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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 place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.8.6 Building and maintaining railways
- 3.8.5 Moving goods and people on land
- 3.7.2 Developing electric means of communication

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 202 Rail and light rail transport
- 210 Telecommunications

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Rawlinna is significant for its landmark quality in a sparsely populated area where its continued existence is remarkable to thousands of Trans Australian Railway travellers. (Criterion 1.3)

The precinct forms a cultural landscape that is notable for its survival in an isolated environment. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Rawlinna provides important evidence of the European occupation of the Nullarbor hinterland and has been a service town linking transport and communications with the pastoral areas. The Concrete Water Tower demonstrates the provision of water for steam locomotives in a region with no permanent water courses. The Provision Store demonstrates the method of supply to isolated communities along the railway. The Railway Barracks represents the provision of 'resthouse' accommodation required in the era before through-crew workings. (Criterion 2.1)

Rawlinna was the first settlement on the Trans Australian Railway to open a school, in 1920. It was also the first WA settlement on line to get permanent housing for Commonwealth Railways employees. (Criterion 2.1)

Rawlinna was the first and largest railway settlement on the Western section of the Trans Australian Railway. The rail link between Port Augusta and Kalgoorlie was promised as part of the negotiations prior to Federation in

1901, and was an integral factor in the Western Australian decision for Federation. (Criterion 2.2)

Rawlinna is the location of the only Western Australian repeater station on the 1929 East-West telegraph/ telephonic route. It was vital to interstate telecommunications for over sixty years. (Criterion 2.2)

Rawlinna developed as a railway depot in an area where all resources, including water, had to be provided. The technical achievement in providing these facilities required the railways to overcome many problems associated with the isolation and the inhospitable country in an era with minimal mechanisation. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Rawlinna has potential to yield information, and hence understanding, about life since the beginning of European settlement in the area. Its remoteness has reduced the level of disturbance in the settlement and, as the largest such Trans Australian Railway site in Western Australia, it incorporates all aspects of rail transport and communications across the Nullarbor. (Criterion 3.2)

Rawlinna demonstrates the technical achievements of the East-West Telegraph and the interstate rail route. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Rawlinna has significance for the former residents and Commonwealth Railways workers as well as for the local pastoralists. The latter is demonstrated by the use of *Rawlinna* as the only place on the line that is the destination for a special passenger train, that is, the train to the Rawlinna Muster each April. (Criterion 4.1)

Rawlinna has significance for the Institution of Engineers who, in 2001, awarded the Trans Australian Railway with a National Engineering Award for Excellence reflecting the enormity of the task in the construction of the line and its service facilities. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Rawlinna is the most complete Trans Australian Railway settlement along the 726km of that line in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

The railway house (1921-24) is the oldest surviving building at *Rawlinna* and the oldest Commonwealth Railways house in Western Australia. It is the only one of the twenty such houses built at *Rawlinna* that is extant. (Criterion 5.1)

The Railway Station is one of only two Trans Australian Railway station buildings in situ in Western Australia, the other being at Forrest, and its size reflects the importance of *Rawlinna* as a depot on the Trans Australian Railway. The station building was the first hollow concrete block structure at *Rawlinna* (Criterion 5.1)

The Provision Store is the only remaining Commonwealth Railways store in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

The Concrete Water Tower is the only elevated water tank remaining on the Trans Australian Railway in WA. (Criterion 5.1)

The Post and Telegraph Office is the only such building in WA along the 1929 East-West telegraph route and is important for its role in communications to and from WA for over sixty years. (Criterion 5.1.)

Rawlinna demonstrates a way of life that used to be practised by railway employees and their families associated with the operation and maintenance of the Trans Australian Railway. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Railway House is representative of the first effort by the Commonwealth Railways to provide permanent housing for its employees on the Trans Australian Railway. The Railway Station's hollow concrete block construction is typical of the post-1940s facilities along the line. The Railway Barracks is representative of the 'resthouse' accommodation provided along the line. (Criteria 6.1 & 6.2)

Rawlinna is representative of the Commonwealth Railways' constructed settlements along the Trans Australian Railway. As one of only two such places in Western Australia that have more than a single railway structure remaining, *Rawlinna's* collection of structures is the most representative of these settlements and the former way of life along the line. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Rawlinna, as a collection of structures, is deteriorating where the buildings are not in use. The inclusion of transportable buildings has removed the need by the owners to maintain some of the older structures and hence these more significant structures are under threat from vandalism and the elements. The complexity of the current ownership and management arrangements does not provide a coherent plan for the future of the structures. As such, *Rawlinna* as a settlement is under threat due, not only to the poor condition of some structures, but also to the current use which is only viewed as temporary.

The older Railway Barracks are in sound condition due to current occupation by Loongana Lime employees with the ARTC owned structures generally in fair condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Rawlinna has high integrity with buildings such as the barracks and houses still used for their original purpose of accommodation. However, many structures are no longer used for any purpose thus reducing their integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Rawlinna's culturally significant structures generally have moderate to high authenticity with most alterations occurring as a function of changing, or increasing, operational requirements.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Philippa Rogers, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Conservation Consultant.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

When the Federation of Australian colonies was being considered Western Australia was the most reluctant colony. The Premier, (Sir) John Forrest, believed that a railway linking WA to the other states of Australia would help to unify the various Western Australian factions. The lure of a trans-continental railway did become the 'carrot' which led WA to join the Federation of Australia on 1 January 1901. Unfortunately it was only a promise and not a cast iron guarantee. This resulted in many years of lobbying by Western Australia before the railway came to fruition. Despite a preliminary survey in 1901 it was not until 1908 that WA and South Australia undertook a full survey across the desert.

