



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)

- 6.2 Establishing schools
- 8.5.2 Helping other people
- 8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 402 Education & science
- 408 Institutions

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Walkaway CWA Rooms is part of the national Country Women's Association movement, begun in 1922, and is indicative of the development of the organisation in Western Australia since 1924 and its importance in the community life of isolated country districts when few other services were available. (Criterion 2.1)

Walkaway CWA Rooms was constructed in 1959, and is illustrative of the contribution made by women to life in country districts as well as their involvement in the wider community. (Criterion 2.2)

The *Walkaway CWA Branch* was established in *Walkaway* since 1932, and the *Walkaway CWA Rooms* has been associated with the Branch since 1959. (Criterion 2.3)

Walkaway CWA Rooms has been associated with the provision of pre-school classes from 1972 to 1996. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Walkaway CWA Rooms has particular value to the people, particularly the women, of the Walkaway district as a venue of social interaction and community activity, and to the families whose children attended pre-school at the place between 1972 and 1996. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

As a purpose built facility constructed in 1959, *Walkaway CWA Rooms* demonstrates the nature and style of accommodation for Country Women's Association activities in the post war period. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Walkaway CWA Rooms is in good condition and well kept with local members active in raising funds for the activities and maintenance of the place. Windows in the west elevation currently require treatment.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Walkaway CWA Rooms has high integrity. The purpose built facility has been in continuous operation since construction and at times accommodated other compatible functions. The declining and ageing membership of the branch may affect the long term viability of the place.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Walkaway CWA Rooms has high authenticity as there has been little change to the fabric or form of the place.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Taylor Architect.

If there is any special curtilage that has been decided by the Register Committee or the Heritage Council a brief description of it should go here.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Walkaway CWA Rooms is a timber-framed and fibre-cement clad, iron roofed building constructed in 1959, probably by C. T. Gibbings, for the Walkaway Branch of the Country Women's Association of Western Australia. It has been occupied by the Walkaway CWA continuously as their headquarters.

The Champion Bay and Greenough Flats districts were explored in 1839 by Lieutenant George Grey, and again in 1848 by A. C. Gregory. Both considered the area suitable for pastoral and agricultural activities. In 1849, the Geraldine lead mine was established in the Northampton district, with others soon following, and the port of Geraldton, on Champion Bay, was established to serve the mines. Pastoralists took up land in the Champion Bay area, and by the early 1850s, pastoral landholdings had extended south along the coast to Greenough. Cattle, rather than sheep, were grazed at this

time.¹ The name Walkaway was given to an area at the southern end of the Greenough Flats where George Shenton took a lease in 1852. The name was derived from Wagawa, the Aboriginal name for the area.²

In 1857, the convict depot at Port Gregory was closed and the Pensioner Guards moved to Geraldton. On the Greenough Flats, land was surveyed for settlement, with freehold blocks of ten to fifty acres being made available. The Greenough and Irwin districts grew rapidly, having the highest rate of population growth in the colony in the 1860s, with the 1870 census showing 1,557 inhabitants. Geraldton was declared a municipality in 1871.³

A railway line was opened from Geraldton to the mines at Northampton, in 1879. This was followed by the completion of the Eastern Railway line from Fremantle to Guildford in 1881, and extended to York by 1885. Other railway lines were planned to open up the country to closer settlement, including a line from Perth to Geraldton, but because the Government did not have the funds to construct these lines itself, it undertook to have them built by private operators under the land grant system. In 1886, the Government entered into a contract with the West Australian Midland Land and Railway Syndicate to build a railway line from Guildford to Walkaway, with the section from Walkaway to Geraldton being constructed by the Government.⁴

The junction of the Government and private lines at Walkaway was sited north-east of the area originally called Walkaway, which then became known as Old Walkaway. A town developed around the Walkaway Railway Station, which was the locomotive changeover point between the private and Government owned lines and the site of a Locomotive Depot for the Midland Railway Company. The town was also the home base of a railway maintenance team. A Post and Telegraph office was opened at the Railway Station in 1899, Walkaway Hall was built in 1902 and a hotel opened in 1907. The subdivision of some surrounding pastoral leases into smaller farm blocks in the period 1896-1920 encouraged closer settlement in the district. While the 1920s were generally favourable to land settlement, the 1930s Depression years saw many people walk off their land. The 1950s were a boom period for the rural sector and there was a spate of home construction and renovation at Walkaway, as rural populations increased following World War Two.⁵

