



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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 precinct.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.8.6 Building & maintaining railways
- 5.2 Organising workers and work places

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 202 Rail & light rail transport
- 106 Workers

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The places and elements within the precinct are valued for their shared and individual aesthetic characteristics, and together they form a significant precinct. (Criteria 1.1 & 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

The Geraldton-Walkaway Railway line was the first section of the line to link Perth with the major port of Geraldton and provided for the transport of passengers for over 60 years and still operates for freight in 2005. The construction of *Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct* marked the beginning of the Walkaway locality and stimulated the development of a communication and transport system in the region. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct is associated with George Temple Poole, then newly appointed Superintendent of the Public Works Department, and later Director and Chief Architect, who went on to design a large number of public buildings in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct is associated with prominent Architect and railway contractor Edward Keane who was responsible for its construction, and the construction of the Eastern Railway from Chidlow's Well to Beverley and the Midland Railway between Walkaway and Midland. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from 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.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct is highly valued by the local and wider community as evidenced by the efforts of the City of Geraldton, Shire of Greenough and local residents to conserve the buildings. (Criterion 4.1)

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct contributes to the local community's sense of place as a part of the railway history of the district and a reminder of a way of life no longer practiced. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

The Gatekeepers' Houses on the Geraldton to Walkaway line were the only such railway residences included in a railway construction contract in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

The Gatekeepers' Houses are rare in Western Australia having been designed as small villas rather than simple cottages. (Criterion 5.1)

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct is rare as a substantially intact and fine example of a late 19th century railway system, and is unique in Western Australia having been designed in the British tradition where Gatekeepers resided beside the crossings. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct is a fine representative example of a railway precinct of the 1880s. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct is overall in fair condition, with most of the houses showing some deterioration of the roofs and stone walls. All of the Gatekeepers' Houses are vacant and boarded, and Gatekeepers' Houses at Utakarra and Short Road are derelict and in poor condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The elements of *Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct* operated as railway facilities for varied periods. All the houses are currently (2008) unoccupied. It is unlikely that any of the buildings and elements could be used for their original railway-associated purposes, but the houses could be used as residences again in the future. Overall, *Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct* demonstrates a moderate degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The places comprising *Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct* show evidence of changes to the fabric, in varying degrees to each place, with the major intrusion being painting of the face stone exterior walls at Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point and Utakarra. Most of the corrugated iron roofs have also been painted. There are concrete floors in the Gatekeeper's House at Short Road. The various verandah enclosures, additions and kitchen extensions have had minimal impact on the original fabric of the places. Overall, *Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct* demonstrates a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this precinct is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman historian and Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant, in August 2004, with amendments and/or additions by Office of Heritage staff and the Register Committee.

Supporting evidence has been taken from Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, Walkaway Railway Station Precinct Conservation Plan, December 1996; heritage assessment documentation for 13253 Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point (prepared by John Taylor Architect & Irene Sauman); and 11054 Gatekeeper's House, Bradley's (prepared by Laura Gray & Irene Sauman).¹

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct comprises three stone railway buildings located along the original railway line from Bluff Point to Walkaway: Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point (1886), Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra (1886), Gatekeeper's House, Short Road (1886), together with Utakarra Siding (u.d.) and the remains of the railway line from Bluff Point to Narngulu (excluding the disused railway level crossing of the North West Coastal Highway, the disused railway level crossing on the Geraldton-Mt Magnet Road (Utakarra Road) in Geraldton, and the section of permanent way at Narngulu where the Geraldton Southern Transport Corridor crosses).² Walkaway Railway Station (1886) is registered as an individual place (P01170) and is not registered as part of this precinct. The precinct was constructed by railway contractor Edward Keane to plans by the Public Works Department under Superintendent George Temple Poole. Gatekeeper's House, Georgina, and Stationmaster's House, Nargulu, which are extant in 2008, are excluded from this assessment.

Lieutenant George Grey explored the Champion Bay and Greenough Flats districts in 1839, and Assistant Surveyor A. C. Gregory did so in 1848. Both considered the area suitable for pastoral and agricultural activities. The settlement of Geraldton was authorised on Champion Bay following the opening of the Geraldine lead mine at Northampton in 1849. Geraldton developed as a port for the mineral fields to the north and as a centre for the pastoral and agricultural lands in the surrounding region, including south to the nearby Greenough district, which was a major producer of wheat for the local market.³

A railway line, known as the Northern Railway, was opened from Geraldton to the mines at Northampton in 1879. The line passed close by the Two Mile Well at Bluff Point.⁴ The Eastern Railway from Fremantle to Guildford was completed in 1881 and extended to York by 1885, to serve the pastoral and agricultural industries in that region. Western Australia was not producing enough wheat for local consumption in the 1880s, and had to import flour

¹ This place is referred to in this assessment as Gatekeeper's House, Short Road. Although referred to as *Gatekeeper's House, Bradley's* in the heritage assessment of the place, the name has been changed here to avoid confusion with the McCartney Road house (not included in this assessment), also located at Bradley's.

² The houses were referred to as gate houses and crossing-keeper's houses in the 1886 contract for the line, but the terms gatekeeper and gate-keeping were used consistently in Railways Dept annual reports from at least 1881, and those terms have been used here.

³ Bain, Mary Albertus, *A Life of Its Own*, City of Geraldton, 1996, pp. 17-105; Hay, John, 'Literature and Society', p. 607, In Stannage, C.T. (ed), *A New History of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth, 1981, pp. 599-635.

