



## 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)

- 7.7.1 Providing for the common defence
- 7.7.3 Going to war
- 8.5 Forming associations

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

- 408 Institutions
- 501 Outside influences - World wars and other wars

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Geraldton Drill Hall* is a landmark as it is sited on a prominent corner close to the centre of Geraldton, having an impact on important vistas with the open layout of the building and parade ground on the site and the use of vernacular timber-framed buildings clad with corrugated galvanised iron. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The evolution of *Geraldton Drill Hall* site provides an understanding of the changing nature of defence training sites since the early 1890s. (Criterion 2.1)

*Geraldton Drill Hall* was constructed in the early 1890s as the base for the Geraldton Rifles Volunteer Corps, one of the early volunteer military forces established in rural Western Australia, and has had a continuous history with the military defence of Western Australia and Australia since that time. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

*Geraldton Drill Hall* is closely associated with the formation in 1876 of the Geraldton Rifles Volunteer Corps, and has been associated since 1958 with the Geraldton Army Reserve Unit. (Criterion 2.3)

#### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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\* 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**

*Geraldton Drill Hall* is highly valued by those who have served and continue to serve in the armed forces in the State, particularly for those in the Geraldton community as shown by the Returned and Services League's desire to preserve the place, and has continuing associations with social and community activities. (Criterion 4.1)

*Geraldton Drill Hall* has been the venue of defence training for generations of Geraldton residents. (Criterion 4.1)

*Geraldton Drill Hall* contributes to the local community's sense of place as a focus for local defence training and for its occupation of a central site in Geraldton since the early 1890s. (Criterion 4.2)

#### **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

*Geraldton Drill Hall* is the oldest operating drill hall in Western Australia.

##### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Geraldton Drill Hall* is representative of the design and functional use of militia training depots from the end of the nineteenth century and through the twentieth century. (Criterion 6.2)

##### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Geraldton Drill Hall* is in good condition. The place appears to have been continuously well maintained, with significant repairs and renovation work undertaken consistent with well-documented and planned procedures.

##### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Geraldton Drill Hall* has high integrity. The military function of the building has been continuous, and is likely to remain so in the short term.

##### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

*Geraldton Drill Hall* has high authenticity. The earliest portion of the building constructed in the early 1890s, has undergone little change. Portions of the fabric of the place have been changed (eg the stage width in the hall was reduced by half), or replaced (eg the corrugated iron wall cladding), but generally the materials and finishes are original. The overall authenticity of the place is only marginally diminished.

#### **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

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

##### **13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

*Geraldton Drill Hall* comprises a stone and corrugated iron hall built for the Geraldton Rifles Volunteer Corp in the early 1890s. Other structures now forming part of *Geraldton Drill Hall* include the corrugated iron Quartermaster Store & Other Ranks Institute building (1952) now used as a kitchen, canteen and recreation area and linked to the hall by a corridor through the brick

ablutions building (1969), and a corrugated iron quartermaster/firearms store attached to the north-east corner of the drill hall post 1981.<sup>1</sup>

When the Swan River Colony was established in 1829 it was provided with a military presence for protection. Members of the 63rd Regiment, who had arrived with Governor Stirling on the *Sulphur* in 1829, were the first military contingent to garrison the Colony. Later, a contingent of the 99th Regiment was stationed in Perth, Fremantle and country areas of the State.<sup>2</sup> In the 1850s, a detachment of the 1st Battalion 12th Regiment, with headquarters in Sydney, provided a garrison force for Perth. In 1850, transportation of convicts to Western Australia began. Pensioner Guards accompanied the convicts, and in June 1851, the British War Office authorised the formation of a permanent force, known as the Duty Force, from among the Pensioner Guards. The country detachments of the Duty Force were available to assist with problems caused by the numerous ticket-of-leave men or by Aboriginal people, at the discretion of the Resident Magistrate.<sup>3</sup>