The Country Women's Association of Australia (CWA) was formed as a non-sectarian and non-political organisation in New South Wales in 1922. Its foundation was prompted by the formation of the Women's Institutes, first in Canada in the late 1890s, and then in Britain from 1913. The motto of the Association was initially: 'Honour to God, Loyalty to the Throne and Empire, Service to the Country through Country Women for Country Women by Country Women', but this was eventually changed to: 'For Home and Country'. The main aim of the Association was to provide services for countrywomen and children in Australia. To this end, the CWA established rest rooms and infant health centres in country towns; holiday homes at the

¹ Bain, Mary Albertus, *A Life of Its Own*, City of Geraldton, 1996, pp. 17-105.

² Bain, Mary Albertus, op cit, p. 96.

³ Bain, Mary Albertus, op cit, pp. 17-105.

⁴ Gunzberg, Adrian & Austin, Jeff, *Rails Through the Bush*, Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Melbourne, 1997, p. 210; Bull, T. J. 'A History of the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia', typescript, pp. 30-49.

⁵ *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1894-1920; Considine & Griffiths Architects, *Walkaway Railway Station Precinct Conservation Plan*, 1996; Shire of Greenough, *Walkaway Character Study*, 1996.

seaside; hostels for children attending school away from home; aged-care homes; instruction in first aid, home nursing and handicrafts; library services, music and drama groups, emergency housekeeping services, hospital visiting, and support for elderly citizens.⁶

The CWA formed in Western Australia in 1924, following a talk at the Karrakatta Club by Lady Forster, wife of the Governor General, on the development of the Association in New South Wales. Mrs Mabel Craven-Griffiths, MBE, was Secretary Treasurer of a Provisional Committee and a driving force in the formative years of the Association in Western Australia. The first State conference of the CWA was held in Perth on 10 March 1925. By 1934, there were 124 branches and 26 rest rooms in the State. Twenty years later, the CWA had 113 rest rooms, ten seaside homes, five hostels and two clubs, one in Perth and one in Albany. There were 312 active branches in the State in 1974, and another 136 that had formed and disbanded over the period. The number of branches stood at 220 in 1998.⁷

The Walkaway Branch of the CWA was formed in 1932, as part of the North Midland Division. Meetings were held in the Walkaway Hall. Assistance to local residents, often in the form of food or clothing, was the main concern of the Branch during the 1930s Depression. Events held during these years included dances, 'Frolics' for the children, and afternoon teas. In 1933, a block of land was rented from the Railway Department with the idea of building a rest room on the site. When nothing had been accomplished in this regard by 1935, a playground was established on the land instead. In 1938, the railway land was relinquished and the playground equipment moved to a resident's land. During the War years, proceeds from dances were used to supply clothing and food parcels to Australian soldiers, and donations to War relief funds. The Branch also managed boxes of library books from the State's public library system, with the books being lent to anyone in the district. Branch members attended Division and State functions whenever possible during this period. By the early 1950s, rationing and restrictions were finally over and a wider range of activities could be indulged in.⁸

In 1952, Mr Major Lockier Logue donated to the Branch an 1148 square metre block from his Victoria Location 1235, with a frontage to Evans Road.⁹ Plans were established for a purpose built centre, comprising a main room for meetings, a kitchen and a front verandah. A committee was formed in 1953, with the task of raising money for the building. Fundraising included cropping on donated land with labour donated by the men of the district, serving afternoon teas at gymkhanas, and selling preserves and goods made from remnants.¹⁰

In 1956, a Mr Prunster drew up plans for *Walkaway CWA Rooms*, and more money was raised from cropping. In 1957, plans and specifications with two quotes were sent to the Head Office of the CWA of WA for State Council

⁶ Erickson, R., Gibbings, B. & Higgins, L., *Her Name is Woman*, CWA, Perth, 1974, pp. 2-6, 109-113; West Australian Country Women's Association (Inc), *Annual Report*, 1952, [p. 5].

⁷ Erickson, R., Gibbings, B. & Higgins, L., op cit; Kelly, B., Haywood, R. & Smeeton, P., *A Continuing Story: A continuation of the history of the Country Women's Association of Western Australia 1974-1999*, CWA, Perth, 1999, pp.177-181.

⁸ 'The Walkaway Branch of the Country Women's Association of WA (Inc)', 4 page typescript compiled from Branch minutes for this assessment, by Mrs P. Short. An exact date for establishment of the Branch is not given.

