

Area: Geraldton	Place Number: 56	Category: 1
Assessment Date: 29/10/1996	Last Revision Date: 06/10/2009	
HCWA Number: 1048	Asset ID: MCH126774	

PLACE DETAILS

Name:	Bill Sewell Community Recreation Complex
Other Names:	Victoria District Hospital, Geraldton Prison
Type of Place:	Community Complex
Address:	90 Chapman Road
Suburb:	Geraldton

LOCATION

Map Reference: 15.16	GPS Northing: 6815319.00	GPS Easting: 267179.000
	GPS Northing: 0000	GPS Easting: 000



Photo Description:

19/11/2007

Rod Milne

View of Victoria House at the Bill Sewell Community Recreation Complex.

SITE DETAILS

Lot No.:	Lot 3185	Assess No.:	11700
Reserv No.:	3524	Vol/Fol:	
Dia/Plan:			

USE OF PLACE

Original Use:	Hospital/Gaol		
Current Use:	Community Complex		
Ownership:	Western Australian Government		
Public Access:	Restricted	Occupied:	Occupied

DESCRIPTION

Walls:	Stone	Roof:	Asbestos
Condition:	Good	Integrity:	
Original fabric:			
Modifications:			

The Bill Sewell Community Recreation Complex is located on a 3Ha site fronting Chapman Road, to the west, and on the corner of Bayly Street to the north and Lewis Street to the south. The front two thirds of the site is relatively flat but the rest rises steeply to the east at the rear.

Thirteen principal buildings or groups, the perimeter walls and the landscape were assessed for entry onto the State Register of Heritage Places and were found to have varying degrees of significance as follows:

- VS - very significant;
- S - significant;
- L - little significance

VICTORIA HOUSE (Victoria Hospital 1887)	VS
CAFÉ KITCHEN (Operating Room 1897)	S
CAMPBELL HOUSE (Kitchen Block 1897)	VS
CROWLEY HOUSE (Ward Block 1897)	VS
(Children's Ward 1938)	S
(Function Room Kitchen 1988)	L
GERALDTON ARTS SOCIETY (Motor Repair Workshop)	L
INCINERATOR SHED	L
MARGARET HOUSE (R.M.O.'s Residence 1882 -date uncertain)	S
GARAGE	L
GARAGES 2	L
DUPLEX (Prison Warder's Quarters 1896)	VS
DUPLEX OUTBUILDINGS	L

VESTIGES OF AIR RAID SHELTER S
 OLD GAOL (1850) VS
 STATE EMERGENCY SERVICES (Maximum Security Block) L
 PERIMETER WALLS AND OUTER STONE GARDEN WALLS VS
 LARGE MORETON BAY FIG TREE VS

The group of buildings has evolved since the 1850's and undergone three major building phases together with several minor alterations and additions. The development of the hospital plan was orderly, though not to any overall plan until 1897. The hospital planning vision was of four main pavilions, linked together by verandahs and set in a large expanse of grounds surrounded by stone walls. Only three were built and these remaining pavilions and operating theatre provide ample physical evidence of the intent of the planning from 1897. Some vestiges of the light framed constructions, to the east of the site remain, in the shape of retaining walls and masonry steps, though nothing of the buildings

themselves remain above ground. The two storey buildings are built of ashlar sandstone with stucco lintels and sills. Roofs are super six profile encapsulated compressed fibro cement with substantial chimneys. The Victorian buildings exhibit detailed timber joinery. Margaret House (originally R.M.O.'s residence) is rendered and painted stone with timber joinery. Several later additions to the residence add to the interest and complexity of this composition.

The convict buildings are scattered around the site in an irregular pattern. The gaol sits hard on the southern boundary and is dealt with as a separate Place Record. In placing the maximum security block within the complex, little thought was given to the overall composition, and the new and incongruous building was placed in close proximity to the old gaol. It is a utilitarian building set on the site in an expedient manner, an

HISTORY

Construction Date:	1887	Source:	Conservation Plan
Architect:	R.R. Jewell		
Builder:	Jas Kelly etc		

The Bill Sewell Complex has historically hosted the major functions as summarised below:

1850 - 1864 Convict Depot

1864 - 1868 Colonial Hospital and Convict Depot

1868 - 1886 Hospital and Gaol

1886 - 1898 Hospital and Gaol, with a major hospital construction campaign

1898 - 1924 Isolation Hospital, Old Men's Home and Gaol

1924 - 1966 Geraldton Public Hospital
1967 - 1984 Geraldton Regional Prison
1984 - 1988 Partial occupation for minor uses
1988 - present The Bill Sewell Community Recreation Complex
(Heritage Council of WA, Register Documentation, p5)

In the 1850s sub-lot 10 was set aside for use as a convict hiring depot and in 1858 a contract for the construction of police barracks, lockup and stables was let to John Wilson and William Stokes for £325. Records indicate that prior to 1862 a number of buildings were located on the depot site, including the surgery and ward, kitchen, first gaol and gaoler's office. (Ibid., p5-6)

