

CWA BUILDING



154 Avon Tce, York

The history of the title

The title for York Building Lot No 2, the site the CWA Building (and 152 Avon Tce), was granted to Benjamin Lyon in June 1852 for £10 and one shilling¹, having been advertised in March and April 1852.² "Up-set price £10".

Benjamin Lyon (-1855) was a Jewish merchant or trader, who imported luxury goods from South Australia to Perth and exported wool to England.³⁴

Lyon put up York Building Allotment No 2 for sale at the York Cattle Show on 20 October 1853, having been advertised on 12 October 1853.⁵ The advertisement says:

"This Lot having a large frontage on the main street, near the Bridge, and being in the centre of a flourishing and rising town, offers an eligible opportunity for purchasers".

Benjamin Lyon sold his business in April 1854⁶ and in that month conveyed the title to York Building Lot No 2 to publican Robert Doncon, ⁷ for £31.

Robert Doncon (1814-1881) was a York publican and businessman, and owner of the Kings Head hotel which he ran with his wife Sophia, and a race horse named "Robin Hood".

York Building Lot No 2 was advertised for sale by Robert Doncon on 11 April 1855 and was described as "adjoining Duncan's Hotel and Wade's Steam Mill, being the best site in York, for Business Premises." "Apply to R. Doncon "King's Head" York".⁸ The reference to "Duncan's Hotel" is a mistaken reference Dunham's Hotel⁹ at the rear of 156 Avon Terrace

¹ Original Grant ET1131, Langate, courtesy Vicki Ryakos and Sara Paton .

² *The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 12 March 1853, p.6, 19 March 1852, p. 6; 2 April 1852, p.6.

³ His first advertisement was published in *The Inquirer*, 29 January 1851, p. 1.

⁴ *The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 14 November 1851, p. 1; 22 October 1852, p.3.

⁵ *The Inquirer*, 12 October 1853, p. 1.

⁶ *The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 14 April 1854, p. 2.

⁷ Memorial V373/392, 22 April 1854 for £31, Landgate.

⁸ *The Inquirer*, 11 April 1855, p.1; further ads 25 April 1855, page 2.

⁹ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 23 April 1852, p.3.

formerly leased by Solomon Cook from John Henry Monger Sr and used as a pub called the Dusty Miller.¹⁰

Construction of the building

Doncon constructed a butcher's shop and advertised the property on 10 October 1856¹¹ as follows:

"TO BE SOLD AT AUCTION AT THE YORK FAIR

A newly erected Brick House built for a Butcher's Shop, but can be easily converted to any other purpose, situated in the most central and business part of York, adjoining Wade's steam mill and known as York Building Lot No 2, the grant is fenced in with a two rail fence".

The house and butcher's shop was probably what is now the CWA building because it is a house and the back sections look suitable for storing meat. So it is likely that the CWA building was not built in 1859 as set out on the plaque in front of the building, but in 1856.

Wade's steam mill (formerly Solomon Cook's mill) was on Lots 3 and 4, being the lots to the south of Lot 2.¹²

Captain Meares

Robert Doncon conveyed York Building Lot No 2 to Resident Magistrate Richard Goldsmith Meares "the Younger" on 6 May 1857¹³ for £250, it being mortgaged back to Robert Doncon.¹⁴

Richard Goldsmith Meares "the Younger" or "Captain Meares" as he was known, (1780-1862) was one of the first settlers to the Colony, originally being part of the group of settlers accompanying Thomas Peel to his settlement at Australind.¹⁵

Meares was the Resident Magistrate for York and Beverley, that is, he represented the government in York and Beverley.

Captain Meares had been in charge of a cavalry brigade at Waterloo and therefore was treated with some respect by the Colonists. There was another Waterloo veteran in town, William Edwards Snr.¹⁶

However, Meares had a reputation for being difficult and for nepotism. He publicly argued with neighbours, other Government residents, the local indigenous and everyone.¹⁷

Meares retired as Resident Magistrate in March 1858.¹⁸

¹⁰ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 14 February 1851, p.2.

