



**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)

- 3.62.2 Providing hospital services
- 4.5 Making settlements to serve rural Australia
- 8.6 Worshipping
- 8.10.4 Designing and building fine buildings
- 8.12 Living in and around Australian homes
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

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

- 306 Domestic activities
- 307 Intellectual activities, arts and crafts
- 406 Religion
- 605 Famous and infamous people

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*The Hermitage* has a high degree of artistic and technical refinement, both internally and externally, and exhibits a well-resolved combination of architectural and artistic motifs in the Inter-War Old English Style. (Criterion 1.1)

*The Hermitage* is an excellent example of John Hawes' eclectic architectural style, where he borrows selected architectural elements from varying styles and combines them to create a building of exceptional individuality and charm. (Criterion 1.2)

*The Hermitage* has a landmark quality in Geraldton from its prominent and elevated location adjacent to Cathedral Avenue. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*The Hermitage* has a close association with the development of the Geraldton St John of God Hospital in the mid 1930s as the former Chaplain's residence. (Criterion 2.1)

---

\* 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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.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 Hermitage* was designed by Monsignor John Hawes. Hawes' life and works are prominent within the history of the Mid West Region of Western Australia and in the context of ecclesiastical architecture in Western Australia. (Criteria 2.2 & 2.3)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

*The Hermitage* demonstrates technical sophistication in the construction of the large scissor-truss to support the roof over the living room. (Criterion 3.3)

### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*The Hermitage* has strong significance for the Diocese of Geraldton and for the Roman Catholic Church through the place's association with local Priest/Architect Monsignor John Hawes who designed the Geraldton Cathedral. (Criterion 4.1)

*The Hermitage* is highly valued by the community of Geraldton and surrounding districts as an example of John Hawes' architectural work, and is valued as a tourist destination contributing to the Geraldton community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.1, 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

*The Hermitage* is a rare example of a design by the Priest/Architect John Cyril Hawes that is domestic in function, small in scale and drawn from Arts and Crafts design principles, all of which are atypical features amongst Hawes' eclectic work in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

*The Hermitage* demonstrates the highly unusual eremitic way of life in its minimal accommodation, and is unusual as a retreat house designed to accommodate only one person. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*The Hermitage* is representative of Hawes' distinctive portfolio of work in Western Australia. (Criterion 6.1)

*The Hermitage* is a good example of minimalist accommodation built for religious retreat, characteristically sited in a bushland setting. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*The Hermitage* is in good condition. Restoration works have been recently carried out, and maintenance to the building has been undertaken on a reasonably regular basis.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*The Hermitage* has a moderate degree of integrity, and continues to demonstrate a usage similar to the original purpose for which it was designed.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

*The Hermitage* is intact, and retains a moderate degree of authenticity. After studying the initial documentation prepared for its construction and then the existing building, one can determine that the major fabric is very much in its

original state. Any changes that have occurred are due to fabric being destroyed through theft or vandalism while the place was unoccupied. The original fabric has been reconstructed with direction provided by available documentary evidence.

### **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

This document has been based on 'Conservation Plan for The Hermitage (1936)' prepared by John Taylor Architect for the National Trust of Australia (WA) in February 1999 with amendments and/or additions by Office of Heritage staff and the Register Committee. An update of the physical evidence was completed by Carrick + Wills Architects in June 2010.

#### **13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

This document has been based on 'Conservation Plan for The Hermitage (1936)' prepared by John Taylor Architect for the National Trust of Australia (WA) in February 1999, p. 12-69.

Restoration works were carried out in the late 1990s in association with the commissioning of the conservation plan. *The Hermitage* was at this time being made open to the public by the National Trust on weekends and by appointment.

In November 2000 *The Hermitage* was placed on the State Register of Heritage Places on an interim basis. However, discussions regarding an appropriate curtilage for the place in order to preserve its isolated setting were entered into with landowners. This resulted in an indefinite extension to interim registration being granted in July 2001.

Plans for an extension of the adjacent 'Hillcrest' aged care facility were drawn in August 2008 by Eastman Poletti Sherwood Architects. The proposed extensions included new car parks and landscaping immediately south of *The Hermitage*, accessed by a bitumen driveway to the east, and a 20-bed extension to the facility southwest of the historic building. These plans were not supported by the Heritage Council due to their potential adverse affect on the visual setting of *The Hermitage* and its sense of seclusion, isolation and space for quiet reflection. The National Trust at this time were leasing *The Hermitage* to tenants as a private residence.

