



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Donnybrook Post Office contributes significantly to the aesthetic quality of Donnybrook's streetscape in a town where the number and density of historic buildings of strong aesthetic value has diminished. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

It is significant in the development of Donnybrook and the surrounding district following the opening of the railway in 1895. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

It is highly valued by the community for its contribution to the life of the community, and its place in the precinct which includes the Police Station and the Court House, the railway station and other turn of the century buildings. (Criterion 4.1)

It is significant in contributing to the community's sense of place as an integral part of the central precinct of the town since 1897. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The place retains its original roofscape complete with functional ceiling vents flumes and cowls which was a common feature of post offices constructed 1890s to circa 1930. Most of these roofscapes have been lost when places have been re-roofed and details simplified. The retention of this aspect of *Donnybrook Post Office* is comparatively rare. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Donnybrook Post Office is typical of small country town post offices and has a strong resemblance to other small country town post offices along the South Western Highway. These exhibit similar plan forms, but have individually treated street elevations. The place is significant in demonstrating the characteristics of a Federation Free Classical post office. (Criterion 6.1)

Donnybrook Post Office fulfils the role of any busy operating Post Office in a modest sized country centre. It is significant in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a purpose built post office and its evolution. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Donnybrook Post Office is generally in good condition. It continues to serve its historic function and retains its symbolic importance. Maintenance of the place has ensured that it has retained many of its features and finishes intact. It was refitted and renovated in 1994 and is in sound condition throughout.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Donnybrook Post Office was originally a Post Office with adjacent Post Master's Quarters, located to the south. The quarters have been disposed of and extensively modified to become shops, which detracts from the integrity of the overall complex. The place acquired an integral telephone exchange which was later relocated to a separate purpose built structure. The Post Office reverted to providing only postal services. It continues to fulfil its original function. The place retains a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Donnybrook Post Office has been modified on a number of occasions, such that only the basic external appearance of the fabric, overall form and roofscape are authentic. Some internal elements and finishes, in particular the ceiling and its ventilators, are authentic. The place retains a moderate degree of authenticity. The associated quarters to the south have been extensively modified and no longer fulfil their original function.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Robin Chinnery, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Philip Griffiths, Architect, of Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Donnybrook Post Office comprises a post office (1912) and former telephone exchange (1950-1952). The original 1897 post office and post master's quarters were located on the adjoining lot to the south. The building is now privately owned and has been substantially modified. *Donnybrook Post Office* is a single-storey, red brick and render building with a corrugated iron roof, constructed as a post office in 1912.

In November 1829, Lieutenant William Preston and Surgeon Andrew Collie explored the coast south of the Murray River; they discovered and explored the lower reaches of the Preston and Collie Rivers.¹ Subsequently the Wellington District was further explored and surveyed. Before 1842, various grants were made in the area; European land use in these years was pastoral, as shepherds brought sheep and cattle to graze. The first attempt at European settlement was in 1842, when a group of five Irishmen with four servants arrived at Wellington Location 55 seeking better farming land than that which was found on the coastal plain.² In February 1843, Archdeacon Wollaston recorded 'The establishment at Donnybrook under Mr. George Nash has entirely failed'.³

After 1850, a number of Europeans arrived in the district to take up land for farming and as pastoral leases. In the late 1850s, William Ramsey of Minninup, near Capel, drove his cattle from that property to a property which he had taken up on the north side of the Preston River, camping at a creek where it entered the Preston River; the place became known as Minninup.⁴

Following the establishment of a convict depot at Bunbury, a small party of convicts in charge of Sergeant Henry Trigwell was sent to Minninup to be employed on public works, which included the first bridge over Minninup Brook and a small brick building near their camp to serve as a gaol.⁵

A memorial of 7 November 1877, from 'settlers and landowners on the Preston River and in the vicinity of the Minninup Police Station on the Blackwood River' requested the provision of a post office and mail service. They suggested that if a post office were established it should be named Preston 'as there is a Minninup on the Vasse Road'.⁶ Mrs. Honorah Butterworth, wife of Constable Butterworth (who had been appointed in that

¹ Frost, A. C. *Green Gold: A History of Donnybrook W. A. 1842 to 1974* A. C. Frost and the Donnybrook Balingup Shire Council, 1976, pp.1-2.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid*, p.2.

⁴ *ibid*, p.8.

⁵ *ibid* pp.13-14.

