



Interpretation Plan - Betty Brown Centre of Women in Rural Australia

Prepared for the Shire of West Arthur – December 2016

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Betty Edith Brown

This Interpretation Plan has been developed to inform the decision making of the Shire of West Arthur in relation to the conditions of the will of former resident, Betty Edith Brown.

Betty Brown was interested in her community and the history of the district and her will directed that a portion of her estate should be used for the establishment of a centre in Darkan that celebrated the contribution of her family to the district. The bequest also stipulated that the household items at Riverview should be, where practicable, used in the museum.

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Introduction

This Interpretation Plan provides a framework for the development and management of an interpretive Centre and meeting space in Darkan that will engage visitors in the vital contribution made by women to rural communities. In addition to identifying themes, stories and media, the plan provides concept design suggestions and linkages to other sites in the region.

This Interpretation Plan has been developed in response to a bequest to the Shire of West Arthur from long time Darkan resident, Betty Edith Brown. Ms. Brown left a sum of money to the Shire of West Arthur to establish a Centre to showcase the contribution of her family to the district, with particular focus on her father's sheep breeding and farming, and her mother's needlework. The plan has been developed in accordance with the principles of the Burra Charter and with reference to the National Standards for Australian Centres and Galleries.

Following acceptance of this plan the next stages of the process involve collecting stories and objects to contribute to the Centre, development of a website and linkages with existing Centres and interpretive centres in the region and Australia.

Background

West Arthur and Darkan

The Shire of West Arthur is located within the Australia's Golden Outback tourism region of Western Australia, 208 kms south-east of Perth. The town site of Darkan is located on the Coalfields Highway, 30 kms west of the main Albany Highway that runs through the eastern edge of the Shire. The nearest town sites are Collie to the west, Wagin to the east, and Williams to the north.

The region is the traditional home of the Noongar people who used the area seasonally for food and water as well as quarrying stone and ochre mining. Many of the local Aboriginal people worked in the agricultural industry providing laboring and shearing services after the settlers came.

The first European settlements in what is now the Shire of West Arthur were developed along the Perth to Albany road, which was built by convict labour in the 1850s, between the Beaufort and Arthur rivers. The construction of the Great Southern Railway attracted settlement away from the 'Coach Road' to the route of the railway line and Darkan was declared a town site in 1905.

The first building in the town, the hotel, was constructed in 1906 for Mrs. Francis. Though modified several times during the years, this hotel still stands just north of the railway station.

The railway went through Darkan in 1907 and immediately the town began to flourish. By 1908, when the first Road Board office was constructed, the town boasted a store, bake house, cafe and boarding house, trading company, blacksmith and bootmaker. These developments were a great boon to the district's first European residents who had established themselves in the general area some 43 years earlier. The first settlers in this town either worked on the land, usually with sheep, or in the various trading posts and stores in the area.

Betty Edith Brown

Betty Edith Brown was born in Katanning in 1927; her parents Albert Augustus Brown (1884–1969) and Edith Jane McKenzie (1893–1983) were both from local West Arthur farming families. On their marriage in 1925, Albert Brown secured two properties alongside the Arthur River, 'Tachbrook' and the farm belonging to settler George Marfleet adjacent to the Arthur Bridge.

Albert and Edith Brown settled on the Marfleet property farm and named it 'River View' with obvious reference to its location near the river.

Albert and Edith Brown had two children, Betty and Dorothy Anne born in 1930. Sadly, Dorothy died in 1943 aged 12. Betty attended Perth College for some years in her teens and it is understood she returned to the farm on the death of her sister.

Albert Brown was a sheep farmer who achieved considerable success in breeding quality wool. Betty worked alongside her father on their farming properties from the 1950s, gaining considerable skills in farming practice. Friends recall she loved being 'hands on' in the sheep yards, drenching and drafting sheep. Her favourite time of the year was shearing when she could put her wool classing skills into practice. She gained qualifications as a wool classer in 1984.

When her father died in 1969, Betty took on the lead role at the farm. Under Betty's management the farm continued to prosper although she did not continue her father's interest in sheep breeding.

In the early 1970s, when Betty was in her 40s, she took up the opportunity to work at an informal local kindergarten in Darkan. Many of Betty's friends recall that this was a very happy time for Betty.

When her mother became ill in the early 1980s, Betty became her full time carer and River View farm was leased. Following Edith's death in 1983, Betty returned to farming the family property herself with the help of some local men to assist with the heavy work. She continued to manage the farm with some assistance until as a result of a fall Betty was forced to relocate to a residential care complex and died in 2015.

Upon her passing, Betty made a bequest to the Shire of West Arthur stipulating her wish to:

"... establish and maintain a Centre in the town of Darkan. This sum to provide for the purchase, building or refurbishment of an existing building and any residue to be invested and the accrued interest to be used for ongoing maintenance and any necessary extensions of said building. The Centre to house the trophies and memorabilia of my father in relation to his lifetime occupation as a wool grower, and as well to home the needlework and associated crafts of my mother, and to be a Centre to house historical relics and items of the district, particularly pertaining to production and development of sheep breeding and wool growing over the years since my father's time and it is my wish without imposing any trust in that regards that the Shire consult with my Trustees as to the site of the Centre and arrangements for its fitting out and I direct that if the Shire has not implemented and sited the Centre within two years of my death then the gift of two hundred thousand dollars shall form part of the residue of my Estate."

A more detailed history of the Brown family, Betty's history and life are detailed in the Significance Assessment that was conducted as part of this project. The Significance Assessment examines the physical objects that were identified to the project team and evaluates their personal, local, regional, State and National significance and suitability for use in the proposed Centre (see Appendix 1).