In 1859, the War Office decided that the regular army unit of the 12th Regiment should be withdrawn from the colony and the garrison duties taken over entirely by the Pensioner Guards. The 12th Regiment unit comprised eighty-five non-commissioned officers and men at that time and there were 183 men in the Duty Force. Before the regular troops could be removed, the Pensioner Force had to be increased, and to that end a number of convict ships in the early 1860s carried fifty Pensioner Guards instead of the usual thirty.<sup>4</sup>

To prepare for the removal of the regular force and provide for the military defence of the Colony with limited means, the Executive Council authorised the formation of volunteer forces, with gazettal of *The Volunteer Force Ordinance* on 18 November 1861. A regular soldier cost about £100 a year to maintain, while a volunteer could be maintained for less than £3, and where a regular soldier required barracks, the volunteer had his own home and held a job, thus continuing to contribute to the development of the Colony while also being available for its defence.<sup>5</sup>

Immediate efforts were made to form infantry corps at Busselton, York, Guildford and Newcastle (Toodyay) but there were problems with the number of members and suitable commanding officers, and the Military Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce, did not approve the formation of the proposed volunteer groups in these districts. Both the Perth and Fremantle Volunteer Rifles were formed, each with about 100 men, and were gazetted on 6 August 1862. The Pinjarrah Cavalry corps of 17 men was approved on 23 October 1862. These were considered to be the areas most in need of a defence force.<sup>6</sup>

The 12th Regiment was still stationed in Western Australia when the last convict ship, the *Hougoumont*, arrived in January 1868, carrying a number of Fenian prisoners. Their arrival caused considerable concern among the

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1 Photographs dated 20 September 1981 in HCWA place file, and physical evidence.

2 Broomhall, F. H. *The Veterans: A History of the Enrolled Pensioner Force in Western Australia, 1850-1880*, Hesperian Press, [198?], p. 1.

3 Broomhall, F. H. op cit, pp. 17-18.

4 Broomhall, F. H. op cit, pp. 58-60.

5 Wieck, George F., *The Volunteer Movement in Western Australia, 1861-1903*, Paterson Brokensha Pty Ltd, Perth, 1962, pp. 7-17. The Volunteer corps preserved no records of their life and experiences.

6 Wieck, George F., op cit, pp. 18-23.

population, with fears of a pirate Fenian ship attacking Fremantle to free the prisoners. The British Government ordered two companies of the 14th Regiment to sail from Tasmania to Western Australia to stand guard. The troops did not arrive until June 1868, by which time the people's fears had been forgotten.<sup>7</sup>

All regular British troops finally left the Colony on 12 February 1869, leaving the Pensioner Guard forces and the three Volunteer corps in the front line of the Colony's military defences.<sup>8</sup> The two Volunteer Rifle corps did not last another year, with the Fremantle corp being disbanded for inefficiency in February 1870 and the Perth corp for insubordination in February 1872.<sup>9</sup>

In 1872, Geraldton had a contingent of fourteen Pensioner Guards, comprising a sergeant and thirteen privates. Pensioner Guards had been stationed at Geraldton since the closure of the Lynton ticket of leave depot, near Port Gregory, in 1857.<sup>10</sup> They were housed in the Pensioner barracks on Gregory Street, near the corner of Marine Terrace.

In the 1870s, there was a desire to cut costs associated with the military force, coupled with the view of Governor Frederick Weld that the Pensioner Force was redundant. Death and migration were reducing the numbers of both the Pensioners, and the ex-penitents from whom they were protecting the civilian population. By 1872, Governor Weld had already replaced the Pensioners stationed at Rottnest with civilian warders and in that year, the Volunteer movement was reactivated with improved conditions of enlistment, service, discipline and command. Volunteer corps were immediately raised at Perth (1872), where the new Perth Rifle Volunteers was made of up most of the earlier disbanded corp, and at Fremantle (1872) and Guildford (1874)<sup>11</sup>

The Colony's Military Commandant, Major R. B. Harvest, set about cutting costs by putting permanent country detachments of Pensioners on the Enrolled list, to be called out only as required. They were recompensed by an increase in their pensions. By 1874, the Pensioner forces in York, Toodyay, Guildford, Albany, Kojonup, Champion Bay (Geraldton) and Greenough had been stood down.<sup>12</sup>