A vote for the new Transcontinental Railway was passed by Federal Parliament on 6 December 1911¹. Construction of the 1,051 miles (1,692 km) standard gauge railway, to run from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta commenced in 1912. For the Commonwealth of Australia, the Trans-Australian Railway (Trans Australian Railway) was its first venture into railways. Once construction was underway a new entity to be known as the Commonwealth Railways was created.

Despite problems with labour and supplies due to World War One, construction was completed on 17 October 1917 at a point near Ooldea. One team had worked from the eastern end, the other from the western end and yet when the two teams met they were less than a metre apart on a north-south line², thus requiring only a slight adjustment of the last sections on both sides. Of the new railway 43% (726km) was in the state of Western Australia.

Rawlinna, the Aboriginal name for the locality (which according to one source means 'wind'),³ was one of the major railway settlements on the new railway. It was created at a point 235 miles (378km) from Kalgoorlie and 816 miles (1313km) from Port Augusta. *Rawlinna* was to be the largest railway township on the Western Australian section of the line.

During the construction of the Trans Australian Railway three locomotive depots were planned between Kalgoorlie and Port Augusta in order to assist with the maintenance of steam locomotives. Following the verification of water supplies in 1916, it was determined that these three depots would be located at *Rawlinna*, Cook and Tarcoola, the latter two being in South Australia.⁴ Steam crews were changed at these places. A temporary station building, constructed of a single framed tent with temporary boards on the sides and the ends, was soon replaced with a station building similar to that constructed at Zanthus.⁵ A Mortlock Library (SA) photograph⁶ shows *Rawlinna* c 1917 with such a timber railway station.

Materials for the various structures at *Rawlinna* were acquired from various sources including second hand materials for the engine shed from the Electric Light Company building in Coolgardie.⁷ Plans were compiled by the Commonwealth Railways Engineer-in-Chief and sent to the Supervising Engineer in Kalgoorlie. There is no evidence found of the construction of these early buildings being undertaken by other than Commonwealth

1 Burke D., *Road through the Wilderness* NSW University Press 1991

2 Commonwealth Railways Annual Report 1918

3 Burke D., op. cit

4 NAA (Adelaide) 'Loco depots fixed' B300 Item 3743

5 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station 816 miles' B300 Item 4166 Part 1

6 Photo number B 24897 '*Rawlinna* Station ca.1917'

7 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station 816 miles' B300 Item 4166 Part 1

Railways employees. Once the railway opened, outside contractors were often used.

In 1918, the building of the bakehouse, with its large oven, was completed and the hospital car (ex Cook) was placed on sleepers. The following year the final touches were applied to the Provision Store, including a cellar and with iron bars installed on the windows.⁸ The departmental bakery had been moved to *Rawlinna* from Naretha. The bakehouse was a 34' by 16' building with a lean to roof over the brick oven.⁹

A passenger on the first through Trans Australian train in October 1917 noted:

'Rawlinna is an engine depot where we experienced our seventh change of locomotives. There is a well here, 323 feet deep, of excellent water.'¹⁰

With the completion of the railway the need to provide for families was recognised by the Commonwealth Railways. Mr Norris Bell, Commonwealth Railways Commissioner located families to Zanthus, *Rawlinna* and Loongana on the western side as part of the planning for services such as schools.¹¹ The Commonwealth Railways contacted Mr Cecil Andrews, Director of WA Schools¹² to gain the State Government's involvement in the education process. The *Rawlinna* school, the first on the Trans line was opened on 9 February 1920.¹³ Its first home was in a Commonwealth Railways owned building relocated from Parkeston but with the cost of relocations paid for by the State Government. Miss Lucy Walters was the first appointed teacher but a year earlier one of the drivers based at *Rawlinna* told the Commonwealth Railways welfare officer that the daughter of Mr Sharp, the station master, was informally teaching the children living there.¹⁴

A qualified chemist was located at *Rawlinna* with a dispensary and accommodation for patients. In an emergency a doctor was sent along the line. The dispenser was allocated a room rent free in the hospital car as he had to be on call 24 hours a day. By 1922 the car was still on sleepers. Two years later the Commonwealth Railways moved the former camp train car body to a new position between the residences and turned the car into House No. 299.¹⁵ A travelling dispensary car replaced it.

Whilst new accommodation was being built at *Rawlinna*, temporary arrangements were made for the transfer of tenthouses for the use of a married employee and for the provision of a water supply for employees. This supply was to be on the south side of the line and so all tenthouses were moved to the south side before connection.¹⁶

8 ibid.

9 NAA (Adelaide) 'Bakeries at Tarcoola and *Rawlinna*' B300 Item 5438

10 B.H. Gillman 'Linking East & West – A trip with the first Trans Australian Express' first published in SAR Officers' Magazines 1919 & reprinted ARHS Bulletin July 1982

11 Commonwealth Railways (CR) Annual Report 1918

12 Battye Library: W. Gable & Staff at *Rawlinna* PS '*Rawlinna* Primary School & Community, April 1993

13 EDWA – Rural & Isolated Schools report by W.Gable c.1970

14 NAA (Adelaide) 'School at *Rawlinna*' B300 item 3207/6

15 NAA (Adelaide) 'Hospital and dispensary Tarcoola & *Rawlinna*' B300 Item 6526

16 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station 816 miles' B300 Item 4166 Part 2

Twenty dwellings for gangers and fettlers were completed at *Rawlinna* between 1921 and 1924.¹⁷ *Rawlinna* was considered to be a main depot and was the first settlement to replace the framed tents.

