

History of the Buildings

The buildings that house the Constitutional Centre were originally the old Hale School. The following is a brief history of how the buildings came into being and how they have been used.

Introduction

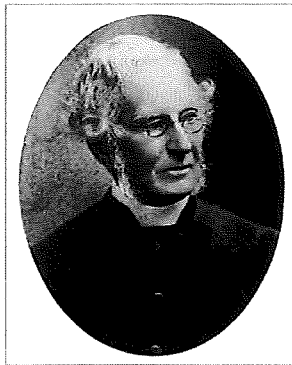
The Swan River Colony, founded in 1829 by free settlers, seemed an inhospitable place for a public school of classical learning and so it was.

As a free settlement, the colony was largely without a labouring class and, out of necessity, the settlers had to undertake their own labouring work. With the arrival of convicts in 1850, the population gained a much needed injection of labour and young children were released from their manual responsibilities at home and, theoretically at least, could undertake formal education.

The Bishop's School, the Church of England Collegiate School and Colonel Haynes' private Collegiate School were the forerunners of The High School and all founded due to lack of local support. There was no secondary education available in the colony prior to Bishop Hale's arrival in 1856.

History of Hale School and its incarnations

The Bishop's School (1858-1865)



Mathew Blagden Hale, the first Anglican Bishop of Perth realised, on his arrival in the colony in 1856, the need for a boys' secondary school to provide for the education of the colony's future leaders. The Bishop's School opened in Perth on 28 June 1858 with an enrolment of 23 pupils.

The school was founded on the basic principles of morality and religious instruction, and provided a traditional classical education. Sport was also important to the success of the boys, as education was regarded as not merely learning in class but was concerned with building a well- rounded cultured gentleman.

The Bishop, a wealthy man in his own right, personally funded the greater part of the running of the school. The only income being from fees which were 10 pounds per annum for day scholars.

The Church of England Collegiate School (1865-1872)



By 1863 Bishop Hale was no longer willing to carry the financial burden and called for the establishment of a Board of Governors to take over responsibility for the school and establish it on a more permanent basis. In 1865 the name of the institution became the Church of England Collegiate School. The School continued essentially unchanged from its predecessor but lack of funding and support from the local community and, more particularly the lack of enrolments, forced its closure in 1872.

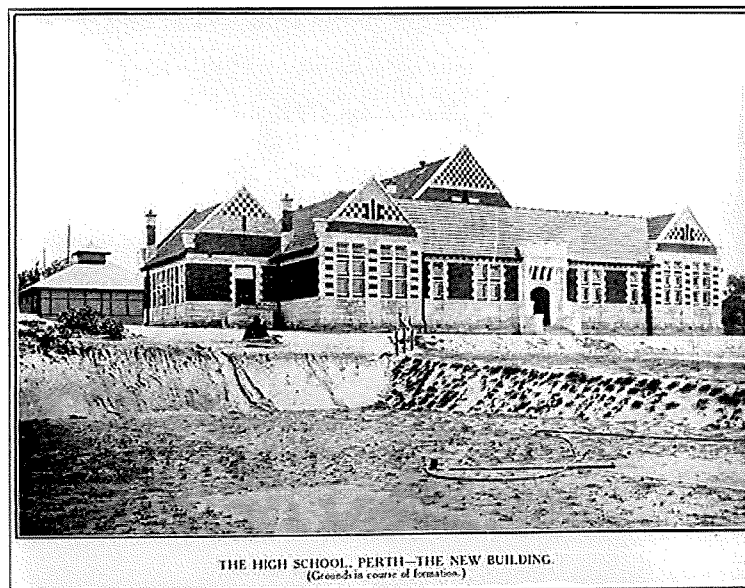
Colonel Haynes' School (1872-1875)



Colonel E.W. Haynes, 1872-1875

Colonel Haynes, the second master at the Collegiate School leased the school's premises from the Board of Governors and continued to tutor a small number of pupils as a private venture until 1875.

The High School



In 1876 the Government recognised the need for secondary education in Western Australia with the introduction of The High School Act

“for the purpose of giving boys an education similar to that given in the grammar and advanced schools in the other Australasian Colonies”

The High School occupied various premises in the city, including The Cloisters, the premises of the former Collegiate College, rooms in the Pensioner Barracks and from the early 1880s the former Military Hospital at the corner of St Georges Terrace and George Street.

The High School, like its predecessors, battled to maintain numbers. In 1912 the Government announced that The High School's annual subsidy would be withdrawn at the end of 1915 and the school would be free of the restriction on the fees which it could charge.