The 'principal residents of Geraldton', sent a petition to Commandant Harvest, for the establishment of a Rifle Corps under the name of Geraldton Volunteer Rifles. Permission was given to raise the Corps and a general meeting for its establishment was held at the Victoria Hotel, Geraldton on Friday 21 July 1876, at which about 80 people were present.<sup>13</sup>

A letter, dated 17 October 1876, confirmed the Governor's approval of a volunteer corps to be known as The Geraldton Rifle Volunteer Corps, and confirmed the following appointments:

Captain	John de Coursey Hillman
Lieutenant	Vernon Birch
Sub-Lieutenant	Edward Stanton
Sergeants	M. Commerlord

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7 Broomhall, F. H. op cit, pp. 58-60.

8 Broomhall, F. H. op cit, pp. 58-60; Wieck, George F., op cit, pp. 18-23.

9 Wieck, George F., op cit, pp. 18-23.

10 Broomhall, F. H. op cit, p. 69-70.

11 Broomhall, F. H. op cit, p. 68; Wieck, George F., op cit, pp. 33-48.

12 Broomhall, F. H. op cit, p. 69-70.

13 Geraldton Volunteer Rifles, Original documents relating to establishment and maintenance 1876-1880, Private archives 295A, Battye Library.

Corporals	M. H. Gale Henry Smith William Miller
Bugler	Not yet appointed

#### BAND

Band Sergeant	Charles Crowther Jr
Band Corporal	J. M. Stroud
Privates	J. L. Glaskin Charles Cope H. M. Beamish J. Duffield G. Phipps I. Charlesworth. <sup>14</sup>

Geraldton Rifle Corps initially comprised, in total, three officers and sixty-one non-commissioned officers and men.<sup>15</sup> Other Rifle corps were established at Albany and York in 1878, while Bunbury had the Wellington Mounted Volunteers (1877). Each corp was administratively independent and dealt directly with the Military Commandant.<sup>16</sup>

Geraldton conducted various activities, as well as regular drills. In 1880, eleven men qualified as marksmen and fourteen qualified as first class shots at the Third Annual Prize Firing. Mr. Gray's Hall was the venue for the prize giving after the event on 1 January 1880.<sup>17</sup> Membership of the Corps numbered forty-eight in 1883. Annual camps, at locations around the town, were held from 1884 onwards. The Company regularly practiced manoeuvres, and after the Northampton Rifle Volunteers was formed in 1885, many joint exercises were held.<sup>18</sup>

In September 1886, the extent of the Volunteer corps was reported in the *Victoria Express*: the Naval Artillery and Perth Artillery each had a force of 39; the Metropolitan Rifles (125); Fremantle Rifles (121); Guildford Rifles (52); Geraldton Rifles (59); Northampton Rifles (38); and Albany Defence Corps (81). Increase in membership during the previous year had been 54.<sup>19</sup>

It will thus be seen that the volunteer service is in a very satisfactory state, and it is hoped it may continue to progress at the same rate for some time to come.

In 1889, Major Pilkington, 21st Hussars, Commandant of the Local Forces, reported that two of the Infantry Corps had detachments of mounted infantry, namely Guildford Rifles and Geraldton Rifles. Geraldton had at that time a total complement of three officers and 56 non-commissioned officers and men, including twenty-four mounted infantry.<sup>20</sup>

Geraldton Town Lots 27-29, on the corner of Charles (Lester Ave) Street and Elwes Street (Cathedral Ave), were gazetted Reserve 1447 in June 1889 for the

<sup>14</sup> Geraldton Volunteer Rifles, Original documents, op cit.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolay, Rev. C. G., *Handbook of Western Australia*, Perth 1880, quoted in Research Note 196, Battye Library.

<sup>16</sup> Wieck, George F., op cit, pp. 42-43.