The 1924 Commonwealth Railways General Appendix lists *Rawlinna* as having the following railway infrastructure:

Station building, 1390' crossing loop, lamp room, gents latrine, Hospital car shed, engine shed, rest houses – maintenance & train crew, ash pit at loco, elephant trunk water facility, 56000 gall water storage, 700 gall sump, well, windmill & engine water pumps, triangle, 200 ton coal stage, oil store loco, carriage watering facilities.

From 1927 the Post Master General's Department (PMG) commenced the installation of the overland telegraph on railway poles. Using three copper wires it replaced the Eucla route. In 1928 the PMG and Commonwealth Railways agreed on a site for the Repeater Station at *Rawlinna*. The site was to be 120' east of the station and 50' south of the line near the school house.¹⁸ Repeater stations and cottages were built at Tarcoola and Cook in SA and in *Rawlinna*. The first East-West phone circuit opened in 1930.¹⁹ With the opening of the PMG repeater station lighting was made available for Commonwealth Railways' use on the platform and in the station building.²⁰ All poles and wires disappeared in the 1990s, being replaced by Telecom's east-west optic fibre.

The first Post Office, or Allowance Office as it was called, opened on 28 April 1916. This was one of several Allowance Post Offices opened on the completed section, the Postmasters being the Station Masters or Operating Porters in charge. Allowance Office business included the Savings Bank. It was also the *Rawlinna* Station Master's duty to record the weather readings. The meteorological station had opened there in 1920 by special arrangement with the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner who agreed that the Station Master (SM) would take readings for no extra pay. This arrangement continued until February 1939 when the Postmaster took over the duties.²¹ After the coming of the telegraph along the railway, the Post Office was upgraded to official status on 1 March 1931 but, after a reduction in the number of railway employees it reverted to allowance status on 1 May 1955.²² Another duty of the SM was to examine the mail van locks and seals to check they were intact.²³

On 10 September 1928 the first plane landed at *Rawlinna*.²⁴ With the commencement of aviation activity in *Rawlinna*, the Shell Oil Company had a need for the handling and storage of fuel.²⁵ The Commonwealth Railways agreed to handle the supplies (for a fee) but could not provide any storage. A 1,000 gallon underground tank was installed in 1930 and the following year the Vacuum Oil Company built a storage shed at the aerodrome to house

17 CR Annual Reports 1921, 1924

18 NAA (Adelaide) 'Telegraph repeater stations & cottages at Cook, Tarcoola SA and *Rawlinna*' B300 Item 6484/1

19 John Moynihan '50 years of East-West Telephony, 1930-80', Telecommunication Soc of Aust

20 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station 816 miles' B300 Item 4166 Part 2

21 NAA (Perth) *Rawlinna* Post Office Partt 1 PP 521/1/0

22 Battye Library, PR 3569 Postal History of the Trans Continental Rwy, WA

23 NAA(Adelaide) B300/2 6251/5 'Attempted Robbery of Mail'

24 Battye Library, W. Gable & Staff at *Rawlinna* PS '*Rawlinna* Primary School & Community, April 1993,

25 NAA (Adelaide) 'Aviation facilities at *Rawlinna*' B300 Item 6187/7

their supplies for the RAAF.²⁶ The tonnages were not great; for example in 1941 there was a total of 372 gallons supplied for the RAAF.²⁷ In 1952, plans were finally approved for the western extension of the runway at *Rawlinna*, so the airstrip was essentially now to be an east-west strip.²⁸ Since 1942, only a strip 150 yards wide had been considered suitable for landing aircraft.²⁹ In view of the limited interest in retaining the aerodrome by the Commonwealth Railways, the Department of Civil Aviation handed over the facility at no cost to the Commonwealth Railways in 1964.³⁰

The state of housing in *Rawlinna* was not as rosy as the provision of relatively modern housing would indicate. In 1930 the Commonwealth Railways agreed to line the residences as the lack of lining meant the houses were draughty and even 'lacking in ordinary privacy'.³¹ The rent of the residences was increased accordingly. Commonwealth Railways defended the rent increases explaining that employees received a district allowance of 12/3 per week and 'were supplied with groceries and provisions from Departmental general stores at prices not exceeding those fixed in Adelaide by the SA Retail Grocers Association. Furthermore they were supplied with meat and small goods at contract prices arranged by the department.'³²

In June 1938 a new faster passenger timetable was introduced with the advent of the new larger capacity "C" class locomotives.³³ With a water capacity of two and a half times the earlier engines and nearly twice the coal capacity, fewer stops were made for locomotive servicing and so these facilities were removed from some locations, thus increasing the importance of the remaining servicing locations such as *Rawlinna*.

Whilst no records have been located detailing the construction of a recreation hall, a 1939 plan of *Rawlinna*³⁴ shows tennis courts located immediately south of a building labelled 'Recreation Hall'. Tennis was only one of the sports played in *Rawlinna*. The Rawlinna Golf Club received permission in August 1939 to use portions of the aerodrome as a golf club 'provided no obstructions are caused, such as bunkers, etc and provided that flags marking the holes are not allowed to remain after play has ceased, temporary permission is given to play golf'.³⁵ Other entertainment included a visit by Wirth's Circus in 1940.³⁶

On the afternoon of 5 September 1941, the station master went home for a cup of tea. Unfortunately the station building burnt down during that time – probably as a result of a match, or live tobacco, carelessly thrown down by the Station Master.³⁷ The building and contents were completely destroyed and the damage was estimated at £620. As a busy railway depot, *Rawlinna*

26 ibid.

27 ibid.

