

Place No. 49 Roebourne Post Office



Roebourne Post Office, 2009, courtesy the National Trust of Australia (WA)

LOCATION	
Name of Place	Roebourne Post Office
Other Name (1)	Roebourne Post & Telegraph Office
Other Name (2)	
Location/Address	
Street Number	69
Street Name	Sholl Street
Suburb/Town	Roebourne
Other Locational descriptor (text)	515125 mE, 7702575 mN (MGA94 Zone 50) Longitude: 117.1453 Latitude: -20.7766

OWNERSHIP & LAND DESCRIPTION				
Owner	Address	Phone/fax	Status	Item No.
G & J Bailey & Sons Pty Ltd	69 Sholl St, Roebourne 6718			
Reserve No.	Lot/Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio	Item No.
	Lot 11	D72573	1786/543	

LISTING AND ASSESSMENT	
HCWA Reference Number	2334
State Register of Heritage Places:(Y/N)	Yes
Classified by the National Trust (Y/N)	Yes
Register of the National Estate (Y/N)	Yes
Local Town Planning Scheme (Y/N)	Yes
Management Category	A

DESCRIPTION	
Construction Date (1)	1887
Construction Date (2)	
Site Type (Place Type)	Individual building or Group
Use(s) of Place	

<i>Original</i>	TRANSPORT/COMMUNICATION: Communications: Post or Telegraph Office Housing or Quarters (Communications)
<i>Present</i>	TRANSPORT/COMMUNICATION: Communications: Post or Telegraph Office Housing or Quarters (Communications)
<i>Other</i>	
Construction Materials:	
<i>Walls</i>	9. STONE 904 Local Stone
<i>Roof</i>	6. METAL 606 Corrugated Iron
<i>Other</i>	
Condition	Fair to good. There is some termite damage to the front of the building around windows and the verandah.
Integrity (how much of the original fabric is intact?):	The place retains a high degree of integrity.
Physical Description	
<p>The Roebourne Post Office is a single-storey stone and iron civic building. The purpose built post office and quarters included two 20,000 gallon water tanks under the rear of the quarters, which are still in place.</p>	
History	
<p>A weekly mail service between Roebourne and Cossack commenced in 1875. ¹</p> <p>In 1885 the post office was situated in one of the timber Government buildings in Roebourne. However, this was deemed to be unsuitable and several complaints were received by the Post Master General's Department from the Roebourne Postmaster.</p> <p>Tenders were initially called for the construction of the 'Post and Telegraph Office and Tramway Station, Roebourne' in December 1885.² However, no works had commenced by mid-1886, and so tenders were again invited for a 'Post and Telegraph Station at Roebourne' in December 1886. ³</p> <p>The successful tender came from Robert and Arthur Bunning, founders of the well-known building and timber company of Bunning Bros. (now Bunnings Ltd). ⁴ Work commenced on 21 June 1887 and the foundation stone was laid in July. W. Lambden Owen, engineer for the North-West, supervised the building work. The workers included three stonemasons and numerous Aboriginal prisoners acted as labourers. Stone for the building was locally obtained and carted to the site by bullock dray while the timber utilised was Jarrah shipped up from the South-West. The building was completed in three months. ⁵</p> <p>In 1888 the gold rushes to Pilbara Creek and Mallina gave economic and demographic stimulus to the region, greatly increasing the volume of mail handled at Roebourne Post Office and by 1890 the mail service was daily (originally a weekly service, then tri-weekly).</p> <p>In 1897 there were eight adults and two messenger boys on staff at the Post Office. By 1919 there was a postmaster, postal clerk and five telegraphists on staff at the Post Office. However, by 1932 the number of staff at the post office had dwindled to three.</p> <p>In 1942, the Cossack Post Office closed and the Cossack to Roebourne mail service ceased.</p> <p>In 1967, the Stevenson screen was installed at Roebourne Post Office for meteorological recordings. In November the following year the Postmaster, Mr N. Matson, ended an era when he sent the last Morse message from the Post Office.⁶</p> <p>The mining boom in the late 1960s and early 1970s saw the Roebourne Post Office experiencing one of the busiest times in its history, employing up to 17 staff during the boom period.</p>	

Modifications were carried out on the building in the early 1970s, including the installation of air-conditioning and the modernisation of the bathroom and kitchen quarters. The counter was also moved.

In 1993, as part of a state wide rationalisation, Australia Post sold Roebourne Post Office. The incumbent Postmaster purchased the property and continued to operate the Post Office and reside in the quarters with his family. Since then the laundry at the rear of the Post Office has been demolished and the front counter in the Post Office has been moved to almost its original position.

In late 1997, the kitchen was renovated in a style in keeping with the age of the building. ⁷

Archaeology

The Roebourne Post Office building has seen little alteration and retains a high degree of integrity.

SIGNIFICANCE

Historic theme (s)

2. TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATIONS
206 Mail Services

Statement of Significance:

From HCWA

Roebourne Post Office has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

- the place provides physical evidence of the growth and prosperity of Roebourne and its development as a major centre of the pastoral industry in the Pilbara region prior to the establishment of the Pilbara Goldfield;
- the place played a vital role in communications during the goldrushes of the 1880s and 1890s and again, during the 1960s and early 1970s, when iron ore mines and mining towns were being established in the Pilbara;
- the place is important for its associations with the development of postal, telecommunications and meteorological services in Roebourne and the Pilbara region;
- the place contributes strongly to the character and townscape of Roebourne;
- the place has close associations with its designer, George Temple Poole, Superintendent of Public Works, and its builders, Robert and Arthur Bunning, founders of the Western Australian company of Bunnings Ltd;
- the place is valued by the local community as a focal point where social interaction and communication take place and contributes to the local community's sense of history and place because of its age and function.

ASSOCIATIONS

Architect/Designer (1)

George Temple Poole

Architect/Designer (2)

Robert & Arthur Bunning

Other Associated Person(s)

Department of Administrative Services
Australia Postal Commission
W Lambden Owen
Mr N Matson

OTHER

References

'Register of Heritage Places – Assessment Documentation Roebourne Post Office', Permanent Entry on the State Register of Heritage Places, Heritage Council of Western Australia, 02 September 1998.

MHI 1996

Site assessed and Place Name Record created

MHI Review 2012

Entry updated



Arrival of Tambourah mail coach at Roebourne Post Office, c1900
Courtesy Shire of Roebourne Local History Office, 2005.2165

¹ Withnell Taylor, N.E. *A Saga of the Northwest, Yeera-muk-a-doo; The First Settlement of North-West Australia told through the Withnell and Hancock families 1861-1890* Hesperian Press, Carlisle WA, p159; Oldham, R. & J., *Western Heritage Part 2. George Temple-Poole Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897* UWA Press, Nedlands, 1980. p. 9.

² *Government Gazette* 10 December 1885, p. 655.

³ *Government Gazette* 30 December 1886.

⁴ *Government Gazette* 6 June 1887.

⁵ Mills, Jenny *The Timber People: A History of Bunnings Limited* Bunnings Ltd, Perth, 1986, pp. 11-12; Fulford, R.E., 'History of Roebourne and District Post Office', Karratha Community Library, n.d; Australian Archives, Series K1209/1 file 1; *Australian Postal Institute Journal* Historical Feature, Roebourne, n.d..

⁶ Fulford, R. E., op cit.; Australian Archives, Series K1209/1 file 1. *Australian Postal Institute Journal* Historical Feature, Roebourne, n.d..

⁷ Letter from the owner, Garry Bailey, dated 26 March 1998.