



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)

- 3.4 Developing sheep and cattle industries
- 3.7.1 Shipping to and from Australian ports

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying
- 201 River and sea transport
- 501 World wars and other wars

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Elders Wool Stores is significant as a massively scaled robust utilitarian warehouse building. The façade of *Elders Wool Stores* is a good example of a warehouse building designed in a manner that displays a robust form of classicism through its trabeated construction and simplified and classically derived rendered detailing. It demonstrates some affinity with the Federation Warehouse Style, particularly in the use of brickwork to provide the building with a bold utilitarian character appropriate to its harbour side setting. (Criterion 1.1)

Elders Wool Stores is a significant landmark because of its monumental scale and its prominent location, lining the railway reserve in front of Victoria Quay. It makes a powerful impact when viewed from the harbour and from the east to the extent that it dominates the area within which it stands. (Criterion 1.3)

The massive scale and functional aesthetic of the *Elders Wool Stores*, in combination with the other warehouse buildings nearby, means that it contributes to the aesthetic qualities of the landscape to the extent that it defines the established streetscape of the area. (Criterion 1.3)

Elders Wool Stores is part of a significant streetscape. As buildings with strong associations with the harbour, the structures that line the harbour between Goldsbrough Street to James Street collectively form a significant townscape. (Criterion 1.4)

* 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. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Elders Wool Stores is evidence of how the wool industry in Western Australia has developed from a modest nineteenth century industry run by individual growers to a sophisticated industry with the latest technology and practices. The place illustrates the practices of wool storage and display throughout most of the twentieth century and how changing techniques of wool display has made these facilities redundant to the present industry. (Criterion 2.1)

Elders Wool Stores is one of the earliest examples of wool stores in Fremantle and the oldest remaining on the strip of wool stores on Cantonment Street which were constructed from c.1917 in response to the need to stockpile wool close to the harbour and railway lines following the Commonwealth Government's decision to sell all the clip to the British Government for the duration of World War One. The establishment of this practice was the forerunner of all subsequent wool sales in WA. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Elders Wool Stores is significant to the Fremantle community and the greater Western Australian community for its association with the Western Australian wool industry. The contribution of the wool industry to the economy and the identity of Fremantle has been a major one throughout the 20th century until the present day. (Criterion 4.1)

Elders Wool Stores has been a dominant physical presence to the town of Fremantle since 1927. The monolithic presence in the streetscape and its continuity of function has contributed to the community's sense of place as part of a working port that has played an integral part in the development of Western Australia for over a hundred years. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

For a range of reasons, including changing markets and work practices, *Elders Wool Stores* has become an uncommon building type. (Criterion 5.1)

Elders Wool Stores were part of a distinctive way of life that no longer exists, where the processing and storage of export commodities took place at the edge of the city within the vicinity of the harbour. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Elders Wool Stores is significant in demonstrating the characteristic form of substantial wool stores within Australia. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Elders Wool Stores building is in a sound condition. The building has been vacant for a number of years and the façade is showing the cumulative effects of lack of continuous maintenance. Elements on the west face of the building are in a noticeably worse condition than on the others. This is most apparent where the concrete lintels that are above the window openings are beginning

to spall as a result of rusting reinforcement. The windows are in a poor condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Elders Wool Stores is of moderate integrity, the building is currently vacant. However changes in the methods of sorting and distribution of wool has made the reinstatement of the original use most unlikely.

Planning permission has been granted by the City of Fremantle for the building to become a hotel, complimenting a residential development to the north that would alter or demolish the 1950-52 building so that it would no longer abut the 1927 building. The exterior of the 1927 building would remain largely intact.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Elders Wool Stores was built in 1927 as a freestanding building at the south end of the block. The 1950-52 building was built to abut *Elders Wool Stores*. The north wall of the 1927 building remains at the ground and first floor levels but has been removed at the upper levels, where it opens into the adjacent 1950-52 building. The structure of the building is of steel at the ground and first floor is of timber and on the upper floors is of steel. The 1927 building was adapted by an additional floor, which reads on the facade as the blind attic. The office areas on the east side of the building have been badly vandalised.

The facades and internal structure of the building remain largely intact.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Prue Griffin, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Elders Wool Stores is part of a complex of multistorey brick buildings bound by Cantonment Street, Elder Place, Goldsbrough Street and Parry Street, Fremantle. The complex was constructed for Goldsbrough Mort and Co. Pty Ltd (later Elder Smith-Goldsbrough Mort Ltd) in three developmental stages. 1927, 1950 – 1956 and 1969 – 1970. The street names have altered since the original names were allocated. Parry Street was formerly Edward Street, Elder Place was Beach Street and Goldsbrough Street was originally New Point Street or Mort Street. For convenience the current names will be used throughout this assessment.

Although Fremantle had been settled as a port town since 1829 it was the discovery of gold in the east of the colony in the 1890s that saw Fremantle transform from a modest port to an industrial town. The completion of the Fremantle harbour in 1897 saw Fremantle become the primary port in Western Australia. The railway link to Perth had been completed in 1880 and the establishment of the railway workshops by the Public Works Department saw Fremantle become a major manufacturing centre.¹

¹ R Reece and R Pascoe *A Place of Consequence A Pictorial History of Fremantle* Fremantle Arts Centre Press 1983 p. 50 & 53.

Wool production has been significant to Australia as an export and a major agricultural industry. Australia is often claimed to be 'riding on the sheep's back' as so much revenue is generated by wool and sheep export. In Western Australia, sheep have been farmed since European settlement in 1829.