28 NAA (Adelaide) 'Acquisition of land at *Rawlinna* by Dept of Civil Aviation' B300 Item 8918.

29 NAA (Canberra) '*Rawlinna* (WA) Aerodrome 1939-1956' A 705 Item 7/1/400

30 NAA (Adelaide) 'Aviation facilities at *Rawlinna*' B300 Item 6187/7

31 NAA (Canberra) '*Rawlinna* – TAR lining of departmental residences'. A1 Item 1932/8290

32 ibid.

33 Port Dock Railway Station Museum 'Locomotives and railcars of the Commonwealth Railways', 1996

34 NAA (Adelaide) 'Application for building site at *Rawlinna*' B300 Item 7997

35 NAA (Canberra) '*Rawlinna*(WA) Aerodrome 1939 –1956' A705 Item 7/1/400

36 Battye Library W. Gable & Staff at *Rawlinna* PS '*Rawlinna* Primary School & Community, April 1993

37 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station building destroyed by fire 5/9/41' B300 item 8169

needed a station building and a temporary building was relocated from Kingoonya. Approval was given to replace the station with a structure similar to that at Tarcoola.³⁸ H. Martin and Company of Perth won the tender for the new building, using hollow concrete blocks at a cost of £580. It was completed by October 1942.³⁹ That same month a tender to construct the new provision store, lamp room, closets and urinal was let to H. Martin & Company at a cost of £2,946. This comprised a retail store 48' by 24'6" and a bulk store 36'6" by 24'6", together with a separate kerosene store 14' square and cellar. Like the new station it was to be made of hollow concrete blocks.⁴⁰ By November 1943 the new store was commissioned though it was not until May 1947 that the old provision store was demolished.

During World War Two in order to meet the increased demand for trains, two buildings⁴¹ were provided for resting quarters for train crews at *Rawlinna*.⁴² Other activities included the existing well supply being successfully augmented by a bore which at 269 feet (82m) produced water, at a rate of 5,760 gallons (26kL) per hour. An east-west road was built in 1942 with materials for the Madura and Eucla passes railed to *Rawlinna*. There the Army had established a supply base from where material was carted to Cocklebidly.⁴³ The ability to acquire fresh bread from the bakery was appreciated by the Army. The busy war years did not preclude other improvements around *Rawlinna*, though contractors were sometimes unable to keep to schedule due to the labour shortage experienced. In 1944 the locomotive running shed was re-roofed and the 50,000 gallon reinforced concrete water tank was constructed by J. O'Malley Dixon.⁴⁴ A Commonwealth Railways residence was also built.⁴⁵

The PMG acquired two sites for cottages for Repeater Station staff in May 1943. A cottage for the Senior Technician was erected in 1951 at Lot 2 Giles St. It had three bedrooms, lounges, kitchen and verandah.⁴⁶ The original residence had been destroyed by fire on 23 April 1950. The house was still used in 1980. A later reduction in PMG staff resulted in the residence of the other technician being rented out to Mr D Griffiths, a rabbit merchant in charge of rabbit chilling plant. It was eventually sold to Commonwealth Railways.⁴⁷ In 1969, they agreed to pay £7,000 for the residence with notice to be given to the then tenant.⁴⁸

In 1947, the teacher's living quarters were now one large room 22' by 28', which was compared favourably with the camp train body still used by the teacher at nearby Zanthus.⁴⁹ Some railway employees, mainly track workers, were in basic accommodation. In 1949, a fletcher appointed to *Rawlinna* was allocated a double tenthouse for accommodation at rent of 6/9 per week. This

38 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station WA (816 miles) & depot' B300 item 4166 Part 3

39 *ibid.*

40 NAA (Adelaide) 'Provision Store, *Rawlinna* -Part 1' B300 Item 8298

41 timber-framed, 2 -roomed quarters, each consisting of a 20' x 12' building, lined with 3 ply timber and subdivided into a 10' x 12' bedroom and a 10' x 8' kitchen with stove

42 NAA (Adelaide) 'Wartime History of CR' B 300/2 Item 8488

43 Edmonds L., '*The Vital Link*', UWA Press 1997, Chapter 5

44 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station WA (816 miles) & depot' B300 item 4166 Part 3

45 CR Annual Report 1945

46 NAA Perth '*Rawlinna* Senior Tech Residence' - K 273 /44 item 1968/599

47 NAA (Perth): *Rawlinna* - PMG - proposed lease of residence PP 520/1 Item 1955/101

48 NAA (Perth): *Rawlinna* - PMG Residence Disposal to CR K 531/3

49 NAA (Adelaide) 'School at *Rawlinna*' B300 item 3207/6

was more expensive than some because it had a kerosene fridge and water.⁵⁰ It was not until 1957 that the residents were able to have a few hours electricity each day for lighting⁵¹ – courtesy of the upgraded telegraph station power plant.

In June 1950, improvements were made to four of the tenthouses, three to be used by married Commonwealth Railways employees and the fourth by the Bush Aid Society Nursing sister who had been appointed to *Rawlinna*.⁵² The Rawlinna Progress Association, who had asked for a first aid post and nursing sister in 1949⁵³, paid the rent of 2/- a week for the single tenthouse but sometimes found it difficult to raise this money. The nursing sister attended to any patients in the area, not just those from *Rawlinna* or Commonwealth Railways employees. In 1960 a total of 1,350 outpatients were treated.⁵⁴

In 1951, the Commissioner altered the schedule of the supply train, the 'Tea & Sugar', to provide transport for children, parents and teachers to attend the first inter-school sports. This became an annual event and provided a rare opportunity for school children to visit other communities. Isolation was a constant difficulty for all residents.

