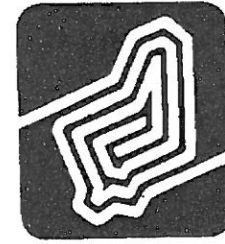Heritage Council of Western Australia

The Heritage Council is the State's expert advisory body on heritage matters. It was set up under the Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990. The aims of he Council are to identify and conserve places of cultural heritage significance throughout the State; to facilitate development which is in harmony with cultural heritage values; and to promote public awareness and knowledge of our cultural heritage.

Yalgoo Heritage Trail

HERITAGE COUNCIL

How To Get There

Yalgoo is located 222 kilometres east of Geraldton and 600 kilometres from Perth and occupies a midwest position between the towns of Mullewa and Mt Magnet. The town of Yalgoo was one of the earliest settlements in the Central Murchison, its growth precipitated by the discovery of gold in 1892.
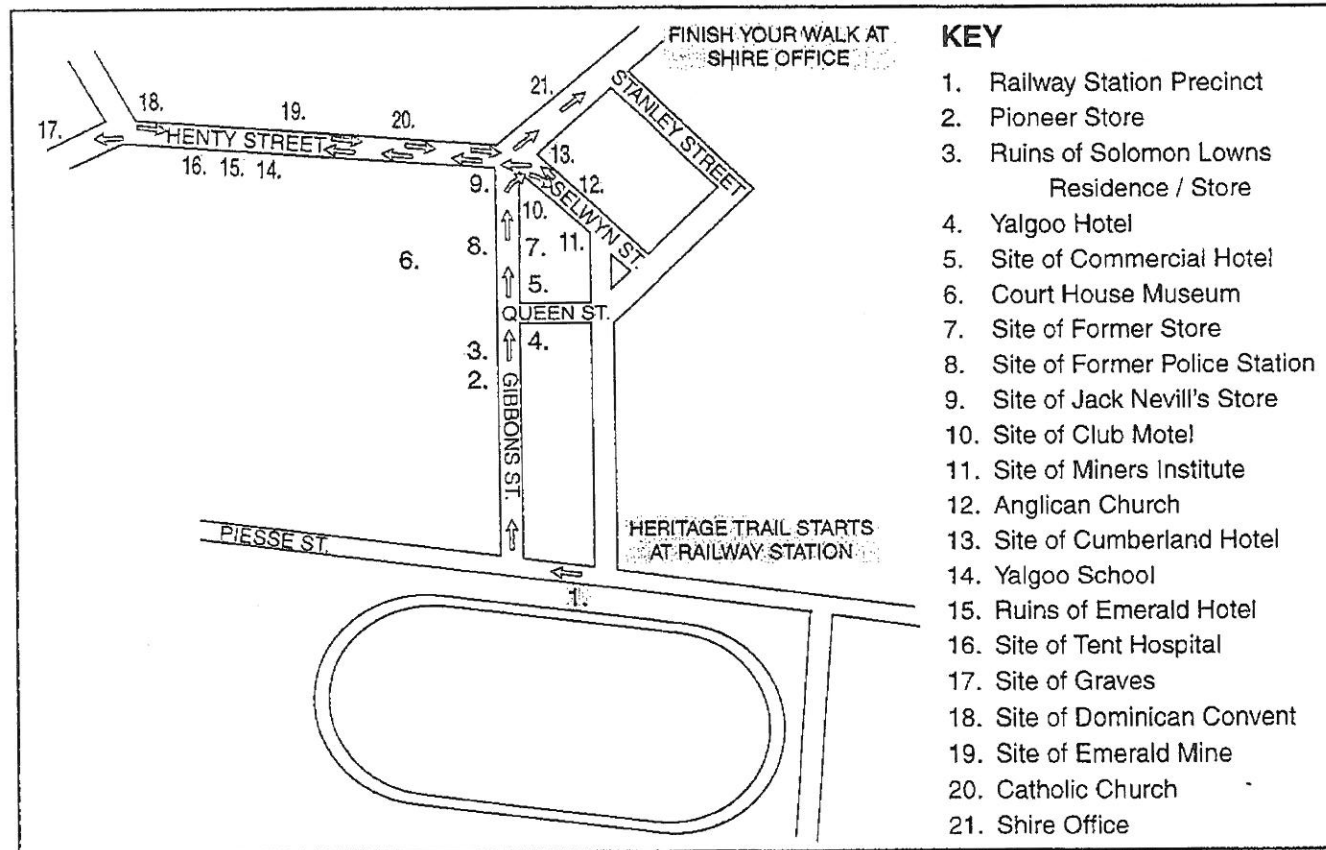
The fortunes of gold have had a checkered history at Yalgoo. Boom has followed bust followed by boom. The current resurgence represents another milestone, albeit different in consequent from its predecessors.

