STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

REFURBISHMENT OF FORMER MASONIC HALL

81 Lakeview Street Speers Point NSW

Lot 14 Section B DP 4063



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Prepared by EJE Heritage February 2015 10523-SOHI-002 Rev E

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1. INTRODUCTION

EJE Heritage has been requested to undertake a Heritage Assessment of the site and building known as the former Speers Point Masonic Hall, also known as the former Lakeview Street Theatre, Lakeview Street, Speers Point NSW 2284.

The initial section of the report places the site within an historical context, and examines the physical condition and context of the current site and building. With the history, physical condition and context understood, a heritage assessment of the site can be completed using the NSW Heritage Division guidelines encompassing the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter 2013* heritage values: historical significance; aesthetic significance; scientific significance; and social significance. The heritage significance of the site and cottage, if any, is then ranked in accordance with Heritage Division guidelines.

The Statement of Heritage Impact that follows examines the proposed works, identifying any impacts which the proposal might have on the significance of the heritage items, and any measures which should be taken to mitigate any negative impacts, if these are in fact identified.

This Statement of Heritage Impact was prepared by EJE Heritage. The project team consisted of:

- Barney Collins (Director), Conservation Architect; and
- David Campbell, Heritage Consultant.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

This report has been undertaken in accordance with the NSW Heritage Office publications, Assessing Heritage Significance and Statements of Heritage Impact, together with the Australia ICOMOS, The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013.¹

1.2 HERITAGE LISTINGS

The site and building <u>are</u> listed as a Heritage Item in *Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan 2014* ('LEP 2014), Schedule 5, Part 1 (Item 43: Lakeview Street Theatre). The site and building are in proximity to LEP 2014 Heritage Items as follows:

Speers Point	Lakeview Street Theatre	81 Lakeview Street	Lot 14, Section B, DP 4063	Local 143
Speers Point	House	10 Council Street	Lot 1, DP 518527	Local 142
Speers Point	House	8 Council Street	Lot 1, DP 521920	Local 141
Speers Point	House	37 Alley Street	Lot 1, DP 587774	Local 140
Speers Point	House	18 Alley Street	Lot 11, DP 525378	Local 139
Speers Point	House	41 Albert Street	Lot 1, DP 962726	Local 138

¹ Burwood: Australia ICOMOS, 2013.



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Speers Point	House	141 Main Road	Lot 1, DP 368588	Local 144
Speers Point	Former Lake Macquarie Council Chambers	143 Main Road	Lot 13, DP 810700	Local 145
Speers Point	Speers Point Garage	155 Main Road	Lot 12, Section A, DP 4063	Local 146
Speers Point	House "Shangrila"	157 Main Road	Lot 11, Section A, DP 4063	Local 147
Speers Point	House	159 Main Road	Lot 10, Section A, DP 4063	Local 148
Speers Point	Speers Point Park (including shelter shed and Minenwerfer (German mortar)	15 Park Road	Lot 1, DP 998238	Local 149
Speers Point	Cottage	64 Speers Street	Lot 1, DP 348879	Local 150
Speers Point	House	66 Speers Street	Lot 3, DP 562487	Local 151
Speers Point	House	74 Speers Street	Part Lot 1, DP 956798	Local 152
Speers Point	House	214 The Esplanade	Lot 1, DP 108865	Local 153



1.3 SITE IDENTIFICATION

The site is identified as the Former Masonic Hall, 81 Lakeview Street, Speers Point NSW 2284. The subject site is located within the Lake Macquarie Local Government Area. The real property description is: Lot 14, Section B, DP 4063. The site is zoned B1: Neighbourhood Centre (Land Zoning Map - Sheet LZN_009A).



Figure 1. Location Image, showing streets. Nearmap (by licence)



Figure 2. Location Image; the subject land and dwelling are outlined in red. *Nearmap* (by licence)



Figure 3. A closer view; subject land and dwelling are outlined in red. *Nearmap* (by licence)

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gratitude is expressed to Mr Neil Cochran, a volunteer at the library of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, who kindly supplied copies of an historic photograph of the former Speers Point Masonic Hall, and also copies of the Silver Anniversary and Golden Anniversary notices of Lodge Speers Point No. 538.

1.5 CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

EJE is not qualified to offer structural opinions. This report is not intended to convey any opinion as to the structural adequacy or integrity of the structure, nor should it in any way be construed as so doing. Similarly, the author's observations are limited to the fabric only: he does not comment on the capacity, adequacy, or statutory compliance of any building services.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

Masonic Halls² were once to be found in most towns and suburbs of New South Wales. The building in question, the former Speers Point Masonic Hall, is emblematic of the progress and decline in Australia of non-Denominational and Denominational fraternal movements during the Twentieth Century. Non-Denominational societies included the Freemasons; the Oddfellows; the Druids; the Foresters; the Free Gardeners; and the Buffaloes. Denominational societies included the Knights of the Southern Cross, the Loyal Orange Institution and the Order of the Burning Bush. The majority of these organisations continue to exist. The following discussion is not intended to explore the history and societal influences of Freemasonry, either in a State or local connection;³ it does, however, attempt to place the former Masonic Hall in its local context.

2.2 Background

The following information, describing the nature of Freemasonry has been promulgated by the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (UGL NSW & ACT), the jurisdiction officially responsible for Freemasonry in NSW and the ACT:

Freemasonry is a large fraternal organisation that promotes moral and personal development amongst its members. Its core values include caring for others, helping those in need and acting with honesty and integrity.

Freemasonry offers a unique and rewarding experience to men from all walks of life, regardless or race, religion or social status.⁴

UGL NSW & ACT states that

The actual origins of Freemasonry have been lost in time, but it is known that it arose from the guilds of stonemasons which constructed Europe's castles and cathedrals during the Middle Ages. These craftsmen were in possession of highly prized skills in mathematics and architecture, which they in turn passed on to apprentices who had been accepted as being worthy of being taught the secrets of their trade. These trainees advanced, depending on their proficiency, to become Master Masons.

In England in, 1717 four Lodges decided to create a formal organisation by forming the first Grand Lodge. Freemasonry then spread across Europe and to other countries with amazing speed.

