



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.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.7.1 Establishing Postal Services
- 7.6.6 Providing Services and Welfare

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 206 Mail Services
- 403 Law and Order
- 404 Community Services and Utilities

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr), a single storey limestone building with a shingle roof, is a competently designed and built example of the Victorian Georgian style on a domestic scale. (Criterion 1.1)

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) has landmark quality situated as it is in a landscaped setting on the south east corner of the 'T' junction formed by Stephen and Wittenoom Streets. (Criterion 1.3)

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) and the landscaped area within which it is located contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the environs of Stephen and Wittenoom Streets. The landscaping provides a setting that ensures that the almost domestic scale of the building is not overwhelmed by much larger surrounding buildings. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr), dating from 1864, is believed to be one of the oldest extant structures in Bunbury. (Criterion 2.1)

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) has been associated with the provision of government facilities, including government stores, postal services, police accommodation and court proceedings, in Bunbury since 1864 up to the present day in 2001. (Criterion 2.2)

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is associated with James Manning, Clerk of Works of the Department of Public Works. (Criterion 2.3)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is associated with the many public servants who have provided services that operated from the building from 1864 to the present (2001). (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) has the potential to yield information about early building construction practices in the colony. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is associated with the provision of public facilities for the community and as a place of work for many public servants in Bunbury since 1864. (Criterion 4.1)

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is a reminder of the early development of Bunbury and is one of the oldest extant buildings, dating from the 1860s. (Criterion 4.2)

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) has social value to people in the state and the region, as evidenced by its inclusion on the Register of Heritage Places, National Trust's List of Classified Places, the Register of the National Estate and the City of Bunbury's Municipal Inventory. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is one of only a few extant buildings from the original colonial settlement of Bunbury. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is representative of early buildings constructed for the provision of important services, such as postal and storage services, in mid-nineteenth century regional towns throughout the state. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is generally in fair condition. There are however extensive signs of rising damp, which is severe in places. There are some signs of damp on the ceiling. There is some cracking in the walls, most noticeably in the external wall at the north-east corner of the building. A few stones on the inner façade of the building are badly eroded.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is of moderate integrity. Although the building continues to be used by a department of the State Government, its present use is significantly different from the original intention. The Bunbury District Police Complex is nearing completion and the long-term future use of the building is uncertain.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) has a moderate to low degree of authenticity. The room layouts have changed substantially as a result of

various changes in use since the building was constructed. Conservation works completed in the 1980s sought to restore the building to its 'original configuration'. It is difficult to assess the authenticity of the fabric of the building because of the extent of the changes that have been made but it would appear that much of the fabric of the interior of the building is not original. The shingle roof mimics original fabric, replacing tiles removed as part of conservation works.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Lucy Williams, Historian and Heritage Consultant. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects.

For the purposes of this assessment the site of the *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* is considered to be the landscaped area that is bounded on the south and west sides by the multi-storey office block and by Stephen and Wittenoom Streets on the north and east sides. *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* is the only building within this defined site.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is a single storey limestone building with a replacement shingle roof situated on the south east corner of Stephen and Wittenoom Streets, Bunbury. Originally constructed as a post office and bonded store in 1864, it has also been used as a Telegraph Office, Police Quarters, Court House Annexe, Regional Police Office and State Emergency Service Office.

Bunbury was established in 1830 as a small military station. The town was named in 1836 after Lieutenant Henry St Pierre Bunbury. The population did not increase quickly and by around 1850, only 66 people lived in the town.¹ The arrival of convicts to the colony in 1850 and to Bunbury a few years later provided a catalyst for the increased provision of public facilities. After completing the convict depot and pensioner guard cottages in Bunbury at the end of 1857, the convict labour force was used to construct bridges and roads in the area.² The harbour jetty was constructed using convict labour in several stages between 1864 and 1868.³ Despite a noticeable increase in crime after their arrival, the presence of convicts in the area appears to have been supported by the residents of Bunbury. The only issue for the residents was that there were so few convicts to meet public and private demand for construction.⁴

Postal services had commenced in Bunbury around 1841 but it was not until c.1855 that a Post Office existed. The location of this Post Office has not been determined.⁵ Early postal services between Perth and Bunbury were slow, mostly because of the poor condition of the roads. Also, the mail service contract, variously operated by government and private companies, was not

¹ Hocking Planning and Architecture, 'City of Bunbury: Municipal Inventory', prepared for the City of Bunbury, 1995, p. 1.

