

NR & NEW INTERNATIONAL SELECTION DOCUMENTATION MINIMUM FICHE

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Figure 1

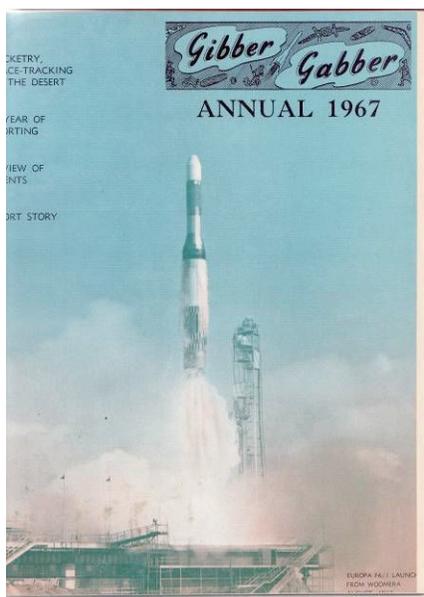


Figure 2

1 Identity of building/group of buildings/urban scheme/landscape/garden

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1.1 current name of building Woomera Village

1.2 variant or former name

1.3 number & name of street

1.4 town Woomera

1.5 province South Australia

1.6 zip code

1.7 country Australia

1.8 national grid reference: n/a

1.9 classification/typology:

Planned town and industrial site

1.10 protection status & date:

Some heritage assessment has been conducted through the Ministry of Defence.

2 History of building

2.1 original brief/purpose:

Long Range Weapons Project. International defence, satellite communications and space research program – civic facilities, rocket launching sites, and accommodation

2.2 dates:

commission/completion 1947 - 1967

2.3 architectural designers:

The Woomera Village was designed in the collaborative environment of the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing (CDWH) 2 senior figures with major involvement in the project were Chief Design Architect Charles Howard; Senior Design Architect William Reilly.

2.4 others associated with building:

Superintendent of Premises Clyde McGrouther.

2.5 significant alterations with dates:

Designed in 1947; developed throughout 1950s and 1960s. Because of its military use, the site was a 'closed secure town' until 1982. Some original housing was replaced in the 1970s and '80s.

2.6 current use:

Had some revival as the site of a refugee detention centre in the last decade. The defence compound is still used by military during training exercises. The village is still wholly owned by the Department of Defence and although it has been scaled down to only a fraction of what it used to be, the Department still manages the town with all facilities operational including the Woomera Prohibited Area (the rocket range) being used for all manner of military and other programs. Rockets have been launched by countries like Japan from the rocket range within the past few years.

2.7 current condition:

The perimeter fence and internal government buildings are intact, but many now seldom used. Much of the prefabricated housing has been demolished or transported to other sites as part of scaling down the size of the town, and many of the defence buildings, like Officer's Messes and associated barracks have been demolished.

3 Description

3.1 general description:

The site of Woomera was a planned town and military site located in remote central Australia. It was associated with Australian and international defence, satellite communications and space research programs for its sixty year history.

The planning of the townsite facilities and accommodation layout followed a neighbourhood model, set within garden-city principles of curvilinear roads, and landscaped zones – albeit in the unusual location of the desert. The town therefore grew into a kind of oasis in its heyday, with a unique arboretum, swimming pool and many other leisure facilities. Extensive research was done by the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing before planning and implementing the town, with an extended international research trip looking at precedents of architecture and planning in North America: Knoxville, Tennessee; and Oak Ridge, Skidmore Owings and Merrill, 1942 as the residential facility for the development of the atomic bomb. The research team also spent a month in Brazil investigating modernist projects and the work of Lucia Costa.

The resulting town grew between the late 1940s and 1960s. It included a variety of accommodation types from single men's and women's quarters, flats, and family homes for personnel and civilians. The town centre included a school, kindergarten and baby health centre and shops, with churches, town hall, library recreation grounds, public swimming pool, theatre and administrations and emergency services buildings completing the fully serviced town.

Woomera Village is arguably Australia's first designed and built post-war planned town. It reflects distinctive and varied modern architectural response to mid-century military power and everyday life in the associated civic town-site.

3.2 construction:

Various, including prefabricated housing steel and fibro-cement sheet; typically steel-frame, brick veneer for industrial and civic buildings; stone church.