In 1864 an extension to the convict establishment's surgery was designed by the Superintendent of Towns, Richard R. Jewell. These works transformed the surgery into a small hospital, but were demolished in 1897 to make way for other developments. In 1865 the Geraldton Convict Depot was proclaimed a Public Prison of the Colony. (Ibid., p6)

In 1886 the first purpose built hospital was commenced under Richard R. Jewell, Superintendent of Towns, and completed by George T. Poole, the Colonial Architect using a modified plan. Referred to as the Geraldton Hospital, it was designed to reflect the post-Nightingale philosophy of hospital construction. New additions to Geraldton Hospital were officially opened to coincide with Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations on 23 June, 1887. The hospital was referred to as Victoria Hospital from this point until 1924. M.A. Bain indicates that the builder for the initial building was David Hepburn at a cost of £1,660, while the 1887 additions were constructed by Jas Kelly for £2,678. (Ibid., & Bain, M.A., "A Life of its Own", City of Geraldton, 1996, p227)

With Geraldton and its region expanding there was pressure to enlarge the hospital and in 1897 substantial works commenced. The new Victoria Hospital buildings, designed by George T. Poole, were opened in 1898. (Ibid., Register Documentation)

In 1904 the east block of the hospital opened as an old man's home. By 1910 the front section of the hospital had deteriorated so badly that it was only used as an isolation ward and lumber store. In 1924 the old men were relocated and the hospital buildings were refurbished and brought back into a fully commissioned hospital renamed the Geraldton Public Hospital. (Ibid., p7)

The new Geraldton Regional Hospital was completed in 1966 and the Government Hospital was subsequently vacated. From 1967 to 1984 the whole place was controlled by the Prisons Department as a minimum security prison. During this time only minor changes to the buildings were carried out. The new maximum security block was constructed in 1979. The Greenough Regional Prison was completed in 1984 and the Prison Department vacated the site. The complex was refurbished in 1988 and named the Bill Sewell Community Recreation Complex. (Ibid., p7-8) The Complex is currently managed by the National Trust of Australia (WA).

HISTORIC THEMES

HCWA:	403 Law and order 408 Institutions 404 Community services and utilities
AHC:	2.3 Coming to Australia as a punishment 7.6.5 Incarcerating people 3.26.2 Providing hospital services

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Places.)

The Bill Sewell Community Recreation Complex has high aesthetic, historic, scientific and social cultural heritage significance as a place prominent in Western Australia's history. In particular, in relation to the regional development of the Victoria District (early convict hiring depot and early hospital) and as evidenced by the large number of relatively intact building types in their original context, and individually of a relatively moderate to high degree of authenticity. The main hospital buildings are fine examples of the work of the Colonial Architect, George T. Poole.

There are sufficiently cohesive elements in both hospital and gaol to evoke their former uses. The gaol and hospital are important historic and social landmarks and both possess strong aesthetic value and contribute setting.

Scientifically the site may reveal information about convict existence in a regional depot and the early practice of medicine in a regional centre.

The place may have social and historic significance to aboriginal people, given European treatment of aboriginal people in the penal system and, by way of contrast, their care in hospital.

RECOMMENDATION:

Care must be taken to ensure the integrity of the place is maintained in accordance with current and future conservation plans. The Geraldton Town Planning Scheme also needs to ensure that the building and the environs of the site are protected so that future subdivision and development will never encroach on the open and park like nature of the site.

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY

Management Category:	1
Level of Significance:	EXCEPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE: Essential to the

**Management
Recommendation:**

heritage of the locality.
Conservation of the place is considered essential. Any proposed change should not unduly impact on the significance of the place and be in accordance with either a Conservation Plan or Heritage Impact Statement.

OTHER LISTINGS

Heritage Council of WA - Register, 30/08/1994
National Trust of WA - Classified, 06/10/1993

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Considine & Griffiths Architects, "The Bill Sewell Complex Conservation Plan", for the Building Management Authority, 1993.
GLLSPC - Buildings (Miscellaneous).
Bain, M.A., "A Life of its Own", City of Geraldton, 1996.
Feilman & Associates, "Survey of Places of Historic and Landscape Significance in Geraldton", 1977.

OTHER PHOTOS



Photo Description:
29/10/1996
Suba, Callow & Grundy
Crowley House.



Photo Description:
29/10/1996
Suba, Callow & Grundy
View of Campbell House from courtyard.



Photo Description:

19/11/2007

Rod Milne

Side elevation of Victoria House.



Photo Description:

19/11/2007

Rod Milne

View over roof of Margaret House.



Photo Description:

29/10/1996

Suba, Callow & Grundy

View of Victoria House.



Photo Description:

29/10/1996

Suba, Callow & Grundy

Margaret House - front entrance.