



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Bunbury Railway Station (fmr) is intrinsically attractive as a consequence of the subdued elaboration of its basic shed-like form by free-Classical stylisms (such as the decorative eaves and chimney details) and the sheltering and welcoming spaces provided by its long, verandahed facades. (Criterion 1.1)

It shows creative achievement in the marriage of the utilitarian, bent-rail cantilever structure of the former platform roof with the historically stylised masonry structures; this mode of creative skill being a hallmark of the more important stations of the Western Australian Government Railways system during the peak era of railway expansion (Criterion 1.2)

Its western facade contributes a "vista-stop" closure of the eastward end of Wellington Street, and it functions as part of a perceptible edge to the built-up old city centre at its interface with the open spaces of Leschenault Inlet and its landscaped shoreline. (Criterion 1.3)

The building as a whole contributes to the aesthetic qualities of the landscape by virtue of its scale, both through the long, approximately north-south tending axis giving unity to a substantial length of the landscaped foreshores, and through being a substantial urban built element within the newly landscaped foreshore gardens that have replaced the former railway lines and marshalling yards. (Criterion 1.3)

The former Railway Station contributes to a significant townscape with its long, low, pitched roofs, reinforcing the surviving, characteristic, urban texture and human scale of the turn-of-century town-centre precinct. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

As the former central station of the State's second largest city, *Bunbury Railway Station (fmr)* is an essential example illustrating the range of types of such major public, passenger and freight transport facilities such as accompanied and promoted the occupation and evolution of the State, fueled and financed by the turn of century gold booms that were coincident upon the achievement of Statehood. (Criterion 2.1)

The station building, albeit bereft as it is of its railway lines and the terminus's utilitarian service buildings, is a vital reminder of the part the railways played in the structuring of the Bunbury city centre (for example in the relative prosperity evident in the adjacent contemporary hotels and commercial buildings) and of the contribution of the railway networks to the development of the region, both influences and themes of great historic importance in the State context. (Criterion 2.2)

The stylisms of the building are a skilled application of the "free-Classical" or "Italianate" idiom, married to technical improvisation and engineering skill of a high order in the form of the platform roof's bent-rail cantilever portals.

Thus they illustrate a particular railways emanation of the characteristic history of aesthetics and architectural and engineering ideas in the State, representing late importation of a style long-since old-fashioned in Britain, perhaps via the railway personnel who came from the eastern states as a consequence of immigration following upon the State's gold discoveries. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Bunbury Railway Station (fmr) is a bench mark for the evaluation of other provincial and rural railway stations throughout the State. (Criterion 3.1)

It contributes to an understanding of the urban morphology of the City of Bunbury where most other railway structures have been obliterated. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Bunbury Railway Station (fmr) is a particular and special type of gathering place in which there is extensive interaction between members of the community, and which forms patterns in community life, and is therefore likely to remain a place highly valued by the regional community for social and cultural associations. (Criterion 4.1)

As an important gathering place for its social and cultural associations, it contributes to the local community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The building demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the cultural heritage of Western Australia; that is, surviving, used, railway stations of the turn of century railway network building epoch of the State's history. (Criterion 5.1)

The closure of rural railway networks across the State, and replacement by bus transport, has reduced such stations, and travel by heavy rail, to elements of a way of life, custom, process, land-use, function and design no longer practised and in danger of being lost. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The station building has the principal characteristics of the railway station class of buildings including platform, ticketing and bookings hall, public amenities, operational offices and work areas, and streetfront forecourt that has survived its adaptation to a bus terminal. (Criterion 6.1)

Bunbury Railway Station (fmr) still exhibits the principal characteristics of the railway mass transit class of human activities, captive to the railway permanent way in contrast to the freedom of routing of the bus, in which a way of private and community life was engendered. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The general condition of the building and its surrounds is good to very good.

The current state in relation to aesthetic values is one of marginal diminishment through loss of chimneys, loss of degree of human activity on the platform, and less than harmonious semi-enclosures of the forecourt verandah. The documentary evidence is, however, such as would permit very accurate reconstruction to former states.

Historical evidence of the host of railway operations, waiting rooms, etc., etc., has been lost in the main building through removal of internal partitions, loss of signage, etc , and through the loss of the former southern detached structure and dividing yard that was designed originally to house the rain-water tanks and lamp and fuel rooms.

The scientific values lost through the above changes are potentially compensated for by the available documentary evidence of former states.

Social values are largely surviving in contemporary forms by virtue of the current bus terminus purposes. Reinstatement of railway uses is not foreseeable, albeit not out of the question, especially with respect to compatible light rail.

The cumulative effects of management and environment effects has meant some losses of fabric but also the extended life of the remaining fabric.

