

Goolwa Post Office – A History
by
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CHRONOLOGY

General Event	Date	Events relating to Goolwa Post Office
Establishment of Australia's first official postal service in Sydney	1809	
Captain Charles Sturt undertakes his journey of exploration along the River Murray, finishing at its mouth	1830	
Founding of the Colony of South Australia; proclamation by the Governor, Captain John Hindmarsh in December	1836	
First systematic exploration of the Goolwa area by Strangways and Hutchison First postmaster appointed in Adelaide	1837	
Town plans drawn up for Currency Creek and smaller plan for "Town on the Goolwa" following survey. Police first stationed at Goolwa.	1840	
A police station built at Goolwa	1850	
Jetty built at Goolwa Construction of Goolwa to Port Elliott railway and Railway Superintendent's house at Goolwa begins	1852	
A new government town, known as Goolwa, surveyed (south of the earlier town) First two paddle steamers travel upriver from Goolwa	1853	Postal facilities established at Goolwa. Thomas Goode appointed Post Master.
Goolwa to Port Elliot horse-drawn tramway begins operation (Australia's first public iron-tracked railway)	1854	Weekly mail services between Port Elliot and Goolwa. Mail services between Adelaide and Goolwa two days a week.
First South Australian postage stamp issued.	1855	
Regular direct paddle-steamer services between Goolwa and Port Adelaide begin. Port Goolwa proclaimed. Signal and pilot station established	1857	Goolwa telegraph and post office opens, with Thomas Goode as Post Master. Post office verandah used as the tram station until 1872.
	1858	Magnetic telegraph connected via

		Goolwa from Adelaide to Melbourne.
	1859	A verandah is built at Goolwa post office/telegraph station
	1862	Major additions to the Goolwa post office/telegraph station, comprising two rooms and a passageway.
Main shipbuilding and repair works established at Goolwa	1864	Further additions made to the building for post office accommodation.
	1866	Savings Bank branch opened.
	1868	A porch erected at the post office/telegraph station.
	1870	A new battery room constructed for the telegraph relay
Goolwa gazetted as a Municipality. New train station built at Goolwa	1872	Goolwa post office no longer serves as the train station
	1877	Further additions to the post office building by J Kennedy
Morgan to Port Adelaide railway opens and restricts river trade to Goolwa	1878	
Goolwa, Port Elliot and Victor Harbor become major resort centres in South Australia	1890s	
Barrages built along the lower River Murray, including at Goolwa Channel in 1938	1935–1940	
	1946	Further additions – staff amenities
	1959	Cream brick additions on both sides of post office. Verandah removed and changes made to office interior. Flat roofed verandah built on western side of original building. Rendering of stonework and two tall chimneys removed.
	1965	Demolition of original stone outbuilding and stone garden walls in rear yard; new steel fuel shed erected; window of exchange replaced with a door; original rear window altered and other minor alterations.
	1975	Minor repairs
Inner part of the town of Goolwa declared a State Heritage Area	1987	
	1990	Alterations to windows and doorway; verandah to Goolwa Terrace added and exposed brickwork rendered. Cement

		ramp and paved area added at front.
	1997	Interior renovations to incorporate Australia Post shop

Goolwa – the context

Pre-European Settlement

Goolwa is situated 83 kilometres south-east of Adelaide. It is an Aboriginal word believed to mean ‘elbow’ and describes the last great bend in the River Murray around Hindmarsh Island before it flows out through the mouth between Sir Richard and Younghusband Peninsulas. Aborigines occupied this area for thousands of years prior to European contact. These were the Ngarrindjeri people of the lower River Murray and Coorong areas. As they lived in a fertile environment, with plenty of plants and animals, as well as aquatic resources, the Ngarrindjeri groups were less nomadic than the aborigines of the inland. Evidence of their habitation of the area is found in the scarred trees where bark was removed for use as canoes and shields and in the extensive remains of the middens in the nearby coastal dunes.

