



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

Beverley Post Office & quarters is significant for the design which has strong visual appeal. (Criterion 1.1)

The place is a landmark in the Vincent St vista. (Criterion 1.3)

Beverley Post Office & quarters is an integral element within the townscape and character of the Town of Beverley, and is located within the main street of the town, contributing an essential component of the main street streetscape. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Beverley Post Office & quarters is important for the association with the development of postal and telecommunication service and facilities since 1910. (Criterion 2.1)

Beverley Post Office & quarters replaced the former facility and represents an era of development in the main street of Beverley. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is associated with its designer, the PWD Chief Architect, Hillson Beasley. (Criterion 2.3)

Beverley Post Office & quarters demonstrates a fine example of the architecture of the period, and is a design achievement which has served continuously since its inception. (Criterion 2.4)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Beverley Post Office & quarters is a focal point for the Beverley district and demonstrates a sense of place where social interaction and communication takes place. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Beverley Post Office & quarters is an individual design for a purpose built function and demonstrates a distinctive and uncommon presence in the Town of Beverley. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Beverley Post Office & quarters is a representative example of the Federation Free style of architecture in Western Australia. It is a testimony to the skill of the Public Works Department Principal Architect, Hillson Beasley. (Criterion 6.1)

Beverley Post Office & quarters was a purpose built structure which has demonstrated a versatility throughout the developments in postal and telecommunications since 1910. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Beverley Post Office & quarters is in good condition with no major works requiring attention. There is evidence of fretting brickwork, and internal cracks of a minor nature. The structure is sound.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of *Beverley Post Office & quarters* is of a relatively high degree. It demonstrates a continuity of its postal, communication and residential use since its establishment.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Beverley Post Office & quarters demonstrates a high degree of authenticity. Given the continuous use and development of services, very few alterations or intrusions have taken place to the fabric of the place.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray (B. Arch.) Conservation Professional.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Beverley Post Office & quarters occupies a central location in the main street of Beverley. The building has functioned as a post office continuously since 1910.

In 1830, Ensign Dale explored eastwards beyond the hills from the Swan River settlement. Favourable reports of the land in the Avon Valley led to the opening of the land for selection as early as 1831, and by 1836, settlers had selected land throughout the region.

In 1843, the boundaries for the township of Beverley were laid out, and in 1867 John Forrest surveyed the town, with the sale of town and suburban lots taking place soon after the survey.¹

Mail deliveries in the early days were few, and the route comprehensive. James Bartram was the first mail carrier in the area, and his route was York, Beverley, Mourambine, Brookton, Boyadine and return to York.

Beverley's first Post Office was opened on 1 May 1858, possibly in a private residence.²

The first official Post Office was part of the old Police Station in Hunt Road, and George Throssell was awarded the building contract tender on 14 July 1898, for a cost of £350. A number of extensions took place to the Police building during the period to 1900.³

Mrs Thomas Edwards, the wife of the Police Constable, was the first Postmistress, and their daughter Miss Susannah was the second Postmistress.⁴

On 8 December 1877, Beverley was connected to the Electric Telegraph, and thereby linked to the eastern states. In anticipation of that connection, Susannah Edwards learnt to operate the telegraph from Mr Hardman at York, after she completed school at York Government School. At the age of 17 years, Susannah Edwards was appointed Postmistress of Beverley, where new telegraph equipment had been installed.⁵

Beverley was the southern terminus of the railway from 1886 until the Great Southern line was extended to Albany in 1889.⁶

With the connection of the railway line through from Perth to Albany, the number of people passing through Beverley increased, and it was necessary to construct a purpose built post office. On 25 January 1892, E.H. Fairhead and T. Davey were awarded a tender to build a purpose built post office and

¹ National Trust assessment. W. Broomfield, F. Bush, D. Kelsall. November 1993.

² Barber, L.L.R. 'A Brief History of the Post Office at Beverley' 28 December 1977 Unpublished.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ National Trust assessment. W. Broomfield, F. Bush, D. Kelsall. November 1993.

quarters for a cost of £944. That building was erected on a block adjoining the railway station.⁷

With the subsequent goldrushes, and influx of people into the state, and traversing the country to and from the goldfields, the development of the Beverley region was promising. By the 1900s, Beverley was emerging as an important regional centre in the Avon Valley, and a new post office was necessary to accommodate the increasing demands of the growing population.

In the 1908 budget, £200 was allowed for a site to be acquired for the location of the Beverley Post Office.⁸ Subsequently there were three sites from which to choose, the Education Reserve with a 100 feet frontage onto Vincent street, for a cost of £500 (from the State Government), a private property owned by R.B. Smith, with a 51 feet six inch Vincent St frontage, for a cost of £250, and land between Forrest and Railway Streets, which was available gratis from the Melbourne owner J. Martin, on condition that a building was constructed within 12 months.⁹

On the 18 January 1909, the Commonwealth Government acquired part of the state Education Reserve for a total cost of £501-10.¹⁰

The sketch plans had been prepared by the State Public Works Department on 20 February 1909.¹¹ The tender to build *Beverley Post Office & quarters* was granted to J.G. Fettes, at a cost of £1,870. The building was opened on 3 January 1910, and the former post office building was rented by the National Bank, and Mr Leake, a solicitor. In 1914, the building was condemned by the Beverley Roads Board, as it was deemed a menace to traffic, causing the railway crossing to be a hazard. It was demolished in 1914.¹²

The first Postmaster at *Beverley Post Office & quarters* was R.W. Graham, and he had a staff of 13 people.¹³

In 1957, plans were prepared by the PWD for substantial extensions to *Beverley Post Office & quarters* building to provide for a significant upgrade in communication facilities.¹⁴ The extension is not included in the assessment, and is the subject of a lease agreement with Telstra.