The architects subsequently amended the plans in response to discussions with the National Trust and the Heritage Council. In December 2008, the Heritage Council gave conditional approval for the 20-bed extension to go ahead, provided sufficient attention was paid to landscaping around *The Hermitage* such that a sense of solitude could be maintained at the place. A second stage, with another 20 beds, was approved in April 2009, again with conditions relating to landscaping. The concern in each case was to retain as much as possible a sense of the place's original remote setting in a landscape of natural vegetation.<sup>1</sup>

Works on the extensions began in mid-2009. In June 2010, they were approaching completion. The proposed car park and access road to the east and south of *The Hermitage* were complete.

---

<sup>1</sup> HCWA file P01051 v1&2.

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

This document has been based on 'Conservation Plan for The Hermitage (1936)' prepared by John Taylor Architect for the National Trust of Australia (WA) in February 1999, p. 70-99. An update of the physical evidence, completed by Carrick + Wills Architects in June 2010, is provided below.

*The Hermitage*, was designed by the Priest/Architect John Cyril Hawes' in 1935/36 and is a domestic scaled, single storey building with load bearing masonry walls and a Marseilles tiled roof. It was designed in the Inter-War Old English style. There are two buildings on site, *The Hermitage* and a garage.

*The Hermitage* is located on the south side of Onslow Street, Geraldton, Western Australia. Immediately to the southeast of *The Hermitage* is a major intersection, John Willcock Link. John Willcock Link is the intersection of major north-south and east-west roads. The road from the south is the Brand Highway and following the intersection it is Cathedral Avenue. Cathedral Avenue is the main access road into the centre of Geraldton's business district. The north-south road is an overpass to the east-west road. The road to the west is Portway and it is the main access road to the Geraldton Port. The road to the east is the North West Coastal Highway, which leads to Northampton and further north to Carnarvon.

To the north of *The Hermitage* site and north of Onslow Street is the Geraldton Bowling Club and in close proximity are the Geraldton Regional Hospital, St John of God Hospital and the Geraldton West College of TAFE. Adjacent to the west is Hillcrest Lodge Nursing Home. A 2009/10 extension to the south of Hillcrest Lodge has resulted in a new access driveway adjacent to the eastern boundary of *The Hermitage* and car parking for Hillcrest Lodge to the southern boundary of *The Hermitage*. *The Hermitage* is situated on high ground and is a prominent landmark.

Onslow Street extends south from Shenton Street to *The Hermitage* site and is a no through road. *The Hermitage* site has a two metre fall from south to north. The fenced site area is roughly rectangular measuring approximately 38.3 metres by 43.45 metres with a total site area of 1,664 square metres. The perimeter fencing to the north, east and south is a chain link fence combined with a three string barbed wire security fencing above. Fencing to the west of the site adjoining Hillcrest Lodge is corrugated fibre cement.

A brick path curves from the front security gate to the front door. There is a system of brick paved paths that follow the perimeter of the building. The building is located within the coastal dune zone and the informal landscape is dominated by coastal grass, shrubs and small trees. At the time of inspection, in May 2010, there is evidence of recent maintenance, including clearing, to the grounds.

### Exterior of The Hermitage

*The Hermitage* is constructed of load bearing brick walls supporting a timber framed terracotta Marseilles tile roof. The red face brick walls to the entry, living room and mezzanine are 350mm (14inch) thick and constructed in Flemish bond. The brick walls to the bathroom are 225mm (9inch) thick Flemish bond and the walls to the bedroom and toilet are stretcher bond.

#### North Elevation.

There are two brick steps leading to the front door and entry. The entry is through a brick arch. The arch is comprised of three radiating sections and is referred to as a shafted jamb brick portal. Set into the wall adjacent to both sides of the entry are terracotta tiles. The tile on the left side of the entry reads: THE HERMITAGE. The tile on the right side of the entry is heavily weathered and no words or design are evident. This tile is approximately half the length of the other tile. The front entry door is painted, timber framed, ledged and braced.

Above the entry door is a small dormer window set into the steeply pitched roof. The pitched roof and gable of the dormer window is clad in timber shingles. The dormer window is a diamond patterned, clear glass, leadlight window.