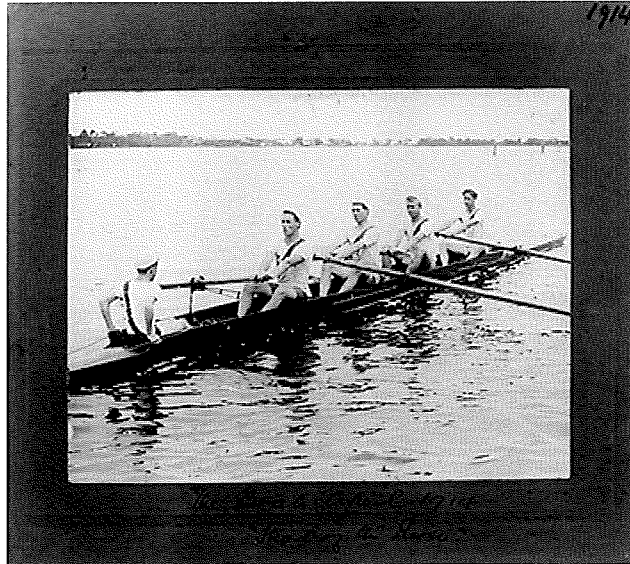
In 1914 the school moved into new premises in West Perth where the school was to remain until 1961.

Headmaster Faulkner's dictum: “sound muscles are quite as essential as a good brain” was reflected in the school's education philosophy and the boys were imbued with the knowledge that a healthy body equalled a healthy mind. From its earliest days, the school considered sport to be central to the education of young

gentlemen. Initially the traditional English sports were played to the exclusion of all others. Cricket, rowing and soccer were the main sporting pursuits and later Australian Rules football, boxing and tennis were added to the list.

The Public Schools' Association

The Public Schools' Association was formed in 1905. Its members were; The High School, Christian Brothers' College, Scotch College and Guildford Grammar School. The main purpose was the organisation of the interschool sports and team competitions between the member schools. It was an exclusive club, which resisted the inclusion of newer schools such as Wesley College, which did not join until 1952 and Christ Church Grammar School which joined in 1956.



Two sporting institutions, the Head of the River (first staged in 1899) and the Darlot Cup cricket competition (commenced in 1901), pre-dated the Association. The High School was to feature prominently and indeed dominate in all sports over the years.

Hale School

With the widespread growth of secondary schools throughout the State, the name, The High School, while originally distinctive, was seen to have lost its exclusivity and a change was felt to be desirable. Accordingly in 1929, to honour both the centenary of the State and the role of Bishop Hale as the founder of secondary education in Western Australia, the name was changed to Hale School.

It was a move which was not without controversy, and was challenged by the trustees of the Church of England. While the secular nature of the school was a major point of contention in 1929, it was not an impediment to its conversion to a church school in 1958. Following negotiations with the trustees of the Church of England, the Hale School Amendment Act of 1958, established that Hale School 'shall be and forever remain a Church of England School'. Along with this change in status, the date 1858 was reinstated in the school crest, and thus gave tacit acknowledgment of the close links with the Bishop's School.

From the early 1920s, arguments had been put forward for moving the school to a suburban location. The site in West Perth was not large and allowed little room for long term expansion. There was also a view that parents did not like sending their sons to a boarding school in such close proximity to the city with the opportunity to experience the temptations and distractions which city life had to offer. The school was eager to relocate as soon as possible however the outbreak of World War Two and problems in the immediate post-war period were to postpone the move for two decades.

The foundation stone for the new school at Wembley Downs was laid by the Premier in 1958 to commemorate the centenary of the school. The school opened its doors there in February 1961 and at the same time handed back the West Perth site to the Government.

The West Perth Site

Overview

The teaching and residential functions of the school were accommodated in independent building blocks, separated on the site and with each having a distinctive character. The school buildings which housed the

teaching facilities were located in the western section of the site close to the boundary with access from Havelock Street. The boarding house was situated on the high ground at the Harvest Terrace end of the site overlooking Parliament House.

The school buildings were developed as a single storey complex, built in stages over a number of years. The original concept based on the traditional collegiate model, with rooms grouped around a cloistered quadrangle, was never fully realised and buildings were added in a pragmatic fashion as demand for accommodation and finances determined.

The Government Astronomer's request of many years earlier that the meridian line remain unobstructed by buildings appears to have been overlooked in the siting of the school building although it may be that the buildings were kept at the single storey height for just that reason.

