

# Tennant Creek Telegraph Station

## Self Guided Walk



### Welcome to the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station.

This guide provides additional information to the signs which are situated around the site. Follow the map to gain the most from your site visit.

### Before you start, Imagine...

As you enter the site take time to look around you. Imagine being here in the 1870s when the Overland Telegraph Line was first constructed. Apart from members of the construction parties and Aboriginal inhabitants of the region, you and your team are isolated from the rest of the world except by the link with the Telegraph Line. Your supplies arrive every 6 months via camel train from Port Augusta.

You and your team are responsible for manning the telegraph equipment 24 hours a day. You need to check and maintain the line

itself, north and south of the station. You are also responsible for maintaining a garden and small allocation of sheep and cattle to provide fresh food. You supply rations to local Aboriginal people and provide medical service in the absence of practitioners. Your Blacksmith is responsible for repairing and making tools and equipment.

### START OF SELF GUIDED WALK

#### The Cellar

Whilst supplies like flour, sugar and salt arrived every 6 months, the mainstay of food was the production of local produce. The Telegraph Station had its own garden to provide fresh vegetables. Stock were slaughtered on a weekly basis.

These items were stored in the cellar. The cellar has been dug down below the soil level to make use of lower temperatures. In addition to this, the vent you see in the western wall would have been covered with wet hessian to cool incoming air. Hot air

would rise to the roof and then pass out the top.

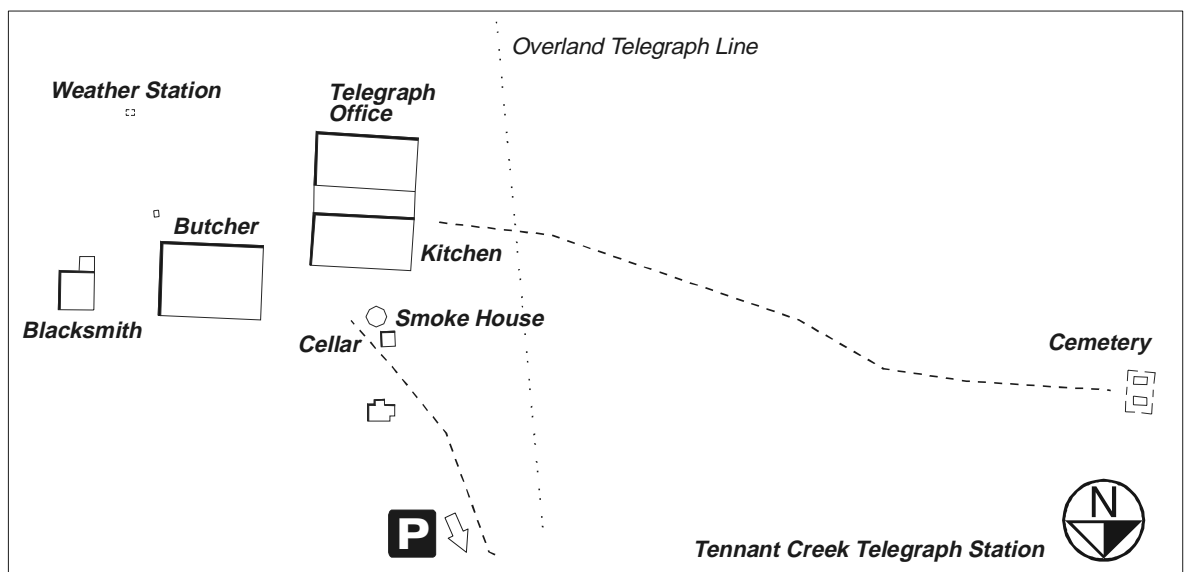
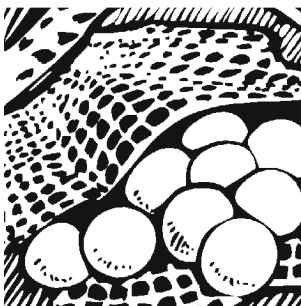
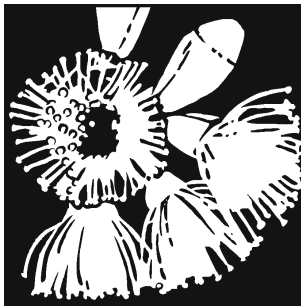
#### Smoke House

Smoking and salting were common methods of preserving meat. Meat not eaten straight away would be hung on racks in this building.