⁹ 'The Walkaway Branch ...', op cit; Certificates of Title Vol 1059 Fol. 50 & Vol. 1190 Fol. 76, 10 January 1956; Survey Diagram 19448, 28 November 1954..

¹⁰ 'The Walkaway Branch ...', op cit.

approval, but this was not granted. The refusal may have been for financial reasons, but another set of plans was subsequently drawn up by a Mr Brockman, suggesting the lack of approval may have involved the design. At a secret ballot held by the Branch in 1957, Mr Brockman's plans were chosen, although members opted for a timber floor rather than the concrete floor designated in his plan.¹¹ In 1958, a loan was arranged through the Grain Pool of WA, which administered a fund built up from levies on grain growers and from which it could provide loans free of interest to CWA branches in grain growing areas.¹² Six tenders for construction of *Walkaway CWA Rooms* were received and although they were higher than expected, one for £1,400 was accepted by the Branch. Head Office, however, did not consider the quote acceptable and tenders were called again in 1959. A quote from a Mr Gibbings for £2,108 was eventually accepted and approved. The builder was most likely C. T. Gibbings of Durlacher Street Geraldton, who is listed as a contractor in the 1949 Post Office Directory.¹³

Walkaway CWA Rooms was opened on 8 August 1959, with twenty-two members of the Walkaway Branch present:

A building containing a meeting room - measuring 24ft x 20ft - kitchen and powder room together with a verandah was constructed at a cost of over £2,000, and on Saturday last it was officially opened by the State President (Mrs J. P. Higgins) in the presence of the Premier (Hon. D. Brand, MLA) and other distinguished personalities.

The structure was barely completed in time for the ceremony, and in fact the board identifying the building as belonging to the Branch was placed in position only on Saturday morning. The rest room will quickly serve a useful purpose, for during next week-end it will be the centre for a Junior Farmer's Achievement Camp, and since the junior farmer organisation is specially sponsored by the Country Women's Association it is fitting that the young agriculturalists should be amongst the first to make use of the new building.¹⁴

Raffles, fetes, birthday parties, card evenings, competitions, dances, afternoon teas, Christmas parties and stalls were all held to raise money to pay off the loan on *Walkaway CWA Rooms*. The place was the venue for regular Child Health Clinics from 1963, religious services, religious instruction by travelling Catholic Sisters to children at the primary school, and meetings of the Magellan Club. From 1969 to 2000, the Walkaway Branch and the Anglican Guild combined to host an annual 'Companion Time', an afternoon of entertainment and afternoon tea for pensioners, many of whom travelled out from Geraldton for the function. The Branch has awarded a Citizenship prize to a pupil at the local primary school since 1971.¹⁵

In 1972, the Kindergarten Association opened a pre-school in *Walkaway CWA Rooms* as joint occupants of the place. The Education Department took over the pre-school in 1976, and the Branch received \$100 a year rental for use of the place, while the grounds were maintained by the gardener at the Walkaway Primary School. The pre-school continued to use *Walkaway CWA Rooms* until 1996, when a room for their use was provided at the Primary School, ending an arrangement which the Branch had found particularly

¹¹ Research into *Wise's Post Office Directories* and *WA Telephone Directories* of the period failed to provide any information on the identity of Mr Prunster or Mr Brockman.

¹² Erickson, R., Gibbings, B. & Higgins, L., op cit, pp. 91-94.

¹³ 'The Walkaway Branch ...', op cit; *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1949.

¹⁴ *Geraldton Guardian*, 13 August 1959, p. 13.

¹⁵ 'The Walkaway Branch ...', op cit.

beneficial. *Walkaway CWA Rooms* was also hired out occasionally for private events such as party plan sales and the sale of children's clothing.¹⁶

Functions and activities undertaken by the Walkaway Branch over the years have included the ongoing provision of lunches at the Narngulu livestock sales, catering for field days, family reunions, weddings and Polocrosse dinners, entering a float in the local Easter Parade, establishing a choir, guest speakers at Branch meetings, handicraft days, and attendance of members at Division, State and neighbouring branch events. A special event was the book launch of Greenough resident Maude Ahearn's *I Remember*, which was held at *Walkaway CWA Rooms* on 21 September 1977. Funds raised by the Branch were used for maintenance of *Walkaway CWA Rooms* as well as contributing to local, Division and State projects.¹⁷