Scope

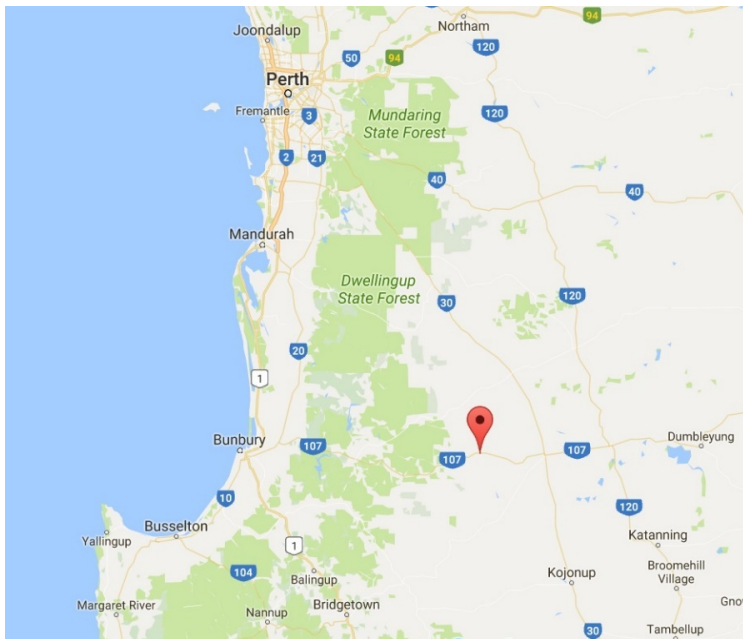
The broad objective of this project is to provide an Interpretation Plan for a Centre in Darkan, outlining suitable stories, themes, and histories, as well as engagement strategies.

A more specific objective is to utilise the collection of the late Betty Edith Brown in the Centre interpretation, to tell the story of the Brown family's contribution to Darkan and the region.

The Site

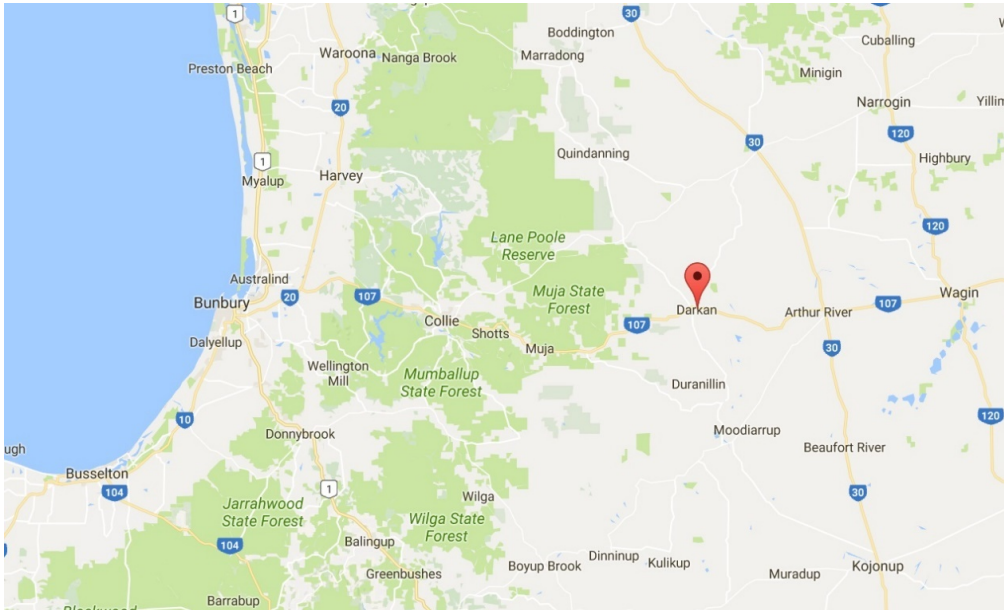
Darkan is located 208 kms south east of Perth, within the Shire of West Arthur. It is located within the Australia's Golden Outback tourism region of Western Australia and the nearest major centres are Kojonup to the southeast, Collie and Bunbury to the west and Wagin to the east.

Figure 1 Darkan in relation to Perth



Source: Google Maps

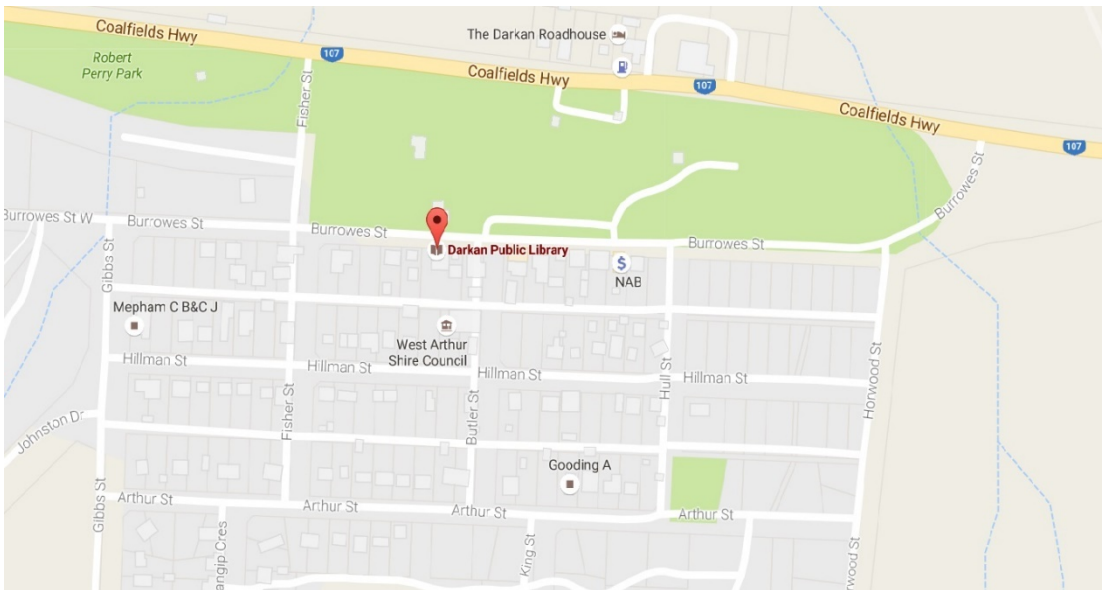
Figure 2 Surrounding regional centres



Source: Google Maps

The site is part of the West Arthur Health and Resource Centre. The building was originally the Darkan Road Board offices and is currently used as a meeting room for the community and managed by the West Arthur Community Resource Centre on behalf of the Shire of West Arthur. The site is near the historic railway reserve and near to a local café and facilities, and the main arterial road, the Coalfields Highway.

Figure 3 Darkan town centre and Centre site location



Source: Google Maps

Methodology

The following methodology was used to develop this Interpretation Plan.

