



OLD COURTHOUSE



ABOUT THE OLD COURTHOUSE COMPLEX

Situated within the Busselton Cultural Precinct at the jetty end of Queen Street, the Old Courthouse Complex buildings were constructed between 1860 – 1897. The Courthouse operated as a judiciary, government administration centre and land agency - servicing the settlement's need for law and order, customs and telecommunications.

Today, these beautifully restored heritage-listed buildings serve as a hub for art lovers and history buffs.

Stroll through the Old Courthouse Complex and take a deep dive into rich local history. Discover tales of hardship in the gaol cells and uncover true stories of tragedy and heroism surrounding the infamous S.S. Georgette shipwreck. Explore the Gallery Store's curated collection of local art and unwind with a coffee at the charming Old Post Office Cafe.

OPEN DAILY – FREE ENTRY

SETTLEMENT HISTORY

BUSSELTON'S BEGINNINGS

Try to imagine Busselton in colonial times when the town was first established. The Courthouse was pivotal to its development, serving as an administrative centre for the district. Over the years, it also served as a lock-up, land agency, post office and savings bank.

Dating back to 1860, the earliest limestone building housed the original Courtroom and Bond Store, both of which were constructed by David Earnshaw. By 1861, Henry Yelverton expanded the site, adding the Magistrate's Retiring Room, the Police Station and Day Room, Holding Cells, Exercise Yard, Earth Closets, Stables, Fodder Room and the original Police Cottages. In 1897, a new larger Courtroom was added. Built with brick and exposed timber, it's a fine example of Victorian-style architecture.

BUSSELTON JETTY TO BOND STORE

Once connected to the Busselton Jetty, the heritage-listed Old Courthouse Complex played an important role in Busselton's settlement history. Ships once docked at the jetty to unload cargo of items such as tobacco, beer, wine, dried fruit, potatoes, rice, canvas, mineral oils and salt.

These essential goods were transported by horse-drawn tram to the Bond Store in the Courthouse, where they were stored until the required taxes or excise duties were settled.

OLD BUSSELTON GAOL

In 1861, eight small gaol cells were added to the complex for the white prisoners, and a larger cell with bars and wall rings was built for Indigenous prisoners. Walk into a cell, close the door and imagine being locked up all night behind one of those heavy wooden doors.

Prisoners spent up to six months in the cells and those with longer sentences were sent to Fremantle Prison or Rottnest Island.

Learn about the misdemeanours and lived experiences of prisoners as you experience the audio-visual display in the gaol cells. Continue through the cell block into the exercise yard to discover stories from the prisoners who vandalised the metal-clad door that once locked them in the exercise yard.

EXAMPLES OF CHARGES & SENTENCES ~ 1893 – 1895

- Disorderly conduct in a public place – 10 shillings or 14 days in gaol
- Threatening and obscene language – 20 shillings or 14 days in gaol
- Assault – 1 month in gaol
- Drunkenness – 21 days hard labour
- Drunkenness and vagrancy – 21 days in Busselton Gaol followed by 6 months in Fremantle Prison.

FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT TO ART HQ

- 1860 Original Courtroom and Bond Store built by David Earnshaw.
- 1861 Magistrate's Retiring Room, Police Station, Police Day Room, Gaol Cells, Stables Complex and Original Police Cottages built by Henry Yelverton.
- 1873 Telegraph and Post Office built by Samuel Rose.
- 1897 New Courtroom built by Hough & Donald. Designed by the Office of George Thomas Temple-Poole. Magistrate's Room extended.
- 1906 New Police Cottages built by William Carter Rose (son of Samuel Rose).
- 1972 Buildings classified by the National Trust as a Heritage Site.
- 1975 Last court case heard in the Courthouse.
- 1976 Complex vacated by WA Police.
- 1981 Police Cottages and Stables vacated.
- 1982 Grant received from WA Heritage Council and restoration begins.
- 1985 Restored buildings re-opened as an arts complex.



ART EXHIBITIONS



The Old Courthouse Complex presents regular art exhibitions in the Bond Store Gallery. The Day Room and Police Station in the complex are also used by local artists to showcase their work. Regular art workshops are offered in the Fodder Room.



HERITAGE EXHIBITIONS



STORIES FROM THE GAOL CELLS

Discover captivating stories of prisoners and law enforcement officials through the Old Courthouse Complex's audio-visual heritage interpretation, *Stories from the Gaol Cells*.

This engaging exhibit features videos, audio stories, and interpretive signage throughout the gaol cells and rooms, sharing true accounts of those who served time within.

Stories of escape, truancy and the hardships of farm life. One man's success and another's demise.

Immerse yourself in lives gone by, imagine what it was like to be locked up inside and learn about how times have changed.

FORGOTTEN VOYAGES - REDISCOVERING THE S.S. GEORGETTE

On Thursday 30th of November 1876, the S.S. Georgette left Busselton bound for Adelaide via Albany, carrying cargo and passengers. The steamship sadly didn't make her destination in a tragic loss of life that echoed around the globe.

The Busselton Courthouse hosted the initial inquiry into the tragedy and we are proud to present this award-winning exhibition that shares previously untold stories, honours the heroes and commemorates those who perished at sea.



Forgotten Voyages - Rediscovering the S.S. Georgette and *Stories from the Gaol Cells* contributed to the Judges' Award bestowed upon the City of Busselton at the 2024 WA Heritage Awards.

SHOP, INDULGE & RELAX

GALLERY STORE

The Gallery Store presents a meticulously curated collection of quality local art by more than 50 South West artisans. Crafted in a myriad of mediums, the beautiful works displayed in this historic building have been selected as inspired expressions of the environment in which they originated. Once linked to the Busselton Jetty by tramline, the Old Courthouse Complex has a strong coastal connection, which is represented in awe-inspiring oceanic art showcased.

Browse the selection of jewellery, pottery, glasswork, cards, photography, paintings and woodwork.



OLD POST OFFICE CAFE

After exploring the buildings, heritage exhibitions, art, grounds and gardens of the Busselton Cultural Precinct, why not visit The Old Post Office Café within the Old Courthouse Complex to recharge?

Take a seat in this charming building or relax on the veranda overlooking Queen Street with a cup of coffee or tea alongside delicious sweet and savoury treats crafted with seasonal, locally sourced produce.

ALFRESCO AREAS

Within the Old Courthouse Complex, the Community Courtyard features an elevated stage for a variety of events held here throughout the year.

Meanwhile, on the northern side of the Old Courthouse, the Merenj Boodja Garden features bush food plants of the six seasons of the local Wadandi Saltwater people.



SETTLEMENT SCULPTURE WALK

Continue your walk down memory lane outside of the Old Courthouse Complex, as you stroll along Queen Street's Settlement Sculpture Walk, which features six bronze sculptures by well-known Western Australian artist Greg James.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Noongar Boodja (Country) on which Saltwater is located, the Wadandi 'Saltwater' people. We recognise the continuous connection to the land and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging who carry the cultural flame.



OLD COURTHOUSE COMPLEX

BUSSELTON CULTURAL PRECINCT

4 QUEEN STREET, BUSSELTON

WWW.BUSSELTONCULTURALPRECINCT.COM.AU



OPEN DAILY – FREE ENTRY

9751 4651 | hello@saltwaterbusselton.com.au

busseltonculturalprecinct.com.au | [@oldcourthousecomplex](https://www.instagram.com/oldcourthousecomplex)