



W.G. Pickering

(*Daily News*, 1 October 1929, p.6; Black, David, 1990, p.159)

William George Pickering (1869-1953) was born 20 September 1869 at Cecil Road in Enfield, 11 miles north of London, England. He was the son of master jeweller and farmer William Francis Pickering and Elizabeth (nee Allen) Pickering. An as-yet unverified family history website notes that William junior's father gave his son £100 to seek his fortune, that he then travelled to Australia, arriving at Sydney 27 August 1886 on the *Iberia* as a third class passenger. A newspaper notice at William George's death states, incorrectly, that he was born in Yorkshire, and thus we may question a note in the same article that says he came to Western Australia at the age of 20 – it may have been 10 years later. The first WA listing for Pickering places him in the south-west of WA as a stationer at Bridgetown in 1899, and in 1900-1901 as an architect at nearby Greenbushes (*Wises Postal Directory*). By 1905 he is recorded as a farmer on the coast at Beachlands, near Busselton.

Pickering married Augusta Isabella Bunbury at St Mary's Church of England, Busselton in June 1907. At this time it was noted that Pickering was from Koorup, 20 kilometres south-west of Busselton, and that Isabella was the daughter of the late William Bunbury, of Beachlands. After the ceremony, where Eustace G. Cohen played the organ, 'the guests drove out to the Beachlands, the residence of Mr and Mrs E.G. Cohen', and later in the afternoon left for the nearby Yallingup Cave House, for the honeymoon.

Pickering appears to have been involved in a rural business venture with fellow architect, Eustace Gresley Cohen (1881-1938), also born in England. In 1904, due to ill-health Cohen immigrated to Western Australia with his brother Gilbert; they soon took up the farm *Beachlands* near Busselton and engaged in farming

and horse-breeding. His health restored, Cohen resumed the practice of architecture at Bunbury around 1908, but by 1913 established a partnership with J. Herbert Eales at Perth. Just prior to the wedding, a journalist on a tour of the south-west noted that 'Messrs Cohen and Pickering recently acquired the old Beachlands property, where they have made considerable improvements. They have done a lot of fencing and clearing' ...

Initially active in local Roads Board activity at Busselton, Pickering was the Country Party member for Sussex (later Vasse) in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly from 1917 to 1924, defeating the then Premier Frank Wilson to take the seat. In 1922 he was appointed chairman of the Royal Commission on Forests. He was listed 1915-1919 as a farmer at New Town, near Busselton, but was again practicing architecture as early as 1918, in Perth, when assisting with a liquor license application for a hotel at Wyalkatchem, built to his design in 1919. In 1920 his office was at the Emanuel Buildings, 89 St George's Terrace, Perth. Pickering was instrumental in assuring that long-sought registration legislation, the *Architects Act of Western Australia 1921*, received formal assent in 1922, and he duly registered (no.7) with the Architects Board of WA in May of that year.

No doubt with the aid of many contacts made through his work as a country politician, Pickering proceeded to design many buildings in the WA wheat-belt including the Lake Grace Hotel (1924), Dowerin Road Board offices (1924), Ardath Hotel for F.W. Jacoby (1925), the Bruce Rock Farmers' Co-operative store (1928) and the Wongan Hills Hospital (1930). Pickering designed the Merredin District Hall, a brick and tile building with a clock tower, constructed in 1925. This hall featured a drop-scene by the renowned artist Phil Goatcher. Merredin District (now Town) Hall was perhaps the most innovative design of all Pickering's country work.

It appears Pickering undertook a large amount of work on an honorary basis, especially for the Country Women's Association (CWA) in the 1920s and 30s, and also in 1929 on behalf of a trust set up to produce business premises at Wubin for a Mrs Smith, whose husband had been murdered. In 1929 Pickering adapted the rambling 'Summit' of 1892, the first permanent residence built at Cottesloe, as a CWA holiday destination known as 'The Sunshine Home'. But

Pickering's business activity was not conducted without controversy. In 1926 publican Herbert Reidy-Crofts sued the architect for damages arising out of the construction of the Kondinin Hotel.

At 80 years old in 1949, Pickering was still listed in Wise's Postal Directory as an architect, at 19 Howard Street in Perth. His office had been at this location since 1929. He died 15 September 1953, aged 83 years, and was buried in the Anglican section of Karrakatta Cemetery. Isabella had passed away in 1943. The couple did not have children.