Stage	Activities
Stage One: Initiation and site familiarisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with the Shire of West Arthur Project Officer and reviewed the collection • Agreement was reached on objectives, timeframes, and outputs • The project officer provided additional background materials • The project officer provided a list of those to be consulted and an indication of how they would like the consultation process to be undertaken.
Stage Two: Desktop Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed historical documentation provided by the project officer • Researched material online including Trove, the National Library of Australia's website (http://trove.nla.gov.au) and other relevant sites and sources • Researched similar collections and effective interpretation methods.
Stage Three: Interpretation Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested core and sub themes for the collection • Identified a range of stories that could be told at the site • Identified a range of interpretive media that could be included in the Centre to create the interpretive experience • Submitted draft for comment
Stage Four: Final Draft Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporated feedback and comments into the final Plan and submit

TABLE 1: METHODOLOGY

Brief History

The following provides a brief chronology of the development of the region. This is a brief overview and it must be noted that there is extensive detail to the history provided in the Municipal Heritage Inventory for West Arthur. Highlighted are key events and activities relating to the life of Betty Brown.

Prior to European settlement – Aboriginal people of the Noongar nation lived nomadically on the land. They used the land for ochre quarries and stone mining as well as moving seasonally across the land sourcing food. (the land is still recognized as part of the Gnaala Karla Boodja region of the Noongar nation)ⁱⁱ

1830 – Captain Thomas Bannister exploring the inland route to Albany eventually opened up the area for settlement

1835–1837 – Surveyor Alfred Hillman made a number of expeditions to the settlements between Perth and Albany

1835 – Captain Stirling sent out another expedition

1837 – Established a military outstation

1853 – The building of the Perth to Albany road with convict labour

1850s – The first settlements begin to appear – Arthur River and Beaufort River

1860s – Many of the local Aboriginal people worked in the agricultural industry providing laboring and shearing services after the settlers came

1862 – 67 – Police barracks and gaol built at 125 Mile, then 133 Mile – Arthur River

16 Jan 1866 – Mary Ann Spratt is appointed postmistress at Arthur River

1866 – Gibbs family moves to the Darkan Rock area

1867 – Dr. Henry Harrison Brown moves to the Beaufort area with his children after his wife's death (Betty's grandfather)

1868 – John Dearle settles the Moodiarrup area

1869 – Mount Pleasant Inn built at West Arthur

1870 – Work on overland telegraph line commenced, completed 1877

1874 – William and Sarah Ann Gibbs settle in the Darkan region at Boolading farm. Sarah Ann's diaries are some of the most comprehensive records of family life in the district from the time

1879 – Charles Perry & William Gibbs introduce Peppin blood rams, the first fine wool sheep in the district

1882–3 – St Paul's Church built

1889 – Great Southern Railway opens and reduced much of the trade along the Albany Road. Many of the Old Coach Road centers closed and the towns along the railway line began to thrive. Connecting the railway lines from Collie to the Great Southern Line brought a new era of prosperity

1890s – Arthur River Hall is constructed, on the Albany Highway, significantly contributing to the social and civic activity of the town site

1891 – Piesse Flour Mill at Katanning is built and begins to be a regular place of trade for Darkan and Moodiarrup locals, establishing regional ties in the area.

1 January 1897 – Western Australian Land Company is released by Government

1905 – Six Mile Cottage is built

5 November 1906 – Darkan Hotel is opened

6 Sept 1906 – Narrogin-Darkan railway is opened

7 December 1906 – Darkan is officially gazetted

1908 – Collie-Darkan railway branch opens

1908 – The first Darkan School opens in town

1910 – Darkan Pioneer Hall is completed and becomes a central venue for social and civic activities in the town

1912 – Darkan Railway Station and Stationmaster’s House are completed

1925 – Albert Augustus Brown marries Edith Jane McKenzie and they settle at a property they name “River View”.

1927 – Betty Edith Brown was born in Katanning to Albert and Edith Brown.

1929 – Road Board Office is completed, replacing a weatherboard building on the same site. The building was later restored

1930 – Dorothy Anne Brown is born, a sister to Betty

Late 1930s – Betty leaves River View to attend boarding school in Perth.

1938 – Darkan Country Women’s Association is established.

1943 – Dorothy dies and Betty returns to Darkan to live

1952 – Darkan Saw Mill (owned by Guiseppi Coli) is built. It later burnt down and was rebuilt in 1965. The Coli family operated at least 5 mills around the south-west, including as far north as Gosnells.

1950s – Betty works alongside her father on the family farm.

1964 – An ‘Aboriginal Camping Ground’ is established in the Darkan region by the then Department of Native Affairs. It was a noted as a meeting place and reserve up until 1972

1969 – Albert Brown dies and Betty takes on his roles at the farm.

Early 1970s – Betty becomes teacher in a private kindergarten in town. It is recalled by many that this was a very happy time in her life

Early 1980s – Betty becomes full time carer for her ill mother, Edith Jane, until her passing in 1983.

1984 – Betty qualifies as a wool classer

2006 – Centenary of Darkan celebrations

2015 – Women in Farming Enterprise (WIFE) starts in West Arthur.

2015 – Betty Edith Brown died.

Audience

There are no specific figures available for visitors to the Darkan and West Arthur area due to the small sample size. Figures provided below are from the Wheatbelt Development Commission area, which incorporates the Darkan and West Arthur areas. Although figures are unavailable at the local level it is possible to get a broad picture of visitation to the region.

The majority of visitors to the region are intrastate (87%) with 7% from interstate and 6% international. 75% of overnight trips are by domestic travelers with 25% from international visitors. Domestic visitors stay on average 2.7 nights whilst international visitors stay an average of 13.8 nights. This suggests that although accounting for a relatively small number of visitors the international market stay longer in the region. The sample size is too small to provide an accurate breakdown of domestic visitation into intra and interstate.

The majority of domestic visitors to the region are either on holiday (48%) or visiting friends and relatives (VFR) 30%. The international breakdown shows that 78% are on holiday and 15% visiting friends and relatives. This suggests that visitors to the region could be in the frame of mind to explore and could be encouraged to visit Darkan if the experience is considered to be engaging enough.