<sup>17</sup> *Quarterly Review*, Geraldton Historical Society, No. 115, November 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Grant, J. R., *From Captains to Colonels: a photographic account of the Western Australian Defence Force, 1861-1901*, John Burridge Military Antiques, Swanbourne, 1991, p. 43; Wieck, George F, p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Victoria Express*, 'The West Australian Volunteers', September 1886, [np], article courtesy Geraldton Regional Library, Local Studies Collection.

<sup>20</sup> *West Australian Yearbook*, 1889, quoted in Research Note 196, Battye Library.

purpose of Volunteers & Drill Hall.<sup>21</sup> The exact date of construction of *Geraldton Drill Hall* has not been ascertained. Oral histories indicate that there were stables adjacent to the existing stone structure and that the stable footings are underneath the existing hall. The *Victorian Express* reports drill parade being held at the Masonic Hall on 5 April 1890, indicating the possibility that a parade ground may not have been established on the Reserve at that time. The earliest located reference to *Geraldton Drill Hall* (referred to as the Military Hall) is a report of the Geraldton Dramatic Club holding its inaugural performance there on 3 February 1893. On 1 June that year, the annual ball of the Geraldton Rifle Volunteers was held at *Geraldton Drill Hall*.<sup>22</sup> A c.1894 photograph of the Corps shows part of a building with a corrugated iron wall in the background.<sup>23</sup>

Membership of the Geraldton Corps numbered 67 in 1892 and 51 in 1895. There was no mention of mounted infantry associated with any of the West Australian Volunteer forces between 1894 and 1900.<sup>24</sup> The raising of Contingents for service in the Boer War gave new impetus to the Volunteer movement in Western Australia. On 3 September 1900, the West Australian Infantry Brigade of five Battalions was formed. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was made up from Guildford, York, Bunbury and Geraldton Volunteer Rifle corps under Captain W. D. Cowan. Each Corp formed its own Company within the Battalion. Geraldton was Company 'B'.<sup>25</sup>

After the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901, the Brigade continued until it was liquidated on 1 July 1903, by the issue of the new Federal Defence Scheme. The Guildford Company of the Battalion was allotted to the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment whilst the Geraldton and Bunbury Companies were amalgamated with the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion to form the new 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, West Australian Infantry Regiment.<sup>26</sup>

Existing defence facilities, such as drill halls, were gradually transferred to the Commonwealth Government. In 1911, compulsory universal military training was introduced throughout Australia and the Commonwealth Government commenced a program of acquiring, leasing or constructing drill halls. During World War One the drill halls were used to recruit and train military personnel. By 1919, the Commonwealth Government owned thirteen drill halls in the metropolitan area and nine in rural Western Australia. In addition, there were at least another eight leased drill halls in country areas.<sup>27</sup>

*Geraldton Drill Hall* was the centre of much social interaction in the early decades of the twentieth century, being the venue for dances and games nights. The place was commonly referred to as 'the cow shed'. In 1923, tenders were called for 'relining and renovations' to *Geraldton Drill Hall*. A contract for the work was awarded on 30 November 1923, to J. Gibson for £255.<sup>28</sup> During the 1920s, *Geraldton Drill Hall* and parade ground were used

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21 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 6 June 1889, p. 332.

22 *Victorian Express*, 5 April 1890, 3 February & 9 June 1893, quoted in research on Geraldton Drill Hall by Ron Butler, December 2001, HCWA Place file 01065. No tender for construction has been found in the Government Gazette, 1830-1925.

23 Grant, J. R., op cit, p. 45.

24 Research Note 196, Battye Library.

25 Wieck, George F., op cit, pp. 62-64.

26 Wieck, George F., op cit, pp. 62-64.

27 Peet, Lindsay, 'Our Disappearing Defence Heritage', *Trust News*, The National Trust of Australia (WA), Vol. 208, September 2000, p. 17.