The pastoral industry, based on sheep has continued to be the mainstay or backbone in the district development.

The Yalgoo Heritage Trail is a self guiding walk/drive through the town featuring sites of historical significance. Following the trail map look for signs bearing the Heritage Trail Network symbol.

Please Note:
Persons using this Heritage Trail/ do so at their own risk.

Introduction

There is ample circumstantial evidence that the area around Yalgoo was used by Aborigines many centuries before European settlement. The physical location would have been preferred as the land was well drained, relatively flat and contained fresh water soaks. During good season, the countryside is lush with grass and seeds, and the surrounding rocky hills are abound with game.

The origin of the name Yalgoo has many theories. The aboriginal word for the word blood in the local dialect is yalgo.

The original proclamation of the Yalgoo townsite in 1896 was spelt Yalgo, although actually gazetted as Yalgoo in 1896.

Although early explorers and surveyors (A.C. Gregory 1846 and R. Austen 1854) traversed the area, no settlement was established until early in the 1890's. Several pastoral holdings were in their embryonic development stages. Sheep being the main industry.

Late in 1892, a shepherd named Pearce led a prospecting party from Mingenew to the site of what is now known as the Emerald Reward Claim. Consequently the fabulously rich Emerald Reward Mine (site 19) was so named because much of the early ore was copper stained green. Although 1890-92 were bad drought years for the squatters, the

KEY

1. Railway Station Precinct
2. Pioneer Store
3. Ruins of Solomon Lowns Residence / Store
4. Yalgoo Hotel
5. Site of Commercial Hotel
6. Court House Museum
7. Site of Former Store
8. Site of Former Police Station
9. Site of Jack Nevill's Store
10. Site of Club Motel
11. Site of Miners Institute
12. Anglican Church
13. Site of Cumberland Hotel
14. Yalgoo School
15. Ruins of Emerald Hotel
16. Site of Tent Hospital
17. Site of Graves
18. Site of Dominican Convent
19. Site of Emerald Mine
20. Catholic Church
21. Shire Office

discovery of gold and good summer rains ensured that Yalgoo was firmly placed on the map. Before the year was out every patch of ground remotely gold bearing within several kilometres of the Emerald had been pegged.

In 1896 the Geraldton Express Murchison Telegraph newspaper reported as follows: "Yalgoo is booming and several wealthy English and foreign syndicates have invested capital. The Joker Propriety Venture Syndicate has the Joker Mine, the Carlyle Cumberland Victorian United over 32 acres (80 hectares) employing about 500 men. Machinery arrives daily. There are 12 stores, 2 saddlers, 2 butchers, 3 bakers, 2 cordial manufacturers, 3 blacksmiths, 2 hairdressers, 2 tent makers, a chemist, watchmaker, bootmaker, livery stables, State School and Miners Institute to be taken in hand; a police station, wardens quarters and courthouse under construction, also 4 hotels and 3 under construction".