The building is, one suspects from the evidence of the original drawings, some-what diminished in original degree of aesthetic value as a consequence of past management practice having been to eliminate functionally obsolete

fabric instead of maintaining same, but more recent works in adapting the building to bus terminal purposes have meant some compensating reversals in the form of restoration of fabric. On balance, losses are not irreversible.

Current programmes of management are reasonably appropriate to the building's heritage status, as a holding operation pending the availability of such incentives and resources necessary for reconstruction of some aesthetically and historically desirable fabric, such as the chimneys, the station clock, etc. Such management could enhance scientific (teaching) values by more extensive interpretive signage based on the documentary evidence.

The current use of *Bunbury Railway Station (fmr)* as a bus terminus, a purpose having a substantial degree of semblance to the former railway purposes, is highly commendable town planning practice, in terms of conserving social and community values, in terms of enhancing the long term viability of the place, and in terms of establishing a propensity for ultimate enhancement through restoration of the degrees of other cultural heritage significance values.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The original intentions in the creation of the buildings and the place are still being realised and the compatibility of current uses is, in general, of the highest imaginable integrity, because no other mass transit use can be visualised at present. Electrified road vehicles or light rail or raised monorail trains or other technological innovations are likely to occur well within the potential lifespan of the building because of predictions of world oil and gas resource developments

The likely long term viability and sustainability of the values identified is of a high order as a consequence of the availability of the original contract drawings, so long as the town planning of the City of Bunbury is so ordered as to ensure the functional demand for the place to remain as a principal public mass transit terminus of the city as it develops.

The criteria of ability to be restored is well met but such a building will ordinarily require a permanent town planning and conservation policy and application of human and financial resources to ensure its integrity survives for future generations.

The time frame for any restorative and reconstructive process is probably in the order of 5 years, as being a time when ordinary refurbishment to counter ravages of use on finishes will be appropriate.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is of a moderate to high degree. The fabric and its arrangement, albeit with losses of the original, is substantially original or of replacements that closely equate with the original, with the notable exceptions of the application of full paint coverage to former fair-faced masonry, and screen additions and brick plinths to posts of the forecourt (western) verandah.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence and the physical evidence has been compiled by Ian Molyneux, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence is primarily of the original contract working drawings dated 7 December 1904 indicating tendering and construction shortly after that date, probably 1905. These documents include plans, elevations sections and details of sufficient scope to permit tendering for such works today.

Other documents are histories that explain the context of the construction and the reason for this particular date of construction. These histories are by Battye and Molyneux.¹

The evidence from Battye shows that the Station was the culmination of the development of the Bunbury regional railway network which was finally brought to fruition during a series of governmental and administrative relocations which Statehood and Federation, and the resources provided by the roughly contemporaneous gold booms of the 1890s and deep mining in the 1910s, both demanded and facilitated.

The evidence from Molyneux shows that the station then was the focus of a reinforcement and expansion of a major, regional, passenger and freight railway terminus, allied with the development of the Port of Bunbury's harbour. It is part of a massive infrastructure development programme.

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| Pre 1876 | The earliest railways in the State were variously constructed by private and colonial government initiatives. |
| July 1876 | Creation of the colonial government position of "Government Engineer". |
| May 1877 | Creation of the colonial government position of "Director of Public Works". |
| May 1878 | Creation of the colonial government position of "Director of Public Works and Railways". |
| July 1881 | Creation of the colonial government position of "Commissioner of Railways". Government railways were constructed under the direction of the Public Works Department. |
| 1887 | A horse-drawn train operated on a Bunbury-Boyanup line running down Wittenoom Street to the town jetty until steam locomotives arrived from Perth by sea.

Commencement of construction of O'Connor's scheme for the harbour. |
| 12 Mar 1891 | Opening of the Bunbury-Boyanup line as an isolated system. |

¹ Battye, J.S. *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia Vol 1* (Perth, 1912; facsimile edition, Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 1985), pp.461-474 and Molyneux, Ian *Bunbury National Estate Study 1978* (Nedlands, 1978), pp.82-86.