The first recorded European contact in the area was made by Captains Matthew Flinders and Nicolas Baudin when their ships intersected on their respective voyages of exploration in 1802. The encounter occurred to the south-east of the Murray Mouth, which neither explorer discovered. Australian, American and French whaling and sealing vessels soon followed and sealers settled on Kangaroo Island; some visited the south coast region of the mainland and kidnapped Aboriginal women for use as companions and as domestic workers.

Captain Charles Sturt set out on his second expedition from New South Wales in 1829 in the hope of finding a large river that he had heard about from the Aborigines and that he thought may lead to an inland sea. He followed the Murrumbidgee River in a whaleboat and found that it flowed into another river, which he named the Murray, after the Colonial Secretary Sir George Murray. The Murray was joined later by another river, which he named the Darling. Sturt continued to explore the Murray to its mouth and towards the end of the voyage in 1830, he named Lake Alexandrina. His last campsite was near the present site of Goolwa and it was from there that he made the disappointing discovery of the river’s dangerous outlet to the sea. Sturt’s expedition was of great significance in the subsequent settlement of this area and in the establishment of the new colony of South Australia.

European Settlement

At Sturt’s suggestion, the New South Wales Governor sent Captain Collett Barker to further investigate the area between Gulf St Vincent and the River Murray in 1831. Unfortunately Collett was speared by Aborigines in 1831 at Barker’s Knoll. This occurred after he swam across the Murray Mouth and was probably a result of previous hostile encounters between the Aborigines and the sealers who had settled on Kangaroo Island. Sturt’s favourable report and Collett’s survey told of fertility, possible harbours and the likelihood of a site for a city, as well as the potential of the Murray as a route to the inland, encouraging settlement in this area. There was talk of the river becoming the ‘Australian Mississippi’ and opening the way across the interior to Victoria and New South Wales, with paddle steamers carrying goods and passengers. However, the area lacked a suitable place for a port.

When the new colony was established in 1836, the first Surveyor-General, Colonel William Light was given instructions to consider the south coast region for the main settlement. On inspection, however, Light found that the Murray Mouth was not navigable and that the southern coast could not provide a safe harbour, and decided the region was not suitable for the capital. TB Strangways and YB Hutchinson made the first systematic survey of the area in December 1837. They were sent by the colony's first Governor, (later Sir) John Hindmarsh, to see whether Sturt's channel was the only outlet to the sea, and to determine the suitability of Encounter Bay as a port. Their report was positive and recommended that the Murray Mouth might be navigable for steamships of shallow draught but that a canal between the Goolwa channel and Encounter Bay might be the better option.

Following this, the region around Currency Creek abutting Lake Alexandrina was one of 36 areas in the colony selected for a special survey on behalf of the Currency Creek Association, a consortium of speculators. This was carried out under the direction of Sergeant Forrest from December 1839 to January 1840. Plans were drawn up for an elaborate town at Currency Creek and a smaller town named 'Town on the Goolwa', set out as a river port in what is now the northern part of Goolwa. Neither town was developed as town blocks, but small acreages were allocated by ballot to local landholders.

Goolwa

South Australia's early governors were very interested in the south coast region around Goolwa, particularly in relation to the possibilities of trade along the River Murray. Governor Hindmarsh wanted Adelaide to be sited there but after a bitter dispute with Colonel Light, he was unsuccessful. Governor Gawler examined the river to the site of the present town of Morgan. After exploring the River with a party including his wife, Lady Augusta, the third Governor, Sir Henry Fox Young, proclaimed a bonus of £4,000 to the first two steamboats to successfully navigate the River from Goolwa to the Darling Junction. This offer was instrumental in introducing steamers on the river; the next consideration was how to navigate the Murray Mouth.

