

# Irwin Shire Council

## Municipal Inventory Place Record

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**Place Details**      **Place Number:** 023      **Category:** 1A      **HCWA No:** 1235  
**TPS No:** 50      **Assessment Date:** 16/10/1996      **Last Revision Date:** 04/11/2004

**Name:** Irwin District Museum  
**Former Name:** Dongara Police Station, Courthouse & Gaol  
**Type of Place:** Public Place  
**Address:** 5 Waldeck Street  
**Map Reference:** HUNT1:2000 BE42/35.03  
**Locality Name:** Dongara      **Area of Site:**  
**GPS Northing:** 6262116      **GPS Easting:** 298758

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### Photograph

**Date of Photograph:** 12/07/2004      **Source:** *Suba & Grundy*



Front elevation from Waldeck Street

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### Ownership

**Owner:** Department of Planning and Infrastructure      **Owner Phone/Fax:**  
**Address:** PO Box 79, Geraldton, 6531

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### Site Details

**Lot/Locn:** Lot 80      **Diagram/Plan:** P15729      **Vol/Folio:** 1619/906  
**Reserve:** 38885      **Purpose:** Police Purposes  
**Assess No:**      **Vesting:**  
**Occupied:** Yes      **Occupier:** Irwin District Historical Society Inc.  
**PubAccess:** Yes      **Lease:** M'ment Order/Shire of Irwin

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### Uses of the Place

**Original Use:** Police Station, Courthouse, Gaol      **Current Use:** Museum and Research Centre

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### Description

**Walls:** Limestone      **Roof:** Corrugated Iron  
**Condition:** Good      **Integrity:** High  
**Orig'l Fabric:**      **Modifications**

The buildings are of limestone rubble construction. The main building is 'L' shaped with a high pitched hipped corrugated iron roof with separate hipped surrounding verandah roof. In the rear yard there is a small gable roofed building containing the earth closets and the walls to the stables remain intact. The main building comprises a court room, police station, quarters, a day-room and three cells. The limestone walls are 600mm thick and the courtroom has corrugated iron ceilings 5500mm high. The original joinery and iron hinge bolts are intact in the cells. The verandahs are supported on timber posts with timber verandah floors. The front windows are double hung timber framed 12 pane, with one casement window to the day room. Timber doors are framed ledge and brace with double entry doors to the courtroom. A timber framed fibro sheet clad toilet block has been added to the north side.

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### History

**Const'n Date:** 1870,1871      **Source:**  
**Architect:** Unknown      **Builder:** Joseph Walton

1997

Built at a contract price of £1200 by expiree Joseph Walton in 1870-71 using ticket-of-leave labour, the building was used as a police station, courthouse, gaol, ticket of leave hiring depot, and police quarters. By 1874 the building had a lean-to addition added to the north side which served as a post and telegraph office. The native cell to the west and some of the rear yard walls were demolished in the mid 1950's. The building served as a police station, courthouse and quarters until 1983. In early 1984 the building was occupied by the Tourist Centre and between 1984 and 1987 extensive restorations were funded and carried out by the Old Police Station Restoration Committee with additional funding through a grant from the WA Heritage Committee. Currently the building is also used by the Dongara Denison Tourist Centre, the Ministry for Justice as a reporting centre and by the Irwin District Historical Society as a research office with historic displays.

(Source: IDHS Records)

2004

The Irwin District Historical Society took over the lease of the building in July 2002 and opened the building as the Irwin District Museum in November that year. In July 2003 the Historical Society completed works funded by a Lotterywest grant. The grant funded conservation works to the internal walls of the cells, dayroom and research office. An infestation of termites was found in early 2004 in the north verandah. The insects were controlled by chemical application and repairs carried out to the verandah flooring, work was funded by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. In April 2004 a Western Australian 175th Anniversary Grant was awarded to the Irwin District Historical Society for the purposes of constructing a display and storage shed. The Society received permission from the Heritage Council of WA for the structure to be sited on an area of the rear yard formerly occupied by the stables. Work commenced on this project in October 2004. In May 2004 the Shire of Irwin negotiated a management order with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure with the IDHS as lessees to the Shire. In June 2004 the IDHS received a Lotterywest grant for conservation works to fund reinstatement of the back verandah timber flooring and drainage works to the rear yard. IDHS Records.

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### Chronology Entries

1871 A police station, courthouse and gaol was built at Dongara. The contract for the construction of the building was awarded to Joseph Walton at a contract price of £1200 The building was also used as a post office.

Ancient Landmarks, Bain, M. A., UWA Press, Perth, 1975 Pages 356, 358

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1874	The telegraph line between Perth and Champion Bay was completed. A lean-to post and telegraph office was added to the police station.	Irwin District Historical Society Records
1984	A new Police Station was built immediately to the south of the old station, close to the site of the first school. The Old Police Station was taken over by the Tourist Committee as a Tourist Information Centre. A Police Station restoration Committee was formed, and the building was restored over the next few years.	Irwin District Historical Society Records
11/2001	The Irwin District Historical Society opened the Irwin District Museum at the Dongara Old Police Station. The opening was performed by the Hon. Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and the Midwest, K.L. Chance MLA.	
18/06/2003	The Irwin District Museum was runner up in the Museums Australia, Museum of the Year Award.	Geraldton Guardian

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### Historic Theme(s)

HCWA	AHC
403 Law and order	2.3 Coming to Australia as a punishment
206 Mail services	7.6.5 Incarcerating people
	7.6.4 Dispensing justice

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### Statement of Significance

Dongara Police Station (fmr) has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:  
the place contributes to the streetscape of Dongara and forms part of a precinct of nineteenth century public buildings in the town;  
the place was the first police station built in Dongara and was the original centre of public administration for Dongara;  
the place is a good example of a multi-purpose complex of nineteenth century rural administration buildings;  
the place has had a significant role in the Dongara community. Until 1983, as a police station and, subsequently, as a tourist information office; and,  
the building form and materials used are representative of the construction of the period.

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### Management Category: 1A

PERMANENT ENTRY ON THE STATE REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES.  
Highest level of protection appropriate. Provide maximum incentives under the Town Planning Scheme with encouragement to the owner to conserve the significance of the place. Prepare a floor plan and photographically record the place prior to any redevelopment.

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### Other Listings

NTWA - Classified; 02/11/1981  
Shire of Irwin - Town Planning Scheme (50); 04/02/1992  
HCWA - State Heritage Register (Interim); 25/05/1992  
HCWA - State Heritage Register (Permanent); 16/12/1994

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### Supporting Information

IDHS Records  
AHC Reference 009643 01-02  
HCWA Database No. 1235  
Pallassis Architects, "Conservation Plan", 1990  
Bain M. A., "Ancient Landmarks", UWA Press, 1975.  
Bunney, R and Ellery, K., "Dongara 1839-197-"

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Irwin Shire Council  
Municipal Inventory Place Record

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**Additional Photographs**

**Date of Photograph** 16/10/1996 IR023-1

**Source:** *Suba & Grundy*



Front elevation from Waldeck Street

**Date of Photograph** 16/10/1996 IR023-2

**Source:** *Suba & Grundy*



Rear Yard