⁶ Memorial to the Colonial Secretary 7 November 1877, quoted in Owen, G. E. 'A History of the Colonial Post Office, Western Australia W. A. 1829 to 1901' Typescript Battye Library, 1959 p.72.

year), was appointed as the first postmistress of Preston Post Office in November 1877, and the Post Office was operated from the Minninup Police Station.⁷ Mail was delivered to Preston Post Office from Bunbury.⁸ In 1887, Mrs. Butterworth was succeeded by Mrs. Frances Trigwell.⁹ In 1892, as the town and district had developed considerably, the Post Office became the Preston Post and Telegraph Office; Mrs. Trigwell remained postmistress having received training in sending and receiving telegrams at Bunbury.¹⁰

The townsite of Donnybrook was gazetted on 12 October 1894. In 1895, the railway opened through from Boyanup; the station, formerly known as Minninup, was named Donnybrook despite opposition from the Central Preston Progress Association (formed 1894) which had wanted it named Preston.¹¹ At this date the school was still Minninup and the Post office was Preston.¹² In 1895-1896, the progress association made repeated requests for a new school and a post office to be built in the vicinity of the railway station.¹³

In April 1897, tenders were called for the construction of a new police station and lockup at Donnybrook, to be built on a site on the corner of Bridge Street and Blackwood Road (later named South West Highway).¹⁴ As it was operated from the Minninup Police Station, the Preston Post and Telegraph Office was also transferred to the new building when it was completed.

9 July 1897, tenders were called for the construction of a new post office at Donnybrook.¹⁵ The tender was let to Hough and Donald of Busselton, 10 August 1897, at a cost of £596/18/-.¹⁶ The site of the new post office was near the police station, on the eastern side of Blackwood Road (later South Western Highway) south of Bridge Street, Donnybrook. Completed 13 December 1897, at a cost of £25/2/-, *Donnybrook Post Office* was officially opened 13 January 1898.¹⁷

Donnybrook continued to develop; a number of timber mills were established in the district, and with the facility of access to more distant markets since the opening of the railway, the fruit growing industry expanded.

In March and April 1912, tenders were called for Additions to *Donnybrook Post Office*.¹⁸ The contract was let 17 June 1912, to W. T. Deeble of Pinjarra at a cost of £1,172/11/9.¹⁹ Following requests from Donnybrook residents for the establishment of a telephone exchange providing connections with Perth and

7 Owen, G. E. op. cit., p.72.

8 Frost, A. C. op. cit., p.15.

9 *ibid.*

10 *ibid.*, p.15 & 32.

11 *ibid.*, pp.31-32.

12 *ibid.*, p.32.

13 *ibid.*

14 *ibid.*, p.34.

15 *Western Australia Government Gazette* 9 July 1897.

16 P.W.D. Contract Book 1896-1901, Contract no. 1085.

17 P.W.D. Contract Book 1896-1901, Contract no. 1085; Frost, A. C. op. cit., p.34.

18 *Western Australia Government Gazette* 21 March 1912 and 18 April 1912.

19 P.W.D. Contract Book 1911-1913, Contract no. 4589 .

Bunbury, one was included in these additions.²⁰ The additions were completed 13 December 1912, at a cost of £1,136/0/3.²¹ Fittings included a battery stand, notice board, lettering, and private post boxes.²²

In 1929, the Postmaster, J. Coles, was given permission to erect a garage on the postal site. It was jarrah framed, with walls of asbestos sheeting, and a corrugated iron roof.²³

In late 1943, it was proposed that additions be made to the accommodation at *Donnybrook Post Office* under the Post War Reconstruction Programme of the G. P. O. 'to meet existing and future requirements by providing additional accommodation at the rear of the existing Post Office.', and plans were drawn.²⁴ In January 1944, it was estimated that the planned additions would cost £400. These plans were approved in late 1945, and the project was included in the 'A' priority programme by the National Works Council.²⁵

In the post-war period, farming and fruit growing expanded in the Donnybrook area, with a corresponding increase in the volume of business transacted at *Donnybrook Post Office*. The initial plans for alterations and additions were substantially revised in the period 1948 to 1950; and the estimated cost increased to £3,000.²⁶ By 1950, it was considered that the accommodation at *Donnybrook Post Office* had become 'totally inadequate to enable the various activities to function smoothly and efficiently...an enlargement of the accommodation at the Post Office is essential to permit postal activities to expand'.²⁷ The new plans included various alterations to the existing building and an extension on the north-west side 'where ample space is available for the purpose', thus allowing retention of the Postmaster's Quarters' garden on the south-west side, which would 'consequently prevent any deterioration in the appearance of the premises'.²⁸ The Alterations and Additions included a new lavatory block to replace the existing earth closets, the requisite sanitary engineering services, new floor coverings, and electrical installation.²⁹ The extension on the north-west (sic) included a lunch room, a retiring room with w.c. opening from it, the relocated telephone exchange, a

²⁰ Letter, 5 July 1912 from Deputy Post Master General to Messrs. Fry Bros. Australian Archives K1209 Box 9.

