



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Amended Entry

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)

- 3.8.6 Building and 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*

Railway Worker's Cottage is a simple 1890s residence demonstrating fine aesthetic qualities in the use of granite, the high-pitched iron roof extending over the verandahs and the symmetrical façade. (Criterion 1.1)

Railway Worker's Cottage makes a significant contribution to the cultural environment of the railway station precinct, demonstrating a clear association with the former station masters house and the railway station buildings that are both constructed of the same local granite. Together with more recent railway housing on Forrest St, the place demonstrates the development of employee housing in the railway environment of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. (Criteria 1.3 & 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Railway Worker's Cottage was built in 1897 to provide accommodation for a railway worker at Kalgoorlie, which was established as a railhead during the gold boom period of the 1890s and developed as a significant railway centre on the Eastern Goldfields and Transcontinental lines. (Criterion 2.1)

Railway Worker's Cottage is an important element in the cultural environment of the Kalgoorlie railway station precinct, being constructed in the same local granite as the station buildings, and together with the station buildings, Station Master's House, District Superintendent's house, parcels

office and Railway Institute represents the importance of the railway in the development of the district and town since 1897. (Criterion 2.2)

Railway Worker's Cottage was constructed to provide a residence for a platelayer, or permanent way worker, and has been occupied as railway workers' housing ever since. Its size, of two main rooms, reflected the lower status of the platelayer's position in relation to the adjacent four-room Station Master's house, which was constructed at the same time. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Railway Worker's Cottage, together with other remaining railway houses in the railway station reserve in Kalgoorlie, contributes to the local community's sense of place as a part of the railway history of the town and a reminder of a way of life no longer practiced when the railways employed a large labour force accommodated near their place of work. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Railway Worker's Cottage is one of two oldest remaining examples of railway employee housing in Kalgoorlie. The other example in Kalgoorlie, the Station Master's House, has undergone a number of alterations to the original fabric, making *Railway Worker's Cottage* the more intact of the two. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Railway Worker's Cottage is a representative example of its type in Kalgoorlie and on the Goldfields line, representing the provision of railway worker housing in the 1890s. It has been occupied almost continuously by railway employees. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Railway Worker's Cottage is in fair condition. There is a serious lack of drainage that exacerbates the existing rising damp problems.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Railway Worker's Cottage has functioned as a dwelling for railway employees, except for a few years in the 1970s when it is believed to have been occupied as the District Engineer's office. The place has retained a moderate to high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The place shows minimal evidence of changes to the fabric, except the painting of the exterior granite, and evolution of the place over time. Much of the development is integral to the significance of the place. *Railway Worker's Cottage* displays a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Conservation Consultant.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Railway Worker's Cottage is a two-room weathered granite and iron platelayer's cottage constructed in 1897. The place was one of two identical cottages built by O'Connell Brothers for railway contractors J. & A. Wilkie. The other cottage, at 20 Forrest Street, was removed in the late 1980s or early 1990s. *Railway Worker's Cottage* has been extended with timber and iron additions.

The discovery of gold at Southern Cross and the subsequent declaration of the area as the Yilgarn goldfield in 1888, brought prospectors to the area in large numbers. In order to exploit the finds and the possible revenue, the State Government commenced construction of a railway to serve the area. The line began at the head of the Eastern Railway at Northam. Before the line reached Southern Cross, the Coolgardie, and then Kalgoorlie gold-finds were made. This brought an even greater rush to the fields, with thousands of men arriving from the eastern states and overseas and making their way to the area by whatever means possible. When the line reached Southern Cross on 1 July 1894, construction continued immediately to extend the line to Coolgardie.¹ At that point, there was no intention to extend the line to Kalgoorlie, but the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, and local mine owners and businessmen campaigned to have the line taken the extra 24 miles (38 kms). Development of the deep reef mines on the Golden Mile depended on the use of heavy machinery, which were more easily and economically transported by rail.

Plans were already underway to construct a branch line to Menzies, and both Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie were vying to be the junction for this line and thus become the centre of the eastern goldfields.² In September 1895, a bill was passed to extend the railway line to Kalgoorlie. The line reached

¹ Gunzberg, A. & Austin, J., *Rails Through the Bush*, Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Melbourne, 1997, p. 206; Le Page, J. S. H., *Building a State: The story of the Public Works Department of WA, 1829-1985*, UWA Press, Perth, 1985, pp. 221-225; Webb, M. & A., *Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of WA*, Hocking & Co and St George Books, Perth, 1995, pp. 208-211.