² Tony Barker and Maxine Laurie, *Excellent Connections: A History of Bunbury, WA, 1836 – 1990*, City of Bunbury, Bunbury, 1992, p. 77.

³ *ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴ By the end of the 1850s there were very few convicts based at the Depot. *ibid.*, pp. 77 and 78.

⁵ Municipal Inventory database, record B271, provided courtesy of the City of Bunbury.

viable given the adverse conditions in which the service was conducted. In some cases, sea transport was more effective than land delivery.⁶

In July 1864, the Colonial Secretary called for tenders to construct a, 'Bonded Store, Post Office, Quarters &c' according to a design prepared by James Manning, Clerk of Works.⁷ The tender was awarded to Daniel Ker in September 1864 at a cost of £367.19.6.⁸ The building was constructed in a 'L' shape on Bunbury Lots 228 and 229. Along the Wittenoom Street frontage were three rooms: the corner room was the Post Office with a bedroom and living room behind. The Bonded Store for government storage, roughly the same size as the three rooms associated with the Post Office, ran along Stephen Street.⁹

By 1879, the use of *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* appears to have changed. A tender for minor works accepted in January 1879 listed the building as, 'Post Office, Police Quarters and outbuildings'.¹⁰ The cost of the works was £23 and it has not been determined what items were carried out.¹¹

By the early 1890s, it would appear that larger facilities were required for the post office. In April 1894, tenders were called for the 'Bunbury Post and Telegraph Office Contract'.¹² The building was constructed on a new site further along Stephen Street and it opened in 1896.¹³

With a new Post Office under construction, plans were made for the future use of *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)*. A sketch was prepared c.1895 to convert *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* into Police Quarters. A substantial police precinct, including the police station and gaol, operated from the next block and additional accommodation for officers was required.¹⁴ By January 1897, an extension was proposed for the rear of the former Bonded Store to incorporate two additional police rooms and a yard.¹⁵ This may not have proceeded as in February 1897, a different plan was devised showing two new kitchens with verandahs onto the yards rather than the enclosure originally planned. Also indicated on the February 1897 plan was the conversion of the former Bonded Store into two living rooms, two bedrooms and a passageway.¹⁶

An undated plan shows that two additional rooms, for the Sergeant and the Inspector, were constructed along the Wittenoom Street frontage. Unfortunately, the plan is not dated and it is not known when these additions were constructed. Given the use of the rooms for police purposes, it is logical to assume the changes occurred after 1896.¹⁷

⁶ Barker and Laurie, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

⁷ *Government Gazette*, 26 July 1864, p. 119.

⁸ *Government Gazette*, 6 September 1864, p. 170.

⁹ State Records Office, Cons 1647, PWD 29259, drawing number 7, 6 January 1864.

¹⁰ *Government Gazette*, 7 January 1879.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *Government Gazette*, 6 April 1894, p. 333.

¹³ *Government Gazette*, 18 May 1894, p. 478 and *Western Alert*, vol. 13, Summer 1989, p. 4.

¹⁴ State Records Office, Cons 1647, PWD 29259, drawing number 4026, c. November 1895. Further information about policing during this period can be found in L. Edmonds, A. Gill and J. Gregory, 'Western Australia Police Service: Thematic History', prepared by Centre for WA History for CAMS on behalf of WA Police Service, May 1998.

¹⁵ State Records Office, Cons 1647, PWD 29259, drawing number 5180, dated 22 January 1897.

¹⁶ State Records Office, Cons 1647, PWD 29259, drawing number 5246, dated 22 February 1897. Latter drawings confirm these plans proceeded.

¹⁷ State Records Office, Cons 1647, PWD 29259, no drawing number or date.