In Australia, Freemasonry can be traced to the First Fleet's arrival in 1788. The United Grand Lodge of New South Wales was officially formed in 1888, and later became responsible for Freemasonry in the Australian Capital Territory.⁵

A Masonic scholar, much interested in the history of Freemasonry in Australia, writes that

http://www.masons.org.au/discover-masonry/what-is-freemasonry/20-a-brief-history.html



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² Also called Masonic Temples; they are now known in NSW and the ACT as Masonic Centres, possibly to emphasise that Masonry, while concerned with spirituality, is not a religion, nor a sectarian movement.

³ An introduction to the history of Masonry in NSW is provided by Peter Lazar, *It's No Secret: Real Men Wear Aprons*. Sydney: Museum of Freemasonry Foundation, 2009.

⁴ http://www.masons.org.au/discover-masonry/6-what-is-freemasonry.html

Despite the romantic claims of ancient origins, Freemasonry seems to have emerged in the late Middle Ages (probably in Scotland) in a Bible-based society where most people were brought up on Biblical stories, upper-class English idiom echoed the King James translation of the Bible, and the potential of man's mind and reason was increasingly appreciated. The Masonic fraternity (often known as "the craft") calls itself "a peculiar system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols". It requires from its members a belief in God, and the Bible (which it calls "the Volume of the Sacred Law") is on display at its meetings, but the movement is neither a religion nor a substitute for one. It has no theological doctrines and no denominational modes of worship.

Its ethical principles are based on the imagery of building – constructing both a quality society and an ethical personality. These principles are enshrined in elaborate Masonic rituals that are a form of didactic play-acting. The founders of the movement mostly based their ritual on the Old Testament...⁶

2.3 The Influence of Freemasonry in Australia

Freemasonry, like other fraternal movements, was until the 1950s- 1960s an integral part of the social order in Australian towns and cities. Bob James, a pioneering historian of the role of fraternal societies in Australian society, and particularly of their relationship with the Labour Movement, 7 notes that

Fraternal societies were the organisational form in which a potent mix of religion, mutual aid and local autonomy came to and spread to every part of this continent. But as the three rose together in prominence, so did they fall together.⁸

He draws attention to the claim of Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton that

many Australians had hidden or covert identities hard to guess from their public personas. Many men joined the Freemasons, a body whose...influence in Australian society has been grossly neglected by historians...Lodges, such as the Druids, the Rechabites, the Buffaloses and the Oddfellows, provided support systems of considerable strength and durability. Catholics had their own religious orders and lay sodalities. (Their) diversity and importance for...Australian political and cultural life is little studied...⁹

James points out that 'it has been argued, wrongly, that Freemasonry, the first three Degrees of which are often called 'The Craft', is or has been only for social elites'. ¹⁰ It was, in fact, by its very nature a social leveller. ¹¹ James draws attention to the fact that, despite a Papal encyclical of 1738 prohibiting members of the Roman Catholic Church from becoming Freemasons, this has, in times both past and present, been by no means entirely effective. ¹²

¹² Bob James, *Mateship*, *Fraternalism and Secret Societies*, p. 18.



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⁶ Raymond Apple, 'Masonic Ministers in Australia', in Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol. XX, Part 4, June 2012.

⁷ See for example Bob James, 'Secret Societies and the Labour Movement: Display Catalogue and Essays by Dr Bob James, Newcastle, for the 6th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Wollongong, October 1999' (October 1999).

⁸ Bob James, *They call each other Brother: the Strange, Slow Death of Mateship in Australia, 1788-2010 : the Authentic History.* Tighes Hill: the Author, 2010, p.30.

⁹ Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton, *Creating Australia*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1997, p. 3, cited in Bob James, *They call each other Brother*, p. 15.

¹⁰ Bob James, *Mateship, Fraternalism and Secret Societies in Australia, 1788 – 2008: an Introduction.* Newcastle: Bob James, p. 20.

¹¹ See generally Peter Lazar, *It's No Secret*.

Attitudes to race and religion in Masonry have reflected the cultures of those countries in which British Freemasonry has taken root; a broad statement might be made to the effect that neither of these accidents of birth are in any way relevant to the Craft, which on the contrary aims to conciliate true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance. The following is provided by way of example. In the 1880s, in Lahore, then part of British India,¹³ poet and author Rudyard Kipling was initiated into Freemasonry;¹⁴ his Lodge consisted of members of several different races, faiths and callings, who despite the external advantages of rank and fortune, were equal when met together. Kipling remembered his Lodge in these terms:

Outside - "Sergeant! Sir! Salute! Salaam! Inside - "Brother", an' it doesn't do no 'arm. We met upon the Level an' we parted on the Square, An' I was Junior Deacon in my Mother-Lodge out there!

In an New South Wales context, James notes that, far from being an exclusive movement, Freemasonry in 1930 there were 71,095 subscribing Freemasons; in 1958 there were 135,126, although by 1988 numbers had fallen to 53,278. In Such figures suggest a very large, but unquantifiable, number of men who had 'called-off' at their own behest, or been suspended from membership for non-payment of dues. It is claimed that, at one time, more than 9% of the Australian male population were Freemasons. In recent decades, there is said to have been a falling-off in membership, and many Masonic Lodges have surrendered their charters, with a large number of Masonic Centres having been sold or otherwise closed.

2.4 Freemasonry in Lake Macquarie

Freemasonry, like other fraternal organisations, had an early beginning in the Hunter Valley. While no general history of Masonry in the Hunter District is known to exist, several brief histories of individual chartered Lodges, into which Freemasonry is organised at the local level, have been published. These, together with contemporary newspaper reports, suggest that a chartered Lodges existed at Maitland from 1840, and that Lodges were afterwards chartered at Newcastle and in the Hunter Valley towns; those of Lake Macquarie, an area long comparatively isolated from other centres, appear to have been formed mostly in the Twentieth Century. Lodge Lake Macquarie, No. 243 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of NSW, appears to have been formed in 1905.¹⁹

2.5 Construction of Speers Point Masonic Hall

Residents of Speers Point and Boolaroo had long been involved in such Masonic and other fraternal organisations as were accessible by horse or steam tram, and later by motor car, attempts around the turn of the Twentieth Century to establish a local Masonic Lodge had failed

¹⁹ Dulcie Hartley, *Frith's: A Century of Service 1897 – 1997*. Pymble: Robert Hamilton Hill, 1997, p. 57



¹³ It is now in Pakistan.