There is an angled buttress to the north elevation. This buttress provides structural support to the timber truss that, in turn, is supporting a portion of the roof over the living room. The buttress has an angled cement rendered cap. The base of the wall to the north elevation steps out approximately 50mm.

Between the front door and the buttress is a painted timber framed double casement leadlight window. The window is a diamond pane clear glass with a brick on edge window sill and head.

#### West Elevation.

The west elevation consists of two gabled ends. The lower brick gable is to the bedroom and has a painted, timber framed casement leadlight window. The window has clear glass set in diamond panes. The window has an angled brick sill and a rendered lintel.

The higher brick gable end has a corbelled brick eave and is the elevation to the entry and the mezzanine floor. The window to the mezzanine level has cement tracery (an arrangement of bars or ribs of moulded stone) and is framed by and set into a stone frame. The arch head to the stone frame appears to have been altered at the head and to the quoining. At the ground floor level, to the entry, there is a small, painted, timber framed stained glass window. The window has a rounded brick arch head.

#### East Elevation.

The east elevation consists of a corbelled brick eave and a stepped brick chimney. The steps in the chimney are capped with flat terracotta tiles. A small painted timber framed casement window is set into the wall to the north side of the chimney. The window is clear glazed, diamond pane and a brick on edge sill and head. The timber frame of the window is showing signs of weathering.

#### South Elevation.

The south elevation consists of four elements. These elements are the higher roof over the main section of the building, lower roof over the bedroom, a balcony from the mezzanine and a toilet.

The higher roofed section contains a bay window. The bay window is expressed through the brick wall stepping out (approximately two brick widths) from the facade. The top of the bay window is capped by Marseilles pattern terracotta roof tiles. There are four painted, timber framed casement leadlight windows. The windows are clear glazed with diamond panes. There is a heart motif in the

upper portion of the window. There is a brick on edge window sill and a concrete lintel to the head of the window.

The balcony has a painted timber balustrade with square timber posts supporting the roof over. The balcony is cantilevered beyond the bathroom wall and is supported by painted timber brackets from brick corbels in the bathroom wall. A painted timber framed, twelve pane, glazed door provides access to the balcony from the mezzanine level. The roof is low pitched and has a corrugated asbestos skillion roof.

The bathroom wall has a small, painted timber framed, leadlight, casement window. The window has an angled bullnose brick window sill and a rendered lintel window head. Below the bathroom window is a small brick kennel with a concrete slab top that is located at the connection of the bathroom and toilet external walls. There is a small hot water system located on the top of the kennel and a reticulation control cabinet and associated conduit is on the bathroom wall. A painted timber framed, twelve pane, glazed door provides access from the bathroom to outside.

The external wall of the bedroom is constructed in stretcher bond and has a door and window to the south elevation. The door is painted, timber framed and ledged with a concrete lintel and an aluminium flyscreen door. The window is a painted, timber framed double casement with leadlight, diamond pane and clear glazing. The window has a bullnose brick on angle sill and a rendered lintel head. Glass to the western casement is damaged. Eight panes are cracked and taped and the window surround is also taped. Terracotta air vents are located to the lower section of the wall. One vent (to the western end) and surrounding brickwork are loose due to the deterioration and erosion of the mortar.

The toilet walls are constructed in stretcher bond using a different brick from the rest of the building. The vaulted roof of the toilet is clad with corrugated iron.

Adjacent to the toilet is a circular corrugated iron rainwater tank on a masonry plinth. The tank receives rainwater from the main tiled roof and the asbestos balcony roof.

The Garage.

The garage is located to the northeast of the site and is accessed from Onslow Street. The building is cut into the landform with the walls at the southern end of the building set into the ground level by approximately 600mm. The walls, to plate height, are constructed of stretcher bond face brick with terracotta air vents. The gable roof form is clad with corrugated iron and the gable ends are timber weatherboards with timber barge boards. There is evidence of a cement slurry being applied to sections of the brickwork. The garage doors are timber framed and are sheeted with vertical corrugated iron. The interior of the garage was not accessed.

Interior of The Hermitage.

The interior of *The Hermitage* consists of five main areas: entry, living room, bedroom, bathroom (including toilet) and mezzanine.

## Entry

The floor of the entry space is black and white coloured paving slabs laid in a chequered paving pattern. A small, stained glass round arch head window is located in the west wall of the entry space. On the east side of the entry is a painted timber balustrade with heart and diamond shaped motifs cut into the timber baluster boards. This balustrade separates the entry space from the living room. The living room floor height is approximately 330mm above the floor level of the entry.