² Wilson, H. H., *The Golden Miles*, Rigby, 1977, pp. 173; Webb, M. & A., *op cit*, pp. 208-211, 288-293.

the town on 8 September 1896, and was taken over by the Railways Department on 1 January 1897.³

As part of the work of constructing the line, the contractors, John and Adam Wilkie, were to provide a number of station buildings along the route. These were built by O'Connell Brothers, subcontracting to the Wilkies. The Kalgoorlie station buildings were not ready for occupation at the time of the handover.⁴

To-day the contractors for its construction, Messrs Wilkie Brothers, hand over the stretch of railway from Boorabbin to Kalgoorlie, making the wholeline from the metropolis a Government affair. This will mean for the fields a more appreciable lowering of rates. ... Messrs O'Connell Brothers, the contractors for the new railway station and connected buildings, are continuing to make excellent progress. The 400ft long platform walk is built, and the walls of the station house are up to a very good height. The two platelayers' cottages, very cool and comfortable buildings are about finished, and the next substantial stationmaster's residence is in the last stages of completion.⁵

Another newspaper report appeared a week later:

Work in connection with the new railway buildings continues to progress speedily though there is at present rather a shortage in the supply to hand of building stone. A chat with the Government supervisor of the work, Mr J Riekje, a vigorous and cheery up to date veteran in railway work, at which he has been for two score years, reveals to one the dispatch with which the work is being done... Messrs O'Connell Bros have been the contractors for the works along the whole of the upper end of the line... In Mr Reikie's [sic] comments on the methods of Messrs O'Connell Bros. he speaks in complimentary terms of the experienced efficiency of their system of work and of the economy in material of the employee. There can be no doubt that the railway section and other buildings that Kalgoorlie is to have will be a superior nature throughout, and such as this place will have good reason to be proud of. A portion of the station building, including the ladies' waiting room and several other apartments, is up to the roof level and the rest of the long row of connected buildings is to be proceeded with without delay. The two platelayers' cottages, as well as the stationmaster's residence, are about finished now to the completed stage of flooring. These buildings are not only designed for full comfort, with wide front and back verandahs, but are strikingly effective in appearance. The main device that makes the exterior remarkably neat and finished was the tinting of the mortar of the same shade as the stones, and the framing of the pretty blocks of stone in black lines. This is a very successful bit of work.⁶

³ Webb, M. & A., op cit, p. 303; Gunzberg, A. & Austin, J. op cit, p. 238; *A Brief History of the Western Australian Government Railways*, Western Australian Government Railways (WAGR), Perth, 1975.

⁴ Kalgoorlie Miner, 1 January 1897, pp. 2-3; WAGR Annual report, 1896, p. 10.

⁵ Kalgoorlie Miner, 1 January 1897, pp. 2-3.

⁶ Kalgoorlie Miner, 9 January 1897, p. 2. Riekje is spelt three different ways in this article.

A report on 13 February 1897 stated that the 'residential portions – the two platelayers' cottages and the stationmaster's residence – are finished'.⁷

Railway Worker's Cottage was later numbered Departmental Property (DP) 399. The cottage at 20 Forrest Street was DP400. A 1902 map of the Kalgoorlie station yard shows the two stone cottages. *Railway Worker's Cottage* is marked as 'Per Way Cottage' and 20 Forrest Street is marked as 'Inspector Per Way'. The term 'per way, an abbreviation of 'permanent way', referred to the railway track. The platelayer's and fettlers were referred to as members of the per way gang from around 1900. Inspector J. Fogarty is recorded as occupying 20 Forrest Street in 1910 and was still resident in 1920.⁸

In 1938, there was an increase in rail traffic through Kalgoorlie, credited to the introduction of separate passenger and goods trains in place of the mixed service previously in operation, and to a new interstate schedule.⁹ A new five-room residence was constructed on Wittenoom Street for the Inspector Permanent Way in 1938, as part of the general expansion of services and upgrading of facilities at this time.¹⁰

In 1910, the occupant of *Railway Worker's Cottage* was Henry Howard.

