

APPLECROSS WIRELESS STATION TIMELINE

Source: *Conservation Plan Applecross Wireless Station (fmr), Wireless Hill Park, Ardross/ Kelly Aris, Helen Burgess, Gaye Nayton; City of Melville 1999.*

1.0 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

1.1 Introduction

Applecross Wireless Station (fmr) now known as Wireless Hill Telecommunications Museum and Park, was built in 1912, on Reserve 29813, Swan Location 8404 (formerly Cockburn Sound Location 605), It is in the suburb of Ardross in the City of Melville, and bounded by McCallum Drive to the east, Davy Street to the south, Canning Highway to the north and Barnard Street to the west. The park comprises 40 hectares.

The research methodology followed for this conservation plan includes the use of primary and secondary sources, including discussions with City of Melville's Heritage and Museum Services, members of the Wireless Hill Telecommunications Advisory Committee and representatives of the Melville History Society.¹ The documentary evidence covers both the concise history of *Applecross Wireless Station (fmr)* as well as the social and contextual history which contributes to the reasons for the station being constructed and the way it was used and developed. A list of references is provided at the end of this report.

The Documentary Evidence refers to the site primarily as *Applecross Wireless Station (fmr)* as well as Wireless Hill (or Wireless Hill Telecommunications Museum and Park), which are one in the same places and both incorporate the residences and barracks in Hickey Street.

1.2 Chronology of Major Events

A summary of the main historic events relating to *Applecross Wireless Station (fmr)* follows:

1830s Surveying and first records of some settlement begin in the Melville area.

1849 The first Canning Bridge is built.

1871 Road District Act is passed and Melville is administered by the Fremantle District Road Board

1888 German physicist, Heinrich Hertz, conducts the first demonstration of the transmitting and receiving waves of energy through air.

1896 Guglielmo Marconi conducts the first demonstration of wireless telegraphy from the Post Office in London, using Morse Telegraphy.

1897 Melville Water Park Estate opens.

1900 13 December - Melville is officially gazetted as a Local Government Authority, initially called East Fremantle District Road Board.

1900 1 January - all six British colonies in Australia join together at Federation, becoming States in the new nation of the Commonwealth of Australia.

June - the name Melville Road Board replaces East Fremantle District Road Board.

¹ These discussions were held in the main during the two years whilst working as the Heritage and Museum Services Officer for City of Melville with members of Wireless Hill Museum Advisory Committee, 1995-1997. Further discussions held as required for this conservation plan. (Helen Burgess).

- 1905 Federal Government introduces the Wireless Telegraphy Act giving the Government complete control over wireless activity and the Postmaster General the exclusive right to transmit and receive messages and to issue wireless licences.
- 1907 Applecross ward is established (along with Bicton, Palmyra and Bull's Creek). Federal Government in Australia realises the importance of wireless telegraphy communication.
- 1909 Federal Government, through the Postmaster General's Department, commits £10,000 for establishing two coastal wireless stations in Australia.
21 October - tenders are called for the construction of two wireless stations, one in Perth and the other in Sydney.
December - Imperial Press Conference is held in Melbourne to discuss the future of wireless communications in Australia and Pacific via the establishment of a chain of coastal radio stations.
- 1910 April - Federal Government announces Telefunken/Australasian Wireless Limited as the successful contractors for the two wireless stations.
The first Engineer for Radio Telegraphy in Australia is appointed by Postmaster General.
Wireless equipment starts to become more common on ships.
- 1911 February - Federal Government notifies Melville Road Board of its intention to survey a site in Applecross comprising portion of Cockburn Sound Location 356 and Swan Location 74.
June - Imperial Press Conference is held in London, whereby the outcomes of the Melbourne Imperial Press Conference are to be applied throughout the Empire.
September - Federal Government purchases Applecross site from London and Australia Investment Company (site now referred to as Cockburn Sound Location 605).
Clearing of the site and construction of the station commences.
German Jetty, on the Swan River - Applecross, where construction materials for the station are ferried.
- 1912 Construction of operations buildings completed, including Operators' House, Engine House, one small brick and tiled roof toilet at the north-east end of the site, a buggy shed and stables, a windmill and well, and circulating water tanks near Engine Room
- 1912 Three residences and single mens' quarters built
120 m mast erected behind Operators' House
Three concrete anchor blocks, each approximately 4.6 m high, built to hold mast guy wires
1.5 metre open picket fence erected around Engine and Operators' houses
Site fenced by 1.8 metre barbed wire fence
- 1912 19 August - Pennant Hills Station (Sydney Radio VIS), is officially opened. Postmaster General's Department (PMG) is in charge of the station.
30 September - Applecross Wireless Station (Perth Radio 'POP') officially opens.
Other small coastal radio stations are established in Melbourne, Hobart Brisbane, Adelaide, Thursday Island and Port Moresby.
- 1913 All construction crew employed at Applecross Wireless Station leave.

