

The story of the site

In late 1871 this site was selected for development of telegraphic and postal facilities. The telegraph cable from Europe was brought up from the sea to cable company offices. From there it was connected with the Overland Telegraph Line, thus linking Australia with the rest of the world by telegraphic communications for the first time.



Darwin Post Office 1941



Postmaster's Residence

Residences and other facilities were developed, and for many years the site was the most important communications complex in Australia. It continued to be used in this way until 19 February 1942.



Post Office wreckage



Postmaster's Residence after the bombing

The site was abandoned after the bombing until the Legislative Council building was erected here and opened in 1955. A feature of the Council building was a remnant of a wall from the old Post Office. This remnant was relocated to its present position during the construction of Parliament House, between 1990 and 1994.

On 18 February 2000, the Honourable Terry McCarthy MLA, Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, unveiled a graphic display in the Main Hall of Parliament House. The display is sited where the Darwin Post Office stood, between 1872 and 1942. It is within a few metres of the exact spot where an enemy bomb fell on 19 February 1942, killing ten people.

Those who lost their lives were postal and telegraph employees who were working at the Darwin Post Office when a devastating air raid began. Most had earlier declined an opportunity to be evacuated away from the Darwin war zone. They had remained at work as long as possible before seeking shelter in a trench in the grounds of the Postmaster's Residence.

The people of the Northern Territory remember and honour their devotion to maintaining postal and telecommunication services in the face of grave risk of enemy attack.

Mr Speaker McCarthy was assisted in the unveiling by relatives of those who lost their lives.



Unveiled 18 February 2000

Designed and Produced by Sprout

Bombing of Darwin Post Office

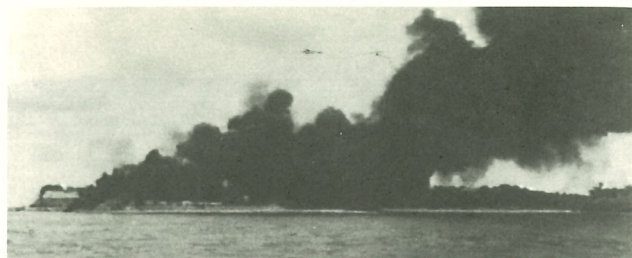
19 February 1942



Legislative Assembly

Darwin Post Office 19 February 1942

A tribute to ten people who lost their lives



Waterfront and town area soon after 10.00am, 19 February 1942

On 19 February 1942, from about 9.58am, 188 enemy aircraft commenced a devastating air raid on Darwin.

The main force of the raid was against shipping in Darwin Harbour, the waterfront area, and on the adjacent town area in this locality.

235 people were killed in Darwin during the first raid, and during a second attack on the aerodrome area two hours later. There were hundreds of other casualties.

These panels are dedicated to the memory of ten people who were killed near here, by bombs which fell on and near the Darwin Post Office which then stood on this site.

Those who died here had known that Darwin's postal and telecommunications facilities would be a primary target during any attack on the town. They also had known for some days that an attack was inevitable. Despite this, they continued their work until after the raid had commenced and news of it had been transmitted south.

Then they sought shelter in a slit trench. A bomb fell directly into the trench, killing nine people outright, and mortally wounding another.

They had only one life to give...

Hurtle Clifford Bald, postmaster, started work as a messenger in the postal section of the Post Master General's Department (PMG) in 1909. He served in Darwin as postmaster between 1928 and 1934, and during that time he received the first air mail ever carried from England to Australia. He returned to Darwin in September 1940 for a second term as postmaster.



Alice Bald had been a schoolteacher in South Australia. She came to Darwin with her husband Hurtle in 1940. In late 1941 she refused to be evacuated, and volunteered to remain to work as a telephonist at Darwin telephone exchange.



Iris Enid Bald was the only daughter of Hurtle and Alice Bald. She had worked in the PMG Department in Adelaide before coming to Darwin with her parents in September 1940. Her brother Peter, the only son of Hurtle and Alice Bald, was in South Australia at the time of the raid.



Archibald Thomas Roy ("Bro") Halls, telegraph supervisor, joined the PMG in 1907, aged 15 years. He served at several remote locations in South Australia and the Northern Territory before he began work in Darwin as a telegraph supervisor just five days before the raid. He left a wife, three daughters, and a son.



Walter Robert Lewis Rowling, foreman mechanic, was mortally injured during the raid, and died aboard the hospital ship Manunda. He had come to Darwin to help install new telephone facilities necessitated by the defence build up. He had been here less than two weeks before the attack.



...they gave it for their country

Eileen Carrig Mullen (left) and **Jean Carrig Mullen**, spent their childhood in South Australia. They both trained as telegraphists, and in May 1941 Eileen was selected for transfer to Darwin to operate a new trunk line telephone service. Jean followed in August 1941, and began work as a temporary telegraphist in October. The sisters were on duty together in the telegraph exchange when the air raid began.



Jennie Freda (Fay) Stasinowksi, telephonist, was born in Broken Hill in 1906, and joined the PMG as a telephonist in 1925. Because of her special expertise she was asked to come to Darwin to operate the upgraded telephone services which were being established.



Arthur Wellesley Wellington, postal clerk, had worked for the PMG in South Australia for 10 years when he agreed to come north in 1940, following a call for extra help at the Darwin Post Office. His wife and infant daughter Aldyth were evacuated, but Arthur Wellington elected to stay in Darwin.



Emily Young had been a telephonist in Darwin when she married Katherine and Darwin identity Jim Young. As was the rule in those days, she had to resign her position when she married. Later, she volunteered to return to work to help overcome staff shortages.