Michael Campbell is recorded as occupying the place between at least 1920 and 1930, and Thomas Read was the tenant in 1940.¹¹ The job classification of these employees is not certain, but the place was still marked as a per way cottage on a 1952 site plan of the railway reserve, indicating that a member of the track maintenance gang continued to occupy the place.¹² Following the end of World War Two, there was a general housing shortage and lack of building materials, and a drastic shortage of residences for railway employees in country districts. WAGR had to provide large numbers of houses for its employees in order to attract staff and meet the demand for increased services. A number of timber and asbestos houses of identical design were erected on the Forrest Street railway frontage on either side of the two stone cottages. The new houses were known as Henry Martin houses for Henry Martin & Company that built them.¹³

In the 1970s, *Railway Worker's Cottage* is understood to have been used as offices for the District Engineer, who had previously occupied the much larger railway house at 2 Forrest Street.¹⁴ Due to the relocation of the Eastern District railway division headquarters to Merredin in 1966, the District Engineer's staff was reduced to an assistant engineer and two clerks and no longer warranted a large office. It is not known for what period *Railway*

⁷ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 13 February 1897, p. 4.

⁸ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1902-1940.

⁹ *WAGR, Annual Report*, 1938, pp. 7 & 24.

¹⁰ WAGR file, Kalgoorlie Station Master's House, 1938-1954, SROWA, ACC 1781, Item 32462; *WAGR, Annual Report*, 1938, p. 23; *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1900-1930.

¹¹ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1910-1940.

¹² Specific information on the place has not been located as no WAGR files for the property were located at either Perth or Kalgoorlie.

¹³ WAGR, Alphabetical Index to Contracts, 1900-1966, SROWA, AN 260 ACC 2581; CCE Plan 38084/2, 26 July 1949; *WAGR, Annual Report*, 1948, pp. 17-19; WAGR file, Provision of houses for employees, Part 1, SROWA, AN262/7 ACC 1389 Item 1769, September 1947.

¹⁴ Information provided to Laura Gray by the current tenant of the place during the inspection in 2001, when the place was assessed for WAGR.

Worker's Cottage was used as the District Engineer's office. The nearby former guards and drivers' barracks was also used for the same purpose for some time in the 1970s.¹⁵

In the late 1980s or early 1990s, the cottage at 20 Forrest Street was demolished. Additions have been made to *Railway Worker's Cottage* over the years as accommodation needs and standards have changed. The skillionroofed section immediately behind the stone construction was possibly added at an early date. The room marked Bedroom 3 on the floor plan has a fireplace, indicating it may have been used as a kitchen. The stationmaster's house, constructed at the same time, had a new kitchen added in 1902. The 1952 site map shows *Railway Worker's Cottage* as it is in 2002, with the exception of the bathroom addition on the rear left.¹⁶

In 2002, *Railway Worker's Cottage* continues to function as railway employee housing.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Railway Worker's Cottage, a single storey weathered granite and iron dwelling, is located on the north side of Forrest Street, backing onto the railway line on the north, near the 'T' junction of Lane Street. The front boundary is delineated by 0.900-metre high pipe rail and cyclone mesh fence with a central pedestrian gate. The side and rear boundaries have supersix fences. The flat site is mostly grassed with a number of plantings. Views of the place are partially obscured by various plantings in the front yard.

The dwelling displays some characteristics of Federation Bungalow style, featuring simple massing and broad simple roof planes with the ridge of the gabled roof parallel to the street and the main roof extending over the verandah. Primarily, however, the design is functional and purpose designed for a railway employee.

The floor plan is simple with a central front door opening into the front left room (living room). A doorway on the right opens into the front right hand room (bedroom 1) and a doorway straight-ahead accesses the vestibule in the skillion addition. There is a room each side of the vestibule (bedrooms 2 & 3) and the rear verandah straight ahead, with a bathroom on the left and a kitchen on the right leading into the dining room on the extreme right. *Railway Worker's Cottage* is a single storey weathered granite construction with a gable roof clad with short sheets of corrugated iron sheeting. The random face pointed granite walls with smooth granite quoins to the window and door openings have been painted. The main roof extends over the front verandah and is supported by square timber posts. The underside of the verandah roof has been painted and the floor is concrete. The verandah is enclosed with a timber framed minorb dado height wall, except for the centre front bay that is open. Each end of the verandah roof is decorated with a vertical pointed-picket valance. There are two chimneys on the west

¹⁵ WAGR, residential property file for DP1609, 26 Ward Street, Kalgoorlie, Properties section, WAGR headquarters, East Perth; WAGR EGR Plan 10/56D, SROWA, ACC 1781 CCE 1926.

