to be used as a school, however it became known as St Joseph's.

In 2013, *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* continues to be used as part of St Joseph's School. The building houses school offices, a staff room and the library. Other school buildings have been added to the site over the years, and *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* now forms the central point for the school complex.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is a large Federation Queen Anne residence constructed in 1897. It has the main living areas located on an elevated ground floor, with the former service and servants rooms on the lower ground floor.

Siting

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam was set in spacious grounds on an elevated site overlooking the township of Northam and the Avon valley.

As part of its adaptation from a house to a school, the grounds have been fully redeveloped and the former house now provides the only physical evidence of the character of the original estate.

On the north-western side of the former house, garden beds on either side of the main entrance steps, and an informal grassed forecourt, provide a buffer zone between the homestead and the school playgrounds, which have been laid out with hard courts to the north-west and an oval to the north. The current forecourt area lacks the traditional character of a formal approach to a substantial house, but does help to retain an open landscaped setting.

To the east, south and west, *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* is closely bounded by school buildings constructed since the mid-twentieth century, including the most recent addition, a large performing arts centre constructed along the south-western boundary in 2012. Between the school buildings and the former house there is a band of asphalt, providing a driveway and parking area to the south-west and pedestrian areas to the south-east and north-east.

There are no extant trees that relate to formal landscaping of the grounds when the place was occupied as a residence and, within the immediate vicinity of the former house, the only prominent trees are the three eucalypts on the grassed forecourt, adjacent to the hard courts.

Exterior

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam features a complex roofline, tall decorative chimneys, an array of projecting bays, tuck-pointed brickwork and contrasting

¹⁶ Certificate of Title, Vol. XXV, Fol. 338.

¹⁷ 'Fermoy Hospital Closing: Historic Building At Northam', *The West Australian*, 29 November 1947, p. 15., Place Record for 'Fermoy House', in *Town of Northam Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places* (2004).

¹⁸ Transfer of Land. Doc No. A427554. Dated 9 July 1971.

rendered detailing, typical of a well designed, substantial Federation Queen Anne residence. Much of the external detailing is intact, but the replacement of the verandahs in brick and concrete has detracted from the authenticity of the facades (noting that Federation Queen Anne typically featured verandahs with timber floors, timber posts, ornamental brackets, valances and balustrades – a much lighter and more decorative finish than the present fabric).

The place was designed with principal rooms and verandahs to the south-west, north-east (front) and north-west, taking advantage of the large elevated site and leaving only the south-east (rear) as a functional façade.

The steeply pitched hipped roof is clad with short-sheet corrugated sheeting and extends in a 'U' shape, with a lower gable over the central hall (the latter visible only from the rear). Along the three principal facades the roof features a mixture of gabled, hipped, splayed and curved sections over seven projecting bays of varied forms and proportions. It also features two large face brick chimneys with coffered faces formed by rendered detailing. Other face brick chimneys are largely concealed from the primary views and have two projecting rendered bands and a projecting rendered cap. To the front façade, the large gable over the projecting wing, near the western corner, features timber battens in a simple geometric pattern and a timber cross mounted at the apex (the latter relating to the use of the place as a Catholic school). The eaves have exposed rafters and a boarded soffit. Gutters have a half-round profile and downpipes are round.

The main facades have tuck-pointed face brick laid in Flemish bond, with varied detailing adding to the complexity of the Federation Queen Anne composition. To all of the main facades there are three plain rendered stringcourses set at window sill height, mid-window height, and window head height. Openings variously have plain rendered lintels (stepping up from the top string course) or brick voussoirs. Windows have rendered moulded sills, some with curved under-sill panels. Windows are typically double hung, of varying widths, but there is also a narrow, arched, stained-glass casement window to the south-west elevation and stained glass casements to the main entry.

The bays facing onto the verandah all have French doors with three panels of varying heights to each leaf, glazed to the upper panels and solid with robust moulding to the bottom panel. Above each door there is a narrow horizontal timber panel and a projecting sill under a plain highlight. Only one of the bays (to the south-west side) has a combination of French doors with matching full height windows.

There are steps up to the verandah from the north-west and south-west, the former providing the main entrance to the house. There is also a modern ramp at the south-eastern end of the south-western verandah. The front steps lead up to a shallow bay that is marked by a projecting hip to the main roof. This bay features a wide, shallow-arched, opening with double doors flanked by a pair of stained glass windows to either side, and is a substantial entry statement.

The verandah has been reconstructed with face brick piers and a perforated brick balustrade to the main ground level and a rendered, arched arcade to the lower ground level. The latter extends partway along the north-west and north-east facades, with a solid rendered plinth around the remainder of the verandah. The bull-nosed verandah roof springs from below a narrow moulded string course. In

2013, the concrete floors and steps were sprayed with a non-slip concrete surface.

To the lower ground floor the walls have been fully rendered and the openings have plain square reveals and plain raked sills. Windows are all double hung and doors single leaf.

