



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.

11. 1. AESTHETIC VALUE*

Bruce Rock Shire Offices is a good example of a civic building in the Inter-War Georgian Revival style and displays some fine aesthetic characteristics. (Criterion 1.1)

Bruce Rock Shire Offices is integral in the main streetscape and makes a significant contribution to the townscape and character of Bruce Rock. (Criterion 1.4)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Bruce Rock Shire Offices was established as a result of the operation of the Eastern Goldfields Railway and the subsequent development of the central eastern wheatbelt district of Western Australia. (Criterion 2.1)

Bruce Rock Shire Offices represents the growing prosperity of the Bruce Rock township and surrounding wheatbelt district in the 1920s. The addition of a new hall and offices in 1971 is indicative of the continued growth and development of the district. (Criterion 2.2)

Bruce Rock Shire Offices has been associated with local government in Bruce Rock since 1920, first as offices for the Road Board and, since 1961, as rooms for the Shire Council. (Criterion 2.3)

The place was designed by local architect, W. J. Thorne, and built by the local firm, Baxter and Sons. Both Thorne and the Baxters were active in the wheatbelt building industry in the 1920s and 1930s. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

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

Bruce Rock Shire Offices is valued by the local community as the site of the Road Board office and the centre of local government since for Bruce Rock and surrounding district from 1920. (Criterion 4.1)

Bruce Rock Shire Offices contributes to the community's sense of place and is dominant in the streetscape. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Bruce Rock Shire Offices is representative of the rural civic administration buildings constructed throughout Western Australia in the late 1920s. It is one of few examples of a double-storey Road Board building in the wheatbelt; the other examples being in the major regional centres of Northam, York and Narrogin. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Bruce Rock Shire Offices is in good condition due to a regular maintenance program.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Bruce Rock Shire Offices has operated continuously as a local government facility and has retained a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The original 1920 fabric is not evident, and the 1928 fabric has experienced considerable alterations with changes to the facade, the removal of some walls, and the replacement of the staircase. These alterations, which took place in 1971, have reduced the degree of authenticity to a low to moderate level.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

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

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Bruce Rock Shire Offices, a two-storey brick and iron building constructed in Inter-War Georgian Revival style, was built in 1928.¹ The place appears to have incorporated the existing Road Board offices which were constructed in 1920, and which fronted the Road Board Hall, built at the same time. The place has served as offices for the Bruce Rock Road Board, and later the Shire Council, and was also occupied by the State Savings Bank, Crown Law Department and District Architect of the Public Works Department during the earlier years. In 1971, *Bruce Rock Shire Offices* was remodelled by architect Marshall Clifton. The Hall was removed and new administration offices were built to the rear of the Council Chambers.

The Merredin district was settled from the 1880s, when sandalwood cutters began working the area and pastoralists began to take up leases.² With the discovery of gold in the Southern Cross and Kalgoorlie-Coolgardie areas in the 1890s, transport between Perth and the goldfields was required. The Eastern Railway, which had been constructed as far as Northam in 1886, was extended to Southern Cross in 1894, Coolgardie in 1895 and reached Kalgoorlie in 1897. The Northam-Kalgoorlie section was known as the Eastern Goldfields Railway.³

In 1913, a townsite, initially known as Nunagin, was surveyed at the T-junction where the York-Quarading railway branch line met the Narrogin-Merredin line. Nunagin was immediately confused with Narrogin and Nungarin so, on 17 June 1913, Nunagin was renamed Bruce Rock.⁴ The name came from one of the granite outcrops in the area, which had probably been named for a sandalwood cutter who worked the district.⁵ The first 31 lots of the Bruce Rock township sold quickly, and a further 64 lots were surveyed.

The first Road Board for the district was the East Avon Road Board, gazetted on 17 January 1913.⁶ The East Avon Road Board was made up of areas excised from the Kellerberrin, Merredin and Greenhills Road Board districts. Their first meeting was held on 19 July 1913, with H. J. Yelland as chairman. The early meetings of the Road Board were held in a hessian shed beside W. H. Duggan's store, on Butcher Street, Bruce Rock.⁷ In October 1913, the first Road Board office was erected. It consisted of a small

¹ Apperly, R., Irving, R. and Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1994, pp. 150-153.