## Living Room

The floor level of the entry steps up two risers to the living room to the east of the entry. The floor is lined by timber blocks of varying sizes laid in a herringbone pattern. The walls are face brick. The prominent fireplace is constructed of stonework which has been painted white. The stone size is large block and rough faced finished. The chimney flue is tapered and the hearth is brick paved in a herringbone pattern. The fireplace is not in use. An iron grate (assumed from the inner shell of the fireplace) is currently located in the garden. The bay window to the south wall has a recessed bench seat with storage space under the seat. The windows to the living room, including the bay window, have a soldier course of thin bricks to the head of the opening. The ceiling over the living room and mezzanine has exposed timber rafters and is lined with timber boards. The boards are approximately 150-200mm wide. A large timber scissor truss supports the roof over the living room. There is a narrow and steep, painted timber, staircase leading from the living room to the mezzanine level. The timber balusters are 30mm by 30mm and the newel post is 215mm by 140mm. The timber riser detail has an arch shaped cut out to the base of the riser. The handrail is timber. There is a storage cupboard under the stairs with a painted timber ledged door.

## Bedroom

The bedroom is located to the west of the entry. The floor level of the bedroom steps down 220mm from the entry. The entry door is painted timber framed and ledged. The walls are painted and smooth rendered above the picture rail and painted and rough rendered below the rail. External access is through a painted timber framed and ledged door. The ceiling is painted timber boards and follows the line of the rafters to the underside of the collar ties. At the collar ties the ceiling is flat. The window reveals are quined bullnose bricks. There is a crack in the west wall above the window.

## Bathroom

The bathroom consists of a shower, hand basin, laundry and food storage facilities. The toilet is located in a separate room accessed from the bathroom. The floor and shower walls are tiled. The ceiling is the underside of the balcony with exposed, painted timber joists. All fittings in the bathroom are modern.

## Mezzanine

The mezzanine level is a small space located above the entry and overlooking the living room. A small dormer window is located in the north face of the roof over the mezzanine. The window is clear glazed, leadlight with diamond panes. The centrally located cement tracery window to the west wall has stained glass

in the upper segments and clear glass, diamond panes to the lower segments. The window is recessed with painted window reveals. There are metal grilles fixed to the inside openings of the terracotta air vents to the west and south walls. The balustrade to the mezzanine has decorative timber balusters cut out from timber boards. There is a painted Latin inscription on the under purlin to the roof over the mezzanine which reads: *Remitte mihi ut priusquam abeam et amplius non ero.*

Access to the balcony is through a twelve paned door with bullnose bricks to the reveal. The balcony has timber boards, covered by waterproof lining to the floor. The lining has a cover flashing at the junction of the wall. From the balcony there are views to west, east and south of Geraldton.

Within the building there are five framed drawings of *The Hermitage* showing the original plans and elevations. Throughout the building there are conduits housing various services. Generally they are surface mounted. The fit-out is contemporary with loose furniture. There are isolated areas of the building requiring repair and maintenance. Overall the condition of *The Hermitage* is good.

In May 2010 *The Hermitage* is leased as a private residence through a local Real Estate Agent.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For some Comparative Analysis refer to 'Conservation Plan for The Hermitage (1936)' prepared by John Taylor Architect for the National Trust of Australia (WA) in February 1999, p. 102-103. Some updated comparative information is provided below.

#### **John Cyril Hawes**

The Office of Heritage database includes 21 places designed by Hawes, of which 18 are on the State Register. Those that include a residence are P01612 *Church of the Holy Cross and Priest's Cell*, Morawa; P1656 *Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the Holy Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, Priesthouse & Presentation Convent (fmr)*; and, P02785 *Melangata*, Yalgoo. Several places include a convent or the like, which are larger group housing for Religious orders and therefore not directly comparable to *The Hermitage*.

*The Hermitage* is a rare example of a design by Hawes that is domestic in function, small in scale and drawn from Arts and Crafts design principles, all of which are atypical features amongst Hawes' eclectic work in Western Australia.

