FORMER WODONGA COURTHOUSE

ADDRESS: 7 High Street, Wodonga

STUDY No.: 2C HO No.: ..... HERMES No.: 206348

DATE: 1877

CONDITION: Good

INTEGRITY: Good



(RBA, June 2024)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

The former Wodonga Courthouse at 7 High Street, Wodonga is significant. The original southern brick section was built in 1877 to a design by the PWD architect Peter Kerr and enlarged to the north likely during the early part of the 20th century.

The significant elements are the paired gable roof form, chimneys, timber soffits and brackets, brick walls in Flemish bond, door openings, and timber sash windows with basalt sills (south wing). In addition, the memorial and plaque are significant.

The non-significant elements are the corrugated sheet metal roof cladding, front timber verandahs and their paving, modern plate-glass windows and doors (north wing), and additions to the rear.

How is it significant?

The former Wodonga Courthouse at 7 High Street, Wodonga is of local historical, representative, and aesthetic significance to the City of Wodonga.

Why is it significant?

The former Wodonga Courthouse is of historical significance as a site of the early administration of justice for the Wodonga community from the mid-19th to 1920 and so a symbol of government control in the early days of the settlement. For some years, the earlier timber court house (demolished), built in 1859, remained in use. The site ceased being used for a court hearings in 1920 and subsequently it was employed as residence until the late 20th century, having been used for various commercial purposes since. Whilst its original function has long been relocated, its design is indicative of the courthouse type employed during the Victorian period and so remains a key signifier of that period in the towns development. (Criterion A)

The south wing of former Wodonga Courthouse is of aesthetic significance as one of the few examples of the 19th century output of the PWD/government architects in the municipality and designed by the noted architect Peter Kerr. The original section is more intact and is distinguished by its moulded and banded brickwork as well as the associated brackets in conjunction with basalt sills (contained within a platband) to the openings. The subtle, temple-like façade treatment imbues the building with a level of gravitas that has its origins in ancient classical architecture. (Criterion E)

The north wing of former Wodonga Courthouse is of representative significance as a largely intact example of an early 20th century addition, likely also designed by the PWD. The later north wing retains some of the same detailing (brickwork) however the surviving detailing to the gable end – louvred timber vent, exposed rafter ends, and roughcast finish- are indicative of the early 20th century. (Criterion D)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The former courthouse is located on the north corner of High and Wodonga, being setback from the boundaries with areas of lawn to the front and carparking to the rear.

The building is comprised of two unequal abutting/parallel gabled units – wider, later northern and original, narrower southern, which is setback slightly – both whose roofs are clad in corrugated sheet metal (replacing the original slate). Each section has a brick chimney and there are non-original skylights. The soffit detailing varies - lined with timber boards to the south wing or sheeting with rafter ends to the north wing.

The red brickwork is laid in Flemish bond (alternating headers and stretchers) with a defined plinth with projecting brick band to the south wind and rendered bands to the north wing.

The front gable ends have moulded brick to the upper edge on which rest curvilinear purlin ends. The articulation of each gable end varies.

The southern gable has a pediment-like treatment with another course of moulded bricks defining its lower edge above a pair of original windows with basalt sills with a platband of brickwork extending at the level. A four panelled door, glazing to upper panels.

The northern gable features a louvred vent and a central arched opening with brick voussoirs, an outer rendered string moulding, and roughcast render to the centre. Late 20th century elements are the paired glazed doors and flanking large fixed-pane windows.

The extant timber verandah has a skillion roof supported on chamfered timber posts with clover motifs as capitals and small cut-out timber brackets.



façade (RBA, June 2024)

Along the south elevation is an original pair of windows which remain visible behind the steel container. At the west end is a slatted screen area.

The rear window of the southern wing has voussoirs and there are small additions concealing most of the rear/west wall of the northern wing. To the west is a gravelled car parking area.