¹⁶ WAGR plan 40670, January 1952, SROWA, ACC 1781 CCE 4233.

side of the dwelling: the front chimney is granite, and the back chimney is brick. Both are painted. The two original timber framed eight-pane double hung windows have been retained on the front façade, flanking the central front door, although an air conditioner has been inserted into the left front window. The front door is the original four-panel door. The skillion-roofed section immediately behind the two granite rooms is clad with vertical corrugated iron that has been painted. The window on the west side is a four-pane timber framed pivot window with a timber-framed awning with mini orb cladding on sides and cover. The rear verandah is clad with vertical corrugated iron, with predominantly louvred-glass windows. The dining extension on the northeast corner is a timber framed and weatherboard clad cabin that has been attached to the skillion-roofed extensions of the dwelling. The cabin has a skillion corrugated iron roof sloping toward the rear where there is a flat-iron clad external chimney. There are no gutters or downpipes on any part of the dwelling.

The two main rooms have the original 0.135 metre (5 inch) timber floorboards. The walls of the two granite rooms are plaster and the ceilings are lined with the original mini orb. The original skirtings, architraves and four-panel doors remain in place. The fireplace in the left front room is boarded over, but the simple mantelpiece has been retained. The skillion extension also has the original 0.135 metre (5 inch) timber floorboards. The interior walls of the extension are lined with horizontal matchboard that has been painted and the ceilings are lined with painted matchboard, on the rake. The partition wall on the left is only to door height. The fireplace in that room (bedroom 3) is boarded over. The rear verandah has a concrete floor. The roof is lined on the rake. The doors are timber ledge and brace. The kitchen fitout is essentially a few basic cupboards forming a corridor into the attached cabin dining room. The dining room has a timber floor and the ceiling is lined with Masonite on the rake. There is a Metters No. 3 stove in place on the rear (north) wall. The interior fabric is for the most part intact. There are several detached structures in the rear yard, including a former freestanding ladies waiting room that serves as the laundry, a brick toilet with a curved iron roof, a colourbond clad shed and a garage.

Overall, most of the place is in fair condition. The roof appears to be in fair to good condition; however, there are no gutters, downpipes or drainage evident. The painted granite shows evidence of rising damp on all main four walls, exterior and interior, and the paint is weathered on the west side. The wall damage is particularly bad on the southwest front corner where part of the concrete windowsill has broken away. The wall is cracked and the granite and mortar is seriously fretted. The timber cladding, corrugated iron cladding and timber detailing throughout is badly weathered with flaking paint and bare material revealed. The mini orb ceiling is in fair condition but there is evidence of moisture ingress and some rust. There are some vertical cracks in the plaster walls.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Railway Worker's Cottage is a standard design platelayer's cottage of the 1890s. Twenty-nine similar cottages were built along the Kalgoorlie-

Menzies line. There are two of these remaining at Goongarrie as part of a group, which includes the station master's house. They are of random rubble stone construction, have been vacant for some time and are in fair condition, but most fixtures have been removed.¹⁷ The Goongarrie houses are entered on the State Register of Heritage Places. Another platelayer's cottage on the same line, at Bardoc, has been dismantled, apparently for re-erection elsewhere, and the remaining cottages at Menzies are understood to have been removed in the late 1990s to facilitate mining activity in the immediate area.¹⁸ On the former Geraldton-Mount Magnet line, there are at least two stone cottages extant at Mount Magnet. Two stone and iron railway cottages are included in the permanent registration of Coolgardie Railway Station and Goods Shed (P0581).

Platelayer's cottages were also built in timber and iron for ease of relocation. The Wyalkatchem station master's house, for example, was constructed in 1916 from two timber platelayer's cottages moved from Walgoolan.¹⁹ Similar railway cottages at Broad Arrow were relocated from the edge of the open cut mine site into the township in 1998/1999.

13.4 REFERENCES

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

¹⁷ HCWA assessment documentation, *Three railway cottages, Goongarrie*, Place 15411.

¹⁸ *Fettlers Cottage (former) (site), Bardoc WA*, Register of the National Estate Database.

¹⁹ HCWA assessment documentation, *Station Master's House, Wyalkatchem*, Place 15748.