On 29 July 1961, a referendum was held in the Beverley district to decide whether to open or close the Post Office for Saturday trading. The result was that the people voted in favour of closing on Saturdays.¹⁵

In 1966, the first broad band co-axial cable link was introduced between Perth and Bunbury. Repeater stations were constructed every 30 or 40 miles in sight lines across the countryside.¹⁶

⁷ Barber, L.L.R. 'A Brief History of the Post Office at Beverley' 28 December 1977 Unpublished.

⁸ Australian Archives Series K273/44 item 1907/1.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Australian Archives Series K273/44 item 1907/1 & Crown Grant Vol 445 Fol. 145.

¹¹ Australian Archives series PP844/1 item 76/22 Plan signed by H. Beasley, dated 20 February 1909, 2 sheets.

¹² Barber, L.L.R. 'A Brief History of the Post Office at Beverley' 28 December 1977 Unpublished.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Australian Archives Series PP280/1 item p1956/57/698/1 PWD Plan WA 12105, 2 sheets.

¹⁵ Australian Archives Series K715/1 Item NN Postmaster's Diary.

On 20 June 1977, L.L.R. Barber commenced as the Postmaster at Beverley Post Office, assisted by one full-time Postal Officer and two Mail Contractors.¹⁷

In c.1990, Australia Post consolidated its operations and sold a considerable amount of its post office properties and privatised the operations of those centres.

On 24 March 1993, Mr Barber, the incumbent Postmaster, and his wife, purchased *Beverley Post Office & quarters*, and continue to operate the post office facility.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Beverley Post Office & quarters is situated on Vincent St in the centre of Beverley. The Post Office is central within the main street at the head of a secondary road in the town.

Beverley Post Office & quarters is a fine example of Hillson Beasley's Federation Free Style influence.¹⁸ The place demonstrates many of the style indicators of that influence, and Beasley is a recognised exponent of that style. Although essentially a non residential style, the post office quarters are detailed in a different manner to the Post Office. Despite the asymmetry of the elements the informal massing forms a balanced composition. The use of contrasting materials has been successfully applied to the post office building, with a rendered string course wrapping the building, contrasting with the red face brickwork. The central section of the building on Vincent St, flanked each side by arched entries, features a set of five vertical format windows.

The entries to the public postal area are through arched openings which have a stucco finish above the brick voussoirs. The face brick work continues above the stucco, and a distinctive parapet is formed each side.

The complex roof is clad with corrugated iron, and for the most part is a hipped gambrel roof. The main hall is vented by a decorative cupola tower is situated on the east side of the roof.

The residential section rises to double storey, slightly recessed from the street frontage, with the entry on the west side via a triple arched porch. The first storey verandah on the west and street front forms a verandah beneath with arched facade responding to the two arched entries either side of the Post Office. The top storey verandah is detailed with vertical timber balustrade infill between face brick piers surmounted with timber posts. The decorative timber supports curve outwards from the central post. The first floor walls to the quarters are finished in roughcast stucco.

The Post Office interior can only be accessed from the double entry doors on the western portico, as the other doors from the east side now have private boxes installed in the former door opening. The main hall is a large open space with a tongue and groove timber lined ceiling. Office partitions, the

¹⁶ *The Northam Advertiser* 25 March 1966; Australian Archives series K433/1 item XP1137.

¹⁷ Australian Archives Series K715/1 Item NN Postmaster's Diary & Barber, L.L.R. 'A Brief History of the Post Office at Beverley' 28 December 1977 Unpublished.

¹⁸ Apperley, R., Irving, R., Reynolds. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present.* Angus & Robertson. NSW 1989.

original desk, and equipment are moveable items, and the high ceilings flow through the spaces due to the partitions not being full height.

The Quarters are accessed from the office area, and entry is directly into the stair space, and entry hall. The staircase is timber with closed strings and turned balusters. The accommodation is well appointed, with minimum intrusion into the original fabric. A double door opening has been inserted in the wall between the kitchen and dining room. The kitchen, and upstairs bathroom have been upgraded c1970.

The laundry and garage are both separate buildings in the rear yard of *Beverley Post Office & quarters* building.

Beverley Post Office & quarters is an imposing structure of structural adequacy, commanding an impressive vista in Vincent St, Beverley.

13.3 REFERENCES

Barber, L.L.R. 'A Brief History of the Post Office at Beverley' 28 December 1977 Unpublished.

Owen, GE *The Postal History of Western Australia, 1829-1901* Melbourne, 1959.