To the rear, the face brick walls have been painted and the detailing is restrained and functional. Access to the main ground level is via a set of metal steps under a functional, modern metal covered-way. Rear access to the lower ground level is via a set of concrete steps down to a sunken courtyard. The physical evidence suggests that this area originally had a verandah over, probably with steps up from the lower ground areas through the sunken courtyard. There were almost certainly additional rear doors onto this verandah through what are now three full height windows (including what were possibly secondary/servants entrances through the small wing near the eastern corner).

The other obvious alteration to the external detailing is the insertion of four later windows, one to the north-east façade, one to the south-west façade and two to the south-east (rear) facade. These are all double hung windows, divided vertically with three panes to each sash – the style suggesting that the works were undertaken in the early post-war era.

Interior – Main Ground Floor

Typical original detailing to the main ‘public’ rooms of the former house includes approximately 4.5m high ceilings with deep moulded cornices, hard plastered walls, timber floors (all concealed under modern coverings), marble fire place surrounds, moulded timber architraves with rectangular plinth blocks, low-waisted four panel internal doors with heavy moulded detailing, external French doors with similar moulded detailing, 350mm high moulded timber skirtings, and plaster wall vents with a decorative curved leaf pattern. In the secondary rooms there was more restrained detailing, such as simpler 240mm high skirtings and timber fireplace mantles. Much of the original internal detailing remains intact, although four of the fireplaces have been blocked up and new ceilings with coved cornices have been installed at a height of approximately 4.2m to many of the rooms (set immediately below the original cornice level).

The main entrance to the building, from the north-west, accessed a large entrance hall/reception room that originally measured approximately 4.7 x 14.5m. This featured two wide, coffered archways along its length and a triple archway at the south-eastern end. In 2005 this was subdivided into two separate spaces with a full height partition wall, creating a reception area at the front door and a separate section of the school library towards the rear. At the same time, the rear corridor was blocked off from the central hall by half-height frosted glass panels to the triple arch. Other than the large coffered archways, the main feature of the entrance hall/reception room is the stained glass detailing to the front entrance, which occupies an arched opening, measuring over 3.6m wide. At the centre of this opening there is a pair of double doors, which have three panels of varying heights to each leaf, glazed to the upper panels and solid with robust moulding to the bottom panel (matching the detailing to the French doors elsewhere in the house). These now have partly frosted panels, displaying the school shield. Either side of these doors there is a pair of casement windows over vertical timber panelling in a moulded surround. Original stained glass to the windows

include painted images representing each of the four seasons to the central panels, four different birds to the upper panels, and a repeated decorative design to each of the bottom panels. The large fanlight is divided into three sections and glazed with plain ruby coloured glass.

The entrance hall/reception room had doors to two large, formal rooms on the north-eastern side. Each of these has a white marble fireplace, with decorative glazed tiles to the hearths. In 2005, partition walls subdivided these spaces to create a bursars office, waiting area and reception/assistant bursars office in the north-western room and a teachers resource room, sick-bay and small foyer in the south-eastern room.

On the south-western side of the reception area a door opens into the projecting wing at the western corner of the building. This room, which is now the school principal's office, features a bay with French doors onto the front verandah, a black marble fireplace surround and a narrow stained glass casement window to the south-western wall.

To the south-east of this room there is a large room forming part of the library. This opens onto the entrance hall/reception room with a wide semi-circular archway, but the detailing suggests that this may be a later alteration. It is also possible that the room was originally subdivided into two parts.

The alignment of the rear wall to the entrance hall/reception room defines the extent of the side verandahs and from this point the floor plan extends to the south-west and north-east with projecting side wings. This part of the house has a corridor providing access to the entrance hall/reception room, a short corridor to the rear door, and four rooms. Each of these spaces has original detailing consistent with use as the private family quarters.

At the rear of the house, near the eastern corner, another wing includes two small rooms, each of which has a full-height window to the south-west. These openings may have originally been doors onto a rear verandah.

Interior – Lower Ground Floor

The detailing of the lower ground floor is consistent with this being used for servants' quarters, service rooms and storage. Typical detailing includes concrete floors, rendered walls with a rough surface texture, a mixture of flush ceilings with coved cornices and panel and batten ceilings, utilitarian low waisted doors, moulded timber architraves with rectangular plinth blocks to the door openings, moulded timber architraves to the window openings, and no skirtings.

Only one room retains evidence of a fireplace (the central room adjacent to the rear, sunken courtyard) and it is possible that this was the former kitchen. The rooms are now all used for storage, with the exception of the central room on the north-eastern side (the uniform shop) and the room at the northern corner (the cafeteria kitchen).

There have been some changes to the layout of the internal spaces and the interconnecting openings, and more detailed analysis would be required to understand the original function of the various areas.

The only obvious addition to the place since its construction is a small bathroom (now a store room) on the north-eastern verandah of the lower ground floor.

Archaeological record

Since the place ceased to be used as a private residence the site has been heavily redeveloped, particularly through the construction of school classrooms, the performing arts centre, the levelled oval and the hard courts. Ancillary buildings are likely to have been located towards the rear of the house, the area in which most of the classrooms are located.