Wodonga Street elevation, west end (RBA, June 2024)

A stone memorial with a metal plaque installed by the Wodonga Historical Society at the front corner to mark the location of the original 1859 courthouse, police residence and gaol.

HISTORIC THEME

7.3 Maintaining law and order

HISTORY

The land on which the Wodonga court house stands was initially part of a triangular parcel (1A, Section B1) at the north end of the township (Wodonga Township Plan).

The first timber Court of Petty Sessions located at 7 High Street was built by contractor Peter McKean in 1859 who was awarded a contract of £484. The timber courthouse was accompanied by a police residence and gaol. Before churches were built, the courthouse was used by visiting clergy. In the 1860s, the Right Reverend Charles Perry, Archbishop of Melbourne visited the district and preached at the Wodonga courthouse, which had previously been used for Presbyterian Services.

By the mid-1870s, the condition of the original timber court house was described as a 'complete ruin' as follows:

> Through the pine timber, the myriads of white ants that infest the place, with their proverbial industry, are reducing the structure to a complete ruin ; the roof is no longer waterproof, and the rain percolates through right over Ihe heads of the portion occupied by the magistrates (1875, *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*).

In December 1876, the tender of James Kyle for a new court house and altering the old Court House (£780, 10s), as well as erecting a two cell lock-up (£447, 10s), Wodonga was accepted totalling £1228 (1876 VGG). The first stage/southern bay of building was designed by the noted architect Peter Kerr (Challinger).

In mid-January 1877, it was reported that:

> Mr James Kyle, the contractor for the erection of a new court house and lock-up at Wodonga, is proceeding with his work in a most satisfactory manner, the foundations being almost completed (1887 *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*).

Six weeks late in early March, the following update on the construction and commentary on the project was provided:

> Mr. Kyle, the contractor for the erection of the new Court-house, at Wodonga, is making rapid progress with the work. The walls are now nearly up to the full height, and the joists for the flooring are already laid. … The new building, apart from the lock-up, consists or merely one large room for the transaction of Court business, the old wooden structure divided into several compartments being utilised for offices for the Magistrates, Clerk of Petty Sessions, &c. We cannot help thinking that it would have been in the end more economical to have erected an entirely new pile of buildings, as from the ravages made by the white ants in the old Courthouse it can hardly be expected that any wooden structure will stand long (1877 *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*).

It has not been established how much longer the original timber court house was retained.

In August 1877, James Kyle was awarded another £97 for additional work to the Wodonga court house under the former contract (1877 VGG).

In June 1899, tenders were invited by the PWD for 'additions, repairs, etc.' to the court house *(*1899 *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*). This might relate to the north wing.

In 1920, it was decided to relocate court facilities to another, centrally located building, and sell the subject site as follows:

> A letter has been received from the Public Works Department concerning the removal of the business from the Wodonga Court House. The freehold of the existing building is to be sold by auction, and tenders are to be invited for the renovation of the "Bond Room" at the Wodonga Police Court. Representations were made a long time ago to have the business of the court removed to a more convenient centre, but no change was sanctioned then. It is mainly owing to the efforts of Mr. A. L. Wright, JP., chairman of the bench, that the removal is now being allowed. The change will be welcomed, as no more inconvenient spot could be found than that in which the Court House is at present situated (1920 *Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times)*.

In 1922, William Henry Moulder Snr, who was one of the presiding Justices of the Peace at sittings at the original Wodonga courthouse, and his son William Henry Moulder Jnr purchased

the former courthouse, including the original stables. While undertaking renovations at this time he named it *The Court*.

An undated photograph below captures changes that were made during the Interwar period to the north wing to convert it to a residence. Typical of the 1920s, there was a porch supported on brick piers and flanking pairs of box-framed windows. These modifications have subsequently been removed during the late 20th century.



7 High Street, Wodonga. (Date unknown, Codling Collection, Wodonga Historical Society)

The following aerial from 1963 shows that there was some planting to the rear, however the extant London planes adjacent in the wide verge in Wodonga Street are not evident.