⁴ Map of Geraldton, accompanying 1901 census.

from the eastern states. The Government wanted to encourage agricultural land settlement and railways were considered an efficient way of doing so.⁵ Although other railway lines were planned, the Colony did not have the funds to construct them itself, so it undertook to have them built by private operators under the land grant system.

In 1886, the Government entered into a contract with John Waddington's West Australian Midland Land and Railway Syndicate to build the Guildford to Walkaway section of a railway line between Perth and Geraldton. The land between Walkaway and Geraldton was already largely settled with no crown land available to grant in return for railway construction, so the Government undertook to construct the 18 miles of line along that section of the route. The line was planned to run along the Greenough Front Flats to a property known as Walkaway, but because the Front Flats were subject to flooding the route was changed to the Back Flats. Although the line then terminated several miles from Walkaway, the name was retained. Construction was authorised by the *Geraldton-Greenough Railway Act, 1886*.⁶

Edward Keane won the Government contract to build the line, with a price of £42,561 3s 6d, and was then contracted by the Midland Railway Syndicate to build the line from Walkaway to Guildford. Keane was an English civil engineer who migrated to Melbourne in 1876 and worked on railway construction in South Australia. Keane worked with J. W. Wright on the Guildford-Chidlow's Well section of the Eastern Railway, taking over when Wright experienced problems. He built the next section to York, and in 1885, was awarded the contract for the York to Beverley line and the Bayswater-Belmont branch line. He was also involved in the construction of the Canning Timber Mill, Zig-Zag Railway and the Victoria Reservoir, and held the directorship of Perth's first water supply company. Keane was active in political life, representing Geraldton (1886-89) and Perth (1889-91) in the State parliament and was Mayor of Perth in 1891-92.⁷

Edward Keane's contract for the Geraldton-Walkaway line comprised the formation and laying of a single track with signals and sidings, the iron rails being supplied by the government. Along the line, Keane was required to provide: a passenger station and goods shed, with platforms, at the Walkaway terminus; six crossing-keepers' houses (also referred to as gate houses); two wells, each fitted with wind engine, pump and 4,400 gallon tank; platforms at the Racecourse and Bootenall Road stations; and, a telegraph line for the length of the track.⁸

In the early development of railways, level crossings in high-risk locations were protected by swing gates operated by gatekeepers or railway station staff. A common design feature on many British railway routes, the idea was exported throughout the British Empire. Gatekeepers' cottages appear to have been more widely constructed on railway lines in the Eastern States,

⁵ Glynn, Sean, *Government Policy and Agricultural Development: A study of the role of government in the development of the Western Australian wheat belt, 1900-1930*, UWA Press, 1975, pp. 34-36.

⁶ 'A Short History of the Midland Railway Company', Part 1, *Railway Institute Magazine*, March 1981, pp. 4-7; *Statutes of Western Australia*, Perth, Gov Print, No. 2 of 1886.

⁷ WAGR, *Annual Report*, 1885, in *Votes & Proceedings of the Parliament of Western Australia*, 1886, Paper 25, p. 8; Gunzberg, Adrian & Austin, Jeff, *Rails Through the Bush*, Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Melbourne, 1997, p. 210-17.

⁸ Geraldton-Greenough Railway contract, 1886, WA Specification Book 2, SROWA, AN 260/CCE ACC 2620 Item 2; WAGR, *Annual Report*, 1885, in *Votes & Proceedings*, 1886, Paper 25, p. 8.

e.g. the 1860s railway line through the Blue Mountains contains twelve identical stone gatekeepers' cottages at level crossings along the route.⁹

Specifications for the Walkaway Station Building and Gatekeepers' Houses called for use of 'the best hard flat bedded stone obtainable within the District through which the Line traverses'. The masonry was specified as hammer dressed in random courses with joints in black mortar. Bricks were to be used for arches, chimney shafts and flues, and the roofing was to be galvanised iron, unpainted.¹⁰

Governor Frederick Broome turned the first sod for the Geraldton-Walkaway line on 6 May 1886.¹¹ Work progressed rapidly, as reported in the Geraldton newspaper, *The Victorian Express*, three months later:

Only three months ago His Excellency Sir Frederick Broome turned the first sod of the line now under construction, and what a change has taken place since then! Or rather what progress has been made! Mr. Keane... has done wonders (though, perhaps, I ought to say that Mr. Riseley has for him) ... Through the virgin bush, starting from the Northern Railway, near to the Two-Mile Well, a road has been cut terminating in the very heart of our immediate agricultural district, and tapping the best of its land... [At] the junction at the Two Mile Well... you see the white (?) tents of the navvies peeping up above the bush and scrub. Between the well and the Northern Line a large iron building has been erected (larger than the Goods' Shed at Geraldton) containing a number of workshops and stables.... A large sized substantially built cottage erected for the accommodation of the crossing keeper, an important personage yet to be appointed, is now nearly finished adjacent to the workshops.... Immediately on leaving the Northampton Line there is rather a deep cutting through the sandhills... The line here takes rather a sharp curve... It then bears slightly to the right toward the hills which divide the Front Flats from the Back Flats. About three miles up the line is another cottage similar to the one at the junction. From thence the line runs away towards the Race Course... A landing is being made here... From this first stopping place it is almost a straight run across to the Seven Mile, where the Second Camp is situated. Here the line runs close under the hills, where men are employed in quarrying for the rough or bottom ballast, Flats farmers with their teams being requisitioned for the purpose... At Grattan's Well at the Nine Mile...is a very pretty camp... To this point from the Bay the formation, with the exception of about a mile, is complete, and a good deal of it ballasted. From the Nine Mile to the Twelve Mile occurs the heaviest work on the line, the ground being very low and swampy, necessitating an embankment being made for the whole distance... At the Ten Mile there is another landing, also another crossing keeper's cottage, the fellow of its predecessors, is in course of erection. From this point you may say that the Back Flats commence, and one can see splendid arable flats stretching far away on either side... At the Twelve Mile another gang of men is camped in a very good situation, and for the accommodation of those who like plenty of company there are two moveable boarding-houses, one of which is kept by hospitable Mrs. Kane... Shortly after leaving the hospitable locality the track runs three or four farms to Mr. S. Marks at the Sixteen Mile.... From the Sixteen Mile to Walkaway the track runs through very thick wattle bush... At Walkaway mechanics have already commenced preparing for the erection of the railway station... a very neat, commodious two-storied structure it is... Besides the men working on the track there are two gangs away on the adjacent hills, quarrying, for building purposes, stone, which is plentiful and good.... The line promises to be speedily completed, and to be most serviceable when completed, tapping as it does a wide extent of fertile land, the greater part of which, up to the present, has been lying idle owing to the difficulty and cost of

⁹ Jack, I, *Significance of the Route across the Blue Mountains in NSW*, icomos.org/australia/Tracks

¹⁰ Geraldton-Greenough Railway contract, 1886, Specification of station buildings, &c, pp. 21-22, Western Australia Specification Book 2, op cit.

¹¹ Gunzberg, Adrian & Austin, Jeff, op cit.

conveying produce to market over the sandy tracks stretching eight or nine miles from the Bay. It also brings several of our outlying stations within easy range of market. But more important still...it is the first link in the chain which will connect the port of Champion Bay with the present metropolis of the colony, that chain being the Midland Railway.¹²

The three cottages mentioned in the report were at Bluff Point, Utakarra and Bootenall. A later report was published on 19 February 1887, when the line was completed. At that time, 'all Geraldton and Geraldton's wives' were treated to a train tour to Walkaway, where there was 'a noble looking station, built of freestone, with a goods shed to match'. But it was the Gatekeepers' Houses that came in for the most comment:

One of the most extraordinary things connected with the construction of this line is the gate-keeper's cottages built at intervals along the road. There are six of them altogether, they were built at a cost of £3,300 and many enquiries were made as to what they were really intended for. Gates there are none and at the very lowest estimate it would cost £40 to furnish one of them. They are more like villa residences than gate-keeper's cottages, they are built of solid stone, and contain five rooms each. They are too roomy for an ordinary gate-keeper, and there is nothing like them on any other line that I am acquainted with. Perhaps the Commissioner of Railways may intend to furnish them by and by, and make way-side stations of them but unless the Midland line goes on, and gives an impetus to trade and traffic I fancy they will prove to be expensive items.¹³

The article makes it clear that the provision of the gatekeepers' houses was considered an anomaly in rural Western Australia. Their inclusion on the line is likely to have been the idea of George Temple Poole, who had arrived from England to take up the position of Superintendent of the Public Works Department in July 1885, succeeding Richard Roach Jewell. The Geraldton-Walkaway line was the first new railway construction he was involved with in the State. Temple Poole would have been familiar with the busy railways and crowded countryside of England. He was the son of Lieutenant Colonel John George Temple and Dame Louisa Poole. Both families had country properties, some of which George had inherited.¹⁴

Poole studied architecture and civil and mechanical engineering in England under C. Crabb Creeke and George Judge, and was later associated with Sir James Lemon, president of the Institute of Civil Engineers and John Ashdown, who was noted for the design and execution of harbour works in England. Poole was 29 years old when he took up his new colonial position. In 1889 he was appointed Director of Public Works, and was the first to occupy the position of Chief Architect, to which he was appointed in 1890. He held that position, and the positions of Superintendent of Public Works and Assistant Engineer in Chief, until his retirement from the public service in 1896. He worked in private practice until his death in 1934. Poole was responsible for the design of many public buildings, including railway stations, schools, police stations, post offices and courthouses, as well as many individual works, during a period of great expansion in Western Australia.¹⁵

The Geraldton-Walkaway line was gazetted safe for passenger and goods traffic on 9 June 1887, and Geraldton Resident Magistrate, Maitland Brown, officially opened the line on 21 June, during the local Queen Victoria Jubilee

¹² *The Victorian Express*, 7 August 1886, p. 3.

¹³ *The Victorian Express*, 19 February 1887, p. 5, item by-line 'A Flying Correspondent'.

¹⁴ Oldham, Ray & John, *George Temple-Poole: Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897*, UWA Press, Perth, 1980.