²¹ P.W.D. Contract Book 1911-1913, Contract no. 4589.

²² *ibid.*

²³ Correspondence February 1929 Australian Archives K273/44 1929/2.

²⁴ Letter, 8 December 1943, from Deputy Director Posts and Telegraphs to Works Director G. P. O. Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

²⁵ Correspondence 16 June 1944 to 8 October 1945 re Alterations and Additions to Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

²⁶ Letter 30 November 1949, from Director of Works to Deputy Director Posts and Telegraphs re Alterations and Additions to Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

²⁷ Letter, 17 January 1950 from H. B. Sturtevant to Secretary State Housing Commission Australian Archives PP 280/1 P1949/50 323.

²⁸ Correspondence, 11 October 1948 re Alterations and Additions to Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

²⁹ Letter, 30 November 1949 from H. B. Sturtevant to Deputy Director Posts and Telegraphs Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

porch with a telephone cabinet and a desk, with the porch opening to the public space of *Donnybrook Post Office* and to the street.³⁰

The approval of State Housing Commission was required as building materials were still controlled in this post-war period; approval was given 6 February 1950.³¹ Work began in March 1950, with the sinking of a bore to provide water for the improved sanitary facilities.³² It was not until 5 August 1950 that tenders were called for Alterations and Additions to *Donnybrook Post Office*.³³ The tender was let to Frank Chappell of Claremont at a cost of £3,194; the completion date set was 7 December 1950.³⁴

Difficulties were experienced with the supply of materials, and there were also various changes made to the plans, resulting in delays in completing the work and added costs. Chappell had tendered on the basis of obtaining bricks from the State Brick Works at Byford, at £7/2/- per thousand; however, as State Brick Works delivery date was approximately eight months, he sought and was granted approval to purchase bricks from Cardup at £8/12/- per thousand.³⁵ In early 1951, when problems were experienced in obtaining supplies of piping and roofing iron, arrangements were made for these to be supplied to the builder from the Department's Store.³⁶

The major change to the plans was the addition of a room for the Technician with a small porch, as 'the necessity has now arisen to station a Technician at Donnybrook.'³⁷ This room was to be located at the rear of the existing building in order that 'all engineering activities...should be as close together as possible, also for convenience in handling materials from motor vehicles'.³⁸ The cost of this addition was estimated at £1,200.³⁹ Minor changes to the plans included the removal of a no. 3 box framed window from the east wall and a no. 1 box framed window from the south wall; demolition of internal walls enclosing the store; a new doorway in the east wall in lieu of the original position; changes to doors and door frames; enlargement of the Mail Room

30 Plan 9933 Donnybrook Post Office Alterations & Additions July 1950, Department of Works and Housing, Perth Australian Archives K 1201/1 WA 9933.

31 Memo 6 February 1950 from State Housing Commission Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

32 Memos re bore at Donnybrook Post Office March 1950 to May 1950 Australian Archives PP280/1 P 1949/50/323.

33 Tender notice Australian Archives PP280/1 P1949/50/323.

34 Tender Acceptance was subject to additional funds being made available; these were approved 29 August 1950, and Chappell was notified that completion was to be twelve weeks from 18 September 1950. Correspondence, memos and Tender Acceptance notice Australian Archives PP280/1 P1949/50/323.

35 Letters, October 1950, from Chappell, Director State Housing Commission, and Construction Architect Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

36 Correspondence, December 1950-January 1951 re Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP280/1 P 1949/50/323.