3.3 context:

The town and military testing site is located in the remote semi-desert of South Australia, about 500 km from the nearest major city of Adelaide.

4 Evaluation

4.1 technical:

Military testing and launching sites with highly specialized technical specifications. Original prefabricated housing included examples of the 'Hawksley' (steel-framed with aluminium cladding); 'Econo' (steel-framed and aluminium clad with galvanized iron roof); and 'Riley-Newsum' (weatherboard with ribbed aluminium roof).

4.2 social:

The town is extremely isolated and was essentially closed-off from outside scrutiny until after 1982. It reflected other planned-military and industrial towns with a strict hierarchy and order of housing types and locations according to rank.

4.3 cultural & aesthetic:

Its everyday modern aesthetic was based on research in America and Europe in the 1940s, including the Radburn planning principles which included 'U-shaped' roads and paths, pocket landscaping and an arboretum. The village was inflected by Australian developments in modern neighbourhood and housing planning and design. Some buildings in the town, built later in the 1960s reflect a more popularist aesthetic; for example the theatre designed by CDWH Supervising Architect Robert Battersby was a popular landmark featured a rocket-like entrance and shape, and motifs of missiles and planetary objects in the interior along with balustrades in the shape of a Woomera, which is the Aboriginal implement for launching spears.

4.4 historical:

The planned town and associated military sites reflect a particular period in Australia's history and connections with Cold War Britain and America.

4.5 general assessment:

Woomera Village is Australia's first designed and built post-war planned town. It reflects a modern architectural response to mid-century military power in both the military sites and through the everyday modernism of the associated civic town-site.

5 Documentation

5.1 principal references:

- C Garnault and I Iwanicki, 'Modernism in the Desert' The Planning and Design of Woomera Village 1947-1967' in *Proceedings of the XXIVth International Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, SAHANZ, Adelaide, 2007.*
- A Saniga, M Lewis, C Lee, 'The Domestic Landscape of Woomera, South Australia', unpublished report, The University of Melbourne, 2007.
- I Southall, *Woomera*, Angus & Robertson, 1962.
- P Morton, *Fire Across the Desert: Woomera and the Anglo-Australian Joint Project, 1946-1980*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 1989.

5.2 visual material attached

Figure 1: Overhead view of the town: Private collection A Saniga (not for reproduction)

Figure 2: Rocket Launch: Gibber Gabber newspaper cover 1967, collection A Saniga (not for reproduction)

Figure 3: Overhead view showing arboretum: Private collection A Saniga (not for reproduction)

Figure 4: The Hawksley prefab housing type: Private collection A Saniga

Figure 5: The Riley-Newsum prefab housing type: Private collection A Saniga

Figure 6: Public swimming pool and bowling green: Private collection A Saniga (not for reproduction)

Figure 7: Woomera theatre building: Private collection A Saniga (not for reproduction)

Figure 8: Woomera theatre building: Postcard from private collection A Saniga

5.3 rapporteur/date

Hannah Lewi, Andrew Saniga, July 2008



Figure 3



Figure 4 and 5



SWIMMING POOL AND BOWLING GREEN

Figure 6



Figure 7

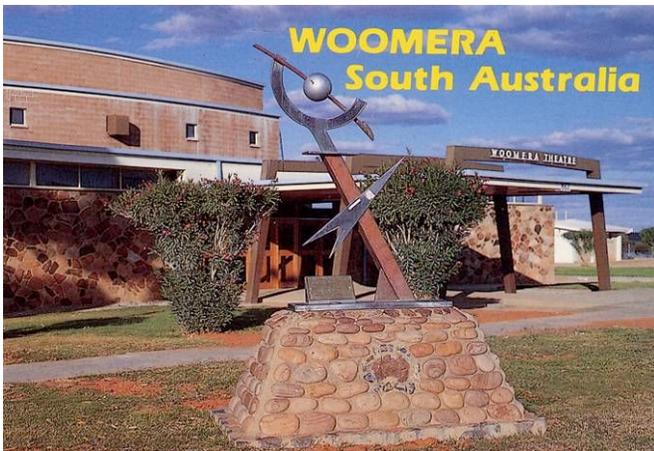


Figure 8