¹⁴ Shamsul Islam, *Kipling's Law: A Study of his Philosophy of Life*. London: Macmillan, 1975, pp. 42-43.

¹⁵ Rudyard Kipling, 'The Mother-Lodge' (1896).

¹⁶ Bob James, *Mateship, Fraternalism and Secret Societies*, p. 18

¹⁷ Raymond Apple, 'Masonic Ministers in Australia'.

Juan Carlos Alverez, 'How Masonry in New South Wales will enter into the Third Millenium, with a Brief History of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales' (1996).

 $[\]underline{\text{http://www.masoniclibrary.org.au/index.php?option=com_content\&view=article\&id=96:brief-history-of-the-united-grand-lodge-of-new-south-wales\&catid=23:lecture\&Itemid=30}$

for want of suitable accommodation.²⁰ In July 1924, it was reported that a contract for the building of a Masonic Hall on a 'central portion of Fourth Street' (now known as Lakeview Street), had been let to D. Campbell, a builder.²¹ The furniture of the lodge, including working tools and tracing boards, as well as the organ and workaday items such as chairs and floor coverings, were donated by the brethren.²² The building itself, owned by Lodge Lake Macquarie, and located near the original Lake Macquarie Council Chambers, was designed without charge by Brother Arthur Herbert Lowry, the Shire Engineer. The laying of the foundation stone, undertaken by Right Worshipful Brother Dugald Dobie, a very well-known Newcastle identity, who had spent much of his life in expanding Masonry in the Hunter Valley,²³ took place on 6 September 1924.²⁴ Lodge Dugald Dobie No. 563, which met at Hamilton, was named after him.

The strength of the connections between the Shire Council and Freemasonry are illustrated by the fact that the opening procession, in full regalia, for the laying of the stone began at the nearby Lake Macquarie Shire Council Chambers.²⁵ This distinctive building, also designed by Arthur Lowry, was opened in 1915.26 While the Council Chambers, now demolished, exemplified the Federation Arts and Crafts style of architecture, the Masonic Hall was a comparatively late example of a simplified Federation Anglo-Dutch style. Its execution in red brick, tuck-pointed on the facade, with a corrugated asbestos roof with prominent roof ventilators and flagpole, afforded a restrained, though not utilitarian, presence. Its facade incorporates symbology of Freemasonry as 'a peculiar [distinctive] system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols', as well in the use of triads, emblematic of the three Masonic pillars of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. Further symbology is exhibited in elements such as the corbels; string courses; entry and window apertures; bays; and pebble-cast. The number of dentils below the parapet is also significant on several levels.²⁷ not least because it might be taken as referring to the fifteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a letter rich in meaning in both Divine and secular terms.²⁸ The northern, western and southern elevations were, by contrast, undistinguished and purely functional, with plain pilasters dividing the face brick into a number of bays.

The Masonic Hall featured two main spaces, one housing the Lodge Room itself, and the other the after-meeting festive board (supper) space known as the South. Access to the Lodge Room was through the South, itself reached by a central entry on the eastern elevation. Masonic meetings were, until comparatively recent times, generally held in the evening. The Lodge Room featured top-hung casement windows high enough to provide ventilation while preserving confidentiality and noise attenuation for meetings, which then as now featured instrumental

²⁸ See NSW Board of Jewish Education http://www.bje.org.au/learning/hebrew/alphabet/15samech.html



²⁰ Lodge Speers Point, 'Lodge Speers Point No. 538 U.G.L. of New South Wales, Silver Anniversary, 1924 – 1949' (1949).

²¹ Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, 4 July 1924, p. 7.

²² Lodge Speers Point, 'Lodge Speers Point No. 538 U.G.L. of New South Wales, Silver Anniversary, 1924 – 1949' (1949).

²³ *NMH*, 18 November 1930, p. 1.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *NMH*, 9 September 1924, p. 7.

²⁶ *NMH*, 28 June 1915, p. 4.

²⁷ See Raymond Apple, 'Masonic Ministers in Australia'., in Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol. XX, Part 4, June 2012; see also Peter Lazar (ed.), It's No Secret: Real Men Wear Aprons; see also Albert Mackey, The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols. New York: Clay and Maynard, 1869.

music, singing, prayers and spoken ritual.²⁹ The eastern fenestration of the South, a space not requiring privacy, was provided by two double-hung sash windows flanking the entry. Unusually, the facade does not appear to have identified the building as a Masonic Hall, nor did it feature the Square and Compasses, the chief symbol of Freemasonry. This may evince the strength of an institution that, at the time, had neither to advertise its existence, nor to attract members who had not themselves made the first approach. It is likely that the Hall was used not only by Craft Lodges, but also by Lodges of the both the Royal Arch and Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.³⁰

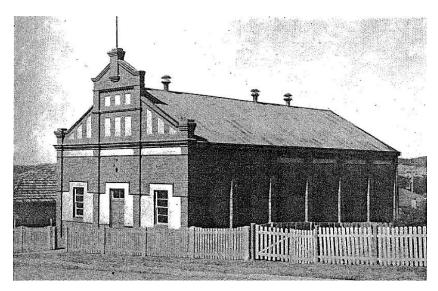


Figure 4. Speers Point Masonic Hall. Note picket fence, roof ventilators and windows flanking central entry. This photograph appears to date from the late 1940s. *United Grand Lodge of NSW & ACT*



Figure 5. Council Chambers (now demolished), designed by Arthur Lowry. Lake Macquarie City Library

See also United Supreme Grand Chapter of Mark and Royal Arch Masons of NSW and the ACT http://www.scottishrite.org.au/; http://usgcnsw.org.au/



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²⁹ See, for example, website of the Grand Lodge of South Australia and Northern Territory http://www.santfreemasons.org.au/

³⁰ For details of these institutions, see Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for Australia http://www.scottishrite.org.au/; http://usgcnsw.org.au/

A.H. Lowry (d. 1938), born in northern Ireland, was educated at South Kensington Engineering School. From here joined the Indian Civil Service, and proceeded to Mysore, then a princely state of British India. Having served at Mysore for only a short time before contracting malaria, he moved to Adelaide, and then to Melbourne. After leading a kangaroo-shooting expedition from Fowlers Bay into Central Australia, he came to Newcastle, and worked for the Scottish Australian Mining Company at Burwood and Lambton B collieries. Lowry then became Shire Engineer at Gloucester, and was thereafter appointed to Lake Macquarie Shire, where he served for 27 years. Retiring in 1936, apparently due to illness, he was accorded a well-attended farewell luncheon at the Speers Point pavilion. He died in May 1938. His funeral was attended by Council and community representatives, including T.C. Frith.³¹ Lowry Street, Cardiff, may be named in his honour. Lowry's ability to design both the Masonic Hall and the Council Chambers is testament to a man of very considerable capacity and skill.