28 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 30 November 1923, p. 2345.

for military training of schoolboys. By 1929 compulsory training had been suspended.<sup>29</sup>

A Certificate of Title for Reserve 1447 was not issued until 1933, when it was required to facilitate the truncation of the corner at Lester Avenue and Cathedral Avenue. At this time, *Geraldton Drill Hall* was owned by the Commonwealth.<sup>30</sup> Lack of records prior to this date makes it difficult to ascertain the exact date of transfer of *Geraldton Drill Hall* to Federal control. A Draft Drill Hall Study by New South Wales firm, Allom Lovell, dated June 2000, records that in 1919, *Geraldton Drill Hall* was described as a 'Type 4, 50x35 feet' following reclassification of all drill halls against the Commonwealth's standard types (1-4), and the place was most likely under Federal control at that time.<sup>31</sup> The work done on the place in 1923 was under the auspices of the West Australian Public Works Department, which blurs the issue, unless the State did the work on behalf of the Commonwealth. The only documentary evidence available at this date confirms that *Geraldton Drill Hall* was under Federal control by 1933.

By 1938, the roofing and floor timbers of *Geraldton Drill Hall* had been damaged by termites. Almost all the Baltic pine matchwood ceiling had been destroyed. It was recommended that the place be demolished and a new brick building constructed.<sup>32</sup> Instead, plans were drawn up for extensions and modifications. An office and storeroom were to be added with doorways from the hall, grilles were to be provided to all windows, the width of the stage area was to be reduced by about half and the hall floor area increased accordingly. Tenders for the work were called on 10 January 1940, and eight were received, ranging from £765-0-0 to £1400-10-0. The work was cancelled on 20 May 1940, due to World War Two.<sup>33</sup>

There is no record of usage of *Geraldton Drill Hall* during World War Two, and possibly the place may not have been in use due to its poor condition at the time. In 1940, a plan was developed for the 'Protection of Vulnerable Points', and Garrison Units were formed to this end. The 19th Garrison Battalion had detachments along the coast at Bunbury, Busselton, Albany, and Geraldton from 1940 to at least 1942. At Geraldton, the Unit was accommodated at 33 Snowden Street.<sup>34</sup>

A plan of *Geraldton Drill Hall* and site, dated 25 October 1950, indicates that the proposed 1939 renovations had been carried out by that time, with the exception of the office and storeroom addition, and the place was being referred to as Geraldton Training Depot. The work is likely to have been done between January 1948 and October 1950. Lot 27, which is shown occupied by quarters for married personnel (not extant) on the 1950 plan, was

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29 Discussion by Tanya Suba (Henkel) with Major Bradfield and Mr Bill Cunningham, 1993, HCWA Place file 01065.

30 National Archives file, Geraldton Drill Hall, Series K273, Item 1932/5; Certificate of Title, Vol. 1036 Fols. 16 & 17.

31 This study was sourced through Department of Defence but could not be located.

32 National Archives file, Geraldton Drill Hall, Series K1141, Item M1939/40/93, 1938-1940.

33 National Archives file, Geraldton Drill Hall, Series K1141, Item M1939/40/93, 1938-1940.

34 McKenzie-Smith, Graham R., *Australia's Forgotten Army*, Grimwade Publications, Canberra, 1994, pp. 76, 131.

a vacant site in January 1948.<sup>35</sup> A corrugated iron clad Quartermaster's Store (Q. Store) and Other Ranks Institute (O Rs Institute) was erected beside *Geraldton Drill Hall* in 1952, and is shown joined to *Geraldton Drill Hall* by 1954.<sup>36</sup>

Geraldton Municipal Council requested permission in November 1952 to build a brick and tile bus shelter on the Cathedral Ave frontage of *Geraldton Drill Hall* site, and to plant shade trees. This was duly carried out.<sup>37</sup>

The 10th Light Horse Unit occupied *Geraldton Drill Hall* and the quarters for married personnel on Lot 27, but facilities at the place were still limited. In 1956, it was reported that there were no showers available and no ramp for vehicle maintenance for the two armoured cars, four White armoured personnel carriers (APCs), four Ferret scout cars and two other vehicles that belonged to the 10th Light Horse Unit.<sup>38</sup>