The school was run by an independent Board of Governors and did not come under the control of the State Education department. Nevertheless it maintained a close association with the Government and was thus able to draw on the resources of the Public Works Department for the initial development of the West Perth site. The original school building was designed by the Architectural Division, under Chief Architect Hillson Beasley. When the Government's financial support came to an end in 1915, with the withdrawal of the annual subsidy, subsequent building work was undertaken by private architects. Herbert Parry, a former student of The High School, was the school's architect until the commencement of the Second World War. He was responsible for the additions to the school building known as the Memorial Wind and for the design of the Boarding House. Howard Bonner succeeded Herbert Parry in the early 1940s and was responsible for the design of minor building works and for the layout of the grounds at the Harvest Terrace end of the site.

The School Buildings

The initial accommodation designed and supervised by the Public Works Department in 1913-14 consisted of six classrooms, Headmaster's office, Masters' common room and a large assembly hall. The rooms were arranged in a symmetrical plan layout with a formal entrance to the building placed centrally in the north elevation. The main access to the site was from the west, off Havelock Street. The following description of the buildings was published in the school magazine in December 1913.

“The style adopted for the buildings is scholastic Gothic, with mullioned windows, the main entrance being treated as a portico with columns on either side, and Tudor doorway...Relief is obtained by carrying up the ends and returns of the wings into gables with copings and corbels, the apices being filled in with diaper work of stone and brick...The materials externally are Cottesloe stone, rock faced and sawn, Donnybrook freestone for finer work, and pressed bricks...Internally, the finish will be of plaster with polished cement dadoes and jarrah floors and woodwork. The walls of the hall will be relieved by pilasters and panels and the ceiling, 20 feet high, will be boldly covered up from (the) cornice and panelled with coffered beams in fibrous plaster.”

Cygnets School Magazine, December 1913

From the Chief Architect's report of 1913-14, it is known that terracotta tiles were substituted for the slate roof, possibly for reasons of economy or availability. Two foundation stones were laid on 14 February 1914; one by the Governor, Major Sir Harry Barron and the other by Sir Edward Wittenoom. The building while not lavish was substantial and probably of a higher standard of architectural finish than any future buildings undertaken by the school on its own behalf on the West Perth site. It compares with two other educational buildings of the same era, Perth Modern School and the first stage of the Fremantle Technical School which were also designed by the Public Works Department under Hillson Beasley.

The building contractor for the works was A T Brine, who was to become a generous friend to the school in later years. The contract sum was 6,437 pounds. A freestanding timber framed ablutions and cloak room block was also included in the building contract. It was located at the rear of the main building and was probably intended to be a temporary structure, however, remained in use throughout the whole of the period that the school occupied the site.

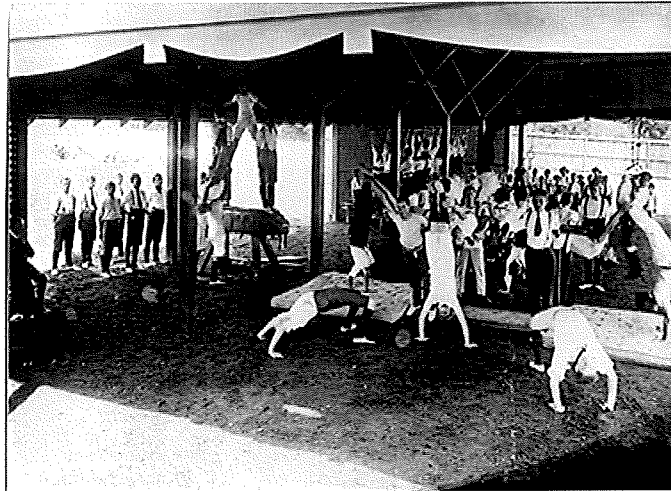
Main Hall (1913-14)

By the end of the first year in the new building, the school enrolments had increased from 95 to 167 and such a dramatic increase put pressure on the available accommodation. The Headmaster while reporting his entire satisfaction with the lofty well lighted and well ventilated classrooms, made the point that there were not enough of them. In order to maintain a good educational standard, by limiting class numbers to 30 boys, he had to use the main hall as a classroom.

Minor additions to the assembly hall were made when a new stage and proscenium were added in 1947. The work was undertaken by the school itself under the supervision of one of the Masters and with the assistance of

students. This new facility was soon put to good use by the schools drama society, whose productions were a highlight of the school calendar.

Gymnasium (1915-16)



The gymnasium, built in 1915 or 1916 soon after the completion of the main school building, was a large free-standing timber structure with decorative timber and lattice detailing and a central roof lantern. It was located on the south-west corner of the site and was initially built with open sides, providing an all-weather covered area for physical education activities which were an important component of the school curriculum. As school numbers continued to grow, the gymnasium was brought into commission as a makeshift classroom and the open sides were partially enclosed with 6 ft (1.8m) high timber panels. As such it must have been an extremely well ventilated classroom. It was demolished when the school relinquished the site in the early 1960s.