More small coastal radio stations are commissioned in Darwin, Mount Gambier, Rockhampton, Cooktown, Townsville, Flinders Island, Wyndham, Broome, Roebourne, Geraldton and Esperance.

Amalgamated Wireless of Australasia Limited is formed with the merger of Australasian Wireless Limited and Marconi Company.

1914 First World War commences.

c1915 Store built

1916 Royal Australian Navy (RAN) takes control of all coastal radio stations, including Applecross, as well as all wireless telegraphy in Australia.

RAN installs a 60 kw Poulsen arc transmitter and valve operated receivers.

1920 Control of Applecross Wireless Station reverts back to PMG.

1922 Control of Applecross Wireless Station goes to Amalgamated Wireless of Australasia Limited (AWA - formerly Australasian Wireless Limited).

1927 AWA installs a short-wave 'Beam System', which extends transmitting range of station enabling direct communication between England and Australia.

Applecross Wireless Station becomes a feeder station for international radiograms, weather reports, news bulletins and press reports.

1932 Radio Station 6PR begins broadcasting via the Applecross Wireless Station.

1938 Work commences on upgrading staff housing in Hickey Street to include electric power, water heaters and septic tanks and extensions to Principal Fitter's Quarters (Building No.2).

1939 RAN again takes over control of the Applecross Wireless Station, along with all other coastal radio stations in the country due to the outbreak of World War II.

1942 Generating machinery is removed from Engine House to the Store. The Engine House becomes a Transmitter Hall.

1943 AWA staff are moved to Bassendean station.

1945 RAN vacates the station with the cessation of war.

1946 Overseas Telecommunications Commission (OTC) is formed after the Imperial Communications system is reviewed after the cessation of World War II-

Operators' House is converted into offices for AWA.

1947 February - OTC take control of Applecross Wireless Station and all other wireless stations from the PMG.

Improvements made to septic and sanitary requirements of the staff houses.

Three timber feeder distribution towers are constructed around the Transmitter Hall, and wires are fed from Transmitter Hall, via porcelain insulator through connectors to towers to rhombic antennae.

1950 OTC takes over Pennant Hills Station.

- 1954 Mast is repainted.
- 1955 WA VHF (Very High Frequency) Group is established.
- 1957 Pennant Hills Station is completely closed.
- 1958 Melville Road Board becomes aware, unofficially, of OTC's intention to vacate Applecross Wireless Station.
- 1959 First television broadcast (TVW7) in WA via Applecross Wireless Station.
- 1960 May - Melville Road Board successful in their first moves to acquire the station site once OTC vacate.
- Two rhombic antennae are installed at the Applecross Wireless Station for the NASA Space Mission.
- 1961 Local Government Act is introduced resulting in the Melville Road Board becoming the Shire of Melville.
- 1962 Shire of Melville changes to Town of Melville
August - the original 120 metre mast is dismantled and replaced by a 46 metre mast.
- Two log periodic beams are installed at the station by OTC as part of the NASA program.
- 1963 April - Town of Melville purchase a site adjacent to Wireless Hill for their new civic and administration centre.
- 1964 German Jetty is demolished.
- 1967 Gnangara Wireless Station opens.
- OTC begins the first stage of vacating the Applecross Wireless Station.
- The log periodic beams are relocated to Gnangara.
- The 46 metre mast, which replaced the original 120 metre mast, is dismantled.
- 1968 Town of Melville changes to City of Melville.
- 1 July - OTC ceases all operations at Applecross Wireless Station and move to Gnangara.
- 16 December - The transfer of the land, now referred to as Swan Location 8404, from the Crown is completed.
- 1969 13 August - *Applecross Wireless Station (fmr)*, more commonly referred to as Wireless Hill, vested in City of Melville.
- 1971 February - the name *Wireless Hill Park* officially approved by the Hon. Minister for Lands.
- 1972 Operators' House is converted into Caretaker's Quarters.
- 1973 A development plan for Wireless Hill Park is prepared for the City of Melville by Dr J. S. Beard (Director of King's Park).
- 1974 Work commences on establishing the Wireless Hill Telecommunications Museum.

Former mast anchor blocks are converted into viewing towers.

Timber feeder distribution switching towers (3) are dismantled.

The former Store is converted into a meeting room and a public toilet facility to the rear (east).

1979 14 October - Wireless Hill Telecommunications Museum is officially opened.

Nearly all buildings and structures at the Pennant Hills Station are demolished.

1980s Extension is made to former Store building to house State Emergency Services office.

1988 Wireless Hill Park Heritage Trail is established.

1992 Wireless Hill is classified by The National Trust of Australia (WA).

1994 Institution of Engineers, Australia, erects a plaque at Wireless Hill in recognition of the heritage significance of the former wireless station and the contribution of engineers in the history and development of Australia.

1996 Caretaker's Quarters is leased privately for residential accommodation by City of Melville.

Source: Applecross Wireless Station (fmr), Conservation Plan.