

Irwin Shire Council

Municipal Inventory Place Record

Place Details **Place Number:** 063 **Category:** 1A **HCWA No:** 1221
TPS No: 36 **Assessment Date:** 06/08/1997 **Last Revision Date:** 20/08/2004

Name: Denison House
Former Name: Benedictine Retreat, Dr Bartlett's & Smith's Mill (site)
Type of Place: House
Address: Ocean Drive
Map Reference: HUNT 1:2000 BE42/35.03
Locality Name: Port Denison **Area of Site:**
GPS Northing: **GPS Easting:**

Photograph

Date of Photograph: 22/07/2004 **Source:** G.W.Grundy



North and west elevations

Ownership

Owner: Shire of Irwin **Owner Phone/Fax:** 99272068 08 99271453
Address: PO Box 21, Dongara WA 6525

Site Details

Lot/Locn: Pt Loc 688 **Diagram/Plan:** **Vol/Folio:** 1948/691
Reserve: **Purpose:** see Modifications Section
Assess No: 2023 **Vesting:**
Occupied: Yes **Occupier:**
PubAccess: No **Lease:**

Irwin Shire Council

Municipal Inventory Place Record

Uses of the Place

Original Use: Residence

Current Use: Residence

Description

Walls: Limestone

Roof: Asbestos

Condition: Good

Integrity: High

Orig'l Fabric:

Modifications Following subdivision new land titles are being drawn up.

Set in a high position above terraces on the south bank of the Irwin River, this large stone house has twin hipped asbestos roofs with separate asbestos verandahs to three sides. The rendered stone walls have raised rendered painted quoins to the openings and corners of the building. The verandahs are supported on timber posts set on small masonry piers and with decorative trim set below the fascia beam. The front (north) verandah is enhanced with a gable above the main entry which extends to the north to cover the concrete steps up to the verandah. To the south, an adjacent small concrete block building has a gable asbestos roof. The building has gothic arch windows to the west and timber framed double hung windows to the south. To the south east of the main building there is a large stone underground tank with flat corrugated iron roof.

The site of the Smith's Mill is located to the south west of the main building.

History

Const'n Date: 1859,1897,1944

Source:

Architect: Unknown

Builder: John Smith

SMITH'S MILL SITE

Smith's Mill was built on the first tillage lease in the Irwin District, location 688 of 100 acres, by John Smith and John Maley in 1865. It was situated on the road to Port Irwin (Port Denison) and it became the centre of commerce in the area when Smith became official postmaster for Lower Irwin on the 11 October 1866, at an annual fee of £6. The mill went into decline after shipping stopped calling at the port owing to bad anchorage and insurance companies unwilling to insure vessels coming to Port Irwin. In 1894, after the opening of the Midland Railway line and the Royal Steam Roller Flour Mill, Smith closed his mill and sold the property to Dr. George Bartlett in 1897. The Benedictine Community purchased the property in 1944..

BENEDICTINE RETREAT, former DENISON HOUSE

Using the stone from the mill, Dr. Bartlett built "Denison House" just west of the mill site. Footings of the mill are still visible. Dr. Bartlett ran his medical practice from "Denison House" and his wife Florence is credited with the design and construction of the terraced gardens on the banks of the river below the house, work was said to be often carried out by her under lamplight. She also operated a conservatory at the rear of the building. The property has also been owned by H.S. Good. The former "Denison House" is now owned by, and serves as a retreat for, the Benedictine Community of New Norcia, who purchased the land in February 1944.

(Source: Bain, M A, "Ancient Landmarks", UWA Press, 1975 ; IDHS Records; Benedictine Community of New Norcia Archives)

2004

Location 688 was subdivided for housing in 2004, the Shire of Irwin purchased the building and some surrounding land. The building is no longer used as the Benedictine Retreat.

Chronology Entries

1859 The first tillage lease was established in the Irwin River valley. John Smith, miller and sometimes stonemason of Greenough leased Loc 688 of 100 acres. The land is located on the south bank of the Irwin River, close to the river mouth.

Ancient Landmarks, Bain, M. A., UWA Press, Perth, 1975 Pages 172

1865 John Smith built the first flour mill on his tillage lease south east of the river mouth.

Bunney, R & Ellery, K, Dongara 1839 - 198-, Geraldton Newspapers Print, 1975

Irwin Shire Council

Municipal Inventory Place Record

1890s Dr. George Hill Bartlett was the first resident doctor in the town. He bought Smith's mill and used the stone to build a house which he named 'Denison House'. Terraces were built along the river bank.

Ancient Landmarks, Bain, M. A., UWA Press, Perth, 1975 Pages 403

Historic Theme(s)

HCWA	AHC
104 Land allocation and subdivision	3 Developing local, regional and national economies
406 Religion	8.6.2 Maintaining religious traditions and ceremonies
603 Local heroes and battlers	

Statement of Significance

"Denison House" fmr. The Benedictine Retreat, fmr Dr Bartlett's Residence and site of Smith's Mill has high historic significance given its connection to the establishment of the first flour mill on the first tillage lease in the Irwin District. Further, "Denison House" has historic significance given its association with the first medical practitioner resident in the district from the turn of the century. The place also has high aesthetic and social significance given its large scale, decorative elements and location in a prominent position on the south bank of the Irwin River. It is a highly visible landmark from the Irwin River look out.

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.

Other Listings

NTWA - Classified; 09/05/1983
Shire of Irwin - Town Planning Scheme (36); 16/10/1996
HCWA - State Heritage Register (Interim); 27/06/2003
HCWA - State Heritage Register (Permanent); 16/12/2003

Supporting Information

IDHS Records
AHC Reference 009657 01-02
Bain M.A., "Ancient Landmarks", UWA Press, 1975.
HCWA Database No. 1221
Documentary Evidence, Register Document.

Irwin Shire Council

Municipal Inventory Place Record

Additional Photographs

Date of Photograph: 22/07/2004 IR063-1

Source: G.W. Grundy



North and west aspects.

Date of Photograph: 22/07/2004 IR063-2

Source: G. W. Grundy



Front (north) entrance.

Date of Photograph: 22/07/2004 IR063-3

Source: G. W. Grundy



Former chapel, west and south facades.

Date of Photograph: 22/07/2004 IR063-4

Source: G. W. Grundy



Underground tank and east side of the former chapel.

Date of Photograph: 6/08/1997 IR063-5

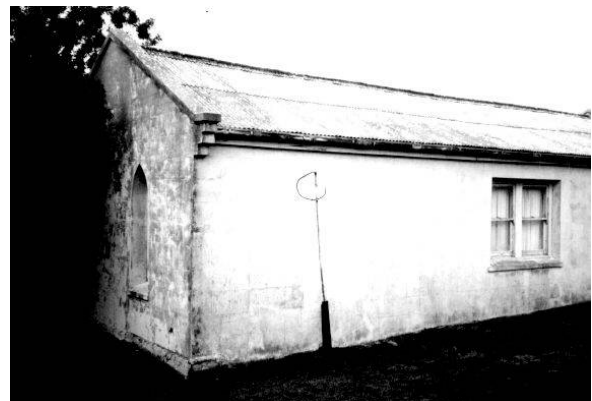
Source: Suba & Grundy



Northwest aspect.

Date of Photograph: 6/08/1997 IR063-6

Source: Suba & Grundy



Former Chapel

Irwin Shire Council

Municipal Inventory Place Record

Date of Photograph: 6/08/1997 IR063-7

Source: *Suba & Grundy*



Underground tank