Figure 6. Arthur Herbert Lowry. NMH, 10 February 1936, p. 5.

The Worshipful Master of Lodge Lake Macquarie at the time of the stone-laying was Thomas Charles Frith (1872 – 1957), who lived hard by, on portion of the site of the present City Council Administration Building, Speers Point.³² Frith, who went on to become perhaps the most prominent businessman in the district, ultimately owned shops at Boolaroo, Teralba Toronto and Warner's Bay, was a foundation member of Lodge Lake Macquarie. In 1925 he became foundation Worshipful Master of Lodge Speers Point No. 538, which began to meet in the new Masonic Hall. Its original membership is said to have been 78.³³

³³ Ibid, p. 58; Lodge Speers Point, Silver Anniversary.



³¹ NMH, 10 February 1936, p. 2, 9 May 1938, p. 9.

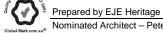
³² Dulcie Hartley, *Frith's*, p. 21.



Figure 7. T.C. Frith. Frith's: A Century of Service

Dulcie Hartley, a prolific local historian, records some of the accolades with which 'T.C.', as Frith was universally known, was honoured:34 'the doyen of retailing in Lake Macquarie'; 'A man of vision, public spirit, and a belief in social justice'; 'A great humanitarian who himself worked hard but always believed in the dignity of labour'; 'The father of local government in Lake Macquarie', who 'displayed benign paternalism towards his employees, thus generating loyalty and lengthy periods of service.³⁵ It is clear that Frith deserved many of these accolades. He was a Shire Councillor from 1917 until 1922, serving as Shire President in 1920. Instrumental in the laying on of electricity to Boolaroo, he helped to establish the local ambulance service and bowling club, and was also a trustee of the Methodist Church. T.C. Frith Avenue, Boolaroo, is named in his honour.36

See generally Dulcie Harley, Friths.



³⁴ Dulcie Harley, *Friths*, p. 9.

³⁵ Ibid.



Figure 8. T.C. Frith in his regalia as Worshipful Master, with jewels of service and office. Frith's: A Century of Service

At some time, an intrusive gabled-roof weatherboard hall was constructed against the western elevation of the Masonic Temple. This, which would have provided additional space for the after-meeting supper known as the South, particularly during the annual recurrence of auspicious solemnities, and would probably have been available for rent, occupies the majority of the former rear yard of the Masonic Hall. It now houses Lake Macquarie Family Day-Care.



Figure 9. Detail of an aerial photograph of Speers Point, 1974. The Masonic Hall and hall at rear, in those days still surrounded by housing, is at the centre of the photograph. A Bird's Eye View: A Portfolio of Outstanding Aerial Photographs of Newcastle and Suburbs: a Special 'Newcastle Sun' Reader Service (1974)

Lodge Speers Point, which in 1974 still met at Speers Point, 37 eventually relocated to the Toronto Masonic Centre. The 1915 Shire Council Chambers, retained by Council as additional office space despite their replacement in 1955, were demolished in 1977, to make way for a car park for the present Administration Building, which was built between 1977 and 1979. The Masonic Hall was purchased by Lake Macquarie Council, apparently as part of Council's scheme for the acquisition of land for car parking and future administrative expansion. The Lodge furniture and fittings, with the exception of a Square and Compasses device in the South (supper room) was removed; their fate is not known. The former Masonic Hall, still structurally sound, was converted into the Lakeview Street Theatre, after which it was used for creative and performing arts groups such as Theatre Kids (now Tandem Theatre for Youth) and Freewheels Theatre Company. It appears to have been at this time that the eastern window apertures and main entry off Lakeview Street were infilled, while a new side entry with panic bars and disability-compliant ramp was opened on the northern elevation of the building. The former door between the Lodge Room and South (supper room) was opened up, with the addition of a beam to support the wall. At some stage, a driveway was provided, and a mural was painted on the face brick of the southern wall, although this has recently been painted over in an attempt to match the remaining unpainted brick on this elevation. Stays, too, have recently been added to strengthen the facade parapet. The former hall at rear now serves as a Day Care centre. The premises are currently vacant, awaiting refurbishment as a training space for Council purposes.



Figure 10. Former Masonic Hall in its new guise as the Lakeview Street Theatre. Note plantings in front of building, infilling of eastern windows and entry, and concrete driveway and ramp leading to new entry. City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study (1993)

³⁷ 'Lodge Speers Point No. 538 UGL of NSW, Golden Anniversary, 1924 – 1974' (1974).



2.6 Conclusion

The former Speers Point Masonic Hall, one of many such buildings to be constructed in what is now the City of Lake Macquarie, is interesting on both historical and architectural grounds. An understanding of its past brings with it the potential for an understanding of its significance as a Heritage Item intimately connected with community life.

3. PHYSICAL CONDITION AND CONTEXT

3.1 THE SITE

The site, addressing Lakeview Street, Boolaroo NSW, is within the City Administration precinct. The site slopes comparatively gently to the south-west, and is almost entirely occupied by the former Masonic Hall and, at rear, Lake Macquarie Family Day Care. The former side yard to the north features partial vehicular access and a disability-compliant ramp leading to the northern entry.