Although Western Australia produced wool for export in the 1890s the business was not professionally co-ordinated. In this period it was the practice of woolgrowers to individually send their clip to London for auction.² In the 1890s Dalgety's, a long established NSW wool broking company opened an office in Fremantle.³ Their primary interests in Western Australia were shipping with wool broking which commenced in 1904 a modest part of the firms interests.⁴ Nevertheless it was an area that the firm was keen to support as wool production increased throughout Western Australia growers and buyers from interstate and overseas began to look to Fremantle as an alternative source of wool. Dalgety's fostered confidence in the Fremantle auctions by offering to forward wool to the eastern states or London should the growers not be satisfied with the prices. The reason being that Dalgety's were the agents for the majority of the wool which was sold in London and the eastern states, combined with their shipping interests Dalgety's were well served by the wool growers in Western Australia.⁵ The establishment of auctions in Fremantle was an opportunity to provide an alternative sale point for the growers of inferior product, and those with mixed lines of wool which in the larger markets would have sold at discounted rates.⁶

By 1912, the Dalgety's auctions in Fremantle were gathering support from growers and buyers. Auctions were being held every few weeks during the season and in November 1912, 540 bales were offered for sale and this quantity taxed the limits of the show floor space of their Dalgety Street store.⁷ With the evidence of Dalgety's modest success other companies began to move into Western Australia. The South Australian based Elders Smith and Co began its push into Western Australia in the early 20th century. In 1903, a subsidiary company was formed with local merchant and pastoralist Sir George Shenton. Named Elder Shenton and Co, it was mainly a shipping company with wool a smaller concern. Elder Shenton held their first auction of wool and produce in 1914 at their premises in Fremantle.⁸

In 1915, the three firms selling wool in Fremantle; Elder Shenton, Dalgety's and local company, C.H. Fielding and Co formed the West Australian Wool and Produce Brokers' Association to co-ordinate their trade activities under a common set of rules.⁹ This association formalised the preceding informal agreements on scales of charges, commission etc and fashioned the framework of the market in Fremantle. The association was also bound to promote the trade of wool, skins and hides.¹⁰

2 Noel Murray Stokes, narrative, Acc 3450A/1, MN 1151, Battye Library, p. 7.

3 Noel Stokes, p. 7.

4 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers Western Australian Wool, 1826 – 1916* UWA Press, 1983, p. 271.

5 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 272.

6 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 273.

7 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 275.

8 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 277. These new premises of Elder Shenton were either on the site of the later building opposite the Railway station which was built in 1917 or at another location in Fremantle.

9 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 280.

10 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 281.

The outbreak of World War One was initially greeted with pessimism within the Australian wool industry. All auctions were cancelled and the uncertainties of the war, particularly shipping to overseas markets demoralised the local buyers and growers. Sales resumed in late October 1915 and buyers were tentative given the problems of lack of shipping space, delays in unloading shipping, and storage would make it difficult to reach the eventual destination of the United Kingdom. Many Western Australian growers sent their clip to Melbourne because it was easier to access shipping to Melbourne than London.¹¹

In the first half of 1916, London sales of Western Australian wools received record prices and the wool was highly praised. In 1916, a local journalist expressed the view that Western Australia was enjoying a reputation in London and Melbourne for producing good length, sound wool which was in constant demand and with the completion of the trans-Australia railway later that year, wool buyers would find it relatively easy to come to Fremantle.¹² On 23 November 1916, at the peak of the selling season and at a time when unprecedented high prices were being paid for Australian wool, the Commonwealth government announced that the British Government would be acquiring the entire Australian clip for the duration of the war.¹³

One of the most significant effects of this decision was that the Australian Wool industry was unified for the first time. In all states all growers, brokers, and dealers would have to abide by the same set of regulations, with some allowances for state production. The most radical change was experienced in Western Australia as described by one historian.

Overnight the established pattern of decades had been completely reversed; whereas nine-tenths of the state's wool had previously been sold in London, and further percentage had been shipped over 3000 kilometres to Melbourne for sale, leaving the local trade to profit from the two or three thousand bales remaining, the growers were now confronted with the sale of the wool on their doorstep, and the local wool trade with the prospect of managing the entire display, valuing and subsequent storing of the Western Australian clip.¹⁴

The body which oversaw the management of the appraisal scheme as the agreement was named was the Central Wool Committee (CWC) with a representative State Wool Committee (SWC) in each state.¹⁵ One of the first decisions made by the CWC was the location of the appraisal centres. The initial centres were Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart, Fremantle, Albury, Geelong, Ballarat and Launceston.¹⁶ Although many other towns throughout Australia agitated to be included as appraisal centres only Albany and Geraldton were included to the list of appraisal centres because Fremantle lacked the storage to handle the entire clip of the state. It was decided by the CWC that if storage had to be built then it may as well be at the outlying towns and save on the freight costs to Fremantle.¹⁷

In all centres available storage was leased by the CWC, in Fremantle Dalgety's store was already stocked and facilities were quickly needed for

11 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 284.

12 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 281.

13 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 289.

14 Fyfe, Christopher *The Bale Fillers* p. 289.

15 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentlemen's Agreements: Australia's wartime wool appraisements* Dalkeith, Lane Press WA, 1995, p.30.

16 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentlemen's Agreements* p. 61.