¹⁵ Pitt Morison, M., 'Immigrant Architects and their work, 1885-1905', unpublished, Battye PR13589.

celebrations. The Geraldton Railway station was decorated for the occasion and a gaily decorated steam locomotive drew a number of carriages with guests and visitors to Walkaway. A separate carriage occupied by the Resident Magistrate and 'about sixty gentlemen' was furnished with 'cushions covered with blue velvet and decorated with old gold, the curtains and fittings being of the same colour'.¹⁶ At Walkaway:

Tables covered with wine glasses were all ready, champagne and other wines were quickly uncorked, and the ceremony proceeded with... The proceedings were of an enthusiastic character, although many regrets were expressed at the stoppage of the Midland Railway, and there was a general agreement that the railway stopping where it does [at Walkaway] can be absolutely of no use to the district.¹⁷

Delays in completion of the Midland line meant traffic on the Geraldton-Walkaway line was light at first. A regular train service, starting on 2 July 1887, consisted of trains each way on Tuesday and Saturday only.¹⁸ To encourage use of the line, the Greenough Farmers' Club requested 'landings along the railway line at convenient places, with good approaches thereto'.¹⁹ Two new sidings were 'laid in' on the line in 1889, and a third was added in 1890-91.²⁰ The first two were Georgina and Wiley's, both marked as stations on an 1890 Public Plan. The third new siding was likely to have been Bradley's, which was located between McCartney Road and Short Road. Sidings were also provided at Utakarra, and at Meru and Wonthella, between Utakarra and Bluff Point. These were all in existence by 1921. Stockyards and wheat stack areas were provided at some of the sidings to facilitate the transport of farm produce. None of the sidings were manned.²¹

The Geraldton-Walkaway line was operated as part of the Northern Railway. In 1891, there was a marked increase in the traffic on the Walkaway line:

This result was contributed to largely by materials hauled in connection with the construction of Midland Railway from Walkaway. The traffic over Government Line from Walkaway to Geraldton will no doubt benefit considerably by the completion of the Midland Railway.²²

When gold was found in the Mount Magnet area the Murchison Goldfield was proclaimed and the *Mullewa Railway Act, 1892* authorised construction of a railway line from Geraldton to Mullewa. The route of the Mullewa line began from the Geraldton-Walkaway line, at a point approximately halfway between the Gatekeepers' Houses at Utakarra and Bootenall. This point was known as Mullewa Junction (later Narngulu) and a station was established with a shelter shed, passenger platform, latrines and loading platform.²³

Both the Mullewa line and the Midland line were opened in 1894, resulting in a great increase in rail traffic on the lines between Geraldton and Perth as people, supplies and equipment were railed to the goldfields. The Mullewa

16 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 9 June 1887, p. 378; Gunzberg & Austin, op cit.

17 *The Victorian Express*, 25 June 1887, p. 3.

18 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 7 July 1887, p. 434.

19 *The Victorian Express*, 18 June 1887, p. 6.

20 WAGR, *Annual Report* 1889, in *Votes & Proceedings*, 1890, Paper 19, p. 7 & *Annual Report* 1890, in *Votes & Proceedings*, 1891, Paper 10, p. 5. No gazettal for these sidings was found.

21 WAGR files, Progress plan 290 (Bootenall), 291 (Georgina) and 292 (Bradley's, SROWA, ACC 1642/290-292; Map of railway system accompanying WAGR, *Annual Report*, 1921. Meru was not listed by 1935; WAGR, *Annual Reports*, 1890-1910.

22 WAGR, *Annual Report* 1891, in *Votes & Proceedings*, 1893, Paper 24, p. vii.

23 Gunzberg & Austin, op cit; Mullewa Contract, 1892, Western Australia Specification Book 2, op cit.

line was rapidly extended to Yalgoo (1896) and Mount Magnet and Cue (1898).²⁴ The lines radiating from Geraldton to Northampton, Walkaway and Cue were known collectively as the Northern Railway.

An 1898 survey of the Geraldton-Walkaway line shows the Walkaway Station Buildings and all Gatekeepers' Houses except Bluff Point, which was located on a previously surveyed suburban lot.²⁵

The Gatekeepers' Houses were never occupied for their intended purpose. This is confirmed by the fact that no money was spent on gate-keeping on the Northern lines, while on the Eastern line the cost for this service was just over £167 in 1889 and £218 in 1890.²⁶ The lack of need for gatekeepers on the Geraldton-Walkaway line would have been a major reason for the fact that no such houses were provided for in any later railway construction in the State.²⁷ From the early 1900s:

In order to control the road traffic at some busy level crossings and thus prevent delays to trains, gates are provided, worked, for the sake of efficiency and economy, by the man who attends to the signals.²⁸

In the 1890s and early 1900s, platelayers occupied the Gatekeepers' Houses at Bootenall, Georgina and McCartney roads.²⁹ It is likely that the houses at Short Road and Utakarra were occupied in that capacity as well. The Gatekeepers' Houses would have been considered luxury accommodation for the platelayers, who were usually provided with two room cottages.

Traffic on the Midland and Northern lines was reduced after 1903, when goldfield production began to fall. Passenger trains between Perth and Geraldton, which had been a daily service, were reduced to twice weekly by 1916. By the 1920s, at least some of the Gatekeepers' Houses were privately tenanted. Narngulu Station, as the junction of the Mullewa line, continued to be manned, as did Walkaway Station, which was the junction of the Government and Midland lines. Lower revenue during the Depression, and increasing competition from road transport immediately following the War, resulted in the introduction of a road passenger service on the Midland line to reduce operating costs.³⁰ The first railway bus ran from Perth to Moora on 12 October 1946, and the service was soon extended to Geraldton. By 1948, six return bus journeys a week were being undertaken and a freight service for parcels and small goods was added.³¹

Reports on the freighting of wheat from the various sidings between Walkaway and Geraldton indicates that, by 1950, most grain was sent from Walkaway Station, and even there the total amount was relatively low. The

24 Gunzberg & Austin, op cit; Mullewa Contract, 1892, Western Australia Specification Book 2, op cit.

25 Map of Geraldton, accompanying 1901 census; PWD Plan 6528, site plans of the railway crossings on the Walkaway-Geraldton line. Lines built prior to 1891 were not fully surveyed, which placed a burden on affected landowners when they wanted to sell their property. Surveys on those lines were undertaken retrospectively to remedy the inequity.