In developing the experience in Darkan it is recommended that the following key audiences be considered:

Local Residents

Many visitors are coming to the region with friends and relatives so it is important that people living in larger regional towns in the surrounding area are encouraged to visit and bring their friends and family with them. Linking the Darkan experience with other attractions in the region could assist in encouraging people to visit. Patients waiting for their appointments in the same building will be encouraged to visit and become ambassadors for promoting the museum.

Day-trippers

Darkan is an easy drive from larger regional towns such as Bunbury and provides an excellent opportunity for day-trippers to explore the region and experience a range of activities including the drive trails, other small Centres and local heritage sites and walks.

Located as it is on the Coalfields Highway and in reasonable proximity to the Albany Highway, passing traffic could be encouraged to stop in Darkan. There is a known audience of geocachers who veer off the Albany Highway from Kojonup and travel through Moodiarrup, Lake Towerrinning, Duranillin and Darkan looking for various geocaches before returning to the highway at Williams. Tying in with this audience by placing geocaches in or near the museum and other attractions provides incentive for visitors.

Visiting Friends and Relatives

This is an important market for Darkan as the town is off the main routes south so will rely on local knowledge. Encouraging local residents and people from Perth, Peel and upper south west regions will provide an opportunity to increase visitation. Linkages with surrounding Centres and other heritage attractions will also support this.

Campers

Situated as it is near the Lakeside Campsite, Duranillin, there is an opportunity to appeal to campers, some who stay up to a week and often seek further entertainment in the region. The

newly refurbished caravan park is starting to gain attention in popular camping forums such as Wikicamps Australia and visitors staying, even overnight, are a potential source of visitation.

Grey Nomads

This market tends to travel for longer periods of time and disperse further than many other markets. They are educated and interested and generally have some existing knowledge of the region and its culture and history. Linking Darkan with other local attractions can assist in raising the profile of the town and encouraging the grey nomads to explore further. The newly upgraded caravan park could be an enticement for this audience.

Local School Groups

This is a vital market for the Centre. In addition to raising awareness amongst local schools of the area's heritage, it also provides a local experience for schools throughout the region. It will be important to develop curriculum focused resource kits for teachers to encourage visitation.

Linkages

Local Links

Other historical sites throughout the region would be important to highlight within the Centre, where appropriate. If the stories told at these sites don't relate to the overall theme of the Centre, it would be of good to inform visitors of these sites through a tourist map, brochure, or other means (such as an App in the future). By having this information available to visitors, it will hopefully allow them to extend their visit to the Shire. These sites could include:

- Six-Mile Cottage
- Arthur River Historical Buildings
- Duranillin School
- Moodiarrup Hall
- Lake Towerrinning

It will be important to provide visitors with some expectation of how long it will take to get to each site and what they will find once they arrive. If there is no interpretation or information currently available at the site, it may be worth including it in a brochure as mentioned above.



Figure 4: Six-Mile Cottage



Figure 5: Arthur River Old Post Office

Regional Links

Darkan is in close proximity to several similarly themed visitor attractions that can be key partners for support and cross-promotion. Similarly, these sites should be considered to avoid duplication and dilution of the stories and messages intended for the Centre.

The site in Darkan could be used to tell stories of local women but it is advisable to work collaboratively with other sites to draw visitation.

Some of the key linkages to investigate are:

Williams Shearing Shed, Williams

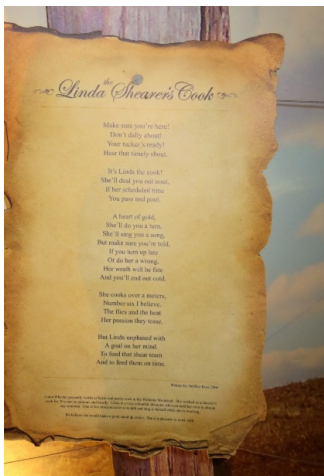
The Shearing Shed is a part of the Williams Wool Shed on Albany Highway, Williams. It provides a succinct experience specific to the wool industry in that region, however it neatly tells several local female stories, covering different roles from shearers cook to the Australian women's shearing record holder from 1986.



Figure 6: Exhibit at Williams Shearing Shed



Figure 7: Exhibit at Williams Shearing Shed



Williams Shearing Shed

Wagin Historical Village, Wagin

The Betty Brown Collection already has established linkages with this site as Edith Brown's lace and needlework has resided here for a number of years (see Betty Brown Collection Significance Assessment).ⁱⁱⁱ The Village is well established and has good visitation and could be a good connection for historical information and stories about early pioneering life and experiences. The Village has diverse representations of women throughout their displays and many of the stories could be built on or linked with stories in the Darkan district.



Figure 9: Exhibit at Wagin Historical Village



Figure 10: Exhibit at Wagin Historical Village



Figure 11: Exhibit at Wagin Historical Village



Figure 12: Exhibit at Wagin Historical Village



Figure 13: Exhibit at Wagin Historical Village



Figure 14: Exhibit at Wagin Historical Village

The Kodja Place, Kojonup

The Kodja Place is an excellent example of a place where the community's stories are directly and intimately included in the Centre. There are many individual stories on display and the representation of women is diverse. The Kodja Place is a key site for women's stories as it has an established attraction based on women's experiences in the region at the Rose Garden Maze, where the fictional (but based on fact, anecdote, and historical research) story of an Aboriginal woman, an Italian migrant and a British settler have been interpreted through fiction and physically through a rose maze.

In conversation with staff at the Kodja Place, it is understood that they are proposing to expand that story and there may be key opportunities to collaborate with them.