17 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentlemen's Agreements* p. 63.

showing wool and for stocking the new seasons clip.¹⁸ A store on the beach front in North Fremantle leased from the firm J. Kitchener and Sons became the main show floor for the five year period of the appraisal scheme.¹⁹ Storage for the incoming clips and for the wool that was appraised and awaiting shipment was made wherever possible around Fremantle and Perth. The Fremantle Harbour Trust was one organisation that leased storage to the SWC.²⁰ Cartage contractors carried the wool daily to Fremantle over the next five years.²¹

The appraisal of the clip would take a form similar to an auction where the wool would be valued by a team of appraisers, then two final appraisers who represented the growers, would make their appraisal to arrive at an agreed price for the grower. A representative bales from growers were placed on the show floor which were sited on the top floor to take advantage of the natural light. Entire bales were sometimes opened up for inspection. Once inspected and appraised the wool was put back into the bales by labourers called 'kickers back'. The following day bales were re sewn by a team of casual workers. The appraised wool would then become property of the British government and be shipped to the United Kingdom.²² In the early years of the scheme shipping was difficult to arrange and the bales would again be stored. The procedures formulated during the appraisal scheme established the procedures for wool sales in Western Australia.²³

In 1918, CWC approved the erection of sheds in Fremantle and by the end of the scheme in June 1920 seven sheds had been built by the CWC in Fremantle.²⁴ All the stores were timber and the CWC reflected that as the timber was of standard sizes throughout all their stores their value as salvage represented an excellent return on the original cost. In addition to stores built, during the scheme the committee had leased thirty-three stores with a total capacity of over half a million bales.²⁵

It was logical that private wool brokers would build stores to capitalise on the shortage of wool stores in Fremantle. Elder Shenton and Co built their first wool store at Fremantle in 1917 opposite the railway station at the location west of *Elders Wool Stores*, at what is now the 'Woolstores' shopping centre.²⁶

18 Noel Stokes op. cit. p. 8.

19 Noel Stokes op. cit. p. 9.

20 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentlemen's Agreement* p. 31.

21 Noel Stokes op cit. p. 10. Noel Stokes was sent to Western Australia by Dalgety's as appraiser for the first auction in Fremantle in 1916. He stated that the Round House in Fremantle was also used to store wool as its location next to the railway line made it convenient for transport to the harbour. This seems somewhat dubious as the round house had no roof.

22 Noel Stokes op. cit. p. 18.

23 Noel Stokes op. cit. p. 26. . See also Battye Library archival photographs 816B/C/2332-2336 and 2338, showing buyers appraising and classifying wool at Elders wool stores in Fremantle. The photographs, although taken in 1948, show the techniques consistent with those described. The exact wool stores in the photographs are not known however it is likely that they were part of the buildings in this assessment.

24 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentlemen's Agreement* p. 35.

25 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentlemen's Agreement* p. 35. These figures represent the situation across Australia.

26 Noel Stokes op.cit.p.7. Noel Stokes states that the builder of this wool store was 'Totterdell' who later went on the build over 30 bulk wool stores around the state.

The parent company, Elders Smith and Co took over Elders Shenton in 1918.²⁷ This store was subsequently leased to the CWC.

The agreement with the British Government lasted until 1921. After 1921, the British Australian Wool Realisation Association (BAWRA) was formed to manage the sale of the acquired wool together with the new clip from all over Australia.

In 1924/25 the other dominant private company in the wool business in Australia, Goldsbrough Mort and Co., moved into Western Australia by acquiring the shipping firm Henry Wills and Co.²⁸ In the inter war period the two companies Goldsbrough Mort and Co. and Elder Smith began to make inroads into Dalgety's market share of the wool industry in Western Australia.²⁹ As the two companies developed in Western Australia the rival wool stores grew on adjacent blocks in Fremantle.

Before Goldsbrough Mort purchased the land containing *Elders Wool Stores*, the land was used for residential purposes. A 1908 sewerage plan shows the occupancy of the site that consisted of ten lots.³⁰ Lots 255 and 256 were occupied by a group of eight brick terrace houses, a substantial stone residence on lot 257 and a duplex and stables on lot 254. Lots 252, 253, 238 and 239 were the location of the rectory which served St John's Anglican Church located in Adelaide Terrace. The Anglican Church had had a church in Fremantle since 1839 and the substantial two-storey rectory was a prominent building in the eastern part of Fremantle.³¹

In 1922, the Church of England diocesan trustees were considering purchasing a new rectory. Inquires were made by Goldsbrough Mort about the possible purchase of the land for a wool store. The Trustees transferred the property to Goldsbrough Mort in 1925 for a price of £13,000.³² With the proceeds the Church acquired a residence and a block of land on the corner of Queen and High Streets for £2750.³³ Goldsbrough Mort gradually purchased the remaining lots over the site containing *Elders Wool Stores* until all lots were owned by them in 1956.³⁴

In 1926, the rectory was demolished and on 14 October plans were approved by the Fremantle council for the construction of a three storied brick wool store at Fremantle for Goldsbrough Mort and Co. ³⁵ Designed by architects Hobbs Smith and Forbes, the project involved an outlay of £60,000 including the cost of the land and a railway siding.³⁶ The building was completed in

²⁷ Hewat, Tim *The Elders Explosion : one hundred and fifty years of progress from Elder to Elliott* Sydney, Bay Books, 1988 p. 40.

²⁸ Hewat op. cit. p. 40.

²⁹ Noel Stokes, op. cit. p.

³⁰ The lots on the site were 238, 239, 252-257, 312 and 875. A plan prepared by the City of Fremantle shows the arrangement of the lots. This plan is included as part of the assessment.

³¹ MWSS & DD Sheet 47, surveyed July 1908.

³² Lee, Bruce William Francis *A History of St John's Church Fremantle Western Australia* Fremantle 1973.

³³ Stevens, Laraine 'The Northern Woolstores Lots 238-239, 252-257, 312 & 875, unpublished document in the Fremantle Library Local History Collection, p. 1.

³⁴ Stevens, Laraine op. cit. pp. 8-19.