By 20 June 1957, 'C' Squadron was located at *Geraldton Drill Hall*, and there was uncertainty about the use of the site because of the reorganisation of the Army that was being undertaken at that time. On 21 September 1957, orders were given to vacate the site by the end of October 1957.<sup>39</sup> Negotiations were entered into with the Municipal Council to take over the site and to locate an alternative site for the training depot of not less than four acres (1.62ha).<sup>40</sup> Geraldton Repertory Club and Geraldton and Districts Boy Scouts Association both requested to lease *Geraldton Drill Hall*, but their requests were refused.<sup>41</sup>

On 23 January 1958, approval was given to reopen the Geraldton Training Depot for use by the Citizen Military Forces (CMF, now the Army Reserve) and to raise a platoon of the 28th Infantry Battalion. A Warrant Officer grade 2 was to occupy the married quarters. *Geraldton Drill Hall* was not to be used as a 'call-up' centre for National Service training but was to be used solely as a facility for volunteers.<sup>42</sup>

By 1961, the 1952 Institute building was being used by the Geraldton Youth Club, and permission was given to install a billiard table in the building. Eight holes were cut in the floor and concrete footings built to provide a stable base for the table. In late 1963, the Warrant Officer asked that the table be removed.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Geraldton Training Depot, plan, 25 October 1950 & State tax Office valuation of vacant Lot 27, National Archives file, Geraldton Training Depot, Series K1109/1, Item 4415, Folder 2.

<sup>36</sup> Geraldton Drill Hall, plan, 25 January 1952, Item 4810; and plan, 28 June 1954, Item 5170. National Archives file, Geraldton Training Depot, Series K1109/1,

<sup>37</sup> Correspondence, 24 November 1952, National Archives file, Defence (Army) training area and drill hall, corner Lester and Cathedral Avenue, Series K273, Item 1979/283.

<sup>38</sup> Demand for services, 15 May 1956, National Archives file, Item 1979/283, op cit.

<sup>39</sup> Memo from Lt Col H. Fairclough, Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General to Chief Property Officer, Department of Interior, Perth, National Archives file, Item 1979/283, op cit.

<sup>40</sup> Memo from Lt Col H. Fairclough & Correspondence 30 November 1957, National Archives file, Item 1979/283, op cit.

<sup>41</sup> Correspondence 18 October & 4th December 1957, National Archives file, Item 1979/283, op cit.

<sup>42</sup> Correspondence 23 January 1958, National Archives file, Item 1979/283, op cit

<sup>43</sup> Correspondence, 23 May 1961 & 23 September 1963, National Archives file, Item 1979/283, op cit.

The Training Depot was used as a staging post for troops exercising north of Geraldton, and the lack of ablution facilities was proving inconvenient. Arrangements had been made with a local hotel for troops to shower there, but the Unit located in Geraldton also required showers during sports activities at the Depot. A request was made on 2 February 1964 for the installation of showers and ablution facilities but it was April 1968 before work was put in hand for this. They are reported to have been in place by 18 May 1969, and the toilets at the rear of *Geraldton Drill Hall* were removed.<sup>44</sup> In the meantime, a request from the Geraldton Town Clerk for consideration to be given for the release of the property for use as a parking lot was refused.<sup>45</sup>

Correspondence to the Commonwealth Department of Works, dated 4 August 1969 and referring to refurbishment of the Geraldton Training Depot was sighted in the National Archive files, but records post-dating 1970 are closed and no further information was available.<sup>46</sup> At some time after 1969, the Geraldton Army Reserve Unit became part of the 11/44th Battalion.<sup>47</sup>

In 1993, it was reported that the site of *Geraldton Drill Hall* was no longer large enough for operations for the Army Reserve and that the Department of Security had indicated an interest in the site as a potential location for their offices. This would require demolition of existing buildings.<sup>48</sup>