The population by 1900 in the Yalgoo townsite was 200 with 1300 in the district, the majority engaged in the mining industry. Around the turn of the century, however, mining started a steady decline, poor shows, drought and occasional typhoid outbreaks saw the closure of several mines. From 1903 to 1908 the gold production from the town steadily declined with the resultant closure of the "Emerald" in 1908.

Today Yalgoo stands as a proud reminder of the State's goldmining era, when pioneers travelled vast distances, often through an inhospitable climate and terrain, in search of their fortune.

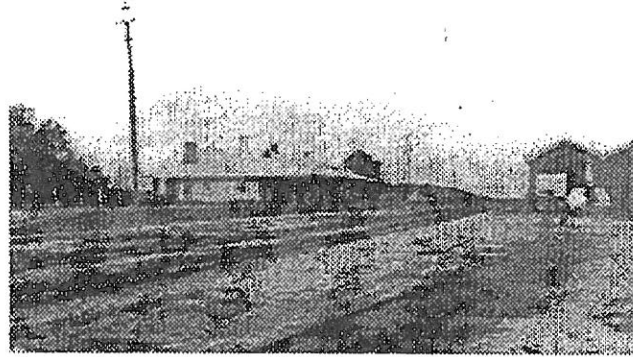# 1. Yalgoo Railway Station
Piesse Street

Photo courtesy of T. Pidgeon

In July 1896 the railway line in land from Mullewa to Yalgoo was opened, a distance of 120km. The Yalgoo Railway Station is typical of the architectural style of the time with thick stone walls and wide verandahs. The covered platform on the south side faced the railway line.

At the time, all the station facilities had not been completed, some not even started. One such building was the refreshment rooms. In mid 1896 Mr. Walter Harrison obtained permission to erect a building on railway property and from there to retail liquor one hour before and one hour after departure of each passenger train.

The arrangement was such that on the Commissioner of Railways taking over the line from the contractors, Harrison's licence would be revoked and he would then be obliged to remove his building.

His hotel was appropriately named the Locomotive, firstly because it was serving railway patrons and secondly because he was an ex engine driver.

When his license of the Locomotive Hotel was cancelled in 1898 it was transferred to the new railway refreshment rooms in the Railway Station Complex (the large room on the west end of the building). Palmer, Alex 1985.

The Railway Station precinct originally included a large goods shed, carriage shed and stock yards.

The Station Master's house being the only house still present on the west side. Two other stone houses on the west side were demolished in the 1970's. On the east side of the Railway Station were three timber houses and single men's huts for the gangers (only one house remaining) Further east adjacent to the old railway line stands the railway water tank mounted above a stoned walled room. Directly south and in close proximity are the old Railway Barracks which housed the changing train crews. *Private residence, please view from road.*

Two railway dams situated a few kilometres north east of the water tank supplied water to the Railway Precinct into the early 1980's.

The railway line was closed in 1978 despite much local protest. After many years remaining empty, the Shire of Yalgoo assumed ownership of the Railway Station and the community refurbished it for use as a Sporting Complex. Today community groups meet there and the annual race meeting is also held on site.

2. Pioneer Store
Gibbons Street

Photo courtesy of J. Bowra

Thomas Pidgeon was born in Gurnsey UK in 1863 and emigrated to Australia on the SS Quetta in 1886. In June 1893 he was a cook at Gabyon Station west of Yalgoo. By the end of 1893 he formed a partnership with Mr. Deal and operated a bakery almost on the spot where the restored Dominican chapel now stands.

Thomas moved and opened the general store and bakery in Gibbons Street in 1894 (present Pioneer Store). He made deliveries in town by horse and cart.

In 1896 he expanded his business to become a produce, skin merchant and gold buyer. He was well known for his helping hand to prospectors in need.

He married Elizabeth Jane Mann in 1901 who was a teacher at the school. They had three children. Elizabeth helped in the store, acted as a nurse when needed and was the Presbyterian Sunday School teacher. Thomas was a member of the Yalgoo Road Board for eleven years, chairman in 1900 and again in 1914, he was also a Justice of the Peace and Acting Coroner.