Police were stationed at Goolwa in 1840 when the first plans for the town were drawn up but the detachment was withdrawn in 1841. A police station was built there in 1850. However, the stimulus for the town's development only occurred when work began on the port and railway facilities that would serve the river trade. The most suitable site for a wharf on the lower river was found to be immediately south of the surveyed Town on the Goolwa and accordingly another government town was laid out in this area. This survey marks the site of the present town centre and was carried out in March 1853 by Corporal Richard Brooking under instruction from Governor Young. The first public auction of allotments for the town was held on 28 April 1853, with 20 one-quarter acre blocks sold at an average price of £20 per lot. There were further sales later in the year and by 1857 all the land was sold.

Governor Young decided that the most suitable harbour near the River mouth that would act as a transfer point for cargo between river steamers and ships was Horseshoe Bay, which was proclaimed Port Elliot in 1851. In 1849 he also proposed a scheme for a railway connecting Goolwa and Port Elliot, despite opposition, particularly from merchants at Port Adelaide. However, he gained approval from the Colonial Office in London in 1851. The works were financed from the Land Fund, again in the face of much opposition, and were the first extensive public works in the

Colony. These included jetties at Goolwa and Port Elliot, the Port Elliot and Goolwa railway and a residence for the railway superintendent at Goolwa, all of which were built in 1852, the year before the official survey of the town was carried out.

Thomas Jones was appointed Superintendent of Works at Port Elliot in 1852 and was responsible for building the railway, as well as the public building works at Goolwa. Governor Young was keen for the works to be completed quickly, but Jones experienced many delays and increased costs, with the line being officially opened on 18 May 1854. Due to cost saving, it was reduced to a single track horse-drawn tramway. However, it was the first public railway on iron rails in Australia and the first railway in South Australia. The first Superintendent of the Port Elliot and Goolwa railway, Buxton Forbes Laurie, had been appointed on 1 January 1854, but by the time the line was opened, Jones had taken over this position. In 1864 the horse-drawn railway was extended to Victor Harbor, where a port was built off Granite Island.

By December 1853 the cargo shed, a substantial stone building, was under construction, and a building was erected nearby as the horse stables for the railway horses. This became inadequate and in 1862 a new stable building, located near the post office, was constructed. A survey of Mr Young Bingham Hutchinson's land on the south side of Goolwa was undertaken in 1856 and became known as Hutchinson's Township or the Goolwa extension.

The town surveyed in 1853 became the commercial centre where the population was concentrated and the main public buildings were erected. These included three hotels: the Goolwa, opened in 1854, followed by the Corio and the Australasian, both built in 1857. A new police station, which housed Goolwa's first permanent police officer, was built in 1859, together with a courthouse, with the buildings designed in the period during which EA Hamilton was the Colonial Architect. Church services were held at the courthouse until the Church of England was built in 1867. The courthouse was also used as a temporary meeting place for clubs and lodges. By 1878 it had become the residence of the manager of the railways.

The river steamers began operating in 1853 and, after loading upriver, some intrepid captains were able to navigate their way through the Murray Mouth and take their loads to Port Adelaide. Captain Francis Cadell brought the paddle steamer, *Lady Augusta*, launched in Sydney in March, through the Mouth in August 1853. Earlier in the same year Captain William Randell launched the *Mary Ann* at Mannum and took it to Goolwa for clearance before travelling up the River. In 1854 Captain Caddell also brought the steamer *Melbourne* through the Mouth. However, in 1859 the *Melbourne* was wrecked whilst attempting to negotiate the Murray Mouth, proving how difficult it was to transport cargo direct from Goolwa.

Goolwa was proclaimed a port on 10 September 1857; it was also made a customs point for colonial trade and a ships' survey centre, as customs duties were introduced on cargo carried by the steamers to the other colonies. A Customs House was built in 1859 overlooking the wharf and River. Goolwa was gazetted a Municipality in 1872 and, with the growth in the river trade, the port of Goolwa developed and a number of industries were established, including a flour mill, a saw mill, an iron foundry and ship-building yards.