From 1907, a portion of the building was used as an annexe to the Court House.¹⁸ A new Court House, on the eastern side of *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)*, had been completed during the 1906-1907 financial year. The new Court House contained 'a court, rooms for magistrate, solicitors, public, jury, and witnesses are provided, also cells.'¹⁹

A 1923 plans suggests that a portion of the *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* was still being used as a Police Office although this may relate to its use as an annexe to the Court House. The plan also suggests that the Bunbury Agricultural Bank was accommodated in a portion of the building.²⁰ The use of *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* as a Court House annexe appears to have continued until proposals for a replacement Court House were discussed in the late 1970s.²¹

In June 1980, the Bunbury City Council was of the opinion, '...that in view of the proposed re-development of the site, the Old Court House should not be retained'.²² There were many objections from community groups to the proposed demolition of *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* including the National Trust, who classified the place in August 1981.²³ The community objection to demolition does not appear to have extended to the 1906-07 Court House as this was demolished c.1983.²⁴

Restoration work was carried out to *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* by Ian Molyneux & Associates in the mid-1980s. Part of the project included demolishing the former Sergeant and Inspector's rooms added to *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* sometime after 1896. This was a conscious decision to restore the *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* to its original configuration.²⁵ A description of the works is as follows:

repairs to the stonework, a new jarrah shingle roof and restoring the verandah to its detached style, instead of part of the roof that it had been converted to with corrugated iron. The interior was brought up to date by converting an end room into two toilets and a small kitchen area. An air-conditioner was concealed in the roof and carpet laid throughout, so it is now quite modern and comfortable, but with the antique exterior and general fittings.²⁶

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) was entered in the Register of the National Estate in 1986 and the Register of Heritage Places in 1992. It was also included in the City of Bunbury's Municipal Inventory in 1996.²⁷

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) was used as a Regional Police Office until around November 1989. Since this time it has been used by the Bunbury State Emergency Service and as a police annexe to the courts.²⁸

¹⁸ *Western Alert*, vol. 13, Summer 1989, p. 4.

¹⁹ 'Report of the Department of Public Works for the financial year 1906-1907', p. 47.

²⁰ State Records Office, Cons 1647, PWD 29259, drawing number 22855, no dated but the number would suggest it was drawn in 1923. This drawing also suggests that partial demolition of the bonded store was carried out some time between 1897 and 1923. The 1983 site plan confirms that the bonded store was partially demolished although the date and reasons for demolition have not been determined.

²¹ Information from Mr Ian Molyneux, 8 May 2001.

²² National Trust of Australia (WA), Bunbury file, number 27, letter from City of Bunbury to Bunbury Historical Society, dated 10 June 1980.

²³ National Trust of Australia (WA), Bunbury file, number 27.

²⁴ Plaque on the building, from a photo in the National Trust files.

²⁵ Information from Mr Ian Molyneux, 8 May 2001.

²⁶ *Western Alert*, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁷ Heritage Council database.

²⁸ *ibid.*; and information from the Municipal Inventory record.

In 2001, *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* is being used for police purposes.²⁹ However, the new Bunbury District Police Complex is nearing completion and the long-term future use of the building is uncertain.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is a single storey building that shares many of the aesthetic characteristics of small residences built in the late nineteenth century. The walls of the building are built of limestone and the roof is shingled.

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) occupies the south east corner of the "T" junction formed by Stephen and Wittenoom Streets, Bunbury. The Bunbury Municipal Council building is situated opposite *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* at the north east corner of the intersection and the new Bunbury District Police Complex is under construction at the end of Stephen Street.

The north and west faces of *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* face onto Stephen and Wittenoom Streets respectively. The site is not enclosed and is part of the landscaped forecourt in front of the three-storey court house, which appears to have been built in the late 1980s. The walls of this building are built of a brown coloured brick. This building is planned as two rectangular wings. The front wing runs in an east/west direction and is set back about 20 metres from Stephen Street. The rear wing adjoins the southwest corner of the front wing and is set at right angles to it. The rear wing is about eight metres from Wittenoom Street. The building was configured so as to provide a landscaped area around *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)*.

The landscaped area is a mix of brick paved areas and garden beds. There are two large plane trees (*platinus acerfolia*) near to the *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)*. The area is divided into two by a retaining wall containing a set of brick steps. The southern end of the area is about 1.8 metres higher than the area around the *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)*.

For the purposes of this assessment the site of the *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* is considered to be the landscaped area that is bounded on the south and west sides by the multi-storey court house and by Stephen and Wittenoom Streets on the north and east sides. *Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr)* is the only building within this defined site.

