Built between 1867 and 1870, the Perth Town Hall is a landmark and an important building in Perth’s history, unique in several ways. It is the only major Australian town hall designed in a Medieval style. It is also the only Australian town hall built by convicts, providing evidence of their workmanship and technical skills, during this time, were superior to those of free citizens. From the beginning, it was conceived not as Council offices, but as a venue for civic events, private and community gatherings and celebrations. Major works completed in 2005 have restored the Town Hall to its place as a popular Perth venue for the new century.

Start at the intersection of Hay & Barrack Streets on the north west corner.

Aboriginal people have lived on the Swan Coastal plain for more than 38,000 years. The Moors led by Yallpong and part of the Whadjuk Nyoongar people were the traditional owners of the land north of the Swan River. The site of the Perth Town Hall lies adjacent to the route Aboriginal people used to travel from Matagarup (the river spot on the river near what is now Barrack Street. He and his party climbed to the nearest high point and symbolically felled a tree. Perth Town Hall is built near this site.

The clock tower had other practical uses too. Coloured flags signaled the arrival of the mail ship in Albany and then in Perth, and the bells were the City’s first fire alarm. The electric winding system was designed and installed by Ennis Jeweller in 1950. The Ennis family has cared for the Perth Town Hall clock since about 1930, first by the late Morrie Ennis (1920–1996), and then by his sons, Norman and John. Gramps Paul Ennis, the current keeper of the Perth Town Hall clock, has been climbing the inner space childhood and remembers clearly the days he helped his grandfather and father with their labour of love in building after the clock. Apart from major maintenance, modifications and repair, the family have attended to the clock’s regular care and adjustment as a family tradition for many years. Within walking distance of the Perth Town Hall are both men’s and women’s toilets.

The electric winding system was designed and installed by Ennis Jeweller in 1950. The Ennis family has cared for the Perth Town Hall clock since about 1930, first by the late Morrie Ennis (1920–1996), and then by his sons, Norman and John. Gramps Paul Ennis, the current keeper of the Perth Town Hall clock, has been climbing the inner space childhood and remembers clearly the days he helped his grandfather and father with their labour of love in building after the clock. Apart from major maintenance, modifications and repair, the family have attended to the clock’s regular care and adjustment as a family tradition for many years.

The clock tower was typically placed in the northwest corner of the building. This, together with a four-faced alignment with the directions of the compass, helped travellers to orient themselves. Although it was built by convicts, the Town Hall’s foundation stone was laid by free men. 74 more stone masons worked on the site day and day, building the hall. The hall was opened in 1869. It has three bells weighing between 204kg and 264kg, and is powered by a falling 204kg pendulum weight. When the first hall opened, the hall caretaker was paid £16 per year to regularly climb 38m (125 ft) to wind the clock. Since 1956, the weights have been automatically wound by an electric motor with three gearboxes.

One of the Perth Town Hall’s distinguishing features is the placement of the Man Hall on the first floor. This plan is similar to that of several European town halls built between 1200 and 800. The ground level Undercroft was intended as an open-air market, square, surrounded by arches. The City’s early markets here did not flourish, and ceased by 1877. However, the space has been several coloureful uses. In 1875, the southeast corner was enclosed to house the city’s fire engine. The Town Hall clock face would signal the fire, which was dispatched to the nearest horse from the nearby Hay Street stables. In the same year, the renowned explorer Ernest Giles used the area to house his group and their camels during their stay in Perth following his epic overland journey from South Australia. In 1910, after a year-long campaign, Perth’s first public women’s toilets were installed in the Undercroft allowing women to participate more easily in city life. Even before the building was properly finished in 1871, the Council began to enclose the Undercroft to provide its own offices and rental property. Additions and alterations continued through the 1880s, progressively encroaching the Undercroft. In 1904, Council resolved to construct shops here, to be rented for offices. They enclosed the space entirely and added pedestrian walkways. The West Australian art foundations are visible. A brass plaque near the west door bears the City’s motto: Ferro Necro Fero, meaning ‘Ferocious face’. Today, the Undercroft is line to view the Hall’s south façade. Cross Barrack Street but remain on the north side of Hay Street, to view the Hall’s south façade.
The total cost of the original building was recorded as £4 567, excluding the cost of convict labour. The new venue was welcomed and used as a civic and social centre for a wide variety of activities such as public meetings, lectures, dances, balls, stage shows, banquets, charitable activities, exhibitions, and community concerts. In 1878, Henry Charles Francis was documented as a costumed skater at the Town Hall, which had been popular for roller skating.

A month after the opening party, the Council bought at least six chandeliers, plus additional side lighting for the Hall. These chandeliers were lit by kerosene and cotton oil (a vegetable light). Two fireplaces were located along the south wall of the Main Hall. However, the building had no toilets and no Council meeting chamber. One public staircase was located where the lift is now, causing immediate concern about fire safety. Within 15 years, the Council concluded that the Town Hall building did not meet its needs and was a financial burden. They first offered to sell it back to the Government in 1886 with plans to construct a new one. Similar offers and counter-offers between the Council and the Colonial and State Government continued for the next 25 years. One such offer was actually accepted in 1906. The Council was to exchange the Town Hall site and buildings for £2 000 plus the block of land on the corner of Hay and旋街 Streets and St. George’s Terrace, and the City would erect a new Town Hall. However, Council rescinded its plans after an overwhelming majority of citizens at a meeting chamber. The one public staircase, located where the lift is now, caused immediate concern about fire safety.