3.2 THE BUILDING

The building is of red cavity brick, with side pilasters. It has a new galvanised iron roof with new galvanised iron gutters and rainwater goods. Floors are of joisted timber. Fenetration consists of timber top-hung casement windows in high apertures featuring concrete lintels. The former main entry and flanking window apertures on the eastern elevation remain infilled. A gabled roof weatherboard and part brick structure currently housing Lake Macquarie Family Day Care stands on the western elevation, but is not accessible from the interior of the former Masonic Hall. The building has a floor area of 195.12m², the site area being of approximately 812m².

The eastern elevation features a comparatively intricately-modelled facade, with prominent narrow pilasters and a windowhead brick string course with additional string courses above and contrasting pebble-cast panelling. This supports a linear, parapeted, pier-interrupted gable with string course and contrasting pebble-cast trim surmounted by a pediment crowning gable. The architectural style might be described as a comparatively late example of simplified Federation Anglo-Dutch, a style popular between c. 1890 - c. 1915.

The building has lost its original flagpole, asbestos roof, roof ventilators and front fencing, while the facade windows and central entry have been infilled. The face brick of the southern wall has been repainted, obscuring a mural painted in the course of the use of the building as the Lakeview Theatre.

3.3 CURRENT USE

The building is currently unoccupied, but is being refurbished as a training centre.

3.4 CONDITION

The building stands in generally good condition, and is currently subject to refurbishment for use as a training centre. Some of the brick mortar is weathering, and will in the future require replacement with a compatible mortar. The roof, guttering and rainwater goods have recently been replaced in galvanised iron. The timber windows have recently been reconditioned and repainted. A small-garden with small-scale plantings addresses Lakeview Street.

³⁸ Richard Apperly, Robert Irving, Peter Reynolds, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present.* North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1989, pp. 112-115.



3.5 SURROUNDING CONTEXT

The subject land is bounded by the Council-owned dwelling known as 83 Lakeview Street to the south; Lakeview Street to the east; a Council car park to the north; and Lake Macquarie Family Day Care to the west. All of the immediately surrounding land is owned by Council.

3.6 IMAGES

The following images were taken by EJE in December 2014.



Figure 11. Detail of parapet.

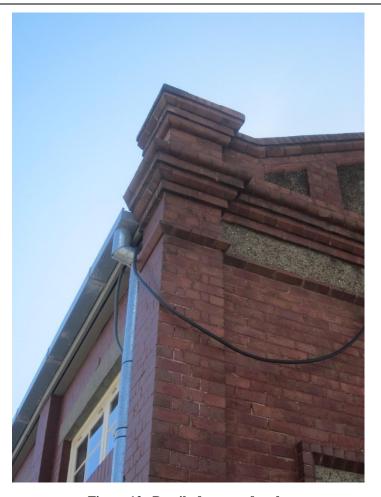


Figure 12. Detail of eastern facade.



Figure 13. Detail of eastern facade.

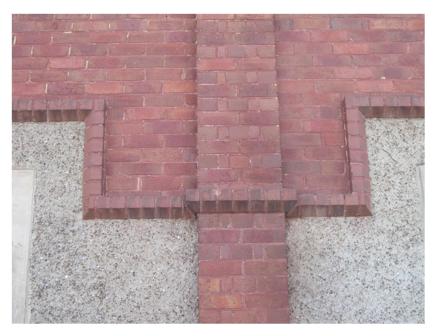


Figure 14. Detail of eastern facade.



Figure 15. Looking north from Lakeview Street.

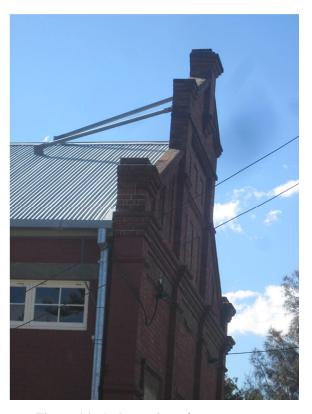


Figure 16. A closer view of parapet stays.



Figure 17. Facade parapet from Lakeview Stree; note parapet stays.



Figure 18. Eastern facade, showing new rainwater goods.

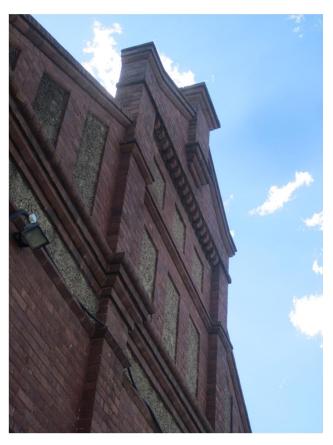


Figure 19. Detail of facade parapet.



Figure 20. Transition between former Masonic Hall and hall at rear (now Day Care centre)



Figure 21. Relationship between former Masonic Hall and Day Care centre.



Figure 22. Southern wall of former Masonic Hall, showing painted face brick.



Figure 23. Looking west along southern wall; Day Care centre entry, accessible via concrete path, in middle distance.



Figure 24. Former Masonic Hall from Lakeview Avenue.



Figure 25. Eastern facade, showing existing plantings.



Figure 26. Northern wall, showing existing side entry and ramp.



Figure 27. Existing side entry (northern elevation), looking east to Lakeview Street.



Figure 28. Northern elevation, showing existing side entry.



Figure 29. Northern elevation, showing existing side entry (left) and Day Care centre in middle distance.



Figure 30. Transition between former Masonic Hall and former supper hall (now Day Care centre)



Figure 31. Closer view of Day Care centre.



Figure 32. Looking north-east from vacant land formerly occupied by dwellings.



Figure 33. Portion of former Lodge Room.



Figure 34. Ceiling joists of former Lodge Room, showing curved cornice brackets.



Figure 35. Ceiling joists of former Lodge Room, with roof truss visible beyond.



Figure 36. Ceiling joists of former South (supper room in eastern portion of building), showing curved cornice brackets.



Figure 37. Transition between former South (supper room in eastern portion of building) and former Lodge Room.



Figure 38. Looking from former South (supper room) to former Lodge Room.



Figure 39. Square and Compasses device, currently fixed to cornice of former South (supper room).

4. HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The NSW heritage assessment criteria encompass four generic values in the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter 2013: historical significance; aesthetic significance; scientific significance; and social significance.

These criteria will be used in assessing heritage significance of the place.