¹¹ *The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 10 October 1856, p. 2.

¹² Inquirer 25 April 1855, p.2.

¹³ Memorial VI 38/215 6th May 1857 for £250, Landgate

¹⁴ From a search of the Deeds Memorial precis for the property by Robert Garton Smith.

¹⁵ Dorothy Erickson *A Short York History, as it pertains to the cemeteries* pp. 100 -102.

¹⁶ Inquirer and Commercial News 17 March 1858, p.2.

¹⁷ Conole, Peter, *Police Historian: Superintendent Richard Goldsmith Meares (1780-1862)*. Western Australian Police Historical Society, Peter William Thomas.

¹⁸ Inquirer and Commercial News 17 March 1858, p.2.

Meares (or his son Richard Gamble Boyce Meares¹⁹) was already running a store somewhere in York and moved to these premises in 1857, and continued to trade here into the 1860s. There are no records as to which building was the store. The store commenced operation almost immediately after purchase. Initially, the list of stock was not large²⁰, so the original store may initially have been Doncon' butcher's shop. Having regard to later advertisements, the building must have been sufficiently substantial to hold a lot of stock.^{21 22}

23 24 25 26 27 28 29

One possibility is that the Meares store was an earlier building where the two storeyed 1887 building next to the CWA building now stands (Dinsdale's Shoe Emporium). Excavation during renovation of the 1887 building disclosed a lot of bricks from a former building at the front, so the butcher's shop could have been a larger building at the front which William Dinsdale demolished in 1887.

Meares died in 1862³⁰. Later that year, the property was assigned to his creditors.³¹

William Dinsdale Jr used it as a boot and shoe shop prior to purchasing and constructing the two storey building next door.³²

The creditors must have been sorted out as the property stayed in the Meares family until 1936 when it was conveyed to Frederick Charles Bramby, a plumber. He died in 1941, and the property was left to his widow, Stella Mary Bramby.

At some time, the property may have been leased to Thomas Horton who carried on a taxi business from the premises.³³

On 17 December 1953, the property was sold to the Country Women's Association of WA Inc for £750. It is one of the few properties in Avon Terrace that remains on the old system title.

CWA York³⁴

The York branch of the Country Women's Association was founded in 1945.

To placate husbands who would have considered an extra trip to York merely for a CQA meeting an extravagance, meetings were held monthly on the Friday of the Pig Sale.

¹⁹ Erickson, Rica [comp] *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australia pre 1829-1888*, Vol 3 UWA Press, 1979, p. 2138.

²⁰ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 15 May 1857, p.2.

²¹ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 15 May 1857, p.2.

²² Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 5 June 1857, p.6.

²³ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 22 May 1857, p.5.

²⁴ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 5 June 1857, p.6.

²⁵ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 24 September 1858, p.6.

²⁶ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 22 October 1858, p.6.

²⁷ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 16 December 1859, p.6.

²⁸ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 13 July 1860, p.5.

²⁹ Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 16 May 1862, p.1.

³⁰ Dorothy Erickson *A Short York History, as it pertains to the cemeteries* p. 8.

³¹ Memorial 205/1326, 3rd March 1862, Landgate.

³² Eastern Districts Chronicle, 9 December 1891, p.1.

³³ Davies, Laurie: *York – Its horse and hey days*, 1982, p.11. The Post Office directories show Thomas Horton as operating in York at least between 1895 and 1920.

³⁴ The information in this section is from Heritage Trail, York, Heritage Council, (1990s) date unknown.

The meetings generated community activities which added significantly to the quality of country living. Its rooms were used for such diverse purposes as infant health care, Junior Farmer meetings, home craft classes, the Bridge Club and musical societies.

Rob Garton Smith
President
The York Society (Inc)
February 2022