³⁵ Another storey was built on this building in 1967.

³⁶ Stevens, Laraine op. cit. p. 1. Also plans formerly held by architects Hobbs Winning and Leighton. Notes in HCWA file 852 record that the plans were sighted in the 1990s by HCWA staff. Former partner George Winning was contacted but he was not able to recall were these

1927 and occupied 252, 253, 238 and 239. This building is still extant as the first three stories of *Elders Wool Stores*.

Between 1927 and 1928, Goldsbrough Mort acquired Lots 1-10 from the previous owner, Johanna Saw. These lots later became known as lots 254, 255, 256, 312 and 875.³⁷ Applications were made to the Fremantle Council for a series of buildings on the site. Some of these were not wool stores but most were related to the wool industry. In February 1930 an iron shed was approved for construction on lots 253 – 255. In 1936, a skin-drying store was built facing Elder Place behind the group of terraces on Cantonment Street.³⁸ Between 1937 and 1938 the brick duplex on lot 254 was demolished. A building known as the Comet Store was constructed between 1929 and 1939 on lot 875 facing Elder Place behind the group of terrace houses.³⁹

In 1939, a brick warehouse was built by J. Hawkins and Sons to the value of £950 on lot 875 to the rear of the terrace houses and facing Elder Place.⁴⁰ This warehouse was known as the Merchandise Store and was designed by architects Hobbs Forbes and Partners. In the previous year the same architects had designed a large wool store for rival company Elder Smith and Co on the property south of *Elders Wool Stores*.⁴¹

The Comet Store and the Merchandise Store were both single storey buildings constructed of brick with steel windows and corrugated galvanised iron roofs.⁴² The Comet Store, Merchandise Store and the Skin Drying store were located alongside each other facing Elder Place. They represent the flurry of activity and building experienced in the wool industry at this time. None of these buildings are extant in 2003.

During World War Two the same appraisal scheme that had operated from 1916 to 1921 was reinstated between the British and Australian governments. All the Australian wool clips would be sold to the British government for an agreed price.⁴³ Storage again became a significant issue for the CWC however from the outset a programme of building stores rather than leasing stores was embarked on.⁴⁴ In 1940, two stores were built south of Fremantle on Mandurah Road.⁴⁵ The programme to own stores in preference to leasing was put under considerable pressure during war time because of demands from the military authorities. In 1943, 41 per cent of the space erected by the CWC in Fremantle was being occupied by the armed forces.⁴⁶ Privately owned wool stores were also being leased by the military forces.⁴⁷

older plans are now stored. Commonwealth Bank of Australia, *Bank Notes: the monthly staff magazine of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia* No. 12, Vol. 19, November 1927, p. 2.

37 Stevens, Laraine op cit. p. 1.

38 An aerial photograph of the site in the early 1950s shows the location of the terraces. Battye Library Pictorial collection BA1244/5. Online image 006184D.

39 Stevens, Laraine op cit. p. 2.

40 Stevens, Laraine op cit. p. 2

41 *The Western Mail* 19 January 1939 p. 33.

42 Ibid.

43 Noel Stokes, op. cit. p. 24.

44 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentleman's Agreements* p. 212.

45 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentleman's Agreements* p. 213.

46 Fyfe, Christopher *Gentleman's Agreements* p. 215.

47 It has not been established if the Elders wool Stores were used by the military during World War Two.

The demand for storage explains the decision by Goldsbrough Mort in 1943 to construct another single storey wool store on lots 254 and 312 which traversed between Elder Place and Cantonment Street south of the Merchandise Store. It was constructed of wood and iron and built by Hawkins and Son.⁴⁸ This store was located immediately north of the three storey 1927 wool store and south of the skin drying store. This building is no longer extant.

By mid 1945, 378 stores were completed for the CWC around Australia, Fremantle had twenty three and one at Albany.⁴⁹ The standard store built around Australia was six metres high of weatherboard with roofs usually of asbestos. The floors were either cement or timber, depending on availability.⁵⁰

In the post war period the wool industry experience a huge boom, as did much of economy in Australia in the 1950s. The reason for this boom was the remarkable growth in the primary sector particularly in wool production and value.⁵¹ Record prices were experienced every year until 1951/52 and those high prices have never been repeated.⁵² The collapse of this boom was a product of the Korean War and the purchase of the Australian wool clip by the United States of America.

Nationally the wool business still saw Dalgety's as the top wool broker followed by Goldsbrough Mort, then Elder Smith.⁵³

In 1950, during the boom period of the wool industry, architects Hobbs Winning and Leighton approached the Fremantle Council with a proposal to build 3 Wiles huts on lots 257 and portion of lot 875. These huts were located on the corner of Elder Place and Parry Streets. They were to be lined externally with corrugated iron until the building situation permitted the external walls to be constructed in brick. These plans went ahead although it is not recorded when the corrugated iron was removed.⁵⁴ The huts are no longer extant.

In 1950, another application was received from architects Hobbs Winning and Leighton for the construction of a three-storey wool store facing Elder Place. This structure valued at £74,468 involved the demolition of most of the 1943 wood and iron store and all the 1936 skin drying store. The new store covered most of the area in the middle of the site adjoining the 1927 store on the corner of Cantonment and Goldsbrough Street. A portion of the 1943 wood/iron store on the Cantonment Street frontage was to remain.⁵⁵

Additions to the 1950 three-storey building were completed in 1952. They consisted of a three storey addition carrying the building through to

48 Stevens, Laraine op cit. p. 2

49 Fyfe, *Gentlemen's Agreements* p. 231.

50 Fyfe, *Gentlemen's Agreement* p. 217-218.

51 Ghosh, R.N. 'Economic Development and Population Growth in Western Australia since 1945' in *A New History of Western Australia* C.T. Stannage (ed) UWA Press, 1981, p. 271.