- 9 Jan 1892 Creation of the colonial government position of "General Traffic Manager" of the Western Australian Government Railways.
- 2 May 1893 Opening of Perth-Pinjarra line followed by connection of Bunbury to the Perth local network and other parts of the State by the opening on 22 August of the Pinjarra to Picton Junction leg.
- (A survey by H.I. Farrell of resumption of part of the site of King Cottage for the railway was approved 19 July 1893, which is perhaps indicative of the stretching of resources in this project)
- Extension of the Bunbury regional network followed with the opening of lines to Donnybrook (16 November 1893), Busselton (26 December 1895), Donnybrook to Bridgetown (1 November 1898), to Collie (1 January 1898) and to the Collie "Boulder" coal mine (2 November 1903). The "Boulder" reference is sometimes mistaken to imply that a line ran to Boulder in the eastern goldfields.
- The celebrated engineer C.Y. O'Connor was acting as Engineer in Chief and Assistant Manager for railways until his suicide in 1902. William Lamden Owen was Resident Engineer in Bunbury during construction of the line from Perth, after which he became Government Resident for Bunbury in December 1904.
- 1896 The railway extended on the axis of the present station to Victoria Street and thence up the centre of this street to the jetty. Engine and goods sheds existed south of Clifton Street.²
- 1 June 1901 The railways department was separated from the Public Works Department.
- 16 Jan. 1904 Assent given to the Government Railways Act 1904 which separated the Commissioner from the administrative interference of the Government Minister and from responsibility for administration of private lines.³
- 7 Dec. 1904 Date of detailed drawing (usually the last in the production line) of the set of 6 contract documents for the Bunbury Station Building. Construction presumed to have followed in 1905.⁴
- 1910 Construction of Goods Depot for Harbour Trust (demolished) extending south-eastwards from the Customs Bond Store (now a restaurant).⁵

² Harbour Chart, c.1896.

³ Batty, J.S. *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia Vol 1* (Perth, 1912; facsimile edition, Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 1985), pp.461-474.

⁴ Western Australian Government Railways; copies of original contract drawings in possession of Ian Molyneux, Fremantle, numbered and inscribed "Bunbury Station Buildings. E.E.L. Plan No. 7804/6, Sheets 1 to 6 inclusive (Vide E.E.L. File No. 7696/04)", Sheet 4 ("Details") dated 7 December 1904. (Note: E.E.L. refers to the office of 'Chief Engineer of Existing Lines'.)

- 1927 Date of design of Loco Round House (demolished).
- 1900s Bus services link with railway services from central Bunbury.
Bus Services replace railway services from central Bunbury.
- 1984-5 Demolition of the Lamp and Fuel Room and minor alterations.
- 1986 Adaptation works for the current uses.
- 1988 Landscaping works to the east of the Station buildings as part of
the so-called "City Square"⁶

The drawings (especially Sheet 1) are particularly interesting in evidencing the functions of each of the rooms, which include, from south to north (current uses bracketed):

Lamp and Fuel Rooms, Tank Yard (demolished).

Guards and Porters, Store Room (City office).

Permanent Way Office, District Superintendent, District Superintendent's Clerks, Station Master's Clerks, Station Master, Foreman (combined as Tourist Bureau).

Booking Hall, Ticket Office (same).

Parcels, Luggage (Bus Crews).

Passage, Ladies Waiting (Cafe).

Tank Yard (open t thoroughfare).

Ladies Lavatories and Latrines, (Mens') Urinals and Latrines (similar).

Among interesting construction details in the documents are the subterranean footings which are shown to be concrete instead of the common lack of footings or inferior brick and/or stone footings throughout the State up to and after this time. In addition the cantilever bent steel rail portals are seen to be counterbalanced by large subterranean concrete blocks.

The designers and builders have not at time of writing been identified but the plans are presumed to have been prepared under the authority of the W.A.G.R. Chief Engineer of Existing Lines, W. W. Dartnell, who retired from the position in 1908. In view of the evolving structures of the new State's ministries and departments, and of federation at the same time (for example the State continued to build for the Commonwealth for some years after federation) there is the possibility that the plans could have been prepared for the W.A.G.R. by the Public Works Department under the authority of the Principal Architect, John H. Grainger (noted for his Classical bent), who retired in 1905 in favour of his assistant, Hillson Beasley.

Physical alterations which are not extant but which were extant in 1978 (including asbestos roofing and western verandah enclosures, as well as use

⁵ Western Australian Government Railways; copy of original contract drawings in possession of Ian Molyneux, Fremantle, numbered and inscribed "E.E.L. Plan No. 11578/4, Sheet 1. Chief Engineer of Existing Lines. Proposed Extension of Goods Shed for Harbour Trust - Block Plan Shewing Fire Service, etc. File No. 233/9"..

⁶ City of Bunbury, facsimile correspondence to Ian Molyneux, 29 March 1996.

of the forecourt for patrons' carparking) can be seen in the photographic evidence in Molyneux 1978.⁷

The buildings ceased to function as a railway station with the closure and removal of the permanent way and lines within the city centre and construction of a new passenger rail terminus at Picton in the early 1980s.

The bus terminus function was retained, the ownership of the place was transferred to the City of Bunbury, and demolition and adaptation works were carried out by the city from 1984 to 1988.⁸

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The building complex of main station building and detached toilet building is the former central railway station constructed in the then Town of Bunbury, and now surviving alone (except for the former Bond Store; now a restaurant) from the precinct of station, goods-shed, locomotive round-house, marshalling yards, rail-tracks and signalling devices, etc., that developed between 1904 and the 1930s.