Immediately around the former house the ground has been variously graded and sealed with asphalt or redesigned as an informal grassed forecourt. There are no obvious early site features in these areas but it is possible that there is some archaeological evidence of former features relating to gardens, driveways and pathways.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is a large Federation Queen Anne residence overlooking the town of Northam, constructed in 1897 for George Throssell, the second Premier of Western Australia.

Federation Queen Anne Residences

Fermoy House (fmr), Northam is a substantial and well-designed Federation Queen Anne residence.

There are 61 Federation Queen Anne residences entered in to the State Register, with the majority (46) being constructed during a similar (1890-1910) period. Of these 46 residences, just seven were constructed outside of the Metropolitan area, including two in Northam, these are:

- P386 *Villa Carlotta*, Busselton (1896) – A single-storey brick Federation Queen Anne style house with tower.
- P1737 *Peter Pan*, Coolgardie (1896) – A single-storey brick and stone residence constructed in the Federation Queen Anne style and named after a Melbourne Cup Winner.
- P1878 *Byfield House*, Northam (1904) – A two-storey brick and tile Federation Queen Anne residence.
- P1880 *The Residency*, Northam (1909) – A single-storey brick and iron Federation Queen Anne residence.
- P2936 *St Davitt's*, Busselton (1896) – A single-storey random-coursed rubble limestone residence designed in the Federation Queen Anne style.
- P3427 *The Palms*, Kalgoorlie (1901) – A single-storey brick and iron Federation Queen Anne residence.
- P15562 *Garryowen*, Albany (1908) – A substantial brick and tile Federation Queen Anne style residence.

Places associated with George Throssell

There are a number of places entered in to the State Heritage Office database which are associated with George Throssell. Due to his role in the development of Northam from 1864, the majority of places are located in the town of Northam. This includes:

- P1865 *Shamrock Hotel, Northam* (1861) – Throssell was an owner from 1862-1869.
- P1877 *Northam Town Hall/Lesser Hall* (1898) – Throssell is associated with this place as a prominent local councillor.
- P1891 *St John's Anglican Church & Parish Hall, Northam* (1890) – Throssell played a significant role in organising the construction of the church and hall.
- P1898 *Railway Institute, Northam* (1898) – Throssell played an active role in establishing the Institute.
- P3976 *Northam Cemetery* (1856) – Throssell is buried at the cemetery.

Other places associated with Throssell which are of note are:

- P10883 Fountain, May Reserve [Throssell Fountain], Northam – A marble topped drinking fountain given to the townspeople of Northam by Throssell and his wife.
- P2993 *Throssell House, Perth* (1905) – Throssell owned the land on which the residence was constructed prior to it being built. He has no other association with the place.

No other houses which Throssell lived in have been identified.

Premier's Houses

There are only a few residences in the State Heritage Office database noted to have been constructed for Premiers of Western Australia. These are:

- P1882 *Mitchell House*, Northam (1905) – Constructed for Sir James Mitchell, Premier 1919-1924.
- P3939 John Tonkin's House, East Fremantle (1939, now demolished) – Constructed for John Tonkin, Premier from 1971 to 1974. The Minister for Heritage directed that this place not be added to the State Register.
- P13599 Cherrita, Dalkeith (1936, now demolished) – Constructed for Sir Charles Court, Premier from 1974 to 1982. It is also associated with his son, Richard Court, who was also the Premier from 1993 to 2001.
- P3351 Scaddan House, Guildford (1907) – Constructed for John Scaddan, Premier from 1911 to 1916. It is thought that Scaddan resided at the property when he became Premier. The Register Committee reviewed this place in 1993 and determined that it did not warrant assessment for the State Register.
- P15711 Minarwarra, Peppermint Grove (1898) – Constructed for Sir Walter James, Premier from 1902 to 1904. The place is entered in the Heritage Council's Assessment Program.

It is likely that other residences of former Premiers are still extant, however have not been added to local heritage inventories or heritage lists, and therefore have not been entered in to the State Heritage Office database.

There are a number of other places entered into the database associated with former Premiers, however the associations are often tenuous being that the

Premier opened a building or was responsible, in some part, for its erection. Other Heritage Council assessments of Premier's residences have noted that further research is needed to identify residences of former Western Australian Premiers.¹⁹

Conclusion

Although *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam* is not unique in terms of its architectural style, it is a good, highly decorative example of its type, and is additionally important for its association with George Throssell.

Throssell played a significant role in the development of Northam, and was instrumental in it becoming one of the State's most important and largest regional centres through the extension of the Fremantle to Guildford railway to Northam and Northam becoming the terminus of the rail line to the Eastern Goldfields in the 1897. In addition, through his role in State politics, and time as Premier, he made a significant contribution to the history and development of the region and the State.

Throssell's residence, *Fermoy House (fmr), Northam*, is one of only a few residences known to have been constructed for a Premier of Western Australia.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research may reveal additional extant residences of other former Western Australian Premiers.

Further research may reveal the artist/glassmaker responsible for the original stained glass windows of the house.

¹⁹ Heritage Council of Western Australia, Below Threshold Assessment Documentation, P3939 John Tonkin's House (fmr) (2002). Heritage Council of Western Australia, Below Threshold Assessment Documentation, P13559 Cherrita (2006).