² Ewers, John K. *Bruce Rock: The Story of a District*, Bruce Rock District Road Board, 1959, pp. 10-13.

³ *West Australian Yearbook*, Perth, 1894, p. 78.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 42-45.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 3 January 1913, p. 14.

⁷ Lovell, Avon, *Bruce Rock: A Revised History*, Bruce Rock Shire, 1993, p. 113 & 215.

pre-cut timber building, sent from Perth by rail, and was sited on the rear of Lot 48, on the corner of Johnson and Bath Streets. Lots 48 had been reserved for Road Board purposes in the second release of surveyed town lots.⁸

In 1916, a Hall Committee was formed to raise funds for a public meeting place. A timber hall measuring 40 x 30 foot (12m x 9m) was constructed by E. S. Gillard on the front of Lot 48.⁹ The hall was opened on 25 July 1917, and a concert was held to celebrate the occasion. During these early years, the Road Board office was lined, and stables were constructed for the use of members when attending meetings, and for the students at the nearby school to stable their horses. The Road Board lot was fenced with a post and rail fence.¹⁰

In June 1918, the East Avon Road Board became the Bruce Rock Road Board, and the first meeting under the new name was held on 6 July.¹¹ The hall quickly proved inadequate for the growing district and the Board applied for a loan to construct a larger hall with offices for the Road Board. The first loan the Road Board raised was for 'Construction of Roads and Building Board Office and Hall at Bruce Rock'.¹² A loan of £5,000 was raised through the Commonwealth Bank, and £900 was allocated for the building work. The plans comprised a 60 x 40 foot (18m x 12m) hall and 'suitable Board Offices at front'.¹³ The new hall and offices were constructed beside (south of) the existing hall, on Lot 48. E. S. Gillard carried out the work to a design by local architect W. J. Thorne. Thorne was also responsible for the Bruce Rock Memorial Hospital (1922), the Bruce Rock Masonic Lodge (1923) and the Narembreen Road Board Office (1928).

The committee responsible for the fine hall and offices at Bruce Rock are to be complemented on their foresight in erecting a building sufficiently large to obviate the necessity of making further additions for some time to come. The brick front and offices also reflect the enterprise and desire for solidity of those responsible. When finished the fine frontage will give an index to the stability of the district to fill in one of the few remaining gaps in the main street with a most imposing structure.¹⁴

The place was opened on 28 July 1920, by chairman of the Road Board W. J. Butler, and a public holiday was declared for the occasion. A football match, a sports program run by the local RSL, and a ball, 'the greatest function Bruce Rock had ever seen,' celebrated the day.¹⁵ It is unclear what the Road Board offices comprised exactly, but given the cost of the construction of hall and offices, it was most likely a single storey structure. It was possibly made up of a Board room, the secretary's office, and perhaps

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 215 & photograph showing first Road Board building (1913) and Hall (1917), p. 112.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Lovell, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-221.

¹¹ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 21 June, 1918, p. 879.

¹² *Bruce Rock-Corrigin Post & Narembreen Guardian*, 14 November, 1919, p. 2.

¹³ *ibid.*, 30 January 1920, p. 2 & 23 April 1920, p. 2.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, *op cit*, 11 June 1920, p. 2.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 6 August 1920, p. 3.

a small storeroom, and may have comprised the back ground floor section of the existing building.¹⁶

In 1924, the Narembreen Road Board was formed and Bruce Rock Road Board district was reduced in size from 1,799 square miles (466,000ha) to 941 square miles (244,000ha). The number of wards was increased from four to six, reflecting the growth in population that took place in the 1920s as a result of Government policies on land settlement and the development of the wheat industry. The boundary of the district changed again in 1929, when the Belka Valley area was removed from Merredin Road Board jurisdiction and placed under the control of Bruce Rock Road Board. This gave the district a total of 1,051 square miles (272,000ha), and the number of wards was increased to nine.¹⁷ In 1926, the Hall was lined and ceiled, and the old timber hall (1917) was relocated to the rear to function as a stage and dressing rooms.

The growth of the district was reflected in the need for new Road Board offices and, in 1928, a loan of £4,000 was raised for the erection of two-storey brick offices in front of the Hall.