"Every boy, unless specially exempted, must participate in physical culture exercise and in organised games."

1929 Hale School (The High School) Prospectus under the heading Physical Culture and Games.

Science Block (1916-17)

The science block was opened at the school's annual Speech Day in December 1917 with some degree of satisfaction on the part of the Governors. Parents were encouraged to inspect the modern facilities for science teaching which the school had previously lacked. The building was designed by Herbert Parry and, like the gymnasium, was a sizeable timber framed structure with clear storey lighting to the laboratory and tiered seating in the lecture theatre. The science block was constructed as a free standing unit located to the rear of the main school building with the floor at a higher level. Access was from a covered veranda on the western elevation. As with the gymnasium, maintenance and termite damage was an on-going problem. This structure remained in use throughout the period when the school occupied the site and was eventually demolished in 1983.

Memorial Wing (1920-21)

By 1920 school enrolments had reached 300 and the pressure for new classroom accommodation had become acute. Four new classrooms and lining cloister were built as an east wing to the main building. Work commenced in September 1920 and was completed the following June. The new accommodation known as the Memorial Wing, honoured former students who had participated in the Great War. It was designed by Herbert Parry and financed by subscriptions from former students of the school through the Old Boys' Association. A T Brine who was the contractor for the original building was also the builder for these additions, at a cost of 2769 pounds. The foundation stone was laid in December 1920 by Minister for Education, Hon H P Colebatch. The interiors of the classrooms were more spartan with the elimination of the open fireplaces. This new wing abutted the science block and was linked with it on the west side by an open verandah. Major changes were made to the roof and end elevation after the science block was demolished.

Pavillion Classroom/3A Form Room (1944)

A brick and tile pavillion classroom was built at the beginning of 1944 when the school was again experiencing an accommodation crisis. This essentially utilitarian building which reflects both the financial constraints and austerity of the period was designed by Howard Bonner. It was located between the gymnasium and science block to the rear of the assembly hall and is still standing.

Boarding House - Hale House (1925-26)

The boarding house was arranged in the traditional manner with dining and communal rooms on the ground floor and dormitory, infirmary and bathroom accommodation on the first floor. It was a plan designed to allow for supervision and control of the students particularly during out of school hours.

As well as accommodation for the boarders and resident house masters, the boarding house contained spacious quarters on both floors for the headmaster and his family. As was the case with the school buildings, the residential accommodation was often overtaxed and modifications and additions were made to the building to accommodate the growth in school numbers at various stages. During World War II the headmaster's suite was converted to dormitory accommodation and from that time on was no longer used for its original purpose.

At no time did the school have generous funds available for its building program and the boarding house, while being an impressive building is nevertheless economical in its design and gains impact from its positioning on the highest part of the site.

The building was designed by Herbert Parry and constructed by M Ellyard, whose tender of 14,464 pounds was the lowest of 16. By the time the building was completed the final cost had risen to 16,385 pounds. The building was mainly financed by the sale of the George Street Premises, bought by the Perth City Council and supplemented by a generous donation from one of the Governors of the school Mr E W Loton. At one point, when work was well advanced, the question of providing a separate kitchen in the headmaster's quarters was raised and rejected because it was felt any additional costs would strain the schools resources.

The escalation in the school numbers which stretched the school teaching accommodation to the limit was also felt in the boarding house. The impersonal airy rooms with louvre opening and raked ceilings are reminiscent of the rugged open air sleepout which was built in the grounds of the old George Street property.

Two residential buildings located close to the school in West Perth were purchased to provide alternative accommodation; one in Walker Street for the private use of the headmaster and the other in Parliament Place for a junior boarding school.

A separate brick drying room was built in 1943 at the rear of the boarding house to upgrade the service facilities and no doubt to assist in overcoming the severe labour shortage which was experienced throughout the war years. This building is still standing. The school's first washing machine was installed in the laundry in 1947 and a similar upgrading of the kitchen occurred in 1952 when a dish washing machine was installed.

At different stages the basement in the building was adapted for various uses. Originally used as a baggage store for the boarders, it was converted first in 1931 for use as the school tuck shop and later in the 1940s and 1950s it was used as a theatrette for visual education.

Current use of site

The Hale School Buildings

The West Perth property was handed over to the State Government in February 1961 and was used by the Department of Education until the late 1980s.

The Constitutional Centre of Western Australia, located at the old Hale School Building (near the Parliament in West Perth) was officially opened on 29 October 1997 by His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffrey, the Governor of Western Australia, with the Hon. Richard Court, Premier of Western Australia. The Constitutional Centre holds a unique place in Australia's civic education fabric.

