

# Irwin Shire Council

## Municipal Inventory Place Record

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**Place Details**      **Place Number:** 122      **Category:** 1A      **HCWA No:** 12245  
**TPS No:** 29      **Assessment Date:** 06/08/1997      **Last Revision Date:** 24/09/2004

**Name:** Irwin House, Post Office and Gravesite  
**Former Name:**  
**Type of Place:** House and Outbuildings  
**Address:** Midlands Road  
**Map Reference:** HUNT 1:2000 BE42/35.03  
**Locality Name:** Milo      **Area of Site:**  
**GPS Northing:**      **GPS Easting:**

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### Photograph

**Date of Photograph:** 24/09/2004

**Source:** G. W. Grundy



Former post office, Irwin House northwest aspect.

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### Ownership

**Owner:** R. Gillam

**Owner Phone/Fax:**

**Address:** PO Box 41, Dongara, 6525

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### Site Details

**Lot/Locn:** Lot 8

**Diagram/Plan:**

**Vol/Folio:**

**Reserve:**

**Purpose:**

**Assess No:** 4578

**Vesting:**

**Occupied:** Yes

**Occupier:**

**PubAccess:** No

**Lease:**

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### Uses of the Place

**Original Use:** Residence & Post Office      **Current Use:** Residence

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### Description

**Walls:** Limestone      **Roof:** Corrugated Iron  
**Condition:** Good      **Integrity:** High  
**Orig'l Fabric:**      **Modifications**

The Irwin House complex consists of the former post office, former kitchen and Irwin House.

#### FORMER POST OFFICE

This simple limestone building has a gable corrugated iron roof with a single small timber framed window and three entry doors to the south facade, one of which has been filled with stone. To the west there is a stone fireplace with brick chimney above, and to the east there is a small timber framed and corrugated iron extension. An iron telegraph pole, (possibly part of the original telegraph line connecting Northam to Geraldton) is sited close to the corrugated iron extension.

#### FORMER KITCHEN

This small stone building has a hipped corrugated iron roof with two skylights located to the west and north. There are two small lean-tos to the south and east. The stone work is rendered and has random pointing. Entry doors are located to the north and west.

#### IRWIN HOUSE

This large painted brick house has a hipped corrugated iron roof which extends to cover verandahs to the south, west and north, the latter being enclosed. To the east, a large extension is enclosed with fibro and aluminium windows. There are two corbelled brick chimneys to the south and north west of the main roof.

#### POST, Former Cattle Yards

Located to the north east of the former Post Office, a large timber post is a remnant of the former breaking yards. It was located in the centre of the yards, note footholds to climb to the top.

#### GRAVE

Nearby is the grave of the first unofficial postmaster, John Armstrong.

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### History

**Const'n Date:** 1851      **Source:**  
**Architect:** Unknown      **Builder:** Unknown

The original two rooms of Irwin House were built in 1851 of wattle and daub on the north bank of the river and later moved up on to the hill to the present site. It was the home of Lockier Burges, and remained so after the break up of the Cattle Company in 1867. He added extensions to the house making it one of the finest homes in the area. On 1 July 1853 Irwin House became an unofficial post office and this continued until 6 September 1864 when unpaid acting post master Matthew Reardon resigned. John Armstrong, who was related to the Burges family, arrived in WA in 1883 per the "Sunbeam" and worked as postmaster at Irwin House from about 1887 until his death in 1907. He was buried beneath a tree near the original Irwin House homestead site.

(Source: Bain, M.A., "Ancient Landmarks", UWA Press, Perth, 1975; IDHS Records)

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### Chronology Entries

1850s      Six married couples were known to be working on the Cattle Company leases.

Ancient Landmarks, Bain, M. A., UWA Press, Perth, 1975 Pages 157

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1852      Governor Fitzgerald accompanied by A.C. Gregory and Captain Helpman visited the Irwin District and they observed that Irwin House was established with wattle and daub structures built close to the river. A site for the permanent homestead on a hill just north of the river had been selected. They were also taken to Arurine Bay by Lockier Burges and noted its suitability as a port. The Governor subsequently wrote to London supporting the proposal for a port.

1852      Irwin House was built and the post office was operating. Mail was carried by police from Perth to Champion Bay. The post office operated until 1864.

Ancient Landmarks, Bain, M. A., UWA Press, Perth, 1975 Pages 356

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1853	<p>In November of this year the Leander was wrecked on the Irwin Reef west of Port Denison. A member of the Watandee tribe guided a passenger to Irwin House for rescue, although not before 11 of the 22 Malay crew had died. The rest of the crew were later abandoned in Champion Bay, unable to claim wages or passage home. The Crown Solicitor's opinion was not helpful to their cause.." the general rule of law is, that freight is the mother of wages, and if no freight be earned, then no wages are due".</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Ancient Landmarks, Bain, M. A., UWA Press, Perth, 1975 Pages 160</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Port Denison 1850-1915 and the Rimmer Sequence as a Model for Port Development, Baskerville, B., UWA Thesis Pages 12</p>
1854	<p>A 'Settlers Force' engaged the Watandee warriors at Bootenal Thicket in June, and in August the defeated leaders submitted to Lockier Burges at Irwin House with an 'assurance of good conduct'.</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Port Denison 1850-1915 and the Rimmer Sequence as a Model for Port Development, Baskerville, B., UWA Thesis Pages 12</p>
1855	<p>Advertisements appeared in colonial newspapers for 'Irwin House' butter, cheese, hams and bacon.</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Port Denison 1850-1915 and the Rimmer Sequence as a Model for Port Development, Baskerville, B., UWA Thesis Pages 13</p>

### Historic Theme(s)

<p>HCWA</p> <p>104 Land allocation and subdivision</p> <p>602 Early settlers</p> <p>206 Mail services</p>	<p>AHC</p> <p>8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements</p> <p>3.9 Farming for commercial profit</p> <p>3.7.1 Establishing postal services</p>
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### Statement of Significance

Irwin House Group, comprising former Kitchen (1850s), Shearing Shed (1850s), Milking Shed (1850s), Stockyard Post (1850s), Port Macquarie Fig trees (1850s-1860s), Stone Wall (1850s; c.1900s), former Post Office (1860s), Irwin House (1890; 1900s), and Gravesite of John Armstrong (1907) has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

the place, a collection of farm buildings located in close proximity to the Irwin River, represents early European settlement and continuing pastoral activity in the Irwin region;

the place is a fine example of a vernacular pastoral station group dating from the 1850s to 1920. In particular, the Kitchen (fmr), Post Office (fmr) and Shearing Shed have aesthetic value for their simple style and contribution to the character of the built farm environment, which includes Irwin House, Stone Wall, Port Macquarie Fig tree, Stockyard Post and Milking Shed, in the rural setting of red earth and grassed areas with a few scattered mature Eucalypts;

the place is associated with the pastoral leaseholding of large tracts of land in the 1850s and 1860s, which were the earliest form of European settlement in the Irwin River district and opened the way for closer agricultural settlement and the establishment of rural townships;

the Post Office is evidence of the sparse settlement in the area during the mid to late 19th century, when isolated farms provided small town services, such as mail and telegraph, to the surrounding region;

the place is associated with The Cattle Company and its partners, the earliest European settlers in the area, and in particular several generations of the Burges family;

the place contributes to understanding ways of life associated with the early establishment of the pastoral industry in the region, and its subsequent development, and contributes to the community's sense of place because of its long association with farming in the area.

There are various outbuildings of little heritage significance.

### Management Category: 1A

PERMANENT ENTRY ON THE STATE REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES.

Highest level of protection appropriate. Provide maximum incentives under the Town Planning Scheme with encouragement to the owner to conserve the significance of the place. Prepare a floor plan and photographically record the place prior to any redevelopment.

### Other Listings

# Irwin Shire Council

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Shire of Irwin - Town Planning Scheme (22); 10/03/1998  
HCWA - State Heritage Register (Interim); 22/01/2002  
HCWA - State Heritage Register (Permanent); 20/09/2002

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### **Supporting Information**

IDHS Records  
AHC Reference 009666 01-01  
Bain, M.A., "Ancient Landmarks", UWA Press, Perth, 1975.  
HCWA No. 12245  
HCWA Register Documentation

# Irwin Shire Council

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### Additional Photographs

**Date of Photograph:** 24/09/2004 IR122-1

**Source:** G. W. Grundy



Former post office, Irwin House southwest aspect.

**Date of Photograph:** 24/09/2004 IR122-2

**Source:** G. W. Grundy



Former post office, Irwin House south facade.

**Date of Photograph:** 24/09/2004 IR122-3

**Source:** G. W. Grundy



Office fmr kitchen, northwest aspect.

**Date of Photograph:** 6/08/1997 IR122-4

**Source:** Suba & Grundy



Office fmr kitchen, west side.

**Date of Photograph:** 6/08/1997 IR122-5

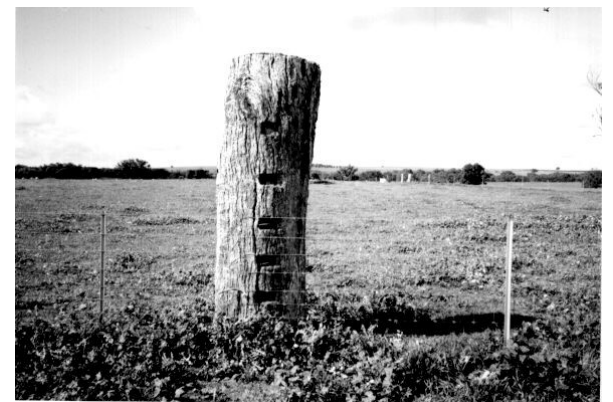
**Source:** Suba & Grundy



Irwin House, west side

**Date of Photograph:** 6/08/1997 IR122-6

**Source:** Suba & Grundy



Original fence post sited in foormer cattle yards.