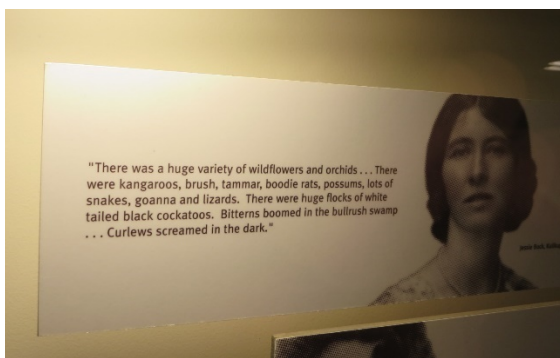


Figure 15: Exhibit at The Kodja Place



Figure 16: Exhibit at The Kodja Place

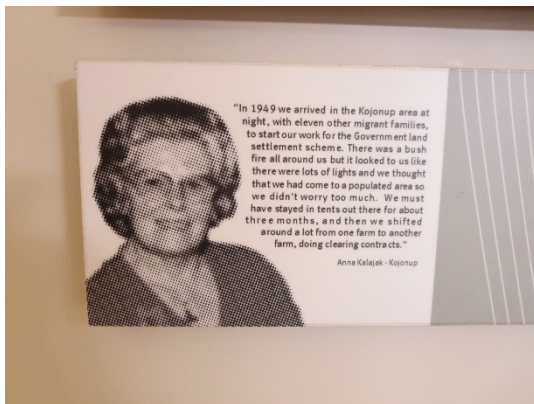


Figure 17: Exhibit at The Kodja Place

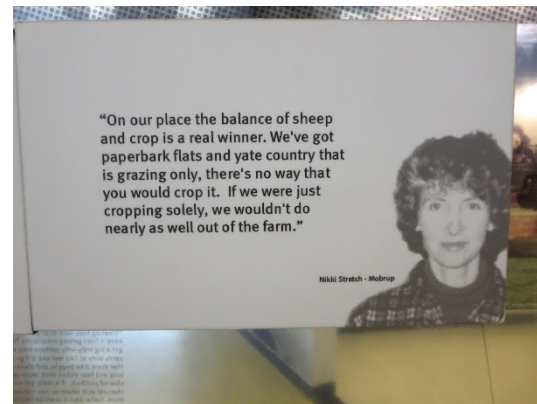


Figure 18: Exhibit at The Kodja Place



Figure 19: Exhibit at The Kodja Place



Figure 20: Exhibit at The Kodja Place



Figure 21: Exhibit at The Kodja Place



Figure 22: Exhibit at The Kodja Place



Figure 23: Exhibit at The Kodja Place



Figure 24: Exhibit at The Kodja Place

National Links

National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame

The National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame (NPWHF) is located in Alice Springs, Northern Territory. NPWHF was established in 1993 with the mission to create:

"a public Centre for the purpose of recognising and honouring pioneering women who contributed to the development of Australia", holding within its collection women's objects donated from across the country and commemorating in a permanent exhibition the achievements of women from across the nation who have been "first in their field".^{iv}

The NPWHF has specific goals related to supporting other similar Centres, including:

- develop a research library of pioneering women's literature, historical records, and personal manuscripts;
- promote knowledge and understanding by the Australian community of the special contribution of women;
- develop relationships and assist other organisations with similar aims.

Connection with the NPWHF could provide valuable research, networking, and support for development of the Darkan Centre, as well as being a vital link for visitors with an interest in history and heritage.

The NPWHF is a key partner with the **International Association of Women's Centres (IAWM)** who's purpose is to *"...promote "culture, arts, education and training from a female perspective" and it undertakes to realise these objectives "by research and development of projects, exhibitions, new initiatives, community activities, seminars and conferences".^v*

The NPWHF and the IAWM provide opportunities to link with local, national, and global experiences of women. These organisations have key goals of supporting other women's Centres and historical societies to promote the story and experiences of women.

To create an engaging, sustainable experience it is recommended that the Darkan Centre connects with these existing sites that could provide resources, connections, and cross promotional opportunities.

Themes

The National Association of Interpreters (NAI), the peak body for interpretation in the USA defines interpretation as:

A mission based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.

The important aspects of this definition are that the process is mission based, meaning that the organisation is trying to achieve something through the communication. The other important element is that the aim is to connect emotionally and intellectually with the visitor.

Interpretation is not merely providing information about a place or creating an entertaining experience; Interpretation provides a bridge between the intellectual and the emotional, the tangible and the intangible. It provides the visitor with an understanding of why they should care about the resource as well as forging strong connections between visitors and the resource.

Professor Sam Ham, a leading interpretation expert, suggests that interpretation should be themed, organised, relevant and enjoyable. This provides the ability to attract the attention of the visitor and then provide them with an engaging message that they are more likely to remember after the experience.

It must be remembered that the visitor is not obliged to undertake the experience and is giving their attention freely, therefore creating something that not only connects but also engages the audience it vitally important. Making something enjoyable does not mean that challenging subjects should be avoided; it simply means that the perspective of the audience needs to be taken into consideration when delivering difficult messages.

Darkan Centre

The will of Betty Brown stipulated the development of a place to house the collections of her father's trophies and her mother's needlecraft. Whilst these stories and objects are very personal and locally important, the collection is somewhat limited due to the house being cleared of possessions before a larger selection of objects could be reserved for the collection. Betty Brown was a very active community member, and an inspirational person in the community who is still considered to be a strong and quiet contributor to the area. Her experiences are somewhat typical of people in the area and the theme for the Centre needs to be broader to be appealing to visitors from outside the local area.

Consideration was given to other unifying themes to guide the development of the Centre in order to create a relatable, broader theme. It was decided that rural women had relatively little representation in the local area and the Centre would provide an excellent opportunity to explore the stories of the role of women in the local areas where they are the backbone of the family and often a dynamic force in agricultural business.

The **mission** of this project has been identified as:

To create an engaging visitor experience that celebrates the role of women in rural areas of Australia with a focus on the experiences of women in the Shire of West Arthur. Creating a vital attraction that will encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more money not just in the town but the region.

A thematic approach allows the organisation to identify a core message that it would like the visitor to understand by the time they leave the site. It has been found that the majority of visitors do not remember the specific facts that are presented to them but they do form an understanding of the place based on the information they receive. Therefore, it is important to develop the interpretation with a specific message in mind.

A theme statement is a complete sentence that is specific and interesting, and creates a bridge between the tangible resource and the intangible meanings, concepts, feelings, and ideas associated with them. The ultimate question being answered by the theme is “so what?” i.e. why is this resource or place important to the visitor and the community. The central theme is then used to guide the development of a series of linked sub themes. Creating a central theme allows the organisation to narrow the stories that can be told about a place and assist in creating a more cohesive visitor experience.