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) was built in a form of the Victorian Georgian c1840 - 1890³⁰ style. The most noticeable contradiction of the recognised broad characteristics of the style is the lack of symmetry in the composition of the facades. However the underlying orderliness and constructional details of the idiom are evident.

The roof of the building is gabled at the east and south ends and is hipped at the corner. A lean-to verandah runs along the outer face of the building and its outer edge abuts the public footpaths in Stephen and Wittenoom Streets. There is no verandah on the inner face of the building.

The roof of the building is of replacement split timber shingles with timber ridge and barge cappings. The pressed galvanised iron guttering has a half round profile and the downpipes are circular. The walls of the building are

²⁹ Site inspection, May 2001.

³⁰ Apperly, et. al., op. cit..

built of random rubble limestone with lined flush pointing. The walls are set on a weathered plinth that projects about 300 mm beyond the outer face of the wall.

The windows and doors are set within segmental arch headed openings. The openings have rendered linings with minimal quoining. Windows are multi-paned, timber framed, double hung sashes. The doors are of timber and are half glazed with a two panel lower section and a multi-paned upper section.

On the west side of the building and for about half the length of the north side there is a 1100mm high limestone wall with brick capping set on the outer edge of the verandah.

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) has an 'L' shaped plan that originally comprised two abutting buildings. One was the former Bonded Store that faced towards Stephen Street and the other is the former post office and residence facing Wittenoom Street. An opening has been made in the original party wall to connect the two parts and thus form one building. The building can be entered through four external doors.

The former post office is in the north east corner of the building. Originally the room could only be reached via the external door at the north end of the south wall. There is now an internal door in the south-east corner of the room connecting it to the rest of the building. The former residence, which is at the south end of this wing, originally consisted of two rooms - a living room and a bedroom. This part of the building has two external doors and both openings appear to be original. One of these doors is near the south end of the west wall and the other is almost directly opposite it in the east wall. The original two rooms of the former residence have been sub-divided. The former living room now houses the kitchen and the male and female toilets. The former bedroom is now an office and the insertion of an additional wall on the east side has created a corridor that connects the kitchen to the former post office and the former bonded store.

The internal finishes are remarkably consistent throughout the building presumably as a result of the extensive refurbishment that has been carried out in the 1980s and which sought to restore the building to its 'original configuration'. Most ceilings, floor coverings, fireplace surrounds, light fittings and doors and windows and their hardware would appear to date from this time.

Generally the floors are concrete slabs with a carpet covering. The timber skirtings are about 250 mm high with moulded tops. The walls are painted plaster. The plasterboard ceilings have a faceted cornice. The timber windows are generally 6-pane double hung sashes. The window openings have timber venetian blinds within them. The internal timber doors are 6-panel doors. Brass door and window hardware has been used throughout. The lights are ceiling mounted florescent fittings. The offices are air-conditioned. The former post office has a fireplace with a simple timber surround and mantle and a firebox with a pointed arch opening.

The kitchen has built in cupboards with a stainless steel sink. The doors of the lower cupboards are t&g jarrah boarding and the upper cupboards are melamine faced. The floor covering is sheet vinyl.

The toilets flooring is of 150 x 150 mm red coloured tiles with a white ceramic tile skirting and splash-back behind the wash basins.

The building has undergone extensive alterations most noticeably in the way the rooms have been sub-divided and the manner in which additional

doorways have been inserted in order to connect the various parts of the building.

The refurbishment of the building seems to have involved the replacement of many of the earlier elements.

Bunbury Post Office and Bonded Store (fmr) is generally in a fair condition. There are however extensive signs of rising damp that is severe in places. The damp seems to rise higher than would be normally expected and this may be caused by the fact that the building has a concrete slab floor.

There are some signs of damp on the ceiling.

There is some cracking in the walls most noticeably in the external wall at the north east corner of the building.

A few stones on the inner façade of the building are badly eroded.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

National Trust files.

Heritage Council file.

Battye Library Research Note #829.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Information relating to the original internal layout of the building should be investigated further.

Further details on the use of the place as a Court House Annexe and any other associated uses in the twentieth century should be examined.

The c. 1923 drawing indicates that partial demolition of the bonded store was carried out some time between 1897 and 1923. The 1983 site plan confirms that the bonded store was partially demolished although the date and reasons for demolition have not been determined.

Details of the restoration works from the 1980s could be investigated further.