52 Hewat, op. cit. p. 36.

53 Hewat, op. cit. p. 36.

54 Steven, Lorraine, op. cit. p. 3.

55 Steven, Lorraine, op. cit. p. 3. The remnant from the 1943 wood and iron building was later demolished in 1952 additions. Another warehouse and store facing Beach Street were approved in late 1950 but it has not been established where this building was located. . It could be on land that is not part of this assessment. However its approval indicates the frenzy of building activity around the wool stores by Goldsbrough Mort.

Cantonment Street and resulted in the demolition of the remaining portion of the 1943 wood and iron wool store.

In 1952, the site consisted of the original three-storey store built in 1927 on the southern portion of the site. The middle of the site and a portion extending along Beach Street, was occupied by a three-storey wool store built mostly in 1950 with additions in 1952. On the remainder of the site, eight terrace houses were still present facing Cantonment Street and a stone residence was still in evidence on the corner of Beach and Parry Streets. An aerial photograph taken in the early 1950s shows that the rest of the site is occupied by single storey industrial buildings facing Beach Street. These were probably the former Comet Store, Merchandise Store and Wiles Huts. All these buildings were demolished in the development of the site in 1967.⁵⁶

In 1956, the eight brick terraces on Cantonment Street were demolished and further additions to the 1950/52 wool stores in the middle of the site were completed by builder R. T. Murphy Ltd. Temporary corrugated iron walls were placed along the northern elevation to allow for future extensions. At the same time the stone residence on the corner of Parry and Beach Streets was demolished. The resulting empty space was used as a parking area and was subsequently developed in 1967.

In 1956, an amenity block was added to the existing lunchroom and locker rooms in the three-storey 1927 wool store on the southern end of the site.⁵⁷

In 1962, Goldsbrough Mort merged with Elder Smith to form Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort, or Elders GM.⁵⁸ Prior to this date the two companies had operated two wool store complexes on opposite sides of Goldsbrough Street. The impact of this merger in regard to the wool stores was that in 1967 an additional four storey wool store was built on lots 255-257. This building filled the northern end of the site. At the same time an additional floor was added to the 1927 building on the south, and the buildings in the centre of the complex built between 1950 and 1956. The technique used to add the additional floors was as follows;

Special steel supports were placed around the solid jarrah posts, which were then cut at ground level. Then with over 70 hydraulic jacks, co-ordinated to self-level, the whole roof section was raised so extra floor space could be built underneath.⁵⁹

The result of this rebuilding was a uniform four-storey structure with the same roof line but with walls of a different age and design. A covered walkway completed in 1969 joined the two wool stores across Goldsbrough Street. An aerial photograph of the site sometime after 1969 shows *Elders Wool Stores* as being a monolithic structure filling all the available land on the site.⁶⁰ At the completion of the rebuilding the site consisted of the 1927 store facing Goldsbrough Street, which had a floor added in 1967/9. Adjoining it to the north was the 'L' shaped store built in 1950/2, which had additions in 1956 that faced Cantonment Street and created a roughly rectangular store. This store also had a new floor added to it in 1967/9. The remainder of the site was the four-storey store built in 1967/9.

⁵⁶ Goldsbrough Mort Wool Stores 195?, Battye Library Pictorial Collection BA1244/5. Online image 006184D

⁵⁷ Steven, Lorraine, op. cit. p. 4.

⁵⁸ Hewat, Tim op. cit. p. 40.

⁵⁹ Whitehead, Kylie 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' in *Fremantle Focus* undated article in Fremantle Library Local History Collection.

⁶⁰ Aerial photograph showing the Elders-GM Wool Store Complex, held in the Fremantle Library Local History Collection.

Few modifications were made to *Elders Wool Stores* after 1969, apart from the construction of a covered loading bay on the Cantonment Street side of the store.⁶¹

The workplace at *Elders Wool Stores* during the 1960s was a male dominated one. There were a few women who worked in the office but the stores were operated by a large workforce of men. During sale weeks, which occurred at regular intervals after the spring shearings the wool stores would be frantically busy. The former operator of the switchboard at *Elders Wool Stores* recalls that the incoming calls to the office during sale weeks were equivalent to the Fremantle Hospital switchboard. The staff of casuals would also increase with the constant shifting of the bales up and down the floors to the show floor on the top floor. The bales were moved by barrows and later by tow motors. After the inspections by the buyers the bales were restacked and up to 40 sewers would come in to sew the bales.⁶²

Not long after the completion of the unified wool store on the site, methods of wool sales changed. It had been the practice, as described earlier, to exhibit the bales for buyers. In the 1970s the Australian Wool Testing Authority developed new methods of measurement of wool. By this method, a long tube pierced the bale taking a core sample, which is sent to the laboratory for testing. Another sample is taken for display to the buyers with the result that approximately 8 kilograms of wool is needed to display 40 to 50 bales, reducing the display area dramatically.⁶³ Consequently, as described by one former worker in the wool industry in Fremantle;

the broking houses have moved out of the town and left the large stores that were adjacent to the wharf. It means that, in most cases, the show floor is on the ground floor instead of on the top floor, which is a saving in time and energy naturally, to get up and down stairs and in lifts and things. These represent to my way of thinking, the most significant changes of showing and selling wool.⁶⁴

By the early 1980s *Elders Wool Stores* were only being used to 50% capacity and the possibility of selling the site was under discussion.⁶⁵ Elders now had a large woolstore in Spearwood which had a vast open space that could stack the bales higher through the use of forklifts. This is the current site of Elders woolstore in Western Australia.