Late in 1915 Thomas Pidgeon sold his business to J.O. Reckner and moved with his family to Victoria Park. (Palmer, Alex 1985)

3. Remains of Solomon Lowns Residence/Store
Gibbons Street

As reported in the Geraldton Express, Friday April 29th 1921 " On Thursday 21st 1921, Mr. Solomon Lowns J.P. of Yalgoo died at the age of about 64 years. The deceased is supposed to have been a native of London. At an early age he followed a seafaring life and had been in Australia a number of years after being in America and South Africa. He spent some years in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Kimberley, and came to Yalgoo over 20 years ago, and remained here till his death. Mr Lowns was at one time in business as a general storekeeper and carrying and forwarding agent.

About 13th February 1903, he was the victim of what was known as "The Yalgoo Post Office Explosion". An explosive bomb had been posted to him during the night. The package, which had deficient postage, necessitated his calling personally for it. In remarking it was probably some gold posted to him to sell, he was requested by the postmaster to open it there, for if the contents were gold, the postage would be more. In attempting to open the package, it exploded; with the result that Solomon lost his left hand between the wrist and elbow.

Mr. Lowns was a member of the local Roads Board, member of the Licensing Bench and a Justice of the Peace in the early 1900's. He purchased the battery off the Emerald Gold Mine and had the leases also on the Gullewa or Ivanhoe as it was renamed and worked it for a number of years.

At one time Solomon contested an election for the district against Mr. Frank Wallace the standing M.L.A. at the time. He was unsuccessful in winning the election.

Mr Solomon Lowns was buried in lot 15 in the Anglican section of the Yalgoo cemetery.
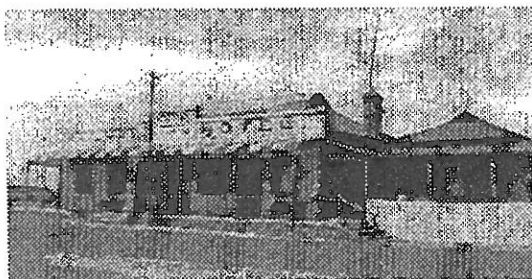
4. Yalgoo Hotel
Gibbons Street

Photo courtesy of A. Bine

On the 12th August 1896, licensee Mr. Arthur Hanlon closed the old Emerald Hotel in Henty Street and opened his new hotel on the corner of Gibbons and Queen Streets where the present Yalgoo Hotel stands today. In 1896 the hotel was named the Emerald, later to be renamed the Railway and then in the 1960's renamed the Yalgoo Hotel.

In late 1898 Walter (Wattie) Harrison, late of the Locomotive Hotel, was it's licensee, this he ran in conjunction with the railway refreshment rooms. About this time it was renamed the Railway Hotel.

In June 1954 the hotel, then owned by M.D. Coyne and leased to A. Armstrong, was burned to the ground, only the foundation, the garage and old stables remaining. In order to retain the license a temporary bar was in operation in the stables the next day. It operated this way for an unnecessary long time while new plans for a new building were deliberated. During this period the freehold was purchased by Ron Hamilton who also ran the garage, electric light plant and the mail run. He bought the Commercial Hotel in Wiluna and using material from there he commenced rebuilding on the old burnt out foundations. It is said the foundation stone of the original hotel is under the present concrete verandah.

Mr. Lyle Palmer brought the freehold from Ron Hamilton

soon after the rebuilding was commenced and it was Mr. Palmer who completed the construction. After Mr. Palmer sold out the hotel changed hands many times. (Palmer, Alex 1985).

5. Site of Old Commercial Hotel
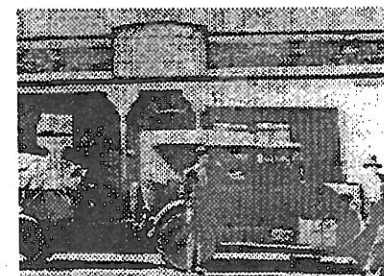*Corner of Gibbons & Queens Street*

Photo courtesy of L. Fleming

A provisional license was issued to William Algernon Viscount Avonmore for the erection of the hotel on lot 65, corner of Gibbons/Queen Streets in May 1896.