It is now used as a bus terminal including a cafe and tourist bureau, the ground levels adjacent to the former platform edge having been raised to the level of the platform as part of the public garden -style landscaping of the former yards. The new purposes have prompted the elimination of internal cross walls and substantial diminution of user traffic at the platform side, which has resulted in a degree of forlornness to the east side.

The station is sited within extensive contiguous open spaces, formed by such gardens and the bus and patrons' parking areas, located originally on reclaimed land at the shores of Leschenault Inlet, virtually at the centre of the old townsite's business heart, where it could best serve the business activity in the town .

The building complex originates from the one year, designed in late 1904 and presumed built immediately thereafter in 1905.

The style of the buildings is a mixture of the free-Classical or Italianate in the general building massing and emphasis on gabled ends and porticoes, and in the bracketed eaves details; this, by then, an old fashioned style, having been principally imported through immigration from the eastern states during the gold rushes. Elsewhere the decorative working of timber details is in the manner of the Arts and Crafts influences then being brought direct to Western Australia through immigration from Britain, later to be defined as among the bag of tricks of the so-called Federation style. Elsewhere, for example in the plain plastered office interiors and the toilet wing, there is limited if any decoration and the manner is utilitarian plain-ness but with harmonious proportions.

The building complex is principally formed by a gable ended, much-elongated, 16 bay, shed structure, 5.450 metres wide with a ceiling height of 3.950 metres, principally of one room in width, with an entry-booking hall intersecting the shed form, asymmetrically, at the seventh bay from the north

⁷ Molyneux, Ian *Bunbury National Estate Study 1978* (Nedlands, 1978), pp.82-86.

⁸ City of Bunbury, facsimile correspondence to Ian Molyneux, 29 March 1996.

end. The roof at this intersection is raised 0.600 metres, and opposed to the general ridge line, thereby producing gables in the elongated facades that signpost the position of entry to the main hall.

The elongated form is continued at the north end in the form of a detached lavatory block, formerly connected by a fenced rainwater tank yard. Similarly, at the southern end there was formerly a tank yard separating the main wing from a detached Lamp Room and Fuel Room block.

The shed is verandahed on the west, forecourt side, with a gablet inserted to correspond with the main roof gable

On the east side, the platform roof is supported on rafters spanning between major purlins which are in turn supported on U-shaped bent steel portals which are cantilevered out of restraining blocks within the platform floor, and which are surmounted by steel rings supporting the inner ends of the purlins. These portals are fabricated from rolled steel railway track sections and are typical of the confident engineering improvisation found within many such railway structures of the era.

The internal layout of the shed consists principally of seried rooms formed by cross partition walls in which are/were inter-connecting doorways and back-to back fireplaces.

Subsequent alterations include re-roofing from galvanised corrugated iron to asbestos to process-painted corrugated steel, uniform painting over of fair-face brickwork walls and stone sills etc, demolition of 3 of 6 former chimneys (no doubt as an economic measure during re-roofing) and alteration of one survivor as a kitchen flue, removal of several partition cross walls and fireplaces, elimination of grade difference between platform and track levels, surrounding of verandah posts with brick armour-plinths, limited filling of verandahs with glazed weather screening at bus-boarding positions, reinstatement of former lost verandah lattice but without accompanying "capital" molds on posts, and, probably, replacement of posts from time to time.

The building materials are principally corrugated steel roof cladding, on timber trussed roof structure (with decorative flourishes in timber), on clay brick walls with cavities, and timber floors, all on concrete plinths and footings, with the internal surfaces predominantly of plain plasterwork.

The appearance and condition of the building to date is good and substantially in what must have been its original form, albeit of different colours and colour scheme. A coloration of the balance of light and dark and of the system of distinction of parts as is evidenced by the original materials would assist appreciation of the designer's original aesthetic intents.

The buildings are, spacially speaking, relatively isolated from other structures, but the main entrance hall discharges virtually on the east-west alignment of Wellington Street which in turn intersects with the town's main street, Victoria Street, one block to the west. This intersection contains the remarkable *Rose Hotel* and other notable turn of the century and early twentieth century buildings, evidencing the station's influence in dictating the prime commercial sites subsequent to its construction. This influence would

have been fueled by rail being the principal mode of transport for summer holiday makers seeking refuge from the heat of the eastern goldfields.

The complex therefore has a strong structural-functional relationship to the historic precinct that remains within the old town centre, which relationship survives, albeit in diminished degree, despite the rise of use of the private vehicle.

The axis of the buildings is skewed from the north-south oriented street grid of the old town centre, this being a consequence of the railway taking the general alignment of least resistance, the undeveloped, unoccupied former shoreline of Leschenault Inlet, on its route to the harbour beyond. Therefore the alignment of this dominant structure is a marker of the historic changes of the city's urban form and provokes questioning that forms part of the scientific (teaching) values.

13.3 REFERENCES

No key references.