37 Letter, 3 January 1951 from Acting Director Posts and Telegraphs to Director of Works Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

38 *ibid.*

39 Supply requisition 20 February 1951 Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323. [*Final cost of the Technician's Room was £1096/10/-.*]

window; and some changes to the fittings.⁴⁰ Inspection of the electrical installation in March 1951, revealed that it was faulty and there was an inadequate number of outlets. Rewiring was required; a new switchboard was installed and re-positioned; fluorescent lighting was installed; these changes added further to the cost, which had risen to £4,290/10/- by May 1951.⁴¹ Problems were experienced with the supply of second class water to service the new septic sewered lavatory in the Post Office and the Postmaster's Quarters, for which a reliable supply of water was essential. As the bore proved unsatisfactory, an electrically driven pump operating in conjunction with a spear point in the river bed was required, at a further cost of £225.⁴² It was decided to convert the recess in the front porch to a telephone cabinet to match the existing cabinet at a cost of £29/8/-.⁴³ As the completion date was further extended and costs continued to increase, the Accountant noted his concerns in a memo to the Construction Manager in February 1952: 'This job is sailing close to the wind again.'⁴⁴ In mid 1952, shortly before completion of Alterations and Additions to *Donnybrook Post Office*, the door to the Exchange from the Mail Room was replaced with a half glass (clear) door 'to allow supervision of exchange staff from the main office.'⁴⁵ Alterations and Additions to *Donnybrook Post Office* were completed 11 June 1952, at a final cost of £5,617/10/8.⁴⁶

Alterations and Additions to the site of *Donnybrook Post Office* 1950-1952, included installation of 12' link mesh double gates in the back fence to permit vehicular access from the rear of the property; installation of new entrance gates, increased from the existing size of 9' to 12', to permit better vehicular access from South Western Highway; re-location of the tank stand and installation of a new 1,000 gallon rain water tank on the south wall.⁴⁷

Dampness was a problem with the floors of the post office in 1956. Work was carried out to remedy the problem in September-October, at a cost of £328/10/-.⁴⁸

In 1958-1959, a new L.L.E. building was erected at the rear of the quarters by R. Falkingham & Son of Busselton, at a cost of £7,093/13/-.⁴⁹

40 Contract changes February 1951 to Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

41 Memo May 1951 Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

42 Memos December 1951 Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

43 Changes to contract Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

44 Memo 27 February 1952 from Accountant to Construction Manager re Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

45 Letter, 27 June 1952 from C. G. Friend, Director Posts and Telegraphs to Director of Works re Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

46 Record of Building Proposal and Building History Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives K 1209 Box 9.

47 Changes to contract Alterations and Additions Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives PP 280/1 P 1949/50/323.

48 Record of Building Proposal and Building History Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives K 1209 Box 9.

In mid 1959, repairs and maintenance to *Donnybrook Post Office* included re-laying of linoleum, and elimination of a leak from the front gable.⁵⁰

In October 1961, twenty seven small and four medium private boxes were installed at *Donnybrook Post Office* to meet increased demand for private boxes.⁵¹

In late 1967, it was necessary to replace the timber floor in the public space of *Donnybrook Post Office* with a concrete floor.⁵²

In 1968, the gravel paving was sealed, garages were erected and rear access was modified by Sawco Bitumen Pty. Ltd. of Welshpool, at a cost of £2,682.⁵³

In 1991, the second entry to *Donnybrook Post Office* was enclosed and the timber counter in the post office was shortened by 1.5 metres in order to provide more space for private boxes.⁵⁴

In 1992-1994, various outbuildings including the garage were demolished.⁵⁵

In January 1994, the place was transferred to T. P. F. & C. Nominees Ltd., care of Global Funds.⁵⁶

In July 1994, alterations were made to *Donnybrook Post Office*. The timber counter was removed, writing slopes were laminated with standard grey laminate, standard Australia Post fittings were installed and the place painted in the standard colours.⁵⁷

Early in 1996, the driveway and carpark were surfaced with hot mix.⁵⁸

In July 1996, the property was transferred to National Mutual Trustees Ltd. of care of Global Funds Management Group; it is held in trust for Mr. G. Frieze of Donnybrook.⁵⁹

The former telephone exchange is in use for post office administration, and has had private boxes installed to the porch area at the front of the post office. There are currently 522 boxes, increased from 324 in 1985, indicative of the growth of business in the period. The former technician's room is in use as a

49 *ibid.*

50 Maintenance and repairs Donnybrook Post Office July 1959 Australian Archives PP 280/1/0 P 1958/59/838; and Record of Building Proposal and Building History K 1209 Box 9.

51 Post Master's Diary 28 October 1961 Donnybrook Post Office.

52 Record of Building Proposal and Building History Donnybrook Post Office Australian Archives K 1209 Box 9.

53 *ibid.*

54 Conversation/site visit by Robin Chinnery with Postmaster of *Post Office, Donnybrook*. Memo, HCWA file PD 0727, 25 November 1996.