26 WAGR, *Annual Report*, 1889, in *Votes & Proceedings*, 1887, Paper 8, p. 18.

27 Western Australia Specification Books 2, op cit, & Western Australian Specification Book 2A, SROWA AN 260/CCE ACC 26202A, Item 2.

28 WAGR, *Annual Report*, 1910, p. 10, in *Votes & Proceedings*, 1910-11, Vol. 2 Pt 1, Paper 8.

29 WAGR files, Progress plan 290 (Bootenall), 291 (Georgina) and 292 (Bradley's), SROWA, ACC 1642/290-292.

30 Bull, T. J. 'A History of the Midland Railway Company of WA', typescript, p. 71; 'A Short History of the Midland Railway Company', Part 3, *Railway Institute Magazine*, Oct 1981, pp. 8-9.

31 Bull, op cit, p. 72.

date of closure of the sidings has not been ascertained, but is likely to have been in the 1950s or 1960s. Narngulu was no longer manned by 1945.³²

In 1964, the State Government purchased the Midland Railway, taking over operation of the line between Guildford and Geraldton on 1 August 1964.³³ In 1968 a review of safety issues recommended that Short and McCartney Roads should have stop signs installed to supplement the existing signs warning of a railway crossing ahead, because visibility along the line from the roads was not sufficient. The Gatekeepers' Houses were part of the problem because they blocked a clear view of the line.³⁴

Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point

Because of its location in Geraldton, the Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point continued to be occupied by railway employees into the 1990s, much longer than the Houses along the rest of the line. Geraldton was the headquarters of the Railway Department's Northern District, which covered all the lines north from Walkaway.³⁵ It was occupied by the ganger of the Bluff Point permanent way gang for a number of years, prior to closure of the Geraldton-Northampton line in 1957.³⁶

During 1995-96, the Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point was unoccupied for about twelve months and during this time the French doors and three interior four-panel doors were removed. In 1996, Celia Lofthouse leased and occupied the place. Ms Lofthouse undertook work on the place to make it habitable, including some interior painting.³⁷

Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point was classified by the National Trust in 1995. In 1998, the place was listed on the City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory with a Category 2 management rating.³⁸ In 1999, Ms Lofthouse placed a caveat on the property to protect her interest in the place in the event of a proposal to demolish. In 2004, the place was granted permanent entry on the State Register of Heritage Places as *Railway Cottage (fmr), Bluff Point & Two Mile Well* (13253).

Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra

No occupation records have been located for Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra, or information regarding the Utakarra siding. The place has been surplus to Railway Department requirements for some time.

The immediate area on the east side of the line at Utakarra included reserves for noxious industries, such as an abattoir, and several recreation areas. In

³² WAGR, *Annual Report*, 1935, p. 74, in *Votes & Proceedings*, 1935, Paper 7; WAGR, Narngulu Progress Plan 289, 1939-56, SROWA, ACC 1642/289.

³³ *Midland Railway Company of Western Australia Limited Acquisition Agreement Act*, 1963; Bull, op cit, p. 72.

³⁴ Railway Crossing Protection Committee, *Railway level crossing protection in Western Australia: report of the Committee appointed by the Government of Western Australia to review the safety requirements for all railway level crossings in the State*, Perth, 1968, pp. 33.

³⁵ WAGR, *Annual Report*, 1920, p. 2, in *Votes & Proceedings*, 1920, Vol. 1 Pt 2, Paper 7.

³⁶ Suba, T., Callow, B. & Grundy, G. *City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory*, 1996-97, Place no. 69, information provided by Geraldton resident Shirley Scotter.

³⁷ Telephone conversation with Celia Lofthouse during research for the heritage assessment of the place, March 2003; Plan from WAGR property file for DP 521, Properties Section, PTA offices, East Perth Railway Terminal, West Pde, East Perth.

³⁸ *City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory*, Place no. 69.

1966, a future railway marshalling yard was proposed for the area and several hundred acres of land were acquired by the Railways Department for the purpose. The acquired site extended north from Eastward Road and encompassed the Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra. Although the marshalling yards did not eventuate, the setting apart of the land, together with the expected eventual demolition of the House, meant that the place could not be sold and was not maintained.³⁹

Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra eventually became uninhabitable. It has been vacant for many years and has fallen into disrepair. In 1998, the place was listed on the City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory with a Category 2 management rating.⁴⁰ The City of Geraldton has expressed concern at the possible demolition of the place.⁴¹

Gatekeeper's House, Short Road⁴²

Gatekeeper's House, Short Road, was located immediately south of Bradley's siding. In 1932, the place was occupied by private tenants, Robert and Josephine Desmond, who purchased the property for £100 in 1934. The purchase was complicated by the fact that the building was situated only 12m from the railway track. Safe working practice required a 20m buffer between the track and private land so only part of the site could be sold. The remainder of the House site, a 7.92m wide strip, was subject to a lease from the Railways Department.⁴³