In 1995, it was reported that Geraldton Army Reserve Unit was currently Alpha Company 16 Battalion of the Royal Western Australia Regiment. The company comprised volunteers from all sections of the community, and was actively involved in various community activities. It supported a large and effective Cadet unit. The canteen at *Geraldton Drill Hall*, located in the Institute building, had been named for Victoria Cross winner, Tom Starceвич. The Unit was establishing sections at Northampton, Dongara and Mullewa.<sup>49</sup>

In 1998, *Geraldton Drill Hall* was entered on the City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory with a category 3 management listing. The eucalypt trees on the site along Cathedral Ave are listed on Geraldton Town Planning Scheme Map No. 1, with a Class C classification (preservation is desirable).<sup>50</sup> The Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL), Geraldton City Sub-Branch have indicated that they would like the place preserved for its cultural significance, having 'served for the training of local people to go to war since the Boer War'.<sup>51</sup>

In August 2002, Shaun Kenwery, Environmental Officer from Department of Defence, advised that substantial works were planned for *Geraldton Drill Hall*,

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44 National Archives file, Item 1979/283, op cit.

45 Correspondence 13 January 1968, National Archives file, Item 1979/283, op cit.

46 Correspondence, 4 August 1969, National Archives file, Geraldton Training Depot, Series K283, Item 263/264W/1 Part 1.

47 *Midwest Times*, 19 April 1995, p. 14.

48 Discussion by Tanya Suba (Henkel) with Major Bradfield and Mr Bill Cunningham, 1993, op cit.

49 *Midwest Times*, 19 April 1995, p. 14.

50 Suba, (Henkel) T., Callow, B., & Grundy, G., *City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory*, 1996-97, Place No. 264.

51 Correspondence from Geraldton City Sub-Branch, RSL to Heritage Council of WA, 11 August 1999, HCWA Place file 10165.

including replacing timber door and window frames with aluminium, new colourbond cladding and repair to stonework.<sup>52</sup>

In 2003, *Geraldton Drill Hall* continues to be occupied by the Geraldton Army Reserve Unit, Alpha Company 16 Battalion of the Royal Western Australia Regiment.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Geraldton Drill Hall*, a vernacular building with some portions of walls built in masonry (stone and brick) and other portions built in timber framing clad with corrugated iron, is prominently located at the junction of Cathedral Avenue and Lester Avenue in the centre of Geraldton. The site includes the drill hall, a number of metal-clad sheds including a lecture theatre, field store, and parade ground also used as a car-park. A flag pole is located at the front of the drill hall, adjacent to the corner of the site. A concrete block wall near the flagpole at the corner of the site has a plaque which reads:

THIS WALL COMMEMORATES THE CITIZENS  
OF GERALDTON AND SURROUNDING DISTRICTS  
WHO SERVED AUSTRALIA AS  
**VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS**  
AT THIS ARMY DEPOT IN THE 125 YEARS  
FROM  
1876 -2001.

Under the plaque on the wall are twelve separate plates listing the various brigades and regiments etc involved with *Geraldton Drill Hall*.

The Lester Avenue boundary has a waist-high link-mesh fence bordering the footpath, and the remainder of the boundaries are typically enclosed by a 1.8 metre high closed picket fence. The frontage of the land is relatively flat, although there is a steep grassed bank rising up adjacent to an elevated level at the southern boundary.

*Geraldton Drill Hall* is located at the north-eastern corner of the site, and is composed of a number of stages of construction. Evidence of the original drill hall building (early 1890s) is provided by the masonry section at the rear (south end) covered by a hipped roof section of the main roof. As the rooms in this portion of the building are of a domestic scale, it is possible that it may have been a singular building of a differing previous use adapted to form the end of the drill hall.

The three rooms in the masonry section at the rear of the drill hall have an elevated floor level which opens onto the stage level in the hall proper through individual doors. The eastern-most of these rooms now accommodates an ammunition magazine, and the former doorway to the outside of the building from this room has been bricked in and rendered over, with the stairway down to ground level removed. The central room has a window with an air-conditioning unit inserted, and the western-most room has a doorway to the outside of the building with a stairway down to ground level.