The basis of assessment used in this report is the methodology and terminology of the Burra Charter 2013; James Semple Kerr, The Conservation Plan: A Guide to the Preparation of Conservation Plans for Places of European Cultural Significance;³⁹ and the criteria promulgated by the Heritage Branch of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage. The Burra Charter 2013, Article 26, 26.1, states that:

Work on a place should be preceded by studies to understand the place which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence, drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines.

Places and items of significance are those which permit an understanding of the past and enrich the present, allowing heritage values to be interpreted and re-interpreted by current and future generations.

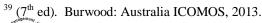
The significance of the place is determined by the analysis and assessment of the documentary, oral and physical evidence presented in the previous sections of this document. An understanding of significance allows decisions to be made about the future management of the place. It is important that such decisions do not endanger its cultural significance.

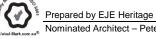
The NSW Heritage Manual, prepared by the former NSW Heritage Branch of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, and endorsed by the current Heritage Division of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, outlines the four broad criteria and processes for assessing the nature of heritage significance, along with two added criteria for assessing comparative significance of an item.

Heritage Significance Criteria

The NSW assessment criteria listed below encompass the following four values of significance:

- Historical significance
- Aesthetic significance
- Research/technical significance
- Social significance





Listed below are the relevant Heritage Assessment Criteria identified in the *Heritage Act 1977* (NSW):

- Criterion (a) An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).
- Criterion (b) An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).
- Criterion (c) An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area).
- Criterion (d) An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.
- Criterion (e) An item has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).
- Criterion (f) An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).
- Criterion (g) An item is important in demonstrating the principle characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places; or cultural or natural environments (or a class of the local area's cultural places; or cultural or natural environments).

An Assessment of Significance requires that a level of significance be determined for the place. The detailed analysis uses the levels of significance below:

LOCAL	Of significance to the local government area.	
STATE	Of significance to the people of NSW.	
NATIONAL	Exhibiting a high degree of significance, interpretability to the people of Australia.	

4.1 ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Significance

Criterion (a) An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

The former Masonic Hall is associated with Freemasonry, once a widespread fraternal movement of considerable importance in New South Wales, and in the Lake Macquarie district in particular. The building provides evidence of the growth and decline of fraternal movements during the Twentieth Century, and of historical relationships between Freemasonry and local government.

Criterion (b) An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

The building has a special association with the late Arthur Lowry, who was for 27 years Shire Engineer of Lake Macquarie Shire Council. Himself a Freemason, Lowry designed the Masonic Hall, apparently in an attempt to emphasise the importance of Freemasonry while reflecting the distinctive solidity of the nearby Council Chambers, a now-demolished building also designed by him. The structure has also a special association with the late T.C. Frith, a prominent local resident and businessman active in Freemasonry, religious affairs, and the wider community.

The building has a strong association with Freemasonry in New South Wales and in the Lake Macquarie district.

Aesthetic And Technical Significance

Criterion (c) An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area).

Although not significant at a State level, at a local level the building is aesthetically distinctive, and is a local landmark despite its being located on a comparatively quiet thoroughfare. Although not designed by an architect, it exemplifies a simplified Federation Anglo-Dutch style of architecture. Its facade incorporates several features that, for Freemasons, are of deep symbolical import, designed to convey an important and useful lesson.

Social Significance

Criterion (d) An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

The former Masonic Hall has a special association with Lodge Lake Macquarie, which owned the building upon trust from the Grand Lodge, and with Lodge Speers Point which was took its rise in association with the completion of the building. It has a strong association with the United Grand Lodge of NSW and the ACT. All three of these organisations continue to exist.

Research Significance

Criterion (e) An item has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

The dwelling is the first structure known to have been constructed on the site. As such, it is considered to have little archaeological or research potential; nor is it an important benchmark or reference site. The site and building are by no means rare in either a local or State context, there being many former Masonic Halls in NSW, despite the fact that a declining number of these remain in use for Masonic purposes. Neither the site nor the building provides information as to past human cultures unavailable elsewhere.

Rarity Significance

Criterion (f) An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

In a State context, the site and its associated structures do not demonstrate designs or techniques of exceptional interest, nor are they the only examples of their type. While Freemasonry is no longer a mass movement in NSW, Lodges continue to meet in most large regional centres; the building does not, therefore, represent evidence of a defunct custom, way of life or activity that is in danger of being lost. That said, the City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study (1993) notes that, in a local context,

This Temple is the only surviving building that reflects the early period of Lake Macquarie's municipal history and development. It is unfortunate that the 1915 Council Chambers have been so recently demolished. Together, the two buildings could have provided a memorable civic precinct. The grand conception of this building's elaborate gable end is now unmatched elsewhere in the city, except perhaps on the Co-op Store buildings at West Wallsend.⁴⁰

Representative Significance

Criterion (g) An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places; or cultural or natural environments (or a class of the local area's cultural places; or cultural or natural environments).

While the building is not outstanding because of its setting, size, condition, or integrity, its facade is a fine example of its kind in a local context. The long-standing use of the building as a theatre has somewhat obscured its identity as a former Masonic Hall, and has probably reduced community knowledge of its original purpose, and also, therefore, the esteem in which it is held by the local community.

⁴⁰ Suters Architects Snell in association with Dr John Turner and C. and M.J. Doring Pty Ltd, 'City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study: Final Report' (December 1993), SP-34.



4.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Masonic Hall at 81 Lakeview Street, Speers Point NSW, is associated with Freemasonry, a fraternal movement once widespread in New South Wales. Designed by Arthur Herbert Lowry, sometime Shire Engineer of Lake Macquarie Shire Council and Lodge member, who also designed the now-demolished Council Chambers, the building provides evidence of the historical relationships between Freemasonry and local government, and of the growth and decline of Freemasonry in the Twentieth Century. It is also associated with T.C. Frith, a prominent local businessman. While not outstanding by reason of its aesthetics, size, condition or integrity, the building remains a local landmark. Its facade, which incorporates several Masonic elements of deep symbolical import, is a fine example of its kind.

The item should, therefore, be assessed as having <u>high</u> heritage significance in a <u>local</u> context.

5. PROPOSED WORKS

These include alterations and additions to the building, exclusive of the existing Day Care centre at rear, to convert it for use as a training centre.