Robert Desmond was employed by the Main Roads Department. His father, Denis (Dennis) Daniel Desmond had arrived in Western Australia on the *Success* in 1843, and by 1857 was farming at Greenough. Josephine Desmond was still in residence at the Short Road house in the mid 1970s. Her son Paul, who had grown up at the place, inherited it and occupied it for a time before moving to Geraldton. In the 1980s, Gatekeeper's House, Short Road was rented for some years. Paul Desmond wanted to sell the place, but it was subject to flooding due to its low-lying position and was not wanted by anyone. Around 1990, Paul's son, Patrick Desmond, occupied the place.⁴⁴

In 1998, Gatekeeper's House, Short Road was listed on the Shire of Greenough Municipal Heritage Inventory with a Category 2 management rating.⁴⁵ A heritage assessment undertaken in June 2002 found that the place was below threshold for the State Register. In 2004, the Public Transport Authority (PTA) bought back the Gatekeeper's House, Short Road with the intention to demolish.⁴⁶

39 WAGR files, Utakarra proposed marshalling yards, SROWA, WAS 1208 CONS 4780 Item 4852, Vols. 1-3, 1965-73.

40 *City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory*, Place 122.

41 *Geraldton Guardian*, 4 April 2003, p. 15

42 Also referred to as *Gatekeeper's House (fmr)*, *Bradleys*, HCWA place 11054.

43 Site plan showing leased and owned portions of land, WAGR, Lease File L2519; telephone conversation with Paul Desmond, former owner, during research for the heritage assessment of the place, May 2002.

44 WAGR, Lease File L2519; telephone conversation with Mr Paul Desmond, op cit; West Australian Biographical Card Index, Battye Library.

45 *Shire of Greenough Municipal Inventory*, Place no. 119.

46 Information provided by Mudji Nielsen, PTA properties department.

Walkaway Railway Station

The Walkaway Railway Station Building, incorporating station offices and stationmaster's residence, was built in Federation Arts & Crafts style with an associated stone goods shed. The township of Walkaway developed around the station. As the junction of the Government line and the privately owned Midland line, Walkaway was home to a number of railway employees. In 1910, these included the stationmaster, night officer, examiner, ganger, loco foreman, two guards and three repairers.⁴⁷

Additions for a post office and post office residence were made c.1899 and extended in 1913. From the 1920s, the post office residence was occupied by the assistant stationmaster and later by other railway employees. With the acquisition of the Midland line by the Government, Walkaway Station, as the terminus of the Government line from Geraldton, was no longer required, and closed in 1966. In 1971, the Walkaway Division of the Geraldton Historical Society arranged to lease the Walkaway Station Building to save it from demolition. In 1972, a regional museum was opened in the place.

In 1996, the Shire of Greenough purchased Walkaway Station Building, leasing the land from Westrail for a peppercorn rent. A conservation plan was prepared for the place. In 1999, Walkaway Station Building was entered on the State Register as *Walkaway Railway Station Museum*.⁴⁸

In 2000, the sale of Westrail's freight division to private enterprise was finalised under the *Rail Freight System Agreement Act, 2000*. The final disposal of remaining railway residences along the rail corridor has become a priority for the Public Transport Authority.

The group assessment of the places on the Geraldton-Walkaway line has been instigated as a result of community concern over possible demolition of some elements, in particular, the Gatekeepers' Houses at Short Road and Utakarra. The gatekeeper's house at Bootenall has already been demolished, although the date of this has not been ascertained.

Walkaway Railway Station Museum was entered in the State Register on a permanent basis in 1999. In November 2004, *Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point & Two Mile Well* was entered in the Register on a permanent basis.

In 2005, the section of line from Narngulu north-west to Bluff Point and back south along the coast to Geraldton was replaced by a railway line and road, known as the Geraldton Southern Transport Corridor, which follows a direct line east-west between Narngulu and Geraldton Jetty. In September 2005, the Public Transport Authority began removing the railway line between Bluff Point and Narngulu as it was no longer operational. Three representative sections of line were left, two adjacent to the Gatekeepers' Houses at Bluff Point and Utakarra, and one to the siding at Utakarra. All other railway line fabric was removed, although the route of the line remains clear, particularly between Chapman Valley Road and North West Coastal Highway where it is set in an extensive curved cutting. Rails also remain embedded in all road crossings, although all signage and signals have been removed.

In 2008, Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point is owned by PTA and unoccupied; Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra is owned by PTA and is vacant and derelict; Gatekeeper's House, Short Road is owned by PTA and is unoccupied; and

⁴⁷ Wise's *Post Office Directories*, 1910.

⁴⁸ Heritage Council assessment documentation, *Walkaway Railway Station Museum*, Place 1170.

Walkaway Station Building is owned by the Shire of Greenough on land leased from PTA and is occupied as a museum.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct comprises several stone railway buildings located along the original railway line from Bluff Point to Walkaway: Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point (1886), Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra (1886), Gatekeeper's House, Short Road (1886), together with Utakarra Siding (u.d.) and the remains of the railway line from Bluff Point to Narngulu, excluding the disused railway level crossing of the North West Coastal Highway, the disused railway level crossing on the Geraldton-Mt Magnet Road (Utakarra Road) in Geraldton, and the section of permanent way at Narngulu where the Geraldton Southern Transport Corridor crosses. Gatekeeper's House, Georgina, and Stationmaster's House, Nargulu, which are extant in 2008, are excluded from this assessment.