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<sup>52</sup> Henkel, Tanya, Midwest Regional Adviser, Report to City of Geraldton on assessment of Geraldton Drill Hall Complex, 14 August 2002, HCWA Place file 01065.

The drill hall itself is a timber framed rectangular structure clad in corrugated iron, with a gabled roof to the north front, and with the rear section featuring a hipped roof. To the north-east corner, a skillion addition built sometime after 1981 accommodates two smaller rooms housing the quartermaster's store and a firearms store. Metal tie rods are evident below the ceiling lining of the drill hall. The roof framing is indicated to be formed with timber scissor truss on drawings, although the main roof framing is not visible due to the sheet ceiling lining. The main entrance in the street frontage features a ledged and battened pair of timber doors flanked by timber framed windows. Internally, the timber floored hall can be used as a small theatre, with a stage at the south end, and offices either side of the north-end entry with a mezzanine over. To the west side a set of double timber doors with a rectangular fanlight over open onto the car-park/parade ground. Either side of this door, Cocos palms have been planted in a garden border down the west side of the building.

Windows to the drill hall are timber framed double-hung sash windows. The single gable features wide, undecorated bargeboards with a simple cross brace. The roof covering appears to be Colorbond finish corrugated sheeting. The west side and the north front entrance to the building have been identified with semi-circular, corrugated galvanised iron covered porches.

The corrugated iron clad gabled roof Quartermaster's Store (Q. Store) and Other Ranks Institute (O Rs Institute) was erected beside *Geraldton Drill Hall* in 1952, and is shown joined with a light-weight framed structure to *Geraldton Drill Hall* by 1954. The joining structure probably accommodated ablution facilities, previously located in two separate toilets at the rear (south) end of the drill hall building itself. The Q. Store and O Rs Institute has been altered and is now used as a kitchen/canteen/recreation area.

The Q. Store and O Rs Institute portion of the building has sash windows, and has been significantly altered both by the addition of an outdoor and BBQ area attached to the east side, and by a link to the main drill hall which includes a brick shower and toilet block. These brick facilities built in 1969 were probably built to replace the ablution facilities built circa 1954.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are eleven drill halls listed on the HCWA database. Of these, Leederville Drill Hall, Fremantle Drill Hall and Swan Barracks have been entered in the State Register.

Leederville Drill Hall was constructed in 1909 as a Mechanic's Institute and was acquired for drill hall use in 1913. It is no longer used for this purpose and has been altered to allow for adaptive reuse.<sup>53</sup>

Fremantle Drill Hall, a prefabricated Defence Department building, now operates as the Fly By Night Club, and is Registered as part of Fremantle Court House (fmr) and Police Station Complex.

Swan Barracks was initially established with the construction of a Drill Hall in 1896, which is extant.

The Bayswater Drill Hall (fmr), a brick building, was formerly a Roads Board hall. It is classified by the National Trust and was assessed in 1999 as below threshold for inclusion in the State Register.<sup>54</sup>

A number of drill halls are no longer extant: East Perth/Highgate, Claremont, Subiaco and Midland halls, all acquired or constructed in the 1910-1915 period, have been demolished.

Other uses for drill halls include: Albany Drill Hall (c.1920), in use as a training and parade facility for the 705 Squadron of the Australian Airforce Cadets; Coolgardie Drill Hall (1890s), used as a post office complex; and Bunbury Drill Hall (c.1900), used for various purposes including the Barracks Arts & Crafts Centre, Rhema Family Church and Good News Family Centre. Victoria Park Drill Hall (1913, weatherboard) is extant, but its current use is not known.

*Geraldton Drill Hall* is the oldest operating drill hall in Western Australia.

#### **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

No key references.

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is possible that footings and other remnants of earlier buildings may exist under the drill hall, and these could be examined in the future as the opportunity arises.

The extent of previous deterioration that has been repaired in recent times will be available at a later date with further research and documentation into files that are currently closed.