

## Place No. 23 Roebourne Hospital, Kitchen Block & Quarters & Matron's Quarters



Former Hospital Ward building 2012

LOCATION	
Name of Place	<b>Roebourne Hospital, Kitchen Block &amp; Quarters and Matron's Quarters</b>
Other Name (1)	West Pilbara Health Service
Location/Address	
Street Number	51-61
Street Name	Hampton Street
Suburb/Town	Roebourne
Other Locational descriptor (text)	mE 514983 mN 7702617 Longitude:117.144 Latitude: -20.7762

OWNERSHIP & LAND DESCRIPTION				
Owner	Address	Phone/fax	Status	Item No.
West Pilbara Health Service	PO Box 519, Karratha 6714			
Reserve No.	Lot/Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio	Item No.
29092	801	P194881	LR3118/ 183	

Listing and Assessment	
HCWA Reference Number	2339
State Register of Heritage Places:(Y/N)	Yes
Classified by the National Trust (Y/N)	Yes
Register of the National Estate (Y/N)	Yes
Local Town Planning Scheme (Y/N)	Yes
<b>Management Category</b>	<b>A</b>

DESCRIPTION	
Construction Date (1)	1886-87
Construction Date (2)	

Site Type (Place Type)	Individual Building or Group
<b>Use(s) of Place</b>	
<i>Original</i>	HEALTH: Hospital
<i>Present</i>	HEALTH: Hospital
<i>Other</i>	
<b>Construction Materials:</b>	
<i>Walls</i>	9. STONE 904 Local stone
<i>Roof</i>	6. METAL 606 Corrugated Iron 613 Zinalume 699 Other metal
<i>Other</i>	3. CONCRETE 399 Other concrete
Condition	Fair
Integrity (how much of the original fabric is intact?):	Sound, original fabric obscured by contemporary additions
<b>Physical Description</b>	
<p>The Hospital complex integrates old and new buildings to allow contemporary functionality. There are three main stone buildings, part of the early hospital complex, the former hospital including wards, kitchen with quarters, and matron's quarters. The former hospital and kitchen with quarters are largely obscured by contemporary additions. The matron's quarters stands extant.</p> <p>Each of these buildings is made with local stone set in cement mortar with cement dressing. The former hospital ward is designed in the Victorian Regency style. It has thick stone walls with stone work laid in a random pattern, wide verandahs with metal verandah posts and large doors, some of which are metal, opening directly onto the verandah, with a corrugated iron hipped roof with separate verandah. The building has a concrete floor on stone foundations. The building provided two large wards, each approximately 9.5 m x 7.3 m, and a one-bed ward for maternity cases and beds for two children. The east side of the building has faceted ends (flattened corners) facing Hampton St.</p> <p>The matron's quarters is a simple rectangular building with lean-to wood and fibro verandahs on each side with a corrugated iron roof. Stone work is laid in a geometric and uniform pattern, with rendered quoins on the four corners of the building and concrete floor on stone foundations.</p> <p>The kitchen block and quarters has verandahs that are enclosed by fibro additions obscuring the original buildings. The kitchen has a corrugated iron hipped roof with separate verandah. Stone work is laid in a random pattern. The foundations are stone and concrete. The quarters are joined to the kitchen under a lean-to roof.</p> <p>Transportable fibro and zinalume buildings from the decommissioned Dampier Hospital were added to the old hospital buildings in 1984.</p>	
<b>History</b>	
<p>The Roebourne Hospital stone buildings were erected as part of the government area and were completed in 1887. The hospital was designed by George Temple Poole and was, according to Ray and John Oldham, one of Poole's 'first commitments' in Roebourne.<sup>1</sup> It was also one of the first buildings to be built by Robert and Arthur Bunning at a cost of £2,679.<sup>2</sup> It included provision for water storage for the town. The hospital consisted of two large rooms for wards (one for women and one for men) and a one bed maternity ward with beds for two children.<sup>3</sup> There was also separate building for a cook's room, a kitchen and a storeroom. PWD plan 694 also shows quarters for the medical officers with a detached kitchen, another kitchen attached to the cow yard, stables and privy. The kitchen, closets and outbuildings were added in 1889-90 and the Oldhams claim that they were connected to the hospital by covered ways.</p>	

The stone buildings replaced the RR Jewell designed original wooden hospital with attached surgery which opened in 1874 and was the first civilian hospital built in Western Australia outside of Perth. Previously, hospitals were part of convict depots. The old hospital was located on the same site, towards Queen St, and was demolished after the new hospital was built, certainly by 1889 when plans drawn by W.L. Owen to plot the buildings on the site showed that it had been 'pulled down'.<sup>4</sup> The 1874 wooden hospital was deemed inadequate not long after opening and Dr Frizell, the North West Medical Officer, lobbied for a new hospital, authorised several years later by Dr James Hope, the state's first Commissioner of Health.<sup>5</sup>

The completion of a new hospital designed by George Temple Poole was an important occasion for the growing community of Roebourne, as reflected by Mr Pearse's comments at the time, who 'pointed out what a boon it was to the place having a hospital, not only for the poor but for the rich.'<sup>6</sup> But not however, for the care and treatment of Aboriginal people. The hospital would have serviced the influx of people coming to the Pilbara goldfields.<sup>7</sup> The public health conditions of Roebourne were poor, Dr Frizell was prompted to write in the Colonial Surgeon's 1886 annual report that: 'Sickness has been widespread during the summer, and is largely attributed to the filthy state of Roebourne and Cossack – no attempt is made to get rid of the refuse; and until a Municipal Council can be formed...one cannot hope much for the health of the district.'<sup>8</sup>

In 1886 there were ten cases and four deaths of typhoid and malarial fever, especially among the men working on the marsh between Roebourne and Cossack while building the tramway line. Dysentery and diarrhoea were common in the towns and the pearling fleet were subject to scurvy.<sup>9</sup>

The kitchen and outbuildings were added in 1889-90, as a separate building, which Ray and John Oldham show was a design feature ensuring that 'kitchens were kept well away from living and sleeping quarters' to allow for greater coolness in the wards, but also to reduce fire hazard from wood-fuel stoves.<sup>10</sup>

According to the memories of a former nurse, Clare Davies (nee Pearn) the hospital had ten beds in 1929, and was staffed by Dr Kenny, two nurses, a cook and an orderly. Her memories included the doctor taking the nurses on day trips to survey the surrounding stations and every eight days they rowed out to the Cossack Lazarette to treat the Aboriginal victims of leprosy. She remembered their unhappiness at being isolated from their families which caused social dislocation.<sup>11</sup>

In 1929, an 'X-ray plant' was installed at the Roebourne Hospital; this was 'the most powerful X-ray apparatus in Western Australia outside the metropolitan area.' The x-ray would have been an important tool in diagnosing tuberculosis, a time when the disease was endemic among Western Australians. After the 1945 *Tuberculosis Act*, widespread X-ray campaigns were run throughout the state and by the 1950 *Health Act Amendment Act* chest X-rays became compulsory for all Western Australians aged fourteen and over. The disease was largely 'cured' with the use of specific antibiotics from the 1950s.<sup>12</sup>

From 1935 the Royal Flying Doctors Service operated from Port Hedland, servicing the Roebourne area.<sup>13</sup>

The hospital was badly damaged by the 1945 cyclone and a letter from Matron Allen to the Medical Department in Perth complained that fourteen weeks had lapsed since the 'blow' and the Public Works Department hadn't yet undertaken the repairs. In the letter she remarked that the 'Native Hospital in its present condition is untenable. It is unsatisfactory nursing the natives on the Hospital verandah.'<sup>14</sup> Another cyclone hit Roebourne in January 1955; the Matron of the hospital wired the Medical Department at Perth, 'Hospital and buildings completely wrecked with storm.'<sup>15</sup>

The hospital & kitchen were threatened with demolition in 1980, when the government was considering closing the district hospital service in Roebourne. However the community rallied to save

the hospital, 700 people signing a petition to the State Government. Pilbara MLA Pam Buchanan was very active in lobbying to preserve the buildings.<sup>16</sup>

In 1983 the hospital was re-developed in Roebourne with a new ward block using transportable buildings from the old Dampier Hospital. At the same time, a Nissan hut, locally known as the 'beehive', which was used as a former maintenance workshop and store on the hospital site were demolished, with plans for it to be re-erected near Millstream by Ngurawaana Aboriginal group for alcohol rehabilitation.<sup>17</sup> The historic hospital buildings were restored and renovated in 1984.

### Archaeology

There is potential for archaeological evidence of the uses of this complex over time, although the tendency has been at add building stock to the site which would suggest archaeology either impacted on by new construction, or underneath it. There are few material studies of health institutions such as this however.

### SIGNIFICANCE

#### Historic theme (s)

1. DEMOGRAPHIC SETTLEMENT AND MOBILITY  
107 Settlements

4. SOCIAL & CIVIC ACTIVITIES  
404 Community services & utilities

#### Statement of Significance:

The hospital buildings are historically significant as they demonstrate a long association with the health and wellbeing of the Roebourne community. The combination of buildings reflects changes within the growing community and are reflective of the 1880s boom and the growth of the iron ore industry in the 1960s. The installation of an X-ray machine in 1929 provided for state wide diagnosis and monitoring of Tuberculosis, endemic in the population at that time.

### ASSOCIATIONS

Architect/Designer (1)

George Temple-Poole

Architect/Designer (2)

Builders - Bunning Brothers

Other Associated Person(s)

W Lambden Owen overseer

MHI 1996

Assessment undertaken, Place Name Record created

MHI Review 2012

Entry updated



**Former Matron's Quarters building 2012**



**Former Hospital Ward building, 1970, courtesy National Trust of Australia (WA)**

<sup>1</sup> Public Works Department Plans of Roebourne Hospital list George Temple Poole as the architect. Notes about PWD plan 693, Local History Collection, Shire of Roebourne; Oldham, R. and J. Oldham 1980, *George Temple Poole: Architect of the Goldfields 1885-1897*, University of Western Australian Press, Nedlands WA, p 15.

<sup>2</sup> Oldham, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> Oldham, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> Public Works Department Plan 694, Roebourne Hospital Plan of Site, copy in National Trust of Australia (WA) classification files.

<sup>5</sup> *Roebourne Hospital, Kitchen Block & Quarters, & Matron's Quarters*, Classification Assessment, National Trust of Australia (WA), ; *Roebourne District Hospital 1887-1987: A century of service to the people to the North West*, Health Department of Western Australia, 1897.; See also J.SH. Le Page, *Building a State: the story of the Public Works Department of Western Australia 1829-1985*, University of Western Australian Press, Nedlands WA, 1986, p 144

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<sup>6</sup> *West Australian*, July 20, 1887

<sup>7</sup> Riatti, H.J. c1964 *A history of the development of the North West of WA*; W.L. Owen 1984, *Cossack Gold: the chronicles of an early goldfields warden*, Carlisle, WA., Hesperian Press.

<sup>8</sup> Annual Report: Colonial Surgeon, Government Printer, Perth, 1886, p 4, copy in files Local History Collection Shire of Roebourne

<sup>9</sup> Annual Report: Colonial Surgeon, Government Printer, Perth, 1886, p 4, copy in files of Local History Collection Shire of Roebourne. See also, Whittington, V. 1988 *Gold and Typhoid: Two Fevers a social history of Western Australia 1891-1900*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands.

<sup>10</sup> Oldham, R. and J. Oldham 1980, *George Temple Poole: Architect of the Goldfields 1885-1897*, University of Western Australian Press, Nedlands WA, p 13

<sup>11</sup> *Hammersley Iron Diary - Reflections on the Pilbara*, 1988, p 43

<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald, C.J, 'Tuberculosis' J. Gregory and J. Gothard (eds) 2009, *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, p 888

<sup>13</sup> 'Flying Doc's on a high for the big 65' *Sunday Times*, May 16, 1993; Jane Leong, 'Royal Flying Doctor Service', Jenny Gregory and Jan Gothard (eds), *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 2009, p 782

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Matron Roebourne Hospital to the Under Secretary, Medical Department, Perth, June 1945. Copy in files of Local History Collection, Shire of Roebourne.

<sup>15</sup> Copies of telegrams sent to Medical Department Perth from Roebourne District Hospital, 1955, Local History Collection, Shire of Roebourne.

<sup>16</sup> '700 seek assurance on hospital's future', *West Australian*, Dec 11, 1980; 'Plea for old hospital building', *West Australian*, June 9, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> 'Hospital store demolished' *North West Telegraph*, April 7, 1983