The through running of the new GM class of diesel-electric locomotives commenced in October 1951 on the passenger services and was quickly applied to all services. This withdrawal of steam locomotives, with their large appetite for coal and water, reduced the need for locomotive servicing staff along the whole of the Trans line. By March 1952, *Rawlinna* only had six employees at the locomotive depot, compared with twenty a few months earlier.⁵⁵ This had an impact on the store with weekly turnover dropping to £481 by August 1952 from £555 the year before. However, in February 1953, the turnover had risen again to £649 a week and the four staff employed retained their store jobs.⁵⁶

Extensions to the PMG Repeater Station were carried out by F. J. Power of Southern Cross for £6,794 and were completed by May 1953.⁵⁷

The Commonwealth Railways Annual Report for 1954 reported that the bakery closed in March 1954 as the new quicker train service had made it redundant. However departmental files⁵⁸ show that the baker declared his intention to leave in March 1954 and the Commonwealth Railways was not confident it would be able to attract another baker and so found ways to achieve the required bread supply without having to find a replacement baker.

The location of a rabbit chiller at *Rawlinna* resulted in work for a least one man on the payroll of a large meat company. But it had a different use in 1960

50 CR Monthly Notices July, 1949

51 CR Annual Report 1957

52 NAA (Adelaide) 'Hospital at Cook, hostel at Tarcoola, hostel proposed Kingoonya, Flying Doctor Service, accommodation for Nurses-*Rawlinna*' B300 7779 part 2.

53 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station WA (816 miles) & depot' B300 item 4166 Part 3

54 NAA (Adelaide) 'Hospital at Cook, hostel at Tarcoola, hostel proposed Kingoonya, Flying Doctor Service, accommodation for Nurses-*Rawlinna*' B300 7779 part 2.

55 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station WA (816 miles) & depot' B300 item 4166 Part 3

56 NAA (Adelaide) 'Provision Store *Rawlinna* – pt 1' B300 item 8298

57 NAA (Perth) 'Extensions to Repeater Station' PP280/1

58 NAA (Adelaide) 'Bakeries at Tarcoola and *Rawlinna*' B300 Item 5438.

when a track section car hit a locomotive. Four men were killed and their bodies kept in the rabbit chiller until taken to Kalgoorlie.⁵⁹

Thirty buildings owned by the Commonwealth Railways were used for residences and employee facilities in 1962. These were⁶⁰:

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|------|
| Residences (20): | Ways and Works employees | - 12 |
| | Loco staff | - 1 |
| | Office (including stores staff) | - 6 |
| | School teacher | - 1 |
| Double tenthouses (5): | Rented by rabbit trappers | - 3 |
| | Kiesey Bros | - 1 |
| | Nursing sister | - 1 |
| Single tenthouses (2) | Trapper | - 1 |
| | Kitchen | - 1 |
| Two roomed quarters | Officers' rest house | - 1 |
| Hospital building | | |
| Crews' barracks | | |

It is likely that the 20 residences were mainly the same places as had been built 40 years earlier as these would not have been replaced whilst tenthouses were still in use along the line.

The 1960s were an era of change – almost an ‘out with the old and in with the new’. In 1965, both the water column (relocated there in 1937) and the 1920 bakehouse were sold for scrap.⁶¹ However the servicing of nearby pastoral properties was creating traffic. In 1964, a 40’ x 20’ goods shed was built. Despite the availability of a portable livestock race, it was agreed in 1963 to extend the siding at the apex of the rail triangle (a 462’ spur) to enable a dead-end loading ramp as well as a sheep and a cattle race to be built – though the work did not take place until 1965. Local pastoralists had been agitating for improved trucking facilities for cattle and the protection of goods since 1937. The Commonwealth Railways had agreed to provide temporary facilities but claimed that there were insufficient goods to warrant a goods shed.⁶² Fire was again a problem in *Rawlinna* on 1965 when the rabbit chiller (owned by Clover Meats), and a privately owned cattle race, were destroyed.⁶³ That year the new power plant shed, and then in August the plant, was installed. Now *Rawlinna* had 24 hour AC power and street lights.⁶⁴

In 1962, the Commonwealth Railways described *Rawlinna* as ‘a large community provided for by building the hostel which is staffed by the Bush Church Aid Society (who operate the Royal Flying Doctor Service), land nearby opened up for selection and a rabbit trapping industry’.⁶⁵ The Bush

⁵⁹ Battye Library, W. Gable & Staff at *Rawlinna* PS ‘*Rawlinna* Primary School & Community, April 1993

⁶⁰ NAA (Adelaide) ‘Hospital at Cook, hostel at Tarcoola, hostel proposed Kingoonya, Flying Doctor Service, accommodation for Nurses-*Rawlinna*’ B300 7779 part 3.

⁶¹ NAA (Adelaide) ‘*Rawlinna* Station WA (816 miles) & depot’ B300 item 4166 Part 3

⁶² NAA (Adelaide) ‘Livestock yards, *Rawlinna*’ B300 Item 8877

⁶³ NAA (Adelaide) ‘*Rawlinna* Station WA (816 miles) & depot’ B300 item 4166 Part 3

⁶⁴ Battye Library, W. Gable & Staff at *Rawlinna* PS ‘*Rawlinna* Primary School & Community, April 1993

⁶⁵ NAA (Adelaide) ‘Aviation facilities at *Rawlinna*’ B300 Item 6187/7

Church Aid Society Nursing Hostel nurse also travelled to Haig and Loongana to immunise children.⁶⁶ Sleeping on the verandah of the tenthouse was not liked by the sister who requested a house where patients could be accommodated overnight if required whilst awaiting the doctor or transport. In July 1962, a three- roomed house was transferred from the 595 mile siding for use by the sister.⁶⁷ This was located next to the double tenthouse and alterations are shown in plan No. 1533 'Additions to the Nurses Hostel Rawlinna'.⁶⁸

In November 1963, the original school was vacated and the children moved into the new school building. Attendance had peaked in October 1960 at 44⁶⁹.