The original hotel was named the Yalgoo Hotel and renamed the Commercial about 1927.

The Commercial Hotel operated well into the 1940's. In 1947 the hotel was partly dismantled and taken to Agnew where it lay idle and was finally bought by the Broad family of Warriedar Station in the Yalgoo Shire.

Parts of the foundations and old well can still be seen on this vacant block.

6. Court House Museum
Gibbons Street

In 1885 Mining Register, Peter L. Gibbons; a short time later to become Warden, allocated the Warden's reserve of 13 acres at this site.

At this time a brush humpy served duty as court, post office, mining registrar, and Registrar of births, deaths and marriages. In 1897, as reported in the Geraldton Express supplement the reserve consisted of "very

comfortable Quarters of stone, residence and court".

The original Court House lost its roof in a storm in 1921. A similar Court House was transferred from Day Dawn and erected at Yalgoo in the same year. In 1972 the Court House was vested in the Yalgoo Shire Council and opened to the public as a museum in August 1974.
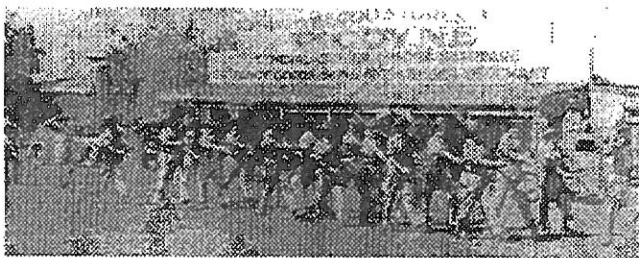
7. Site of Old Yalgoo Store
Gibbons Street

Photo courtesy of J. Coyne

Peter Coyne born in Ireland 1875 and came to Yalgoo in 1915. He worked for a while carting mail to Warriedar with a horse team until he was financed by Jack Clark of the Commercial Hotel into buying Calet Williamson's mud brick store in Gibbons Street. From then on things prospered and by 1923 he owned the store and had a new timber and iron store built around the old mud brick building on this site.

He had significant reserves to weather out the depression and war years after which his various enterprises were in the hands of his family. He died in 1952. The store was run by Des Coyne, then John Coyne who sold the business in 1954 to A.L. Armstrong.

Jack Neville bought the store in 1967 and sold out in 1971 to Barry Giles. The store was again sold to the last owner in 1976 to Ray and Judy Lindsay who ran it for a few years before it was burnt out in the late 1970's.

8. Site of Old Police Station Precinct
Gibbons Street - Private residence, view from street

Photo courtesy of W.A. Police Department

Construction of the police quarters, lock up and stables did not commence until late in 1896. Prior to this Yalgoo's first constable Fred Fox PC 134 had no alternative other than to chain dangerous prisoners to a post. Fox was joined during his first year by Constable Doddridge and Aboriginal assistant Jimmy.

Three remained the permanent number at the station for the next thirty years. In 1934 the station became a one man station. (Palmer, Alex 1985).

On the 10th of February 1983 a new precinct consisting of office, court room, cells and ablution amenities was erected on the corner of Gibbons and Selwyn Streets. The police residence was the former Aboriginal hostel, Warramboo House, on the old Club Hotel site. The stone used in this house was the original stone from the Club Hotel.

9. Site of Jack Nevills Old Store
Corner Gibbons & Henty Street - Private residence, view from street

John Laurence Nevill settled in Yalgoo in 1916 and worked for Peter Coyne. In 1922 he married Nellie Flanagan and in 1924 he opened his own store on this site. At one period beside the store and his mining interests he operated the bakery, the butcher's and the slaughter yard. In his leisure time he served as president, secretary and captain of the rifle, cricket, football, tennis and athletic clubs.