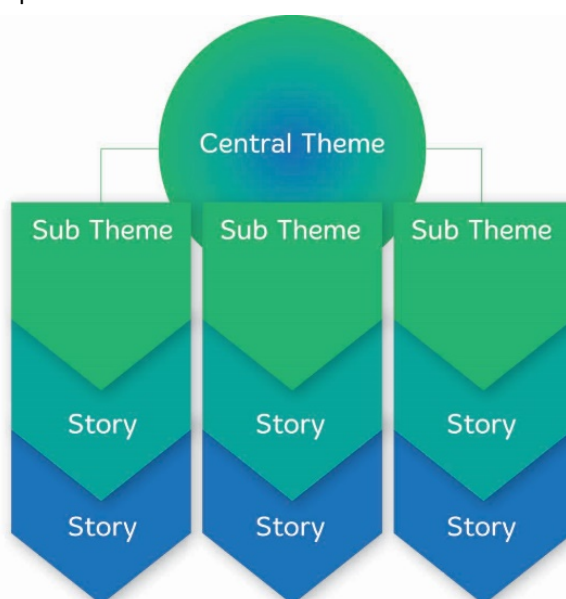


Figure 25: Creating a Theme Statement

Central Theme

The initial proposal for the Centre was to feature the history of Darkan and the Shire of West Arthur, focusing in particular on the contributions of the Brown family, as per the bequest of Betty Brown.

Betty Brown was a very active, community minded and involved woman with life-long involvement with the Church, several community organisations, taught a community kindergarten in town, and all on top of assisting with, then managing, the family farm in Darkan. Though a typical story of many women in rural areas, her journey is not celebrated nor documented in the public eye.

In discussion with the Project Officer at the Shire of West Arthur and the executors of Ms. Brown’s estate it was decided that the theme for the project be expanded beyond Darkan and beyond Miss Brown’s experiences, though a dedicated area of the Centre be set aside for the Brown family story. There are several regional Centres that have documented the life and general history of the Wheatbelt region well including The Kodja Place in Kojonup, the Shearing Shed in Williams and the Wagin Historical Village. It is recommended that any new attraction

contain local stories but have regional threads linking to other sites in order draw together the commonalities of experience.

With regard to the theme it is proposed that Betty's experiences be the inspiration for a centre that celebrates the contribution of women in rural areas. Often women living in rural and remote communities have many roles as the connectors, the backbone, the supporters that keep families, facilities, and farms running as well as providing leadership within the industry and the community.

The central theme suggested for the Interpretation Plan is:

Women in agriculture in our community

Sub Themes

There are many ways that women contribute to agriculture and the community, and as such, four sub themes have been chosen to provide a means narrowing the focus and organising the stories into a coherent framework.

The four sub themes that have been chosen are:

- **Providing** – women provide for their families in the most basic ways by feeding and nurturing them. They provide a home as well as physically providing food, gardens, cooking, skills. They also provide for the wider community in much the same way, opening their homes and hearts to those that need it.
- **Working** – alongside their work running a household many women work on the family farm as well as traditionally taking on 'female roles' in the town such as postmistress, telephone exchange operator, teacher, nurse. The role of working women in modern life extends beyond these roles to running farms, working for council, and taking new leadership roles in community life.
- **Leading** – Women hold key strategic roles at work and are also leaders in the community on councils, in community groups and by supporting other women as well as whole communities.
- **Supporting** – Not only supporting their families, their husbands and their households, women have been instrumental in holding together community groups, health services, education and most importantly, in supporting one another and other families socially.

Stories

The stories are the substance behind the sub themes, detailing the lives and events of the everyday but extraordinary contributions that women have made in rural communities. The table below outlines some of the stories identified through the research process.

Sub Theme	Stories	Potential objects (from Betty Brown collection) <small>See Significance Assessment for details</small>
<p>Providing</p> <p>Women providing for their own families and also for the needs of the community</p>	<p>Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • childbirth • raising • Schooling • Work <p>Feeding the family (and extended too) CWA Cookbook and recipes Gardens/growing food/supplies Domestic duties Creating a house and a 'home' Feeding/accommodating workers</p>	<p>Domestic items i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oven • Washboard & laundry tongs • Preserve jars • Cot • Instructional book (Hints to Mothers) • Grocery order book and household hints
<p>Working</p> <p>Women working alongside their families as well as taking other roles within the community.</p>	<p>Traditional/early days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land clearing • Sheep <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wool classing ○ Roustabouting (shed hand) ○ Drenching ○ Shearers' cook ○ Lambing ○ Lamb marking • Dog training and breeding • Postmistress • Telephone exchange • Nurses • Teachers • Kangaroo skin sales • Uptake of male roles during war years <p>Modern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government (office staff & work crews) • Farm manager/owner • Business owner/manager (i.e. hairdresser, mechanic, beautician, photographer) • Ambulance Driver • Aged Care • Bus driver • Teachers • Wool classer and shed hands • Librarian <p>Functional crafts – not fun but necessity i.e. knitting, crochet, make-do mending</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photographs of Betty working in wool sheds (see front cover) • Trophies ribbons • Handbook for woolgrowers • Slates • Kindy syllabus • School reader • Kindy notebook • Wool basket (not sighted but is in storage at the Neil-Smiths) • Bale stencil • Educational chart from local daycare

Sub Theme	Stories	Potential objects (from Betty Brown collection) See Significance Assessment for details
<p>Leading</p> <p>Women as leaders within industry and socially.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors and Shire President • Chairperson of the P&C • CEO/DCEO • School Principal • Organisations like WIFE and Rural, Remote and Regional Women’s Network of Australia (WA) • Involved with community organisations • Fundraising 	
<p>Supporting</p> <p>Women working together to support each other and their community.</p>	<p>Each other – handling the isolation</p> <p>Community organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWA • Church • Red Cross <p>Community activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music • Theatre • Sport • Landcare/environmental causes <p>The new home front – FIFO/DIDO</p> <p>Business organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIFE • RRR network • Women in Agriculture 	<p>Crochet work of Betty’s mother</p>

Media

There are a number of different approaches and interpretive devices that could be used to tell the stories within the Centre:

Panels

High quality replaceable or interchangeable text panels will hold most the information in the Centre. Objects can be attached to the panels and used for design or interpretive purposes either secured safely for touching or safely displayed behind acrylic for objects too fragile or significant for touching.