The report of the Commonwealth Railways Commissioners' visit to *Rawlinna* in 1966 to attend the Interschool sports day there provided an opportunity to meet with the local residents.⁷⁰ In view of his attendance at a film evening, and concert that evening it was an appropriate time to give approval to the Parents and Citizens Association to acquire the old school for a film centre and the holding of functions such as jumble sales. In April 1967, the P & C Hall with theatrette, purchased for \$60 and renovated with busy bees, was opened.⁷¹ The 'new' barracks were under construction by E.M.J. Morgan of Tea Tree Gully, SA. However, the Locomotive Journal in 1957 noted the opening of the new concrete block barracks at *Rawlinna*. Hence the later date coinciding with the Commissioner's visit may refer to the beginning of work on the more modern barracks.

Early in 1967, the CSIRO conducted tests using an electrolysis plant to desalt underground water at *Rawlinna*.⁷² The favourable results led to the recommendation to install such a plant there. This was commissioned in 1970. That same year, two trains were stranded in *Rawlinna*, giving it a temporary population of more than 500. Supplies ran out and had to be flown in by plane. Dancing and bingo were organised to entertain visitors.⁷³ No doubt the P and C hall was very busy.

In July 1968, authority was given by Commonwealth Railways for the expenditure of \$5166 to replace the Road Masters' office with a 364 sq ft addition to the Station building.⁷⁴ The Road Master's office was very old and cramped and there were advantages to having the Station Master and the Road Master located in the same building. Livestock was still transported through the station –to the extent that a new water supply and trough was installed for the yards.⁷⁵

The number of patients being treated by the resident nursing sister had dropped to the point in 1967 that the Bush Church Aid Society could no longer afford to locate a nurse at *Rawlinna* and withdrew their nursing

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- 66 NAA (Adelaide) 'Hospital at Cook, hostel at Tarcoola, hostel proposed Kingoonya, Flying Doctor Service, accommodation for Nurses-*Rawlinna*' B300 7779 part 3
- 67 *ibid*
- 68 *ibid*
- 69 Battye Library, W. Gable & Staff at *Rawlinna* PS op cit
- 70 NAA (Adelaide) ' Commissioner's visit to Port Augusta and *Rawlinna*, August 1996, part 1' B300 Item 6900/362
- 71 Gable, op cit
- 72 NAA (Adelaide) 'Water Treatment by electrolysis plant' B 300 Item 9678 Part 2.
- 73 Gable, op cit
- 74 NAA (Adelaide) '*Rawlinna* Station WA (816 miles) & depot' B300 item 4166 Part 3
- 75 NAA (Adelaide) 'Livestock yards, *Rawlinna*' B300 Item 8877

sister.⁷⁶ The Commonwealth Railways appointed a temporary caretaker/sister, Mrs Hawkins, who was the wife of a linesman, to the position.⁷⁷ This position was paid by the railways according to the number of patients. From 1970, the State Government provided a subsidy of \$1,100 towards running costs. The hostel was still open into the 1980s.

In 1970 the initial Trans-Australian telecommunications microwave link was established. However, the telegraph lines were retained as a back-up. It is not clear at what point these lines ceased to be used, but they were probably redundant by the late 1980s, as in 1991 Telecom called for expressions of interest to remove them.

In 1975, the Commonwealth Railways was renamed Australian National Railways, which was later shortened to Australian National until its demise in 1996.

A 1975 inspection of western Trans-line settlements by various authorities recommended that the Trans-line settlements be consolidated west of the border on *Rawlinna* and Coonana: i.e. phase out Zanthus and Reid for family occupation. *Rawlinna* was to have new quarters for the teacher and replacement of louvered windows of the school to permit air-conditioning to be installed.⁷⁸ Teacher housing was to be in Government Employee Housing Authority transportables.

At that time there were twenty houses at *Rawlinna* and the 1963 primary school consisted of two classrooms, 2 stores and an office, of timber frame construction and bounded on all sides by a verandah.

The 1980s started with more fire problems. Two houses caught fire (one was Jones'), one of which was totally destroyed and the power house caught fire twice. In 1983, construction started on new hall.⁷⁹ Three years later, the foundations for new houses were started ready for the arrival of the new transportables in November. Also in 1983, Men of the Trees planted all the trees in the town.

In 1991 the Trans-line sports day was held at *Rawlinna* for the last time. At the end of 1995 the school was closed.⁸⁰ By January 1996, there was only one family left in town. The store was closed but mail still arrived for the family and the surrounding stations courtesy of the supply trains 'Tea & Sugar / Bomber'.

Whilst *Rawlinna* closed as a railway town in 1996, the station community in the district was still functioning. In the late 1990s Loongana Lime transferred its mining operations from Loongana to *Rawlinna* and now has ownership of most of the infrastructure.

In 2002, the ownership of the various structures reflects their current use. Those structures owned by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) have been retained for railway operations and communications purposes. The company Loongana Lime, who operate a lime quarry to the north of *Rawlinna* own most of the buildings – employee accommodation and facilities (the company headquarters being at Parkeston). The Education Department

76 NAA (Adelaide) 'Hospital at Cook, Tarcoola SA, accommodation for Nurses at *Rawlinna* WA' B300 Item 7779 part 4.

77 NAA (Adelaide) 'Hospital at Cook, hostel at Tarcoola, hostel proposed Kingoonya, Flying Doctor Service, accommodation for Nurses-*Rawlinna*' B300 7779 part 3.