References:

- 'A Trip to the South-West', *Western Mail*, 1 June 1907, p.11 (acquired Beachlands with Cohen).
- 'Pickering-Bunbury', *Bunbury Herald*, 3 July 1907, p.2 (marriage at Busselton).
- 'Pickering-Bunbury', *Western Mail*, 13 July 1907, p.42 (marriage at Busselton).
- 'Country Liquor Licences', *The West Australian*, 14 December 1918, p.7 (hotel Wyalkatchem).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 2 April 1919, p.5 (hotel at Wyalkatchem for E.B. Johnston).
- 'Hotel for Lake Grace', *The West Australian*, 30 April 1924, p.6 (licence application granted).
- 'On arrival', *The West Australian*, 4 November 1924, p.8 (Dowerin Road Board offices).
- 'Activity in the Country', *Daily News*, 2 May 1925, p.9 (Wagin, Bruce Rock, Ardat, Merredin).
- 'Merredin Hall Opened', *Western Mail*, 28 May 1925, p.11 (Merredin District Hall).
- 'The Ardat Hotel', *The West Australian*, 10 October 1925, p.8 (Ardath Hotel for F.W. Jacoby).
- 'Country Women', *The West Australian*, 17 February 1928, p.4 (hon. Architect, seaside home).
- 'Bruce Rock Farmers' Co-operative store', *The West Australian*, 30 October 1928, p.6 (rebuilt).
- 'Mrs Smith (Wubin) Appeal', *Sunday Times*, 6 January 1929, p.3s (business premises).
- 'The Wubin Appeal', *The West Australian*, 26 June 1929, p.20 (business premises Mrs Smith).
- 'Beside the Sea', *Western Mail*, 22 August 1929, p.35 (CWA rest home at Cottesloe).
- 'Wongan Hills Hospital', *The West Australian*, 25 October 1930, p.6 (£1,500 Hospital).
- 'New Town Hall Wanted', *Daily News*, 17 January 1934, p.2 (Southern Cross Town Hall).
- 'Road Board Buildings', *The West Australian*, 21 April 1934, p.6 (at Kalamunda for Darling Range Road Board).
- 'Country Women's Association', *The West Australian*, 28 December 1935, p.6 (CWA rest houses at Perenjori, Cunderdin, and Busselton).
- 'Esplanade Resumption', *Daily News*, 2 May 1936, p.6 (proposal criticised by Pickering).
- 'C.W.A. Rest Room', *The West Australian*, 6 April 1940, p.6 (Dowerin CWA).
- 'W.G. Pickering dies after a brief illness', *The West Australian*, 16 September 1953, p.12 (death and some background information).
- 'Pickering', *The West Australian*, 17 September 1953, p.28 (funeral notices).
- Black, David, *Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of Western Australia*, Vol.1, 1870-1930, WA Parliamentary History Project, Perth 1990, p.159.
- <http://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/forum/topic5023.html>

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Lake Grace Hotel (1924) (Google 2013)



NEW HOTEL AT ARDATH.

THE ARDATH HOTEL.

Mr. F. W. Jacoby, a former Perth tearoom proprietor, has spent £7,250 on the erection of an up-to-date hotel at Ardath, the centre of an important wheat growing district, about 40 miles south-west of Merredin, on the railway to Norragin, and the furnishing has cost nearly £1,000. The building, which was designed by Mr. W. G. Pickering, architect, has

a frontage of 75ft. by a depth of 60ft., and has been constructed with a view to extension. There are 14 bedrooms, with dining rooms, commercial rooms, sitting room, baths, and a hot and cold water service, and the whole building has been electrically lighted by the owner's Deeco plant. Extensive stable and garage accommodation has been provided, and when the town obtains a sufficient water supply Mr. Jacoby intends to instal a septic tank system.

Ardath Hotel for F.W. Jacoby 1925 (*The West Australian*, 10 October 1925, p.8).



Ardath Hotel for F.W. Jacoby 1925 (www.publocation.com.au accessed 2014)



Merredin District (now Town) Hall 1925 (Google 2013)



This building at 36 Johnson Street may be the 'large coffee palace' that Pickering had under construction at Bruce Rock in 1925 (*Daily News*, 2 May 1925, p.9; Google 2013)



An example of the use of illuminated glass bricks and illuminated glass stanchions and dome of the Amat-ice canopy in the saloon bar of the Palace Hotel, Kalgoorlie. Improvements costing £10,000 have recently been completed at the hotel. The architect was Mr. W. G. Pickering.

Palace Hotel Kalgoorlie (*The West Australian*, 5 December 1936, p.4)