55 *ibid.*

56 Certificate of Title Lot 32 Wellington Location 464, 5 January 1994.

57 Conversation/site visit by Robin Chinnery with Postmaster of *Post Office, Donnybrook*. Memo, HCWA file PD 0727, 25 November 1996.

58 *ibid.*

59 Certificate of Title Lot 32 Wellington Location 464, 4 July 1996.

store room. Telephone cabinets have been removed from the building and standard cabinets installed at the front of the place.⁶⁰

Donnybrook Post Office continues to serve the postal needs of the Donnybrook community. It is perceived to be an important and integral part of the development of the town, and of the aesthetic environment of the central precinct. Plans are being made by the local community to celebrate the centenary of the official opening of *Donnybrook Post Office*.⁶¹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Donnybrook Post Office, is a single-storey structure in the Federation Free Style, constructed in several campaigns.⁶² Each is constructed in English bond brickwork with rendered sills, strings, arches, keystones and parapet copings, all painted white and a silver painted corrugated galvanised iron roof.

Donnybrook Post Office is set at the northern end of the town centre shopping strip, east of the railway reserve and station. The much altered former post office and postmaster's quarters lies on the adjoining lot to the south. *Donnybrook Post Office* is set back from the back edge of pavement and the pavement pattern indicates that there were two paths approaching the two porches previously and that there was a perimeter fence and possibly a garden in front of the Post Office. The garden has since been filled in with paving. The integral phone box from the 1950s has been replaced by two Telstra cabins at the northern end of the west or street elevation. There is a concrete and timber seat located on the southern side of the central bay and remains of a galvanised steel tube framed linkmesh fence on the northern side of the building. Several informally arranged small signs have been attached to the front elevation walls and these are beginning to clutter the main elevation.

Donnybrook Post Office is simply rendered in the Federation Free Classical Style. It has an 'ABA' rhythm central bay with an arched central window bay flanked by tall rectangular windows; most panes have been painted out internally. The bay is divided vertically into plinth and window sections and capped with a low pitched pediment. The windows are contained by two rendered string courses and a rendered keystone surmounts the central arch. This section is abutted by two porches with arched openings; the south porch remains open and the northern porch has been infilled with a window. The telephone exchange was attached to the northern side of the Post Office and is set under a lower pitch roof and is attached to the postal building. It is rendered in a similar style to the earlier structure. Floors to the porches are tiled covering up the original granolithic. The windows are casements, and the roof is of silver painted corrugated galvanised iron with the original ridge ventilators in place. The roof is a hipped form with ventilated gables facing the eastern and western aspects. The facade has the words Donnybrook Post

⁶⁰ Conversation/site visit by Robin Chinnery with Postmaster of *Post Office, Donnybrook*. Memo, HCWA file PD 0727, 25 November 1996.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989 pp.136-139.

Office in metal letters in Roman style attached to the rendered strings with a small crown and the E.R. insignia set on a plaque high in the gable.

Donnybrook Post Office interior layout is simply a large single room under the main roof, with recent counters and screen dividing the space into public and work areas. The porches have been modified to suit the accommodation of a larger number of Post Office boxes, following the relocation of the telephone exchange. The Telephone Exchange and Rest Room to the south have been modified; the former to provide more work area and access to the Post Office boxes and the latter to become part of the work area. The technician's room on the rear verandah is simply a storage area. The main postal hall retains its essential features in terms of the timber lined ceiling and wall finishes and fittings. Ceiling ventilators are in their original form and remain in use. The present screens and counters and writing slopes are all products of the recent fitting out work. The floors under the former work area behind the original counter line are of timber and those in the former public areas at the front of the building are granolithic. All are covered with carpet.

Each of the alterations is discernible, though all changes up to the 1950s were designed to blend in with the existing fabric. All remaining fabric is well maintained, though later alterations have tended to ignore the original intent, imposing instead a national corporate identity into an individual place.

Donnybrook Post Office, strongly resembles Beasley's design for the post office in Bridgetown which preceded Donnybrook. Both were similar in plan and elevation rhythm, but differ in stylistic rendering. Both have been subject to similar changes with similar design solutions, though Donnybrook retains a higher degree of authenticity.

A recently constructed metal frame shed in the rear yard is not included in this assessment.

13.3 REFERENCES

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

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