Goolwa was the first port on the River where vessels were built and became the second most productive after that established at Echuca in Victoria. The first vessel built at Goolwa was a barge, the *Eureka*, which accompanied the *Lady Augusta* on the voyage up river in 1853. Later Captain Cadell established the River Murray Navigation Company and brought in new permanent equipment for repairing vessels. George Curson and James Hooker established an Iron Works and Patent Slip Company in 1864. By 1877 ship construction was at its peak along the Murray. Between 1853 and 1912 37 paddle steamers and 25 barges were built at Goolwa and many repairs were carried out.

The period from 1878 to 1884 was the peak in relation to trade for Goolwa, with the quantity of cargo moving over the wharf so large that the railway experienced delays. As a consequence, the river trade began to be diverted from Goolwa and it is likely that this led to its demise. A new line, the Northwest Bend railway, was opened between Adelaide and Morgan in 1878, and Morgan overtook Goolwa's status as the most important river port in South Australia. As the railways expanded further upstream, the Murray trade was linked to capital cities in the respective colonies, restricting trade to South Australian ports, including Milang and Meningie on the lakes and Mannum and Blanchetown on the River. With the opening of the Murray Bridge line in 1886, trade to Goolwa declined further and by 1890 had virtually ceased.

Despite the decline in its function as a river trading port, Goolwa continued to grow, with grazing and fodder crops becoming dominant and later dairying and market gardening. From the 1890s Goolwa, along with Port Elliot and Victor Harbor, developed as a major resort centre. As people's livelihoods disappeared with the fall of the river trade, they turned to the provision of trades, professions and services to support the tourism industry and the local community. The Goolwa community, as did the rest of Australia, experienced great setbacks from the impacts of the First World War and the Great Depression. Following this, major construction works were carried out with five barrages being built at the five channels in the vicinity of the Murray Mouth to maintain fresh water in the river and assist gravitational irrigation. Work commenced in 1935 and the Goolwa Barrage was completed in 1938, providing work for many in the region.

In the 1950s there was a boom in the building of shacks, retirement homes and caravan parks in and around Goolwa. The many permanent residents required services and this has meant the erection of new buildings. This growth has continued and the summer influx of holidaymakers sees a threefold increase in the number of Goolwa residents from about 6,000 to about 15,000 to 18,000.

In 1987 the River Murray Interpretive Centre was established in the heart of the wharf/tramway historic precinct, known as Signal Point Hill. The area that was the commercial hub of Goolwa and included its early public buildings was declared the Goolwa State Heritage Area, incorporating the Interpretive Centre. It includes a section of the original Goolwa to Port Elliot tramway cutting, excavated in 1852 and believed to be the oldest surviving railway artefact in Australia; the railway superintendent's residence; the Goolwa wharf; the former police station and courthouse; the former railway horse stables and the post office.

Postal and Telegraph Services – the Context

Postal Services in Australia and South Australia

The New South Wales postal service, established in 1809, is the oldest in Australia. It was formed when the former convict, Isaac Nichols, was appointed postmaster, operating from his shop in George Street, Sydney. In 1825 the role of the postal service was expanded under the Postal Act, which provided for the establishment of the General Post Office. Post offices in New South Wales were established in the outlying districts of Sydney from 1828 but the expansion of postal services in that colony only really began in the 1850s as the increasing population led to closer settlement.

While there is some debate as to the first post office to be established in South Australia, the first official post office was located in the hut of the Colonial Storekeeper, Thomas Gilbert, at the corner of North and West Terraces in Adelaide. Gilbert was appointed postmaster on 10 April 1837. By 1841 there were six post offices in the colony, at Adelaide, Port Adelaide, Port Lincoln, Morphett Vale, Willunga and Encounter Bay. Later that year the northern mail line opened to Gawler and was extended to Angaston in 1846, while the eastern mail line reached Mount Barker in 1842 and Mount Gambier in 1846. By 1850 post offices were established in Adelaide's suburban villages and Adelaide became a General Post Office in 1851.

