

FREMANTLE TOWN HALL

INVESTIGATION OF EXTERNAL WALL FINISHES AND INTERPRETATION

INTENTION OF THIS PROJECT

As a part of the investigative/ Design Development stage to conserve the exterior of the Fremantle Town Hall in preparation for future internal refurbishment works associated with the construction of the new Administrative Building and Library, specialist heritage contractors will be appointed to carry out investigations into the removal of paint and repair of the underlying stucco substrate to the exterior of the Fremantle Town Hall.

Work on heritage buildings is usually complicated and difficult to plan because the true condition of the building is not revealed until opening up works begin on site. To reduce the uncertainties associated with this type of work it is good practice to carry out investigations before the project starts gain a better understanding of the condition of the building, the type of conservation work that will be required, time frames and costs. This information is very useful for documenting, programming and financial planning for future works.

SCOPE OF WORKS

These works will include:

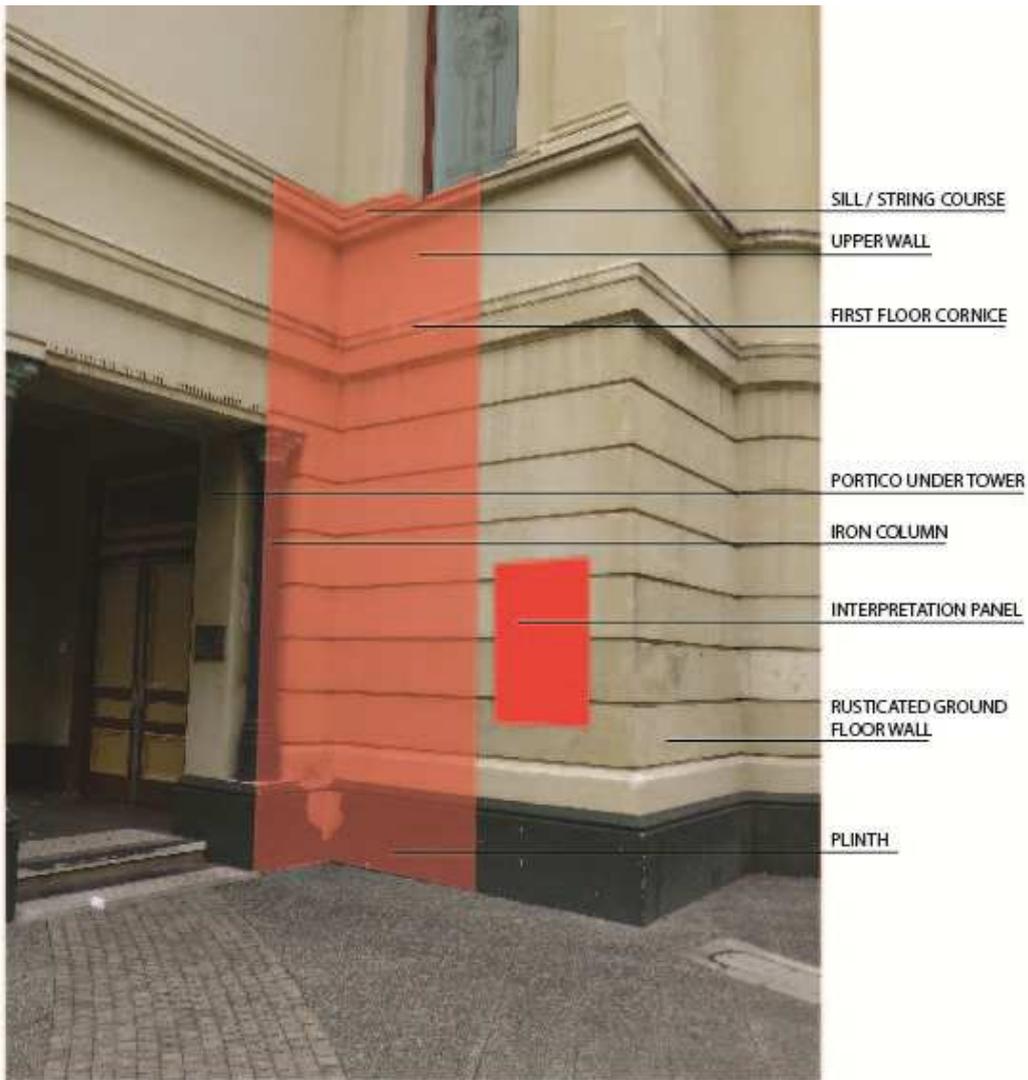
- The contractor preparing a sample panel to show:
 - o A paint ladder of the various layers of paint on the walls
 - o An example of the stucco substrate with paint removed
 - o An example of the conserved stucco substrate