In 1985 all the lots were transferred to Wadhurst Pty. Ltd.⁶⁶ In 1987, *Elders Wool Stores* was used as the venue for the Americas Cup Ball, one of the functions held during the defence of the Americas Cup in Fremantle.⁶⁷ The America's cup is a match racing Yacht race that had been dominated by USA until Australia's successful challenge in 1983. Fremantle was the site of the defence of the America's cup in 1987 and the cup defence was a cue for the rejuvenation of older parts of Fremantle.

In 1988, all the lots were transferred to Heytsbury Holdings and three years later they were transferred to the State Housing Commission.⁶⁸ In 1995, the then owner, Goodland Holdings Pty Ltd, purchased *Elders Wool Stores*. From

61 Stevens, Laraine op. cit. p. 5.

62 OH 2616 Margaret Matthews interviewed by Maxine Tonkin, Battye Library

63 Whitehead, Kylie op. cit

64 OH 2621, Fred Bullock, interviewed by Maxine Tonkin, Battye library.

65 Whitehead, Kylie op. cit

66 Certificates of Title, 417/7A, 1694/387, 417/13A, 417/10A.

67 Stevens, Laraine op. cit. p. 6.

68 Certificates of Title, 417/7A, 1694/387, 417/13A, 417/10A.

1988 to 1996 several proposals for development were put forward to the City of Fremantle. These included shopping centres, a trade centre and a mixed use residential and retail development. Demolition of *Elders Wool Stores* was requested for most of these developments.⁶⁹ Community comment on these various proposals has reflected the important role of *Elders Wool Stores* in Fremantle's identity as a port town.

Goodland Holdings Pty Ltd put forward a proposal for the site in stages. Stage A of the project was approved and the 1967 wool store on then lots 255-257, the most northern portion of the site, has been demolished. Two multi storey buildings for office and residential use have been constructed on the corner bound by Elder Place, Cantonment Street and Parry Street.

In June 1998, Goodland Holdings Pty Ltd sold the site to Camellia Holdings. The titles for lots 239, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 312, & 875, portion 238 and portion 252, were amalgamated onto one Certificate of Title in the name of Camellia Holdings.⁷⁰ In January 2001, this amalgamation was subdivided to form lots 201 and 202⁷¹ and Lot 202 was transferred to MMAGS Holdings Pty Ltd.

Lot 201, on which the 1927 warehouse is located, remains in the ownership of Camellia Holdings in March 2003.⁷²

In March 2003, almost all the apartments and offices comprising Stage One of the development of Lot 202 had been sold prior to completion of the buildings.⁷³ The remainder of the site is still subject to approval from the City of Fremantle. At present plans have been approved by the city of Fremantle to maintain the 1927 wool store on the corner of Goldsbrough and Cantonment Streets and refurbish it as either a hotel or apartments.⁷⁴

In March 2003, the 1927 wool store is being used as the venue for marketing the project and the remainder of the building is unused and subject to vandalism.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Elders Wool Stores is a massive, four-storey, brick warehouse building. The building stands in a block bounded by Goldsbrough Street, Elder Place, Parry Street and Cantonment Street. *Elders Wool Stores* consists of the southern part (constructed in 1927) of a complex of multistorey brick buildings that formerly filled the entire block, and faces Goldsbrough Street. A single fourth floor was added in 1967 to both *Elders Wool Stores* and the adjacent 1950-52 building which occupies the middle of the block. The street-block is roughly rectangular with a slight change of direction in Elder Place, about midway along the block. Since the building follows the boundary line this change of direction is a feature of the Elder Place façade.

Elder Place edges the railway reserve that runs beside Victoria Quay. Cantonment Street runs between the *Elders Wool Stores* building and the reserve containing the former Princess May Girls' School and the former Fremantle Boys' School. The block to the south of Goldsbrough Street

69 File in Fremantle Library, Local History Collection.

70 Certificate of Title, 2208/337.

71 Certificates of Title, 2208/338, 2208/339.

72 Certificate of Title, 2208/338.

73 www.vqapts.com.au website for the Victoria Quay Apartments.

74 Information from selling agents, Ray Fuller and from the City of Fremantle planning department.

contains the Woolstores Shopping Centre which includes the carpark which faces Goldsbrough Street.

The block used to be fully occupied by a large complex of four-storey brick warehouses known collectively as Elders Wool Stores. The south end of the site contains the original 1927 building identified as *Elders Wool Stores* for the purposes of this assessment. The central section of the block was built in two stages in 1950-52. The building at the north end of the site was built in the 1960s but it has been demolished recently and has been replaced by a residential development. This development is now complete.

Until the recent demolition of the 1960s building the site was completely occupied by the former Elders Wool Stores buildings. The buildings constructed in the three phases of development abutted one another so that, in effect, a continuous brick wall, equivalent to five storeys high enclosed the site. However, although the buildings abutted each other, they did not share a common aesthetic style. Instead each structure displayed the aesthetic characteristics of warehouse buildings of the particular era in which they were constructed.

The height of the 1927 building has been increased to match the height of the 1950-52 building.

The buildings formed part of a significant precinct of large warehouse buildings that served the harbour. The three buildings which contributed most significantly to the precinctual qualities of the area were the wool stores, which occupied the site of this assessment; the former wool stores now known as the Fort Knox Buildings and the wool stores that used to stand on the site now occupied by the 'Woolstores Shopping Centre'. The height and mass of these building established a streetscape with strong precinctual qualities and clearly demonstrated the strong links between the wool industry and the harbour. The strong precinctual qualities remain intact to a degree but have been severely undermined by the demolition of the building where the 'Woolstores Shopping Centre' now stands and by the inappropriate scale of the shopping centre building.