Early postmasters also performed other duties, including as customs officers and harbour masters in coastal towns and police constables in country towns. By 1859 there were post offices at Clare, Goolwa, Goomeracka (now Gumeracha), Mount Pleasant, Kapunda, Koorlingal, Port Augusta, Robe, Strathalbyn and Kadina. By the following year the number of post offices open for business was 146. A new GPO was built in Adelaide in 1866–72.

The Post and Telegraph Departments were amalgamated in January 1870, followed by the construction of the overland telegraph to Port Darwin from 1870–1872. Under Section 51 of the Commonwealth Constitution Act, which received royal assent in July 1900 and commenced operation on 1 January 1901, control of the nation's post and telegraph service passed to the Commonwealth under the newly established Postmaster-General's Department.

In 1975 the Postmaster-General's Department was split into Australia Post and Telecom but the first significant change did not come until 1985 when non-official offices were named Post Office Agencies. In the late 1980s post offices were transformed into retail establishments and in the 1990s there was a gradual conversion of official post offices into corporate post shops.

Telegraph services

In 1856 Charles Todd made a journey from Portland in Victoria to Adelaide, mostly by horse, to survey the route for a proposed telegraph line between Melbourne and Adelaide. This followed the Victorian Government's agreement in 1854 to allow Samuel McGowan, an Irish Canadian, to build the first Australian telegraph line from Melbourne to Williamstown in Victoria. Todd's survey was to determine the best route for the telegraph line, having regard to the topography. Ironically, a privately-owned electric telegraph line had been built to link Adelaide and Port Adelaide in November 1855 at the same time as Todd arrived in the colony to take up a position as Superintendent of the Electric Telegraph and Astronomical Observer. Todd commenced by establishing telegraph stations in Adelaide in 1856.

Todd's Melbourne to Adelaide route travelled via Mount Gambier, on to Robe and Guichen Bay, along the Coorong direct to Goolwa, then to Port Elliott and up to Willunga, Noarlunga and Adelaide. The first inter-colonial telegraph line was subsequently opened in July 1858, with the five initial South Australian telegraph stations built at Willunga, Port Elliot, Goolwa, Robe and Mount Gambier. The original buildings survive at Robe (c.1858), Willunga (1857) and Goolwa (1857). The surviving Mount Gambier post office is the second telegraph office there, built in 1865. The Goolwa post office is the only one to continue in operation since it was built.

The type of telegraph station established on the long distance lines was different to that in the cities. These were repeater stations, where telegraph signals were received and retransmitted as the signal was not powerful enough to traverse the entire length of the line. The repeater stations often had settlements grow around them, particularly on the transcontinental lines such as the Overland Telegraph to Darwin. The telephone was invented in 1876 and conversion of telegraph lines to telephone lines occurred rapidly in South Australia. By the 1890s many post and telegraph offices also had public telephone offices or exchanges allowing the connection of private telephones.

Goolwa Telegraph and Post Office

Goolwa Post Office

When a mail service was established at Goolwa in 1853, Thomas Goode was appointed the first postmaster, for which he was paid £6 per annum. Goode, a chemist from Hereford, England, opened Goolwa's first chemist shop and general store in Cadell Street in 1852, the year before the town was surveyed. He built a new store in 1860. Goode was highly esteemed by the local community and, when the Corporation of the Town of Goolwa was proclaimed in 1872, he became its first Mayor. Goode's son, Thomas Goode junior, later became a mayor of the Town and continued to run the new Thomas Goode and Co. store after his father died in 1882.

In January 1854 weekly postal mail services were introduced between Port Elliot and Goolwa via the newly established horse-drawn railway line and mail services between Adelaide and Goolwa were open on Tuesdays and Saturdays. In 1855 twice-weekly mail services, transported by horse carriage, commenced between Goolwa and Currency Creek.