This building when completed will be a great asset to the district generally and will present an appearance worthy of the great progress that has been made by Bruce Rock during the past few years... The advent of these offices will mean the establishment of State Savings Bank, Crown Law Department, the District Architect of the Public Works Department, and Road Board offices under one roof.¹⁸

The architect for the project was once again W. J. Thorne. The tender to construct the place was won by Wilfred Baxter & Sons. Baxter and his sons Ted, Harry, John, and George, operated an undertaking and building business in Bruce Rock. The Baxters were responsible for a number of buildings in the district, including the Co-op store, the Nurses' Quarters, and Durham Hall.¹⁹ Wilfred Baxter's quote for £3,956 was the lowest of five tenders received for construction of the Board's offices. There is no mention of the existing offices being incorporated into the new building, but it is unlikely they would have been demolished, being only 8 years old. The Baxters were also known for economic construction work, as they reused the existing walls when rebuilding Durham Hall in 1937, after the place was destroyed by fire.²⁰

The foundation stone of Bruce Rock Road Board Office was laid by F. D. Farrell, as chairman of the Road Board, and the place was opened on 5 January 1929. The building was described as 'an imposing 2 storeyed structure of red brick with cement facings'.²¹

In the ensuing years, Bruce Rock Road Board was considered one of the most progressive in the State, and representatives from many other Road

¹⁶ This information is based on knowledge of other Road Board offices built in the wheat belt during the 1920s.

¹⁷ Lovell, op cit, pp.221-222.

¹⁸ *Bruce Rock-Corrigin Post & Narembreen Guardian*, 20 July 1928, p. 2.

¹⁹ Handwritten notes, HCWA file 10647 'Durham Hall, Bruce Rock'.

²⁰ HCWA Assessment No. 10647 'Durham Hall, Bruce Rock'.

²¹ *Bruce Rock-Corrigin Post & Narembreen Guardian*, 11 January 1929.

Boards visited the area to examine plant and study methods of administration.²²

In 1953, the Hall was refurbished to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Road Boards throughout the State became Shire Councils in 1961, and Bruce Rock Road Board Office became *Bruce Rock Shire Offices*. By the late 1960s, Bruce Rock needed a larger hall and the Shire needed larger and more modern offices.

Plans were developed for the construction of a new hall on the adjoining Lot 49, to the south, and for administrative offices to replace the existing hall behind *Bruce Rock Shire Offices*. The old hall (1920) was purchased and removed by local farmer Gordon Pericles. As part of the planned work *Bruce Rock Shire Offices* was to undergo remodelling and internal renovations. The architect for the work was Marshall Clifton & Associates, and the contractor was 'Mr Ward', a resident of the district. The complete work cost \$178,000, which included furnishings, fittings and landscaping. The new hall and Civic Buildings were opened on 21 August 1971, by Premier John Tonkin.²³

The remodelling of *Bruce Rock Shire Offices* altered the facade of the building. This entailed the removal of the parapet and the upper floor window treatments. There were also extensive alterations to the interior of the place. In 1998, *Bruce Rock Shire Offices* continues its association with local government, housing the Bruce Rock Council chambers and function room on the upper floor. On the ground floor, one section of the place is currently occupied by Landcare and includes a herbarium.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Bruce Rock Shire Offices, built in 1928, is a double-storey building which fronts the Bruce Rock Shire administration building (1971). The place is located in Johnson Street, the main street of Bruce Rock, on the corner of Bath St.

Bruce Rock Shire Offices makes a significant contribution to the main streetscape of Bruce Rock, signalling the beginning of an almost continuous strip of one storey shops, interspersed with two storey buildings, which extends for over two blocks along Johnson Street. The place contributes to the rhythm and scale of the main street fabric of Bruce Rock.

Bruce Rock Shire Offices was constructed in 1928. Documentary evidence suggests there was a pre-existing (1920) building on the site which was probably included in the construction, but there is no evidence of this building to be found today. The administration offices at the rear of the place were constructed in 1971 to replace the hall. A new hall facility was also constructed in 1971, on the adjoining lot to the south.

Bruce Rock Shire Offices displays characteristics of the Inter-war Georgian Revival style described in Apperly.²⁴ The characteristics appropriate to this place include: clarity, simplicity, reasonable proportions, restrained and

²² Lovell, op. cit., p. 223.

²³ *Bruce Rock-Narembeen-Corrigin Post*, 26 August 1971, p. 1.

²⁴ Apperly, R., et. al, op cit.

refined classicism, free standing in the streetscape, symmetry, regular repetitive fenestration, plain wall surfaces, classical elements, pediment and cornice, roof of simple configuration, and semi-circular headed windows in the principal storey. The construction of the place is typical with traditional brick load bearing walls, timber floor and roof construction.

The double-storey building was originally face brick with rendered quoins; the exterior was now painted in 1971. The regular plan is repeated on both levels. The box like form of the place is topped by a gambrel hipped roof with no eave overhang. The roof is clad with custom orb profile colorbond sheeting.

At ground floor level, there is a porch each side of the building. The ground floor frontage has retained the original detail. Each of the windows which flank the central entry are timber framed and feature a semi circular headed window. Both the window sets are within a rendered panel of incised horizontal banding which corresponds with the corner quoins of the frontage, and the central entrance opening. The main entry has an arched pediment which extends in a cornice line each side. The original timber front doors have been replaced by aluminium framed doors.

The ground floor of the building comprises a central entry hall, and two rooms each side, the stair space and small rear room. The walls of the entry hall are hard plaster and the ceiling is plaster board. The floor is laid with terracotta floor tiles, and honour boards line the walls. An original decorative timber fretwork arch is still in place across the hall. All the rooms exit onto the respective side porches. The rooms on the ground floor are austere with undecorated plaster ceilings and walls. All have suspended fluorescent lighting. The original 125mm (5 inch) tongue and groove jarrah floorboards are in place throughout. Also extant are the original timber framed windows, the five panel doors with fanlights above, and the original hardware.

Double doors at the rear of the entry hall open directly through to the 1971 administration offices. The entry into the administration offices is recessed and the external part of the recess is a ramped floor leading between the two buildings. These doors would originally have opened into the 1920 hall; the timber floor of the hall was possibly on the same level as the floor of *Bruce Rock Shire Offices*. It is likely that the recessing of this entry was carried out as part of the 1971 alterations to accommodate a change in floor levels.

The stairs leading to the upper floor have timber treads and risers with fine steel baluster supports and plastic coated steel handrail. The treads are covered with continuous carpet. Behind the staircase at ground floor, and inaccessible from inside, is another room with access from the north porch.

On the second landing up the stairway there is a doorway leading into the ladies toilet. At the top of the stairs, opening off the west side of the foyer, is the men's toilet. From the stair foyer access is gained through double doors into the council chamber at the front (east side), and into the function room which comprises the entire southern section of the top

floor. The function room has plaster walls and ceilings and a recent bar facility centred on the south wall of the room. Double doors give entry into the council chamber to the north. This room has an original fireplace and mantelpiece, and coved ceiling with decorative detail.

An ante-room, or store room, in the north west corner of the upper floor is accessed from either the foyer or the council chamber, where an opening has been made in the wall beside the fireplace.

Bruce Rock Shire Offices underwent alterations in 1971, when architect Marshall Clifton designed the addition of the administration offices to the rear of the place, and the new hall on the south side. At that time, many of the original classical elements of the place were removed, and the former face brickwork and rendered panels were painted. The original decorative rendered front parapet, with a pediment over the two central windows, was removed, as were the smaller pediment details above all the upstairs windows. The supports for the side porches were replaced with brick piers. The interior of the place was also altered and a new staircase and toilet facilities were added. The ground floor layout and fabric remained intact, but the upstairs layout and fabric were extensively altered, and have been refurbished in more recent years.

Bruce Rock Shire Offices is in very good condition and has retained its integrity as it continues to function in association with local government and the provision of community facilities. Considerable changes have taken place to the exterior of the 1928 construction. The removal of the parapet and details from the facade, and the painting of the entire building, together with the staircase and more recent function room alterations, are significant interventions to the original fabric of the place. The place has a low to moderate degree of authenticity.

Bruce Rock Shire Offices is one of the very few two-storey Road Board buildings of the period in the wheatbelt region, the only other examples being in the major regional centres of York, Northam and Narrogin. W. J. Thorne, the architect of the place, also designed the Bruce Rock Hospital (1922) Bruce Rock Masonic Lodge (1923) and Narembreen Road Board office (1928), all of which are extant.

13. 3 REFERENCES

No key references.

13. 4 FURTHER RESEARCH