He was a Justice of the Peace and Shire Councillor (Chairman for 21 years) for a total of fifty six years.

At the age of seventy in 1967 he bought Coyne's old store in Gibbons Street. He sold out and retired in 1971. In 1973 he was made a Freeman of the Municipality for services to the town. He was further honoured in 1974 with the Order of the British Empire.

Jack resided in Yalgoo for sixty six years He died in 1982 followed in a matter of months by his wife Nellie. (Palmer, Alex 1985).

10. Site of Old Club Hotel
Corner Gibbons & Selwyn Street - Private residence, view from street

It was Yalgoo's first hotel worthy of the name and was called the Yalgoo Hotel before being named the Club Hotel. It was built of stone with wide verandahs and run by Walter Moxon in late 1894. He was one of the group that started the Emerald Mine and used his share to build the hotel.

In 1896 Frank Wallace, a Yalgoo store keeper and later the first M.L.A. for the district bought the property. Steven Haddy was the licensee at the time and he continued on for several years. The hotel became known as Haddy's Club Hotel and retained the name of the Club from then on. (Palmer, Alex 1985). The Geraldton Express Supplement 1897 reported "The bar is well stocked, there is a well furnished parlour, a large billiard room with a good table and in the big dining room cleared of tables and chairs the lads and lasses tripped the light fantastic toe to the strumming of Mrs Haddy's piano.

In December 1942 the hotel was delicensed. From then on the building had a checkered career. Most of the building material was pulled out and carted to Geraldton to build Lance Maddison's house. The remaining stone walls were used by Ron Hamilton who had acquired the block in 1952 and built the present house, now the police residence. (Palmer, Alex 1985.)

11. Site of Old Miner's Institute
Selwyn Street

As reported in the Geraldton Express Supplement 1887 "The Miners Institute" is one of the finest buildings in the town, in fact it excels in point of size of any similar building on the field. The entire building has been well floored, roofed and lined with match boarding and a good stage erected, with committee rooms added behind. The exterior was cladded in corrugated iron. The block of land on which the Institutes stands was donated by the Government and supplemented with a grant of $800.00 to which the Progress committee (later the Road Board Committee) added $200.00, as a loan to complete the amount expended. The Institute which is only just completed, will be vested in the trustees and be managed by a committee yet to be elected." The Road Board moved from the Miner's Institute in 1907 into their new hall in Gibbons Street. (house on old site between Telecom building and former Police Station Precinct). The Miner's Institute closed in 1956 when the Yalgoo Shire Offices and hall were built in Shamrock Street in the same year.
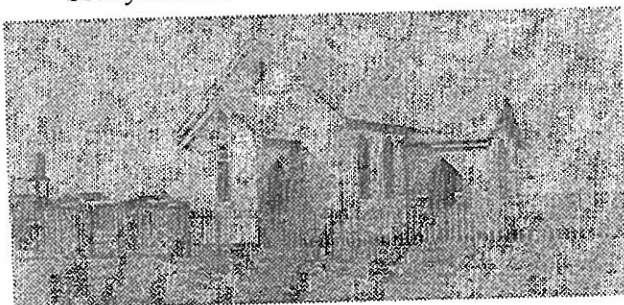
12. Angligan Church
Selwyn Street

Photo courtesy of Yalgoo Courthouse Museum

August the 14th, 1912 saw the opening of the Holy Trinity Church by Bishop Riley, the Anglican Bishop of Geraldton. The white corrugated iron and timber framed church was built by Messrs Millars' Karri and Jarrah Co. The interior of this Victorian Gothic building has timber flooring and the lower half of the walls are panelled in timber. The vestry is on the east side of the building. The church is still in use today.