It is suggested that one of these panels include a triplicate timeline that compares events in time on a global scale, Australia-wide and in the Darkan region. This should be focused on theme specific events such as demonstrating when women were granted the vote in the UK, when it was granted in Australia and what was happening in Darkan and the surrounding rural areas at that time. This will help locate people in time and build relevance of the local connection.

High Tech/Multimedia

Static panels can provide an overview of the stories but there will always be a limitation on space and the amount of content that can be included and still maintain visitor interest. The development of digital context could facilitate a deeper connection and understanding of the area's stories. This could include the development of oral histories with local people to preserve stories, this could be particularly effective with some of the region's older residents that have stories that will be lost once they have gone.

The development of a smartphone application could provide visitors with a souvenir of their visit and the ability to learn more about the Centre before and after their visit. The content of the application would have to be stored on some kind of web application and this could then be used within the Centre loaded on to iPads or tablets that would give visitors access to deeper layers of information and digital content.

Interactive iPads will enable a larger collection of images or audiovisual material to be made available in the Centre. They are cost effective, easy to manage and content can be updated and changed regularly and easily. iPads and other similar tablets on the market are ideal for this sort of interpretation as they are cheaper than traditional touch screens and readily available. For audio content headphones should be used to prevent noise spill in the small space.

The development of an application of any kind relies on the availability of information and digital resources. Ensuring that the back end of the application is developed in such a way as to allow the easy ongoing development of resources is important to encourage repeat visitation and connection with the place before and after the visit. This also provides a resource that people can access from home and can assist in creating a stronger connection with the place for locals and visitors.

Low Tech Interactives

These would provide a range of touchable and sensory experiences to provide a more kinesthetic experience, this is particularly important for younger visitors who learn through "doing".

There is huge potential for 'touchable' displays to encourage hands on experiences for visitors, especially around the wool industry, including carding, sorting, spinning and grading activities.

Objects and Artefacts

Use of the Betty Brown collection in the site should be informed by the Betty Brown Collection Significance Assessment which has been prepared as part of this project (see appendix). As the Centre, will be unmanned, a self-guided experience is recommended as opposed to staff offering tours or having staff onsite to act as docents. There is space within various displays (see Design Development plans for details) to include objects and they can be made secure to prevent theft or damage. Objects or artefacts of significance should be secured in locked showcases or display boxes to for security reasons. (see Management section for further details).

Several potentially significant objects, not owned by Betty Brown, have been unearthed in the research phase of this project, including the original diaries from Mrs. Sarah Ann Gibbs (microfilms are held by the State Library of WA (SLWA)). Undoubtedly, more objects will be discovered in future phases of this project. It is recommended that the management and conservation of these potentially significant objects (such as long term preservation, research potential, safety, and security, as well as their interest to other organisations like the SLWA) be considered before making them a part of the Darkan project.

In the Design Development Plan an area has been identified for a display about the Brown family specifically. This area could incorporate display panels, cases and showcases incorporating some of the family items in the Betty Brown collection to illustrate their story. This would be an ideal place to display some of the family trophies and ribbons from Agricultural shows, bale stencils, framed family photos, family bible, needlework and other items that help interpret their family's story.

Edith Brown's lace collection (currently on loan to the Wagin Historical Village) could be included within the displays as outlined in the Design Development Plan and also put on display throughout the adjacent Resource Centre currently being developed.

Identification of further artefacts and stories from the community should be considered for inclusion in the Centre to present a well-rounded story and incorporate a diverse range of experiences from the local area.

The next stage of the project would involve seeking stories and artefacts from the community that could be included to illustrate the themes chosen from this plan and complement the objects from the Betty Brown collection.

Oral Histories

Several oral histories have already been collected (particularly about Moodiarrup in "Moodiarrup an Oral History of its Hall & People" by Author Beverley Prideaux) but there are a number of community members that are likely to have a further significant contribution to make and it would be good to undertake a project to collect further stories linked to the themes in the Centre. Key individuals have been identified already and initial discussions have been had with them. These people include:

- John Bird (author of 'West of the Arthur' and key historian for the region).
- Lyn Hatherly (Brown family friend)
- Peter and Paul Doudle (long time Darkan residents)
- Heather Gibbs (female farmer)
- Sheila Curnow (member of the Historical Society)
- Jennifer Nalder (single female farmer)
- Trigwell family (long-time local family)
- Mr Ian Woodruff (Executor of Miss Brown's will)
- Mrs Geraldine King

- Mr and Mrs Ronale and John Neil-Smith
- Mrs Janice King

The Oral History Association of Western Australia can provide information and resources for the collection of oral histories as well as identifying grant funding available to assist with the professional collection and storage of these histories. <http://www.ohaa-wa.com.au>

Community Display Case

There is an opportunity to create displays outside the project space (within the Health & Resource Centre) that will draw people's attention and lead them into the Centre. Involving community groups and rotating displays regularly (approximately once every 6 months) will help generate repeat visitation and keep locals interested.

Community displays could include schools, community and sporting groups that could be invited to create small displays to add to the Centre and encourage community involvement and new audiences.

Marketing

To be available to, and engage with, a wider audience than those that may visit physically, it is important to create a marketing strategy for the Centre.

Website

A website is essential for sharing and storing content. A good quality website will enable visitors to find information about activities and history prior to visiting in the trip planning phase. As much of the interpretive content is going to be digital there needs to be an accessible portal for sharing this content online. This should be linked with social media channels to encourage engagement and reach wider audiences.

There may be the opportunity to link this with the existing Shire of West Arthur or West Arthur CRC website. It is important to make the website easily discoverable by people not familiar with the Shire or those looking for tourism opportunities.

Social Media

A social media strategy needs to be developed to identify which platforms should be used and plan for suitable content curation and scheduling of posts. It is suggested that the museum start with the following:

Facebook – a dedicated Facebook page for the Centre, separate but linked with, the Shire of West Arthur or West Arthur CRC pages. Council pages generally focus on operational information and attract different audiences to those seeking tourist or historical information. Lost West Arthur is a great example of engaging people in history through Facebook.

YouTube – as audiovisual material will form part of the collection; a video sharing platform will make the sharing of this content simple.

Instagram – Instagram offers the opportunity for sharing images as well as allowing for competitions or encouraging the use of hashtags for locals and visitors to associate with their experiences.