No major work has been carried out to *Walkaway CWA Rooms*, but minor work has included the installation of lattice at the north and south ends of the front verandah (1976), and the addition of a patio on the south side (1979). Painting and repairs were carried out regularly in the early years of occupation. Branch membership has declined in the last decade, with membership in 2002 down to around ten or twelve. Most of the remaining members are elderly. Low membership and higher costs have resulted in a reduction in catering and other activities, which has also meant less funds available for such things as maintenance of *Walkaway CWA Rooms*.¹⁸ The Shire of Greenough Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places, adopted on 12 December 1998, lists *Walkaway CWA Rooms* at Management Category 5.¹⁹

The Walkaway Branch will celebrate its 70th birthday with a lunch on 18 June 2002, and efforts are being made to attract new members, but with limited success to date.²⁰ In 2002, *Walkaway CWA Rooms* continues to be occupied as the headquarters of the Walkaway branch of the Country Women's Association.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Walkaway CWA Rooms (1959) is a single-storey fibre-cement clad building with a corrugated iron roof constructed for the Walkaway branch of the Country Women's Association in 1959. The only other structure on the site is a pre-fabricated Shed (c. 1975-1990s) located behind the main building, towards the west boundary. The boundaries have been fenced and access to the rear garden prevented by fences extending from the sides of the building to the east and west boundaries.

The site is located just west of the railway line on level ground and has a slightly irregular rectangular shape with a longer rear (south) boundary than front. *Walkaway CWA Rooms* is set back from this front boundary along Evans Road and surrounded by a grassed area with a flag pole at the front and a few mature trees.

The building has a rectangular form with the ridge of the broken back gable roof parallel to the street. Two evenly spaced, circular ventilator pipes protrude above the north roof plane, below the ridge. The roof extends over

¹⁶ 'The Walkaway Branch ...', op cit.

¹⁷ 'The Walkaway Branch ...', op cit.

¹⁸ 'The Walkaway Branch ...', op cit.

¹⁹ Suba, T., Callow, B. & Grundy, G., *Shire of Greenough Municipal Heritage Inventory*, 1997-98, Place No. 151.

²⁰ 'The Walkaway Branch ...', op cit.

the front and rear verandahs at a lower pitch, with square timber posts supporting the verandah eaves. The simple nature of the building fabric and technology is identifiable with the austerity of the post-war period but otherwise displays few style characteristics.

The concrete floor of the front verandah is raised slightly above ground level with a single riser located centrally at the edge of the verandah. Above, the Walkaway Country Women's Association signboard and CWA logo span the two central verandah posts. The front elevation is a symmetrical arrangement with timber framed casement windows on each side of the double leaf entrance doors. Metal awnings shade similar windows in the east and west elevations. A partition height timber lattice screen extends across the width of the rear verandah.

Internally, the building comprises a full width meeting room at the front with kitchen and bathroom facilities dividing the space behind. The finishes and detailing are simple with a vinyl covering throughout on the timber floor, and simple timber skirtings and architraves. The meeting room has a flat plasterboard ceiling with surface mounted fluorescent light fittings, suspended fans and square ceiling vents. A hatch in the southern wall, functions as a servery to the kitchen behind.

The place has been in continuous, if declining, use since first constructed and is currently well maintained. Minor alterations and maintenance have been carried out on the building fabric, with roof repairs completed early in 2002. The use of the place for early childhood education required the addition of some fencing; a Garden Shed (1975) and an Equipment Shed (c. 1980-1990s). It is not clear whether the current Shed behind the Meeting Rooms is either of these structures. Windows of the west elevation are suffering from timber deterioration and have been secured, awaiting future maintenance.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are fifty-eight CWA rooms and halls listed on the Heritage Council database, none of which have been previously assessed. Five places occupied by the CWA are currently undergoing assessment, namely those at Pingaring, Hyden, Cuballing, Wonthella and Walkaway.

Of these: Cuballing CWA occupies the former Cuballing Road Board Office, a stone building, which was constructed as an agricultural hall in 1898; Pingaring (1956) and Hyden (1950) have purpose built rooms constructed of cement block with iron roof; the purpose built rooms at Walkaway (1959) were constructed in timber and asbestos with iron roof; and, Wonthella CWA purchased an existing 1940s timber and asbestos residence, which has had the interior walls removed to form a hall space.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