As you look at the roof you will note that much, but not all, of the wood in the roof has been replaced. This is an example of the restoration program. Original nails have been reused where possible and some wood has been replaced with hand adzed Mulga, as the original would have been.

You may notice that the front of the smokehouse roof is made from old flattened kerosene tins.

A clay or antbed bread oven would have stood alongside the smoke house. This location ensured the heat was reduced in the kitchen area during the hot summer periods.



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## Self Guided Walk

### Kitchen/Living Area

The large verandah you are standing under was added in about 1911 to reduce the effect of high summer temperatures.

The original buildings are of a Georgian design representative of that time period in England. They have thick walls and high ceilings. The stone for the buildings would have been quarried nearby and the lime and sand mixed to form a mortar to bind the rocks. The lime would have been produced locally in a lime pit.

The buildings would have had compacted gravel or antbed under the verandah.

There are ventilation holes along the walls and the louvres allow air flow. It is a lot cooler inside than outside. Is it any wonder that they chose to have the bread oven situated outside?

Look at the corners of the building and notice a series of stones protruding. This is far from shoddy workmanship but keystones. It was originally planned that the building might be extended to include a courtyard area.

*Walk around under the verandah and have a look in through the louvre windows.*

The Metters wood stove was probably introduced during the pastoral era and this era is also represented by the use of lino on the bench.

The concrete floor was another later addition.

After the telegraph office staff vacated these buildings they were

used as a homestead for a local pastoralist.

The present use of rock paving outside covers the extensive drainage system constructed in 1984 to prevent moisture damage to the buildings.

The buildings have had silicon injected into the walls just above floor level to prevent water from rising up and causing damage.

### Telegraph Office

The Telegraph Office was the hub of the station. It was manned 24 hours a day and re-transmitted messages along the line to the next telegraph repeater station.

*Walk anti-clockwise around the building.*

Look through the louvres into the Battery Room. In this room there were large banks of Meidinger cells. Each one produced just over 1 volt so a lot of them were needed to produce the operating voltage of 120V.

The central room is where the post and telegraph offices would have been situated. There is a fire place that kept the operators warm on winter nights.

Initially all messages had to be retransmitted manually by the operators. Later automatic repeaters were installed.

The end room was a bedroom.

Inside the building dampness has effected the walls. This will be remortared and the walls lime-washed as part of the conservation program.

### The Cemetery

From the Telegraph office follow the

pathway west to the cemetery where Archibald Cameron (a linesman) and Bryan Thomas Nugent (from Banka Banka Station) are buried. This walk is approximately 100 metres.

As you walk along the path look towards the ranges in the south and you will see a windmill which was installed in the 1960s. The site contains the original well, dug to provide water when the waterhole in the creek dried up.

*Head back along the track to the buildings.*

### Other Buildings

The remainder of the buildings represent the associated work areas of the site and a shed for the wagon. The first room is the mens hut for accommodating linesmen.

The end room was the butchers area. In the post war period the then cattle station supplied beef to people in the township of Tennant Creek. Remains of the cool room, Butcher's block table and infrastructure can still to be seen.

The final building is the Blacksmith's workshop. Tools were made and equipment repaired. Some reshaping of horseshoes may have occurred but this was not its primary role.

The bellows were used to create the heat required.

A careful examination of the walls reveals early attempts at conservation of the building.

*A path leads towards the stock yards and back to the entrance gate. This provides an alternative return route for those who are interested.*