1963 aerial indicating location of subject place (CAD8, Run 2, Frame 269, Geoscience Australia)

Wodonga's third courthouse was opened in Elgin Street in 1966.

Moulder's daughter, affectionately referred to by locals as Miss Iris Moulder, was recorded as owning the courthouse by 1976. Subsequently, it has been occupied by a restaurant and offices.

To accommodate these commercial uses, further changes have been made, primarily to the north wing. Large glass windows and paired modern glass doors have been installed to the façade as well as a continuous, skillion roofed verandah across the front of both wings. To the rear is a small weatherboard addition with an asymmetric gable roof and glazed entry.

During 2015, the two-storey block in the north-west part of the site was constructed and mid-2020 a café was established in a shipping container at the southern end of the site.

COMPARISON

The subject building is one of a small group of Victorian period, public buildings erected in Wodonga during the early development phase in the township that are included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay. The other four buildings, three of which were also erected during the 1870s in brick, with one timber example from 1859, are:

- Old Custom & Custom Office, Lincoln Causeway, Gateway Island (HO5). A timber building erected in 1859 with a single hip roof, brick chimney, multi-paned windows, and full length verandah.
- Powder Magazine, Lincoln Causeway, Gateway Island (HO6). Built 1877-78, it is a small red brick building in English bond with granite sills and slate clad, gable roof.
- Wodonga Railway Station, Elgin Boulevard, Wodonga (HO10). Opened in 1873, it is a bi-chrome brick building, brown with cream brick quoining and brackets, with a hip roof, now clad in corrugated sheet metal.
- Former Wodonga Post Office, 67 High St, Wodonga (HO41). Built in 1874, this brick building has been overpainted. It has a hipped and gable roof, clad in sheet metal (likely slate originally) with a front porch (probably not original). It was also designed by Peter Kerr of the PWD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTENT OF LISTING

It is recommended that the former Wodonga Courthouse at 7 High Street, Wodonga is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wodonga Planning Scheme.

The extent of the heritage overlay should include most of the parcel of land on which the courthouse is located as outlined below. The building is defined as 2/PS840973 and the surrounding curtilage is 1/PS840973, however the two-storey building to the rear in the north-west corner should be excluded.



(Nearmap, 22 June 2024)

PLANNING SCHEME CONTROLS

Planning Controls	Y/N
External Paint Controls Apply?	N
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	N
Tree Controls Apply?	N
Solar Energy Systems Control?	Y
Outbuildings or Fences Not Exempt Under Clause 43.01-4?	N
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register Under the *Heritage Act 2017*?	N
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	Y
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	N

REFERENCES

1876 *Victoria Government Gazette (VGG)* , 29 December, p2411, no. 1124

1877 *Victoria Government Gazette (VGG)*, 17 August, p1584, no. 720

Border Post Almanac 1878, index compiled by Peter Lakeman, 2001, p. 54. http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~surreal/AVNE/Book-indexes/borderpost.html

Challinger, M (2001), *Historic Court Houses of Victoria*. Palisade Press, p196

Commonwealth of Australia (1939): Electoral Roll, Division of Indi, District of Benambra, Subdivision of Wodonga

Dunlop, A (1976): *'Wodonga Over River and Plain'*. Hawthorn Press

'Wodonga Court-House', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 3 July 1875, p4

'Wodonga Court House', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*,18 January 1877, p2

'Wodonga Court House', *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 3 March 1877, p12

'Wodonga Court-House', *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 23 June 1899, p22

'Wodonga Court House', *Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times*, 20 March 1920, p5

Wodonga Historical Society Archives

WODONGA POLICE-COURT. (1865, July 15). *The Argus*, p7. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5788977

Wodonga Township Plan W308, S4

ADDITIONAL IMAGES



South elevation and memorial stone, prior to container/café being introduced (Biosis, March 2020)



Rear view with later additions and carpark. (Biosis, March 2020)