In 1892, electric lighting was installed, including a centre ‘starlight’ with 90 jets and pillar gaslights for the stage. The chandeliers were lit by candles, but the clock was lit by kerosene. Notably large jarrah trees felled at nearby Mount Eliza were used in the construction of the ceiling. On 10 June 1944, five women’s volunteer organisations, as a reversal of the war, were combined to form the Perth Women’s Volunteer Laboratories. The Hall was opened every day providing writing facilities and light refreshments, with music and dancing at night.

In addition to the City of Perth’s larger civic events, the Hall is used for public meetings, exhibitions, corporate and charitable events, weddings, concerts and shows.

The Town Hall has witnessed much of Perth’s history. The Town Hall has played its part in wartime too. On 26 April 1945, the City hosted a luncheon for 1200 ADAC soldiers from France. Between 1914 and 1918, the Town Hall was handed over to the Army for its use as a munitions factory. The venue opened every day providing writing facilities and light refreshments, with music and dancing at night.

The Town Hall has witnessed much of Perth’s history. The Town Hall has played its part in wartime too. On 26 April 1945, the City hosted a luncheon for returning ADAC soldiers from France. Between 1914 and 1918, the Town Hall was handed over to the Army for its use as a munitions factory. The venue opened every day providing writing facilities and light refreshments, with music and dancing at night.

In 1958, Perth won its bid to host the 1962 Empire Games. The Council again considered razing the Town Hall and once again a public outcry saved the historic building. The issue was finally resolved when the Council built new civic offices - Council House on St. George’s Terrace. In 1963, and new heritage listed it, it remains the home of most of the City’s administrative and civic functions.

In 1978, the Town Hall was placed in the Register of the National Estate. Finally, assuring its survival for future generations. However, the building’s challenges were not over. It had taken years for the State Government to formally vest the title to the City of Perth. But when it finally did, the deed included only the land on which the building physically sits.

In the early 1990’s a new Rural & Industries (R&I) Bank tower was built abutting the Town Hall’s east façade. Two television s were deliberately sheared off on one side to accommodate the new office tower, and a grey granite veneer was attached to the remaining façade at ground level in an attempt to make the two buildings more compatible. When the R&I building was removed in 1994-95, damage to the Town Hall was revealed. Some of the brickwork had been softened due to excess water runoff, and the foundations had suffered damage.

However, for the first time in a generation the Town Hall was visible from all sides. As it had been designed. Council took the initiative and under the leadership of Lord Mayor Peter Matturas, the City made a major investment to restore the Hall as one of Perth’s heritage treasures. Much of the $50 million cost went into structural reinforcement including earthquake proofing. A new brick run was required to replace bricks that were damaged. Restoration work took nearly as long to complete as the original building.

The most dramatic effect of the restoration was the restoration of the Undercroft, allowing it to be seen as designed 100 years before. A portion of the Undercroft, which performed better than the original jarrah, was enclosed in glass, creating the Lower foyer.

The best way to conserve a heritage building is to keep it in use. so the Town Hall was fitted with an air-conditioner, modern but compatible lighting. Not all the older additions and modifications were removed - the stage and the parapet roofs. added early in the Hall’s history. were retained. The restoration project won two awards from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

The Hall’s re-opening was celebrated on 12 August 2005 with an art exhibition ‘Perspectives in Time’ featuring depictions of the Town Hall throughout its first century.

The Lower foyer is home to the ships hall of the RMASS Perth, which is now the Sir John Woolley. There is also a model of the new wool hall and a view of the ‘Perth II. The RMASS Perth is still in service.

In 1958, Perth won its bid to host the 1962 Empire Games. The Council again considered razing the Town Hall and once again a public outcry saved the historic building. The issue was finally resolved when the Council built new civic offices - Council House on St. George’s Terrace. In 1963, and new heritage listed it, it remains the home of most of the City’s administrative and civic functions.

In 1978, the Town Hall was placed in the Register of the National Estate. Finally, assuring its survival for future generations. However, the building’s challenges were not over. It had taken years for the State Government to formally vest the title to the City of Perth. But when it finally did, the deed included only the land on which the building physically sits.

In the early 1990’s a new Rural & Industries (R&I) Bank tower was built abutting the Town Hall’s east façade. Two television s were deliberately sheared off on one side to accommodate the new office tower, and a grey granite veneer was attached to the remaining façade at ground level in an attempt to make the two buildings more compatible. When the R&I building was removed in 1994-95, damage to the Town Hall was revealed. Some of the brickwork had been softened due to excess water runoff, and the foundations had suffered damage.

However, for the first time in a generation the Town Hall was visible from all sides. As it had been designed. Council took the initiative and under the leadership of Lord Mayor Peter Matturas, the City made a major investment to restore the Hall as one of Perth’s heritage treasures. Much of the $50 million cost went into structural reinforcement including earthquake proofing. A new brick run was required to replace bricks that were damaged. Restoration work took nearly as long to complete as the original building.

The most dramatic effect of the restoration was the restoration of the Undercroft, allowing it to be seen as designed 100 years before. A portion of the Undercroft, which performed better than the original jarrah, was enclosed in glass, creating the Lower foyer. The corrugated iron roof was removed, replaced with sleek aluminium, which perform better than the original jarrah.