The buildings in *Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct* are located at various points along the original route of the Geraldton-Walkaway railway line, between Bluff Point to the north and Walkaway to the south. All the places are located on east of the railway line, except Utakarra Siding, and are in close proximity to the line and adjacent to a road crossing over the line. Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point is at the north end of the group and, southwards from Bluff Point: Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra, and Gatekeeper's House, Short Road. Of the extant Gatekeepers' houses, three are included in this assessment.

The Gatekeepers' Houses were designed and built to be occupied by a crossing keeper where roads crossed over the Geraldton to Walkaway line. Each of the four houses is the same design and display some characteristics of Victorian Georgian style, although Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point features a bay window at the front. Typical of the style, the Gatekeepers' Houses have a simple rectangular form, with symmetrical façades and a central entry, and unsophisticated details and sash windows.

All of the Gatekeepers' Houses have the same floor plan, although this plan is reversed for Gatekeeper's House, Short Road. The plan is simple, with a central front door opening into a corridor with two rooms to the right, one on the left and one ahead. The room on the left leads to the rear kitchen. The exterior is accessed through a door on the side of the kitchen. The Gatekeepers' Houses are single-storey stone structures with hipped roofs clad with corrugated iron, and corbelled face brick chimneys. The gutters are ogee profile with round galvanised downpipes, where those elements remain in situ. The eaves are lined with matchboards, as are the original gable ends to the front verandahs. The roofs extend over the front verandahs to form a skillion roof supported by evenly spaced square timber posts. The overlap timbers on the front verandah soffit at Short Road provide evidence that the roofs may originally have been shingled. The squared random coursed stone walls are tuck pointed on the front façades and mortared elsewhere. The stone is quoined around the window and door openings. The quoin stones have a distinctive, even pitted pattern on the surface of the stone. The window heads are detailed in an arched brick soldier course and outside header course and the sills are rendered. The central front doors are the original six-panelled doors with fanlights, flanked by timber framed double hung sash windows, with a bay configuration on the left side. The kitchens have louvred windows.

The interior fabric comprises walls that have a hard plaster finish, skirtings, architraves, timber door casements, and original four panel doors, lathe and plaster ceilings, and 15cm jarrah floor boards throughout except where the floor has been replaced with concrete in Gatekeeper's House, Short Road. The simple bracketed painted timber mantelpieces remain in situ in the main front room fireplaces except where it has been removed in Gatekeeper's House, Utkarra. The pantries have timber framed ladder shelving.

Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point is located on portion of Lot 3046 immediately adjacent to the railway line and Chapman Road crossing, at the northernmost crossing on the Geraldton-Walkaway line. The House, on the north side of the railway line, faces west to the ocean, only several hundred metres away. There is a low corrugated fibro-cement fence across the front boundary, and outbuildings on the north side and at the rear, including an asbestos clad skillion shed, and steel clad garage. The site is elevated and slopes down to the road frontage. The Two Mile Well is located separately on the north side, close to the road. Gatekeeper's House, Bluff Point is as described for a typical Gatekeeper's House except for some alterations. The front verandah has asbestos clad dado walls, and an extension along the north side is clad with weatherboards. The north extension incorporates a bathroom and extended kitchen. The door in Room 4 has a porch attachment and has been boarded up. The face stone walls have been painted, and gutters are dislodged. Overall, the place is in fair condition.

A 200m section of railway line has been retained to the south of the house. To the northeast (rear) of the House, embedded in ground and obscured by undergrowth, are timber sleepers from the Geraldton to Northampton Railway that intersected with the line at this point.

Gatekeeper's House, Utkarra is located within Geraldton Lot 2922, immediately adjacent to the railway line. The house, on the east of the railway line, faces due north immediately adjacent to the railway crossing, with the line passing across the southwest of the triangular site. The house faces the main road between Geraldton and Mt Magnet. There are no outbuildings. The site is low-lying, below road level, and flat. Gatekeeper's House, Utkarra is a typical Gatekeeper's House except for a corrugated iron clad extension along the east side, within which is an asbestos wall of the kitchen beyond the stone wall alignment, and a cement block bathroom. The front verandah has a concrete floor, and remains of a timber frame along the front shows a previous enclosure. The roof sheeting shows some loose sheets and rust, and the front and part of the side of the roof has been painted. Interior and exterior walls show extensive damage, stone disintegration, rising damp, and damage to asbestos sheeting. The original timber floors throughout are termite damaged and boards have been removed in many sections. The stove has been removed from the kitchen; many skirtings, architraves and door casements have been removed or damaged. There is evidence of fire damage in the living room fireplace where the mantelpiece has been removed. External doors and windows are boarded throughout. The place is in poor condition, vacant and derelict. A 75m section of railway line has been retained southwest of the house.