- The chemical analysis of three samples of stucco finish from different locations to determine their composition. The analysis of a paint sample for lead content.

- The preparation of a temporary interpretation panel to explain to the general public why the investigations were carried out, the information uncovered during the investigations plus background information on good practice for conserving solid stone wall heritage buildings and traditional stucco finishes.

These investigations were recommended by the Conservation Management Plan for the Fremantle Town hall prepared by Considine and Griffiths Architects in 2004 and follow the processes set out in the Burra Charter, the key document guiding conservation works in Australia.

LOCATION OF SAMPLE PANEL



OPTION A - BASE OF TOWER AND HALL



SAMPLE PANEL OPTION A - view from Mall



SAMPLE PANEL OPTION A - hidden by tower



Typical paint ladder - Showing the layers of paint applied to the building in their historic sequence.



Example of interpretive panel for conservation works

BACKGROUND

The Fremantle Town Hall is a two storey stuccoed brick and stone building in the Victorian Free Classical style, designed by Grainger and D'Ebro, and constructed in 1887. It is triangular in shape, and sited at the junction of William and High Streets, overlooking King's Square. A prominent feature is the 90 feet high clock tower at the apex of the plan.

In 1993 the Fremantle Town Hall was permanently included on the State Register of Heritage Places.

The primary document to guide the future conservation and management of the place is the *Fremantle Town Hall Conservation Plan* that was prepared in 2004 by Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Robin Chinnery Historian. This document updated and expanded the 1985 conservation plan also by Considine and Griffiths Architects.

PAINT TREATMENT OF EXTERNAL WALLS

The walls of the Fremantle Town Hall are load bearing brick and limestone with a stucco finish externally and plaster internally. Parts of the masonry walls were painted in the first half of the Twentieth Century, but it was not until 1966 that the entire exterior of the building was painted as a part of the refurbishment works carried out when the adjacent Civic Administration and Exhibition Hall were constructed. The exterior of the building was last painted in 1995 when it was coated with cement based paint. The condition of the cement based paint is poor.

The paint coating to the building has created a number of issues that directly impact upon the condition of the building as well as its presentation

- The paint has sealed the external face of the solid stone walls preventing the walls from breathing naturally and leading to an accumulation of moisture within the walls which is causing the following problems:
 - o Damp problems on the internal faces of the walls
 - o Rusting of embedded steelworks such as window lintels
 - o Rotting of embedded timber such as floor joists
 - o Deterioration of the stucco finish and stone work below
- The accumulation of paint coatings has also obscured decorative detail including the incised coursing lines on the upper storey and has also obscured the patina of the building and evidence of historic change.

The 2004 conservation plan makes the following recommendation:

21. The reinstatement of the unpainted stucco external finish should be investigated and implemented if practicable.

It is recommended that a trial be conducted to remove the paint in a repair area and a control area, and that some experiments be carried out to ascertain the practicability of complete paint removal from the stucco, and for the resulting surface to be left as intended.¹

¹ Fremantle Town Hall Conservation Plan, 2004, p. 88