On 14 October 1857 Goolwa residents presented a petition to Parliament stating that 'as a consequence of the rapid rise and increase of business in the Township of Goolwa ... the time is arrived when a public Post Office would more satisfactorily meet the wants of the community than the present method.' The petition also stated that the electric telegraph would be completed as far as Goolwa in a few weeks, and with the need for a telegraph office, this would be an opportunity to unite both in one building. Plans for a telegraph station at Goolwa were prepared and signed on 21 October, by which time the tender for its construction had been let. The post office was erected late in 1857, with Goode continuing as postmaster; by 1859 his salary was £25. Although the connection of Adelaide and Melbourne by magnetic telegraph did not occur until July 1858, the Goolwa post office was built as a post and telegraph office.

The verandah at Goolwa post office was built above street level and was used as the tram station for the horse-drawn railway, which had operated from 1854. This was an obvious location as the tram had to collect and deposit the mail from here. The waiting area was to the south, or front, of the building; the railway tracks that passed in front of this area are still clearly visible and an interpretive sign has been erected here. There is a horizontal timber rail across the front of the verandah and a set of steps on the eastern side leads to the tracks. The 1862 alterations which extended the 1859 verandah to the west and south would have greatly improved the facilities. One early resident recalls that the post office had:

a verandah facing the Corio Hotel, wooden verandah posts and a rail about waist high. It was a gathering place for people waiting for their mail. The window at the far end of the verandah was partially blocked off and an opening was provided for people to receive their mail. Two posts and a rail were erected opposite the opening and in single file you asked for your mail, which was given to you through the opening. The main office housed the manual telephone exchange, telegraph machine [received in Morse Code] and other items connected to post office work.

The same resident noted that there was a lobby about 12 feet (3.65 metres) by 9 feet (2.75 metres) inside the main entrance and an opening at the counter in front of the office to conduct business. The rest of the building was used as the postmaster's residence.

The post office verandah continued as a railway station until, in response to demands from the locals, a new station was built in what is now the Soldiers Memorial Garden in 1872. By 1884 steam locomotives were introduced on the Goolwa line and the horses became redundant. A replica of the horse drawn passenger carriage, presented to the Goolwa community for the railway centenary celebrations in 1954, is housed in a small building with glass windows to the west of the post office.

Other postmasters after Goode include A Baldock (1862–1870), CFO Michael (1871–1873), WH Darwin (1873–1897), Alfred Batch Sexton (1897–1902), W Thomson (1906–1907) and EG Schunke (1910–1911). In later years Jim Giddings became postmaster in 1987, replacing Ian Smart who had been postmaster for about ten years. There was a concern that post offices would be closed from about 1986 and contractors would take over. In 1994 when there was a threat the post office would close, Councillor Anthony Presgrave said that it serviced 750 post boxes and made about 1600 street deliveries, as well as being a collection point for Hindmarsh Island residents and holidaymakers.

The Architects

Prior to 1901 and the federation of the Australian colonies, colonial governments were responsible for the design and construction of their own public buildings, including post and telegraph offices. In South Australia this was the responsibility of the office of the Colonial Architect and Supervisor of Public Works, created in 1851. William Bennett Hays was appointed Colonial Architect in 1852 and was responsible for the newly formed Colonial Architect's Department. This was superseded by the Public Works Department, established in January 1854, and the Colonial Architect operated within this Department. As Colonial Architect, Hays was in charge of the Goolwa to Port Elliot railway and the associated public buildings. He continued in this position until 1855, when he returned to England.

After self-government was introduced in 1856, a Commissioner of Public Works was appointed in 1857 and the title of the department headed by the Colonial Architect reverted to the Colonial Architect's Department, under the control of the Commissioner. EA Hamilton, who had worked as assistant to the Colonial Architect from 1853, was appointed Colonial Architect and Supervisor of Public Works in July 1856. In 1859 he was responsible for the design and construction of the Kapunda, Clare, Mount Barker and Strathalbyn post offices.