There are Centre specific activities that are easily integrated to encourage people to share images from your location, as well as driving awareness of your site amongst new

audiences. An example is the museum activation organization, Culturethemes, which announces a new hashtag each month and encourages museums to get visitors to contribute to the hashtag at their sites. A recent theme was #culturesounds, inviting places to share not just music but any sounds or related objects within their collections.

Joint Promotions

Linking with other attractions and local and regional tourism organisations will provide an avenue for more traditional promotion through brochures and visitor centres as well as a broader level of distribution. Australia's Golden Outback prints thousands of brochures and has a sophisticated distribution system, which will ensure a much broader reach than the Shire could have through existing marketing and promotions budgets. Membership of these organisations is reasonably priced for the associated benefits.

There are several historic properties and sites within the Shire of West Arthur which could be cross promoted with the Centre. This would provide opportunities for visitors to explore some of the areas discussed in the Centre and see more of the Shire. Some consideration should be given to the management of these external sites if they are to be promoted alongside the new Centre and managing the facility, opening times, parking, and signage which may involve further costs to the Shire.

Management

It is understood that the Centre will not be directly manned, but supported with staff in the CRC area of the building with visitors being encouraged to undertake a self-guided experience of the space. Some thought will need to be given to the management of the exhibition space in terms of the security of displays and equipment, refreshing the interpretive experience and maintenance of the space to deal with any damage or cleaning requirements. While the space may be unmanned it will still have staff requirements such as cleaning, maintenance and updating displays and the responsibility for the Centre is likely to fall to the manager of the CRC or the Shire unless a member of staff is engaged specifically for this task.

Collections

To complement the artefacts from the Betty Brown collection, it is recommended that further objects be sought from the community to help tell the story of women in the area. A collections policy should be developed outlining what the Shire would like to collect and how they will manage this. This will give some control over what is collected and ensure resources are allocated appropriately. It is recommended that the focus be on digital collections to avoid issues of storage, conservation, and care of physical objects. Digital collections are comparatively easier to collect, manage and store, and can be changed regularly to invite interaction and repeat visitation for example, a gallery of digital images that can be shown in the Centre, as well as shared online on websites and Facebook.

The Shire may want to make their underlying collections policy one that avoids the collection of physical objects but works with the community to create a virtual collection through photographs and stories.

Managing Content

It will be important to update content regularly and it is recommended that a 'bank' of digital images and oral histories be collected to allow for the displays to be refreshed. Not all content needs to be displayed at all times. Digital storage, copying and formatting will need to be considered and advice can be sought from organisations such as the Oral History Association of WA. If content is to be displayed on iPads and Tablets in the Centre, then updating and changing

content will be able to be managed more simply. Finances will need to be set aside for the upgrading of these machines after a set period, perhaps 5 years.

Staffing

There is significant work involved in caring for collections, even digital ones, and it is recommended that it be considered appointing a suitable member of staff specifically for this role. This person would be responsible for the ongoing acquisition and care of any collection items (including digital photographs, films, oral histories etc.), creating and maintaining exhibition content, managing any usage of the site by community groups, promotion, and networking of the site in conjunction with other local, regional and state attractions.

Without dedicated staff the Shire risks creating a static display which will reduce the Centre's appeal for visitors, locals and especially school groups who would be interested in the local history (see School Groups under Engagement Strategies below).

Security

As the site will be manned in conjunction with the CRC it is recommended that all objects on display be secure and hardwearing. Any significant objects should be in display cases and any on open display securely attached to panels.

Engagement Strategy

Ongoing engagement activities and events will encourage locals to use the site and feel connected to the history. Through high quality engagement activities, the Centre can become a new social space for locals as well as a key attraction for visitors.

Memory Sharing Day

A memory sharing day is an efficient way to collect stories and artefacts for addition to the Centre and would complement existing objects identified from the Betty Brown collection. Such a day would involve inviting local residents to share their photographs, videos, stories and memories and possibly objects to contribute content to a community collection to be used for interpretation. This could be quite targeted to any themes or stories that have been outlined in this plan, or could be open to identify new stories.

Any material can be scanned or digitized on the day and memories can be recorded either audio -visually or physically (having somebody transcribe or have people write their own). If the day is successful it may be necessary to take loans of materials to complete digitising at a later stage. This sort of activity will also identify key individuals for future collecting and engagement activities.

A memory sharing day has the potential to generate a great store of material that can be used to refresh displays and create community exhibitions.

Opening Event

A small celebration for the opening of the Centre inviting all contributors. This will give the community a greater feeling of ownership and pride in the project. It is a key opportunity to strengthen linkages and networks with other Centres and tourism organizations.

Living Books

A storytelling event whereby people with interesting stories about the town can be 'borrowed' from the Library or CRC to have conversations about set topics. This can be very successful as an intergenerational activity with schoolchildren and elders of the town.

Demonstrations

Small demonstrations of relevant skills could be staged at the museum or in the proposed community meeting spaces that will be part of the new build.

These activities would be based on, or related to, the themes in the interpretation plan such as wool carding and spinning or crocheting.

School Activities

Material should be developed in accordance with the Australian Curriculum and in consultation with local schools to create meaningful learning experiences based on the sub themes and stories. Engaging local teachers through a professional development taster session may create opportunities for co-development of these programs with teachers and invite investment from the schools.

National Trust Heritage Festival (NTHF)

The NTHF is a nationally coordinated, month long festival held in April/May each year. The Festival encourages participation in history and heritage across Australia. By registering events with the NTHF host organisations are provided with templates and promotional material, as well as having their events promoted at a state level, reaching new audiences.

The Festival will be held from 18 April –18 May in 2017 and the theme is “Having a Voice”, a topic which the Centre could easily relate to.

Endnotes

ⁱ Betty Brown Collection Significance Assessment: Hocking Studios: 2016

ⁱⁱ South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council Noongar Nation website, <http://www.noongarculture.org.au/gnaala-karla-booja/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Betty Brown Collection Significance Assessment: Hocking Studios: 2016

^{iv} National Pioneer Women’s Hall of Fame website, www.pioneerwomen.com.au

^v International Association of Women’s Museums Website, [Http://lawm.International](http://lawm.International)

Appendix

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1. Betty Brown Collection Significance Assessment: Hocking Studios: 2016
 2. Exhibition Design Development Plan – Rev B: 2016