78 PRO, 'Coonana school' Acc 3449 Item 610/70

79 Gable, op. cit.

80 School Matters 7/2/96, EDWA

of Western Australia owns the former school building, though it is disused and has been vandalised. There are two privately owned residences.

Former Commonwealth Railways House (1921/4) No. 120 is privately owned and in 2001 was used by kangaroo shooters. Another house, formerly the PMG Technician's Residence (c.1943), is vacant and is privately owned by Mr Hogg.

Post and Telegraph Office (fmr) (1929/30) and the Railway Station Building (1942) with toilet block are owned by ARTC but managed by Loongana Lime, though all are vacant.

Provision Store (1943), the Concrete Water Tower (1944) and hall (1983) are no longer used but are owned by Loongana Lime.

Railway Barracks (1957), later railway barracks (unknown date) and adjacent transportable units are used for accommodation by owners Loongana Lime. The Power Plant and generators (1965) and the Desalination Plant (1970) are owned by Loongana Lime and used for original purposes.

The School (1963), owned by the Education Department of Western Australia, is disused.

Six transportable houses (1986 onwards) on south side of the track. Three of these are owned by ARTC but are licensed to be managed by track maintainers Transfield.

Commemoration plaque, time capsule, (1995) with 'tumbling tommy' (c.1916) and portion of aircraft beacon (c.1929) are still in situ.

Railway tracks (1915) and long siding (1965) are owned by ARTC who have responsibility for east-west rail route but Loongana Lime own and operate the siding to the quarry from a point beyond the northern apex of the rail triangle.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Rawlinna is a Transcontinental Railway settlement located at the Rawlinna Siding, approximately 400 kilometres due east of Kalgoorlie, on the Nullabor Plain. *Rawlinna* is one of thirteen sidings along the railway line between Kalgoorlie and the South Australian border. Of the thirteen sidings, *Rawlinna* is the largest and most complete settlement.

Rawlinna settlement is aligned east west, parallel to the railway line, with buildings each side of the line. Road access is from the west. Tracks exist through station country southwest to Balladonia and South east to Cocklebiddy. An unsealed road leads north to Warburton.

Entering from the west, the main group of buildings are on the south side of the line; the School, the Hall, Telecom House, 5 transportable dwellings, are all on the south of the access road. To the north of the access road, and still south of and parallel to the line, with only approximately 10 metres setback, is the Provisions Store, toilets, Railway Station and Post and Telegraph Office. Located in the centre is a commemorative plaque with a time capsule entombed on 10 October 1995. The commemoration includes a 'tumbling tommy' a tool used to build the railway line, and also a portion of the aircraft beacon for the air-service between Perth-Forrest-Ceduna, that was established in 1929.

Further east is an original Railway House and a transportable dwelling.

Crossing the railway line, between the Post and Telegraph Office and the Railway Station, north of the line, west of the crossing is a Concrete Water Tower and the Railway Barracks. On the west of that is a more recent barracks structure. The two barracks and Concrete Water Tower are located within the railway triangle turnaround. East of that is a more recent water tank and also a grave site with a concrete headstone that reads 'here lies bldgs' (maybe for a dog?) At the apex of the railway triangle, in the north, is the Power Plant. The railway line extends northwards to the Loongana Lime quarry operations.

The site of the settlement is flat, although the railway line is built up. The places on the south of the line are vacant except two of the transportable dwellings and the remaining original Railway House. On the north side, the original Railway Barracks is an accommodation facility for the fly-in fly-out quarry employees, and the more recent barracks building is the Loongana Lime office.

All the public buildings except the brick Post and Telegraph Office are constructed of cement blocks. Apparently the Post and Telegraph Office is the same design as Tarcoola and Cook Post Offices on the line in South Australia, and they were constructed when the PMG originally put the phone line along the railway (1929). Locals suggest that the only reason the Post and Telegraph Office hasn't been demolished is that all the phone services are still connected.

There is a playground typical of the playgrounds that were constructed at all the siding settlements in the 1970s. All the vacant buildings are open and it is as though they have just been vacated. There is minimal vandalism and the places are weathertight. The vacant telecom house and Hall are exceptions, as they are derelict.

School

Rawlinna School is a single storey two roomed pavilion with surrounding verandahs. The building is a timber framed structure with asbestos wall cladding, timber framed windows and a low pitched metaldeck sheeted gable roof on steel trusses. It comprises two main classrooms and a utility area along the west end, including an enclosed verandah on the north end of the west verandah. The classroom fitouts are intact. There is a bitumen playground on the south side and ablutions block on the south edge. The gardens are still intact.

Hall

The Hall, also known as Rawlinna 'Club', is a single storey single room structure. It is timber framed and asbestos clad with a timber floor and a gable roof clad with corrugated iron. The building was reportedly a former Telecom building relocated from Tarcoola. It is vacant and derelict.

Telecom house

The Telecom House is a single storey timber framed and clad dwelling elevated off the ground. The external cladding is vertical timber boards. The windows are the original timber framed double hung sashes. An extension on the west side is clad with asbestos sheets and has aluminium framed windows. The gable roof is clad with corrugated iron. The place is vacant and derelict.

5 transportable houses

There are five more recent transportable houses. They are single storey simple pavilions with gable roofs. Three houses back onto the main road through town, facing south where the other two houses front onto. Each house lot is fenced with supersix fencing.