In late 1860 the Colonial Architect's Department became the Engineer and Architects Department and was headed by William Hanson, who designed new post offices at Burra (1861) and Kingston SE (1866–67), as well as at Auburn and Kadina (both 1861–62), Port Adelaide (1864–65), Gawler (1865–66) and Moonta (1866). It is not known if Hanson was responsible for the 1862 additions to the Goolwa post and telegraph office or whether it was one of the architects working in his office at the time. In 1867 the functions of Engineer and Architect were separated and Hanson continued as head Architect. The Department of the Architect was abolished on 31 December 1870 and restored in 1874 under George Thomas Light, who had been Assistant Architect from April 1873. Prior to this Light had worked in the Colonial Architect's Department as a temporary draughtsman from July 1856 and as draughtsman from 1 January 1857 and it is likely that Light designed the Goolwa Post office. In 1878 the Architect-in-Chief's Department was created, with Edward John Woods as its head. This became the Works and Buildings Department in 1886, and was headed by Charles Edward Owen Smyth as Supervisor of Works and Buildings; Smyth continued in this position until 1920.

Original building, 1857

The tender from Messrs Morris and Willcock for the construction of a post and telegraph office at Goolwa for £417/14/9 was accepted on 6 October 1857. Morris and Willcock were based at Franklin Street, Adelaide and also built the post offices at Willunga and Port Elliot. Although the original 1857 plans for the main part of the telegraph station have not been located, indications from an 1857 plan of the building's roof and from later plans show that it comprised four rooms situated in the area which is now the main part of the post office: these were a lobby to the south-east, an office to the east of this, a sitting room located at the rear of the lobby and a kitchen at the rear (north-east) of the office. Although the plans indicate that there was a lobby where business was conducted inside the entry door of the original building, mail was distributed from the eastern front window, as noted earlier.

The building was constructed of travertine limestone with a hipped shingle roof. Changes were made to the specification details during the building works when the Colonial Architect, EA Hamilton, wrote to Thomas Jones, the Clerk of Works, with instructions to use good colonial shingles instead of hardwood palings for the roof, and brick sills rendered and weathered with Portland cement instead of wood sill windows. The 1857 plans were signed 'Morris and Willcock' [the builders] and by a witness to their signatures. It is most likely that the plans were prepared by GT Light, who was a draughtsman in the Colonial Architect's Department from July 1856 and is attributed with the design of the nearby police station and courthouse, built in 1859. This is supported by the appearance of the initials 'GTL' and the date '5.9.57' appearing under the stamp of the Architect-in-Chief's Office on the 1857 plans.

The plans included a two-roomed outbuilding, which comprised a stable and forage store in one room and a chemical store in the other; this was constructed to the north-east of the main building. The small stable would have only housed one or two horses and was probably for the use of the postmaster.

The screen on the counter was moved in 1858 as it had been fixed too close to the counter edge, and in July that year, the inter-colonial telegraph connection commenced. In 1859 J Bowley built verandahs at the Port Elliot and Goolwa telegraph stations for £93/8/6 and £70/19/6 respectively; the Goolwa verandahs were at the on the southern (front) and western sides of the original building.

Major alterations were undertaken to extend the original building in 1862, comprising two bedrooms built to the north (rear) of the original building, with a passage separating them from the original building. A pantry and shelves were built at the eastern end of the passage. The two rooms on the northern side of the original building, now at the centre, became a sitting room and kitchen. Mr Wadham was the successful building tenderer at a cost of £339.