Cantonment Street Façade

The east façade of *Elders Wool Stores* was designed in a manner that demonstrates some affinity with the earlier Federation Warehouse Style, particularly in the use of brickwork to provide the building with a bold utilitarian character appropriate to its harbour side setting. However, typically, where the Federation Warehouse Style was influenced by Romanesque architecture, the later 1927 wool store displays a robust form of classicism through its trabeated construction and simplified rendered detailing.

The building is of loadbearing face brickwork. The façade consists of eight equal bays formed by piers that project about 225 mm from the main face of the building.

The wall at ground floor is thicker than the floors above. This thickening serves as the base for the piers that rise through the first and second floor levels to support the 2400 mm high entablature. A blind attic of face brick work sits above the entablature and is a later addition. The wall is capped by a rendered flush coping about 600 mm high.

Each bay contains windows that are about 2200 mm wide. A typical bay is composed with a single large window in the ground floor level base. The opening for the window has a deep splayed sill to accommodate the

additional thickness of the wall. The opening has a rendered concrete lintel. The windows are steel framed, multi paned and are a combination of fixed and centrally pivoted sashes.

The steeply splayed rendered capping of the thicker ground floor walling combines with the sills of the windows at first floor level. The first floor window openings are set centrally in the walling between the piers. The window openings are about 2000 mm high and have a rendered concrete lintel that forms part of a band of render that runs through the panels of brickwork across the facade.

Each bay of the second floor contains three windows grouped one above the other. The lowest of these is at floor level and is about 600 mm high. The openings have rendered lintels and brick sills. The lowest window opening contains three sashes that are now filled with fibrous cement sheeting. About 700 mm above this lower window is a large window opening with a concrete lintel and brick sill that matches the size of the window on the first floor. The opening contains a multi-paned metal-framed window and comprises three centrally pivoted sashes. The top window of the group sits in a 450 mm high opening formed by the lintel of the window below and a concrete lintel at the head that forms part of a rendered band that runs through the panels of brick work across the façade.

The variations to the typical bays are at ground level where two of the bays contain loading docks. The openings for the loading docks are about one and a half storeys high and have rendered concrete lintels. The openings are filled by single roller shutters.

At ground floor level one of the bays contains a tripartite window with rendered surrounds arranged with a segmental pediment above the central window.

The walls of the building are constructed of face brickwork of red coloured bricks laid in an English bond. The rendered enrichment has a smooth cream painted finish.

At ground level a raised platform about 450 mm wide runs for the length of the façade. A cantilever canopy of steel and corrugated iron construction extends about three metres over a roadway to the rear edge of the pavement. The canopy is not original.

Goldsborough Street Façade

The Goldsborough Street Façade of the building is similar to, but less elaborate, than either the Cantonment Street and Elder Place facades. In the design of this façade there has been no attempt to include classical elements in the detailing.

The facade is divided by piers into five bays of varying widths. The piers project about 450 mm from the face of the building and rise to the parapet level where they end in sloping rendered tops.

The windows are arranged similarly to those of the other facades. However here they are two-thirds the width of the others.

The façade contains three loading docks, each one-storey high. Two contain roller shutters while the third is now faced with metal sheeting.

Towards the centre of the facade there is a large opening which rises through the first, second, and third floor levels of the building. The reveals of the opening are rendered. The opening used to contain the covered bridge that connected this building to the wool store that used to stand on the south side

of the street. The bridge has been removed and the opening is now filled with corrugated iron sheeting.

Elder Place Façade

The Elder Place Façade (south) is almost a match of the Cantonment Street façade. The façade consists of eight equal bays formed by piers that project about 225 mm from the main face of the building. The piers sit on a base formed by the thicker ground floor level and support an entablature at the third floor level.

The main difference between the two facades is that the Elder Place facade contains three loading docks, all one-storey high.

At ground level a raised platform about 3 metres wide runs for the length of the façade. The platform is sheltered by a suspended canopy of steel and corrugated iron construction.

Interiors

The interior of the *Elders Wool Stores* building combines with the adjacent 1950-52 building to provide four floors (including ground floor) of largely uninterrupted warehouse space.

At ground and first floor levels the north wall of the 1927 phase of the building remains, complete with windows. The former large openings in the wall, presumably serving the loading bays, provide the connections to the 1950-52 building. On the upper two floors the transverse wall has been removed forming a single space.

The north end of the 1950-52 building is now open as result of the recent demolition of the 1960s building.

The ground floor of the building is mostly set at one level. There are, however, minor adaptations at the east and south sides to cope with the fall in level across the site. A raised platform about 12 metres deep and one metre high runs along the east side of the building. A wide set of timber steps connecting the platform to the general floor area to the loading docks on the south side is set within the building. The steps are about 500-900 mm below the general floor level. The platform of the external loading docks on the west side of the building coincides with the general floor level.

Part of the platform on the east side of the building is set aside for partitioned rooms. This area has been severely vandalised and this makes it difficult to ascertain the specific uses to which the rooms were put; it is assumed, however, that they served as offices. Some of the partitions are lined with v-jointed timber boarding. Most seem to be of 'masonite' to dado level with glazing above, some of which was of adjustable glass louvres. The ceilings in the area are of fibrous plaster sheeting with batten cover-strips. The perimeter walls of the building are plastered. The floor tiling is semi rigid, composite type. An open well staircase with solid balustrading connects the office area to the upper floors. Two further sets of timber stairs lead from the corridor space beside the offices.