Gatekeeper's House, Short Road is located within part Victoria Location 100, and mostly in the railway reserve immediately adjacent to the railway line at the first railway crossing north of Walkaway. The house, on the southeast side of the railway line, faces northwest directly opposite the railway crossing in Short Road. On the southeast side of the property is the main road

between Walkaway and Geraldton. There are several outbuildings at the rear, both within and outside the fenced area. The site is low-lying and flat, and the railway line and crossing are elevated significantly above the ground level of the house. Gatekeeper's House, Short Road is a typical gatekeeper's house except the roof is painted, a section of the roof is missing from the northwest corner and there are no gutters or downpipes. The timber overlaps on the front verandah soffit suggest the original roof may have been shingled. The front verandah has a dado wall, with louvred windows above across the front, and full height walls on the sides of the verandah. The verandah, dados and extensions on the side and rear of the place, are constructed of concrete blocks typical of the moulded pattern blocks of the 1950s. The front verandah has a concrete floor, the front bay window frame has extensive termite damage, and an aluminium framed sliding glass window has replaced the other front window. Floors in Rooms 1 and 4 and the kitchen are concrete. The walls show extensive evidence of rising damp and subsequent damage around the lower sections of the walls, as well as serious vertical cracks in the centre of the northeast wall of Room 3, horizontal cracks at the ceiling/wall connection in Room 4 and other cracks at various other locations throughout the place. There is an intrusive metal doorframe, a brick wall through the centre of a room, which intrudes into the window opening, and cement rendering to dado height on the original walls. Room 1 has a plasterboard ceiling with c.1950 art deco motif and fluorescent tube. The kitchen fireplace has a Metters No. 1 wood stove and a c.1950s fitout. The bathroom addition and various outbuildings have no heritage value. Overall, the place is in poor condition. The roof is rusted, the timbers are significantly termite damaged, there is considerable rising damp and fretted stonework, and there are significant cracks in the walls.⁴⁹

Utakarra Siding

Utakarra Siding consists of a raised stone platform adjacent to a 100m section of railway track.

Railway Line – Bluff Point to Narngulu

All but three representative sections of the railway line between Bluff Point and Narngulu has been removed as a result of the 2006 decommissioning of the line. A 200m section of line remains adjacent to Bluff Point Gatekeeper's House, 75m has been retained adjacent to Utakarra Gatekeeper's House and 100m at Utakarra Siding. Elsewhere, the route of the railway line remains although all ballast, sleepers and rails have been removed. The curved extensive cutting between Chapman Valley Road and North West Coastal Highway is still clearly defined in the landscape. Rails remain in the road at all crossings, although signals and signs have been removed.

Overall, *Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct* is in fair condition, although Gatekeeper's House, Utakarra is vacant, derelict and in poor condition. The unoccupied Gatekeeper's House, Walkaway requires maintenance and securing.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Geraldton to Walkaway Railway Precinct is best compared with the Menzies Railway Group (1898) on the Eastern Goldfields line, which comprises a

⁴⁹ Interior details taken from heritage assessment June 2002: below threshold.

collection of stone buildings that includes the special design station building, Class 2 stationmaster's house and three platelayer's cottages. The Kalgoorlie Station Master's House (1897) but has been extensively altered for use as single-men's barracks and is currently unoccupied.

Other Class 2 stone stationmasters' houses were built on the Mullewa-Murchison line at Yalgoo, Mount Magnet, Austin, Day Dawn and Cue.⁵⁰ The Yalgoo station building and stone stationmaster's house remain in good condition, with a barracks, square tank on a stone tank stand and a dam. *Yalgoo Railway Station Group* is entered in the State Register. The stationmasters' houses at Mt Magnet and Cue remain in good condition.⁵¹

Gatekeepers' Houses were a common design feature on many British railway routes, and the idea was exported throughout the British Empire. Gatekeepers' Houses appear to have been more widely constructed on railway lines in the Eastern States, e.g. the 1860s railway line through the Blue Mountains contains twelve identical stone gatekeepers' cottages at level crossings along the route.⁵²

In the 1881 'Report of Public Works, Railways & Roads and Bridges' it was stated that works above the original contract for the Fremantle-Guildford line included three gatekeepers' cottages.⁵³ No details regarding their location was provided, but one gatekeeper's house has been identified at the East Street crossing near the East Guildford station. This is a four-room brick and iron residence with verandahs front and rear. In 2002, it was assessed as below threshold for the State Register.⁵⁴ There were 32 crossing gates provided on the Fremantle-Guildford line, the majority of them unmanned.⁵⁵

The gatekeepers' houses on the Geraldton to Walkaway line were the only such railway residences included in a railway construction contract in Western Australia. The Gatekeepers' Houses are rare in Western Australia having been designed as small villas rather than simple cottages.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

Various WAGR property files, Properties Section, PTA offices, East Perth Railway Terminal, West Parade, East Perth.

WAGR files and plans relating to the various places, State Records Office.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

50 WAGR, Mullewa-Murchison-Cue Contract, Western Australian Specification Book 2A, SROWA AN260/CCE ACC 26202A, Item 2.

51 Uhe, Phillipa, *Survey of Railway Heritage in Western Australia*, National Trust of Australia (WA), March 1994, Region A/5.

52 Jack, Ian, *The Significance of the Route across the Blue Mountains in New South Wales*, www.icomos.org/australia/Tracks/

53 Report of Public Works, Railway & Roads and Bridges 1881, in *Votes & proceedings*, 1882, Paper 18, Part 2, pp. 5-6; General conditions of contract on First section of the Eastern Railway, 1879, Western Australia Specification Book 2, op cit.

54 HCWA assessment documentation, *Gate-keeper's House*, Place 14798.

55 Minchin, R. S. & Higham, G. J. *Robb's Railway: Fremantle to Guildford Railway Centenary*, 1881-1981, Australian Railway Historical Society WA Division, Bassendean, 1981, p. 23.