Railway House

Further east on the same alignment as the more recent houses, is the original Railway House. It is a single storey dwelling with a verandah along the front and west side. It is timber framed and clad with weatherboards. The gambrel roof is clad with corrugated iron. Internal access was not available. The house is occupied by kangaroo shooters.

Transportable dwelling

Several lots east of the original Railway House is another dwelling. It is a single storey transportable pavilion. Clad with vertical profile asbestos walls and corrugated iron roof, it has a verandah across the front. The place is vacant, and was inaccessible but appeared to be in fair condition.

Post and Telegraph Office

The Post and Telegraph Office building is located adjacent and parallel to the Transcontinental railway line, being approximately 10 metres from the line. The single storey building has a "T" shaped floorplan. The structure is a brick construction, rendered above door head height. The hipped roof is clad with corrugated iron. The north (front) verandah has a separate low pitched hipped roof with an underlining of spaced timber battens, running lengthwise. The verandah is supported by square timber posts on metal stirrups with a few replacement round steel posts.

A large metal sign with brass lettering is still in place on the west end of the Post and Telegraph Office where the public office was located. The building comprises four main rooms. The interior floors are concrete and the walls are painted face brick. There are channels in the concrete floors in the rear room, and vinyl tiles are still in place in the Post and Telegraph Office, as well as a timber counter. The fireplace has a cupboard enclosure.

The external south and east walls have been rendered to dado height and there is evidence of rising damp. The place is vacant and open. It is in fair to poor condition.

Rawlinna Railway Station

West of the Post and Telegraph Office and railway crossing road, and on the same alignment as the Post and Telegraph Office, is the Stationmasters office. It is a single storey building constructed in two different periods. The pavilion has a corrugated iron hipped roof extending in a skillion over the front verandah along the north. The cement block structure informs of the two periods of construction. The original cement blocks are decorative and the openings in the walls are quoined with smooth blocks whereas, the two rooms on the east have been constructed of smooth face concrete blocks on a concrete plinth. Further evidence is demonstrated in the window elements; the original is timber framed double hung sashes and the later extension has aluminium framed sliding glass windows. The interior is basic. The walls have a hardplaster finish in the two original rooms on the west end, but the east rooms are painted face block work, with an internal timber stud partition wall. The ceilings throughout are plaster board with battens. The floors are concrete except for the second room on the west end. The building is vacant and in fair condition.

Toilets

The toilet block, a small single storey pavilion with a gable roof, is west of the Railway Station on the same alignment. It is decorative concrete block construction with a gable corrugated iron roof. It was inaccessible, and assumed to be unusable. Fair condition.

Provisions Store

Further west of the Railway Station and Post and Telegraph Office, is the Provisions Store. On the east side there is a concrete loading ramp, and originally a spur line ran along the front of the Provisions Store. The single storey structure has a hipped roof with an extending skillion verandah over the north front verandah. It is constructed from decorative concrete blocks with smooth concrete block quoins to openings. The timber framed windows have double hung sashes and several windows have vertical metal grilles attached on the interior. The main store runs north south on the west end of the building. It has a gable roof with a series of skylights and an exposed timber truss. The interior walls are painted face brick with engaged piers and the floors are timber with vinyl tiles laid over. The original office partition is still in place in the north west (front) corner. The other room has a ramped front entry and two large freestanding cool rooms. At the east end a staircase accesses a cellar. The cellar has hard plaster walls and a concrete floor. There is a small externally accessed room at the east end of the building.

Railway Barracks

North of the railway line are the Railway Barracks. The original barracks is a single storey building with a 'U' shaped floor plan. The building is a cement block construction. The decorative cement blocks form a dado wall on the exterior walls on the south, west and east, with render above. All other external walls are entirely concrete block. The corrugated iron roof is hipped with a skillion over the ablutions in the 'U'. The barracks are occupied and in good condition.

c.1980 Barracks

Located on the south east corner of the original Railway Barracks, the single storey rectangular brick building is obviously different to the other buildings in the settlement. It is a salmon coloured brick construction with a low pitched roof concealed by a steel sheet parapet fascia.

Power Plant

A few hundred metres north of the Railway Barracks is the Power Plant. It is a steel framed and clad double gable shed structure.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The Commonwealth Railways used a standard style of hollow concrete block structure for barracks and later station buildings along the Trans Australian Railway (Trans Australian Railway). *Rawlinna* is the only WA location with both structures of this style. There are some buildings remaining on the South Australian side of the border such as at Cook and Tarcoola.

Of the twenty-one sidings on the Western Australian section of the Trans Australian Railway, thirteen were large enough to have a station building and now there are only three places with buildings remaining and only two of these have station buildings. Zanthus has only the hollow concrete block barracks remaining whilst Forrest has the original small timber railway

station and a number of houses remaining, mainly to service the aerodrome and hanger. Hence *Rawlinna* has the most complete collection of remaining buildings on the western Trans Australian Railway. The Provision Store was one of only two Commonwealth Railways stores in Western Australia. The other, now demolished, was at Parkeston.

The Post and Telegraph Office at *Rawlinna* is the only such building from the 1929 East-West telegraph link in Western Australia. The Post Office at Forrest was much smaller and was demolished several years ago.

Rawlinna was the first WA settlement on the Trans Australian Railway to get permanent housing for Commonwealth Railways employees. The one remaining original house appears to be the only early Commonwealth Railways house remaining. Such a building is possibly unique along the whole of the Trans Australian Railway.

13. 4 REFERENCES

No key references. .

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH
