

Victorian Heritage Database Report
FORMER TELEGRAPH STATION



Location:
83A RYRIE STREET GEELONG, Greater Geelong City

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H1527

Listing Authority: VHR

Heritage Overlay Number: HO242

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

The former Telegraph Station in Geelong was built in 1857-8 by builders Patterson and Bell, after the telegraph line between Melbourne and Geelong was constructed in 1854-5. It was the centre of communications for Geelong and district for many years. The building replaced two earlier telegraph stations, the first being a portable building, the second a brick office in McKillop Street, with business transferred to the building in Rynie Street in July 1858. It is highly probable that Henry Ginn, the Colonial architect for Victoria from 1851 to 1853, designed this building, although it was not erected until four years after his departure from the Colonial Service. At the suggestion of the Harbour Trust, a time ball was erected on the telegraph station tower in 1862. The time signal was received from Melbourne on the electric telegraph and relayed to the people of Geelong, including shipmasters, by the releasing of a ball at 1pm daily (except Sundays). This has since been removed.

In 1870 the telegraph business was amalgamated with the post office and the telegraph building was handed over to the postmaster for use as a residence. It was used for this purpose until 1881. The building was unoccupied for several years and subsequently occupied by various government departments until it was vacated by the Health Department in 1971. Since this time uses include a tourist information centre and its current use as a photographer's studio.

Built of Barrabool freestone, the Old Telegraph Station is a single storey building of simple Georgian design. The symmetrical front facade with parapeted slate hip roof, is dominated by a centrally located square tower with pedimented window and crowning bracketed cornice. The smooth, large stonework of the front facade contrasts with the rough textured, smaller stone courses of the side walls. Vermiculated quoining emphasises the corners of the lower front facade, while smooth quoining surrounds openings and corners of the upper tower.

How is it significant?

The Former Telegraph Station is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Former Telegraph Station is of architectural significance as one of the first buildings in Victoria to be constructed of Barrabool freestone and is an excellent example of early masonry construction in Victoria. It is also of significance as a probable outstanding example of the work of important colonial architect, Henry Ginn.

The Former Telegraph Station is of historical significance as an important centre of communications in early Geelong and district. By 1857, telegraph lines radiated out to all main Victorian towns and a year later telegraphic communication was established between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Together with a number of other telegraph stations which were constructed at towns in Victoria in the 1850s, it represents an era when this mode of communication was highly important.

The Former Telegraph Station is of historical significance due to the presence of a time ball at the building which provides an association with the history of shipping on Corio Bay.

[Online Data Upgrade Project 2004]

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1857 - 1858
Architect / Designer	Ginn, Henry
Municipality	GREATER GEELONG CITY

Other names	
Hermes number	541
Property number	

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online