13. Site of the Old Cumberland Hotel
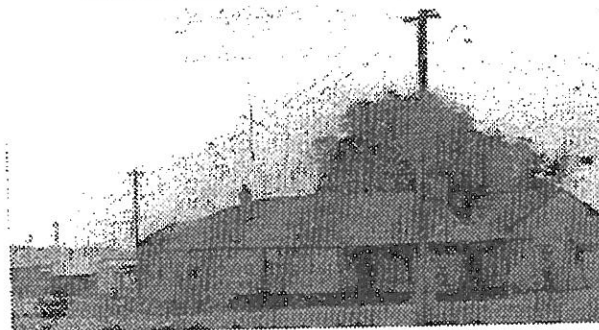*Corner Shamrock & Selwyn Street*

Photo courtesy of L. Fleming

This hotel which went under the name of the Miner's Rest for a year or two was granted a wine and beer license in 1895 before being renamed the Cumberland Hotel. The Cumberland had Yalgoo's first billiard table license, the table being housed in a canvas tent six by eight metres. During the Depression years, the hotel was well known as a soft touch for a hand-out or a meal for many out of work passing through Yalgoo. Early in 1939 the storm damaged building was sold and its materials used in construction of a hotel at Agnew. (Palmer, Alex 1985)

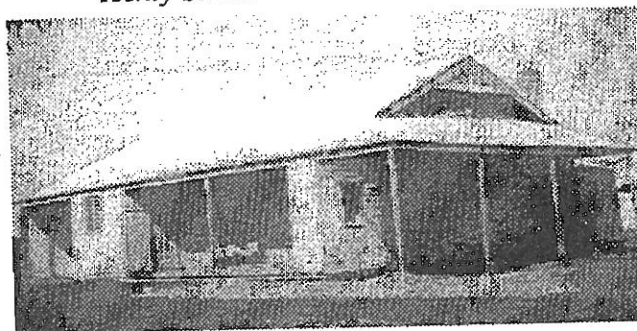## 14. Yalgoo District School
Henty Street

Photo courtesy of B. Coward

March 1897 saw the opening of the first Yalgoo school erected on lot 96 at the end of Selwyn Street with thirty five students enrolled.

The first teacher was John E. Jones on an annual salary of $300.00.

The low position of the school site, had been over looked and in June of the opening year it was severely flooded. The foundations were undermined and a new school was proposed. The children were transferred to temporary quarters in the Miner's Institute. In July 1899 a one roomed stone school building together with quarters were erected on the present school site in Henty Street.
1921 saw the quarters damaged by a cyclone and in 1939 the school was so damaged in a storm that lessons had to be conducted in the Warden's Court: In 1941 the school closed through low attendance. It was reopened in 1945. In 1954 an infants class room was added and in 1963 the pan system was done away with and a septic system installed. In 1968 the present school was built. (Palmer, Alex 1985)

15. Site of Emerald Hotel
Henty Street

The Emerald Hotel, built in 1893, was Yalgoo's first licensed wayside inn. Licensed in the name of Tobin and Bowes in the same year, it was a stone building with an iron roof. In 1894 the license was transferred to Arthur Hanlon. When the town was eventually surveyed in 1896 the hotel and the store which the proprietors also ran, was outside the town boundary and hence was not included on the survey map. On the 12th August 1896, Hanlon closed the Emerald Hotel and opened his new hotel situated on the corner of Gibbons and Queen Streets. The license and name of the original Emerald Hotel were transferred to this new hotel, which is the site of the present hotel, Yalgoo's only remaining hotel.

16. Site of Old Tent Hospital
Henty Street

The original tent hospital was simple canvas structures. In 1896 the tent which functioned as the post office was relocated to the hospital site for use there as additional accommodation following the construction of a new post office. The hospital was managed by a Board. The staff consisted of Doctor Lawson, Matron Grace, two nurses, one warder and a cook. In 1896 there was a severe outbreak of typhoid resulting in the deaths of three people. It did not take

Doctor Lawson long, supported by a vigorous sanitary committee, to be on top of the dreaded disease. The doctor issued a pamphlet titled "notes on Typhoid". The hospital closed in 1900. (Palmer, Alex 1985).