Details of external works are as follows:

Eastern Elevation

- The reinstatement of timber four-light windows and glazed timber-framed entry door, with a balustrade, on the eastern elevation, with the addition of a steel-framed glazed awning to protect the entry;
- the provision of fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) decking leading from the eastern lot boundary to the entry;
- the construction of a new masonry, cement-rendered wall with 'MASONIC HALL' signage; and
- the provision of two garden beds with low-scale plantings.

Northern Elevation

- The construction of a new metal clad roof and wall to protect a new side entry, in place
 of the existing, with new glazed timber-framed doors;
- the demolition of existing concrete ramp and landing, and the provision in their place of concrete steps and landing, with steel handrail, protected from the west by a metal-clad wall;
- A new 4000L slimline rainwater tank; and
- A new air conditioning unit

Western Elevation

No external works are proposed.

Southern Elevation

No new works are proposed.

Details of internal works are as follows:

These involve the construction within the existing building of facilities suitable for use as a training centre. The proposed works include:

- A large Training Room with four electronic interactive boards and magnetic wall strips for instruction purposes;
- a medium Training Room, separated from the larger room by a folding wall;
- a Store Room;
- a Storage Cupboard;
- two Quiet Rooms;
- a self-preparation kitchen;
- an eastern entry Foyer;



- a northern entry Foyer;
- a male w.c.;
- a female w.c.; and
- an accessible w.c.

The facilities will be identified by internal signs. New ceilings, revealing the curved cornice brackets, will be installed. New floor coverings will be provided. The existing bathroom in the area of the former Lodge Room will be removed. The Square and Compasses device will be relocated from the wall of the former South (supper room) to above the northern entry.

The roof space above the former South (supper room in eastern portion of building) will be converted for storage with the fitting of a trafficable ceiling, and made accessible via retractable stairs. The ceilings of the remaining portion of the building will be non-trafficable.

Heritage Architect

The nominated Heritage Architect for supervision concerning the proposed works is Barney Collins BSc (Arch) BArch (Hons) MSc (Arch) (Cons) of EJE Architecture, 412 King Street, Newcastle NSW 2300, tel. (02) 49 29 2353.

6. STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

This is the Statement of Heritage Proposed Alterations and Additions, 81

Impact for: Lakeview Street, Speers Point NSW 2284

Date: This statement was completed in February

2015

Address and Property Description: 81 Lakeview Street, SPEERS POINT NSW

2284

Lot 14, Section B, DP 4063

Prepared by: EJE Heritage

Prepared for: Lake Macquarie City Council

The following aspects of the proposal respect or enhance the heritage significance of the item or area for the following reasons:

External Works

- The proposed reinstatement of the eastern entry and window apertures will replace historic features depleted during the use of the former Masonic Hall as a theatre.
- The proposed reconstruction of the depleted four-light timber windows will reinstate these historic features, going a considerable way towards returning the eastern facade to its original condition.
- The proposed provision of a timber-framed glazed door leaf will reflect the now-depleted timber-framed door light, while allowing for modern conditions and workplace heath and safety standards.
- The proposed glazed, steel-framed awning above the eastern entry will retain the legibility of the ornate eastern facade, and will be readily identifiable as non-original, new work in terms of the *Burra Charter 2013*, Article 22:

New work should be readily identifiable as such, but must respect and have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the place.

- The proposed fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) decking leading from the eastern lot boundary to the eastern entry will be sympathetic to the eastern facade, while allowing efficient and safe drainage.
- The proposed masonry, cement-rendered wall with 'MASONIC HALL' signage will inform audiences as to the history of the building, while permitting its identification in its proposed use as a training centre.
- The provision of two garden beds with low-scale plantings will soften the building on the eastern elevation, while not detracting from its legibility as to its historical significance.

- The proposed metal clad roof and wall to protect the new side entry and glazed timberframed doors will replace the currently unsympathetic side entry, ramp and landing while allowing the new fabric to be readily identifiable as new work in accordance with the Burra Charter 2013, Article 22.
- The proposed 4000L slimline rainwater tank and air conditioning unit will be to some extent be screened by the existing (car park) plantings to the north, and affect the undistinguished northern elevation of the building, rather than the ornate eastern facade.
- The proposed awning on the eastern elevation will exhibit a light touch as regards the
 interface between this element and the existing building, with connecting elements to be
 as little intrusive as possible.
- All proposed works to the building are minimised in accordance with the *Burra Charter* 2013, Article 3, 3.1, reflecting a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.
- The proposed works are sensitive in accordance with the *Burra Charter 2013*, Article 15, 15.2, in that they will be reversible.

Internal Works

- The proposed Large Training Room, Medium Training Room and northern Foyer in the space formerly occupied by the Lodge Room will be differentiated from the former South (supper room) by the retention of the visible overhead beam above the aperture.
- The majority of the space formerly occupied by the Lodge Room will remain legible through the use of the proposed opening wall between the Large Training Room and the Medium Training Room.
- The relocation of the Square and Compasses will help to identify the historic use of the building to internal audiences.
- The retention of the top-hung casement windows on the northern and southern elevations will allow the building to remain legible as a former Masonic Hall.
- The exposure of the curved cornice brackets will reveal this well-crafted original fabric to new audiences.
- All proposed works to the building are minimised in accordance with the Burra Charter 2013, Article 3, 3.1, reflecting a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.
- The proposed works are sensitive in accordance with the Burra Charter 2013, Article 15, 15.2, in that they will be reversible.

Compliance with Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan 2014 ('DCP 2014')

The application of the provisions of DCP 2014, Heritage Guideline, Section 2: Management Framework, requires that a Site Analysis and Streetscape Analysis should be undertaken within particular circumstances. These are discussed below:

Site Analysis

It is submitted that, within the meaning of DCP 2014, 2.2, the proposed external works should be classified as being minor, in that the proposed works do not involve the building of new structures within the meaning of DCP 2014, Section 8.3, and that the remaining works are interior only. A full site analysis is therefore not required.

Streetscape Analysis

As shown in the site images reproduced below, the two properties neighbouring the subject building are a Council car park to the north, and a post-War triple-fronted rendered brick and tiled-roofed dwelling to the south. It is understood that Council intends, in the fullness of time, to demolish this dwelling as part of its wider scheme for the Administration Building precinct.