The c. 1862 plans show that the wall between the lobby and the office was to be removed and a counter to be fitted to the rear of the lobby; a telegraph bench was to be fitted at the eastern side of the office, while shelves were to be fitted on its northern side at each end of the existing fireplace, and a bench and desk on the southern side. These were probably the internal alterations to the post office requested by the Postmaster General in 1864. The c. 1862 plans also show the verandah extended along the extension at the western side of the building. There were two entries to the building: one at the south-western end (to the lobby) and one via the passageway on the western side; both doors were timber with brick quoin surrounds, the passageway door having a fanlight. In 1868 a porch was built at a cost of £7/19/6.

In 1870 a new battery room was built by RS Newell for the telegraph relay. This was a small room located to the south-east of the original building that used the same construction materials and was in the same style as the original building and the c. 1862 additions. The plans were headed 'addition to the Telegraph Station', although the main building was labelled 'telegraph and post office'. At this time William Hanson was the Architect-in-Chief but it is not clear if it is his signature or initials on the plans and it is likely that they were prepared by one of the architects in his office. A signature on the plans appears to be FJ Harrison, not Hanson.

In 1877 a large room, used as a living room, was added to the north-east of the building. A smaller room, built some time between 1870 and 1877 and used as a kitchen, adjoined this new room. The former pantry had been removed from the end of the passageway and the kitchen had access from the eastern exterior of the building, as well as from the passageway. A fireplace in the new rooms shared a common chimney with the kitchen. The plans also included a water tank. Again the addition was in the same style and using the same materials as the original building. The plans were headed 'Goolwa Post office and Telegraph Station Additional room and Tank'. It is not known if GT Light was the architect or whether it was one of architects working in his office. The builder was James Kennedy at a cost of £225/5/0.

About 1918 a new water service, bath and wash trough were added to the small separate building to the north-east of the main building, which then comprised two rooms, one a washhouse and the other a store, with a toilet on the eastern side.

In 1923 a set of 20 post boxes was installed in the area located under one of the front (south) facing windows, probably on the eastern side where mail had earlier been distributed. In 1924 the post office was extensively refitted with new cupboards and shelving; these were installed in the office, which was then located at the front eastern side of the building, with the entry and public space on the western side.

In 1946 additional staff toilets were built to the north-west of the post office building, behind the laundry and work shed. In 1958 the PMG Department of the Commonwealth Department of Works commenced major alterations to the post office and these were completed in about 1959. They included cream brick alterations that provided a store, male toilets, a bicycle shelter and porch, as well as part of the new post box area on the western side of the original building. A flat roofed verandah, enclosed with a cream brick return wall, housing most of the post box area, was also built to the south of the western side.

At the same time, the existing kitchen and bathroom on the eastern side were removed, and a female rest and locker room, also in cream brick, was built there. The 1958/59 alterations included internal modifications that involved removing the existing interior walls and the fireplace in the main office, located at the rear of the public space and counter at the southern end of the building. The post boxes beneath the window and the existing verandah at this end were also removed. The two rooms at the northern end of the building, which had been bedrooms, were converted to a lunchroom on the north-western side and an equipment room on the north-eastern side. The room to the north-east of the building, built as a living room in 1877, served as the telephone exchange room. It is likely that the two tall chimneys were removed at this time. Telephone booths were installed inside the public porch on the western side of the building at the time of these alterations but were later replaced by public telephone boxes; these have since been removed.

In 1965 alterations were made to the interiors and the grounds of the post office, including the demolition of the original stone outbuilding and the stone garden walls in the rear yard. The outbuilding was replaced with a prefabricated steel fuel shed and a window of the exchange (north-east corner) was replaced with a door. There were minor repairs in 1975 and Holland blinds and new signage were installed.

In July 1990 extensive modifications to the post office commenced, including replacing the verandah, rendering of exposed brickwork and replacing the old asphalt pavement in the backyard, at a proposed cost of \$25,000. There was also a major reworking of the western porch area to form the private letterbox alley and sorting area. A cement ramp and paved area were added at the front to follow the embankment alignment of the original tram platform. The Post Office was renovated to incorporate an Australia Post shop in 1997.

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