The toilets for the 1927 building are located in a block in the attached 1950-52 building, against the transverse wall, to the west of the raised platform. This internal toilet block is repeated on each floor and is built against a lightwell that rises as a shaft within the building. There are therefore no toilets provided in the 1927 section.

The main floor area of the ground level has a concrete floor slab. The internal faces of the perimeter walls are of painted brickwork. The building has a structural grid of 6 x 6 metres.

The floor above is supported on 310 mm square, chamfered, jarrah columns. The soffit of the first floor is almost completely unlined. The structure of the first floor consists of 310 mm x 310 mm jarrah beams running in a north south direction, supporting 240x 70 mm jarrah joists at 300 mm centres, with one row of herring bone strutting per bay. Steel brackets project from the heads of the columns to assist in supporting the beams.

This structure is consistent throughout the floor.

The first floor is all one level and has timber flooring throughout. The layout is similar to that of the ground floor being divided in two by the transverse wall and having a series of lightweight partitioned rooms arranged along the east wall of the building. Again the partitioning is in a very poor condition but it is possible to see that, in part, the area used to serve as the kitchen and canteen.

There are three locations at this level where areas of flooring (structure and boards) measuring about 12x12 metres have been removed.

On all the upper levels there is a large opening near the mid-point of the south wall that used to lead to the bridge that spanned Goldsborough Street. The ramped approaches to these openings remain in place.

All levels are served by two sets of timber stairs. The stairs are within the open space, not within enclosed shafts. One staircase is on the east side of the building beside the lightwell and the other is on the west side in the corner formed by the west and transverse walls. Both staircases vary through their height and have flights of both closed and open treads with open post and rail balustrading. In addition to these stairs there are a number of very steep timber stairs (almost ladders), with open treads and balustrades, that connect the three upper floors, but do not rise continuously through the floors.

There are two bale hoists serving all floors of the building. They are distributed at each end of the floors. They appear to be intact but it is not known whether they are in working order.

The second floor is all one level, with timber flooring throughout. It is a single undivided space apart from the toilet block beside the light well and the area of partitioned-off offices beside it on the east wall. There is no transverse wall.

The structural grid at the second floor level remains at 6x6 metres. The primary structure, however, is of steel with universal columns and beams supporting the timber floor joist of the third floor.

The third floor is similar to the second floor in that it is a single undivided space apart from the toilet block beside the light well and the area of partitioned-off offices beside it on the east wall. There is no transverse wall.

The third floor has no windows apart from low level vent windows around the perimeter of the 1927 part of the building. The floor is lit by bands of fixed, steel framed, glazing in a series of saw-tooth trusses. These run slightly obliquely across the space. The underside of the roof is lined. The trusses are supported on steel columns that are on a 24 x 12 metre structural grid. An area of flooring, measuring about 18x20 metres, is missing from the north half of this floor level.

Elders Wool Stores was built in phases. The third floor of the 1927 building was added in 1967. When completed in the 1960s, the complex of wool store

buildings fully occupied the block bounded by Goldsbrough Street, Elder Place, Parry Street and Cantonment Street. The 1960s building to the north has been demolished, and the 1950-52 building in the centre is not included in this assessment.

Elders Wool Stores appears to be in a sound condition. It is noticeable, however, that the west façade is in a much poorer condition than the others of the building. A number of the concrete lintels above the windows are spalling and the reinforcement is exposed. Also, the internal partitioning has been badly vandalised in this part of the building, most of the glass in the external windows has been broken and the steel framed windows are in a poor condition.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Information from the HCWA database details several warehouses on the database. There are no direct comparisons to wool stores in Fremantle, Geraldton or Albany built during the inter-war period. There is only one warehouse on the database from Albany, Moir's Warehouse (27), which was built earlier. Geraldton has six warehouses on the database (1057, 13200, 13355, 1057, 13463, 13292) these places were all built earlier than *Elders Wool Stores*.

The stores built during World War One and World War Two in Fremantle to accommodate the appraisal scheme are different in style and materials. Most have probably been dismantled. Wool stores were constructed c1915-1916 in North Fremantle in land between the railway and the ocean. They were long wooden structures with corrugated iron roofs, and remained until after World War Two.⁷⁵

Photographic evidence is available of a metal clad, single storey wool store in Albany that was apparently relocated from Fremantle. It has a saw tooth roof and timber supports internally but is not similar in any other respects. The date of construction is also unknown.

A multi storey wool store is currently extant in Albany to a similar design as the 1950-52 or 1967 building on the site of *Elders Wool Stores*. This structure is steel framed with a timber floor, asbestos cement cladding and the ground floor is brick.

Elders Wool Stores shares the aesthetic characteristics of other wool stores built in Fremantle in the first half of the twentieth century. These include the former wool stores now known as the Fort Knox Buildings and the wool stores that used to stand on the site now occupied by the 'Woolstores Shopping Centre'. The height and mass of these building established a streetscape with strong precinctual qualities and clearly demonstrated the strong links between the wool industry and the harbour.

Modern wool stores such as those erected by Elders Smith in the 1970s in Phoenix Road, Bibra Lake are characterised as large single storey shed. The storey height is the equivalent of two floors of the *Elders Wool Stores*. The building has a concrete floor slab and was designed for the use of fork lift trucks.

13.4 REFERENCES

⁷⁵ Craig Burton, *North Fremantle Heritage Study*, prepared for Fremantle City Council June 1994, p.31.

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

It possible that further information is available from the records of Elders IXL regarding the range of activities engaged in at *Elders Wool Stores*, and specifically whether the buildings were used for the military forces during World War Two.

Further research my also identify how long auctions continued to take place in the building.