The car park, secured with a chain wire fence topped with barbed wire, makes no positive contribution to the streetscape; such cannot, therefore, be reflected in the proposed external works.

The dwelling to the south, which if Council's longstanding plans are carried out will not be extant in the medium term, makes little positive contribution to a streetscape now defined by the demolition of all of its formerly neighbouring residences south to Cornish Street. The dwelling is of an era and design entirely separate and uncomplementary to the former Masonic Hall, and lacks characteristics that make a positive contribution either to the streetscape or to the heritage significance of the Hall. It is, therefore, submitted that the incorporation of such characteristics in the design of the proposed external works should not be supported.



Figure 40. Perspective from Lakeview Street, looking south-west, showing neighbouring dwelling.



Figure 41. Northern car park, showing relationship with former Masonic Hall; note unsympathetic fence and expanse of asphaltic concrete.

The following aspects of the proposal could detrimentally impact on the heritage significance of the item or area for the following reasons:

It is submitted that the proposed works will have no negative effects on the heritage significance of the former Masonic Hall, or on the precinct and streetscape within which it is located, but will, on the contrary, prolong the life of the building by adapting it for a sympathetic and viable use.

The following sympathetic design solutions were considered and discounted for the following reasons:

The construction of a concrete path in place of the proposed fibre reinforced plastic element was considered, but was rejected on the basis that it would not complement the eastern facade of the building, and potentially be confused as reconstruction of an original element.

Restoration of the brick tuck-pointing on the eastern facade would go far towards returning the facade to reflect its original condition; this has not, however, been proposed by Council.

The following actions are recommended to minimise disturbance and/or enhance the interpretation of the heritage significance of the item or area:

Mandatory Actions

The site is <u>not</u> known to contain historic relics within the meaning of the *Heritage Act 1977* (NSW), s. 41(1), as set out below:

relic means any deposit, artefact, object or material evidence that:

- (a) relates to the settlement of the area that comprises New South Wales, not being Aboriginal settlement, and
- (b) is of State or local heritage significance.

Additionally, excavations are not proposed. There should, therefore, be no need to obtain an excavation permit under the *Heritage Act 1977* (NSW), s. 139:

- 139 Excavation permit required in certain circumstances
- (1) A person must not disturb or excavate any land knowing or having reasonable cause to suspect that the disturbance or excavation will or is likely to result in a relic being discovered, exposed, moved, damaged or destroyed unless the disturbance or excavation is carried out in accordance with an excavation permit.
- (2) A person must not disturb or excavate any land on which the person has discovered or exposed a relic except in accordance with an excavation permit.

Should, however, any items properly described as relics in fact be unearthed in the course of site or construction works, notification must be made in accordance with the *Heritage Act 1977* (NSW), s. 146, as follows:

146 Notification of discovery of relic

A person who is aware or believes that he or she has discovered or located a relic (in any circumstances, and whether or not the person has been issued with a permit) must:

- (a) within a reasonable time after he or she first becomes aware or believes that he or she has discovered or located that relic, notify the Heritage Council of the location of the relic, unless he or she believes on reasonable grounds that the Heritage Council is aware of the location of the relic, and
- (b) within the period required by the Heritage Council, furnish the Heritage Council with such information concerning the relic as the Heritage Council may reasonably require.

In the event of such a discovery, Council's Development Planner – Heritage Focus, must be contacted at (02) 4921 0333 .

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that electronic and printed copies of this Statement of Heritage Impact should be lodged both with University of Newcastle Cultural Collections, Callaghan NSW, and with the Community History Section of Lake Macquarie City Library, Speers Point NSW.

7. CONCLUSION

The former Speers Point Masonic Hall is one of many such buildings once found all over the State. Representative of the growth and decline of fraternal movements in New South Wales, and also of the role of Freemasons in the growth of the City of Lake Macquarie, it provides a tangible link with another locally significant, but now demolished, building, namely the former Council Chambers that once stood nearby. While not rare in a State context, the structure has been described as the only surviving building that reflects the early period of the history and development of local government in Lake Macquarie. Its eastern facade, in a simplified Ango-Dutch style, is not distinctive from the point of view of architecture or materials; it is, however, regarded as being rather grand in conception, and to be now practically unmatched within the local government area. The incorporation within the facade of Masonic symbology will have been a matter of particular interest to local Freemasons, while perhaps remaining a matter of indifference to those who were not.

The proposed works, far from having a negative impact on the heritage significance of the building, will in fact increase the usefulness and longevity of the building. Its use as a training centre is an appropriate and non-invasive one, which will go far towards allowing new audiences to develop an appreciation of so historic a building.

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8.4 Reports

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8.5 Websites

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http://www.santfreemasons.org.au/
http://www.santfreemasons.org.au/
http://www.

NSW Board of Jewish Education http://www.bje.org.au/learning/hebrew/alphabet/15samech.html
United Grand Lodge of New South Wales http://www.masons.org.au/discover-masonry/what-is-freemasonry/20-a-brief-history.html

United Supreme Grand Chapter of Mark and Royal Arch Masons of NSW and the ACT http://usgcnsw.org.au/

8.6 Other Sources

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9. APPENDICES: PLANS AND ELEVATIONS



ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING SCHEDULE

A000 COVER SHEET A001 SITE PLAN

A101 GROUND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

A102 LEVEL 1 FLOOR PLAN

A401 REFLECTED CEILING PLAN - GROUND LEVEL

A402 REFLECTED CEILING PLAN - LEVEL 1

A501 ELEVATIONS A502 ELEVATIONS A503 SECTIONS

INTERNAL ELEVATIONS

A901 DOOR AND WINDOW SCHEDULE

ALTERATIONS

MASONIC HALL

81 LAKEVIEW STREET, SPEERS POINT, NSW 2310

DA/CC ISSUE

EJE ARCHITECTURE





ACN 002 912 843 | ABN 82 644 649 849 Nominated Architect Peter Campbell | NSW Architects Registration No: 4294 P +61 2 4929 2353 | F +61 2 4926 3069 | E mail@eje.com.au | W www.eje.com.au

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