#### **Inter-War Old English style**

There are 45 places in the Inter-War Old English style in the database, of which 16 are Registered. Nine of these include a residential function, including P03677 *Kulahea*, Cottesloe (1922), P05507 *Mine Manager's House*, Wiluna (1929), and P08894 *Model Brick Home*, Floreat (1934). In addition to *The Hermitage*, one other is a priest's residence, being the Presbytery of P03266 *St Joseph's Church and Presbytery*, Subiaco (1937). The remaining four are flats or institutional housing.



The place is a representative and domestic scale example of Inter-War Old English style architecture, with some Arts and Crafts elements in its interior detailing.

### **Hermitages**

Two other places are identified in the Office of Heritage database as 'hermitage': P03354 The Hermitage, Carnarvon (c.1886) and P13992 Hermitage, Greenough (c.1870s). Both appear to have been given this designation because they are small and isolated, not on account of any intentional design for the purpose of retreat.

A keyword search of the database for 'retreat' identifies six relevant places. Four relate to religious retreats. P01221 *Dr Bartlett's Residence (fmr) and Surrounds* (RHP) Port Denison comprises an 1897 Federation Bungalow style stone residence in an expansive riverbank setting, originally a doctor's home and surgery, which has been used as a retreat by the New Norcia Benedictine community since 1944. P02218 *Redemptorist Monastery and Church*, North Perth (RHP) includes in its park-like grounds a 1967 concrete and tile Late Twentieth Century Perth Regional style retreat house, suitable for group accommodation. P11856 Dominican Retreat, Port Denison is a 1930 simple rectangular fibrous cement and tile building located in coastal dunes, built as a retreat for Dominican nuns working inland in the Goldfields. P07041 St Francis Xavier Mission (fmr) Complex, Wandering includes the Old Retreat, a single-room rendered brick structure approximately 2.5 x 3 metres, with a steeply pitched gabled tile roof and lancet shaped doorway. It is in an elevated bush setting and was used by the Catholic staff, including Sisters of St John of God, who ran the mission.

Two other non-religious retreats are noted in the database. P10421 Artists' Weekend Retreat (fmr), Gooseberry Hill (1913) is a weatherboard and iron cottage, originally two or three rooms, set on a hillside in a bush setting, which was used as a weekend retreat by artist Fred Williams and colleagues. P15601 The Homestead, Manypeaks, is a large 1929 brick and corrugated asbestos cement roofed residence reputed to have a very original design, constructed for a lawyer as a rural retreat.

The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia includes one 'hermitage', the former Marist novitiate house 'The Hermitage' in Mittagong, NSW, now a retreat centre and Marist residential community within a working farm. There is one listing for 'hermit'; the Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit, which arrived in Australia in 1981 and has monasteries at Berrima NSW, Canungra QLD and Tumbarumba NSW.<sup>2</sup>

The Catholic website 'Australian Retreat Directory' notes eleven retreat centres in Western Australia. These offer private retreats, generally in single rooms, but most are also of a size able to cater for groups, ranging from 17 to 55 in number. Two are smaller, being the Mary MacKillop Centre in South Perth, a recently added section of the provinciate house of the Sisters of St Joseph, and Wellsprings, Shelley, a centre for spiritual accompaniment, counselling and supervision that offers three private rooms for retreat. God's Farm (Gracewood),

---

<sup>2</sup> The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia <http://www.catholicdirectory.com.au/> accessed 11 August 2010

Cowaramup, offers shared accommodation in its lodge but also includes a Poustinia (a Russian term for a small, sparsely furnished prayer cabin used for quiet retreat).<sup>3</sup> No other poustinias could be identified in Western Australia at the time of this assessment.

The Australian Retreat Directory is subtitled 'A Quiet Place' and its descriptions of retreat centres indicates that the setting of the centres is a significant aspect of their function, with many located in bushland, garden or seaside settings. Accommodation is generally simple, although modern comforts such as ensuite bathrooms have been added at many centres.

As hermitages, retreats or poustinias are by their nature private and secluded, it is possible that more exist, which have not come to the attention of heritage lists.

*The Hermitage* is a good example of minimalist accommodation built for religious retreat, and is unusual in that it is a whole house designed to accommodate only one retreatant.

#### **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

'Conservation Plan for The Hermitage (1936)' prepared by John Taylor Architect for the National Trust of Australia (WA) in February 1999.

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

-----

---

<sup>3</sup> Australian Retreat Directory <http://www.cathcomm.org/cathcomm/retreats/index.html> accessed 11 August 2010.