17. Site of Old Graves
Over the hill, west end of Henty Street

Closed in by a fence at the western end of Henty Street not far from where the first tent hospital used to stand, are the lonely graves of three people. Two are identified as being Sydney John Abrahamson, the 17 year old assistant postmaster who was buried on 16th April, 1896, and William McBride, the 22 year old clerk of courts who was buried in April 1896. The third person buried there was Peter Hamilton, a 37 year old who was also buried in April 1896. The three people died during the severe typhoid outbreak. (Palmer, Alex 1985 & Yalgoo Burial Register)
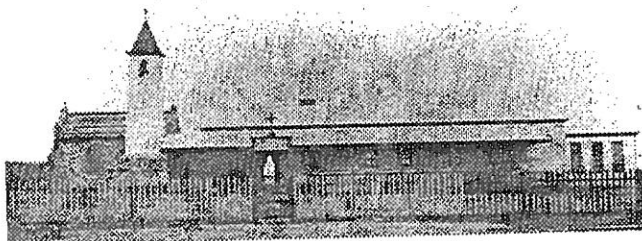
18. Dominican Chapel
Henty Street

Photo courtesy of Geraldton Roman Catholic Diocese

Completed in 1922, the chapel was designed by Monsignor John Hawes for the Irish Dominican Sisters who staffed the Dominican Convent School.
"February 1922 saw the convent open with twenty-six students under the watchful care of the three foundresses, Mother Dominican Murphy, Sister Reginald Rice and Sister Evangelist Graham". (Palmer, Alex 1985)

The convent was a weatherboard and corrugated iron building with verandahs to all sides. The convent closed in 1950 due to a lack of pupils.

Immediately to the north of the chapel is a grotto which has caved in. All that remains of the convent are two stone chimneys. The large framed viewing window to the east

elevation of the chapel is an addition, where the chapel joined the convent. The chapel was restored by the Yalgoo Shire in 1981.

19. Site of Old Emerald Mine
Henty Street - See Introduction
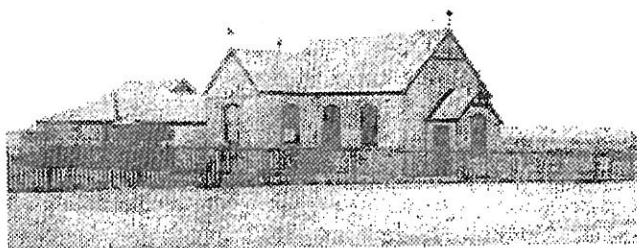
20. Catholic Church
Henty Street

Photo courtesy of Geraldton Roman Catholic Diocese

The original Catholic church, the Holy Saviour, was built of corrugated iron and timber in the gothic style popular at the time in 1909. On this site, a priest's house was built directly behind the church. In 1984 a severe storm rendered the old church unsafe resulting in the present church being erected.

21. Yalgoo Shire Office & Hall
Shamrock Street

Originally, a Progress Association conducted the affairs of Yalgoo, but on the 3rd of July 1896, the Road Board was formed. Meetings were held in a small corrugated iron and timber hall in Gibbons Street in 1907. In 1956 it was decided to erect another building with offices and hall all under one roof, as the Road Board Office and the Miner's Institute or Town Hall were in poor condition,. The present Shire Hall and Office was brought from Wiluna where it had served for about thirty four years as a Miners' Club. In 1961 the Yalgoo Road Board became the Shire of Yalgoo.

This completes the Yalgoo Heritage Trail. For those interested in other historic mining towns, the Eastern Goldfields, Cattlin Creek, Perenjori - Rothsay and Sandstone heritage trails explore the development and fluctuating fortunes of early goldmining centres in Western Australia from the boom years of the 1890's to the present day.

Further Reading

Alex Palmer   YALGOO
                       (Lap Industries Perth 1985)