



Bullfinch Hotel

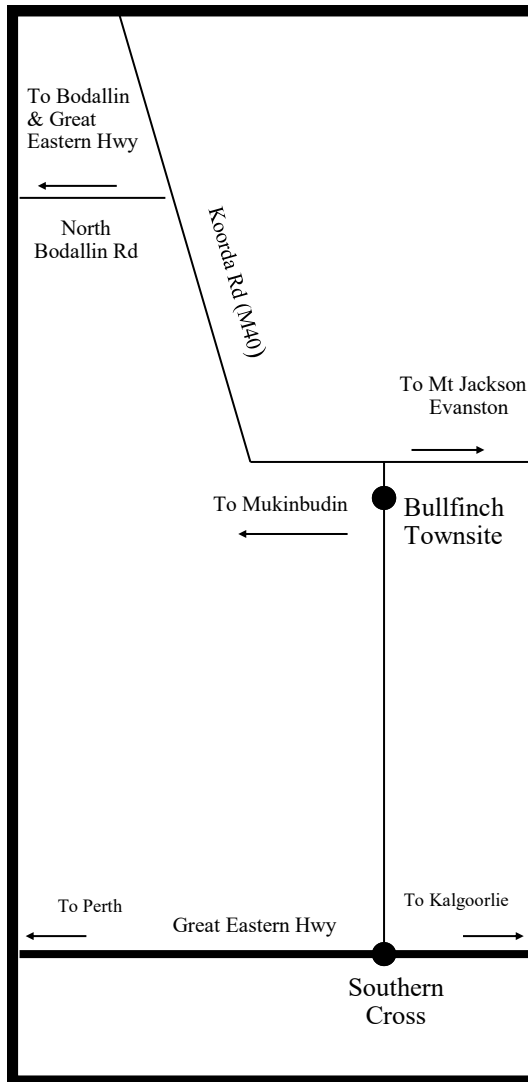
The small mining town of Bullfinch falls within the Shire of Yilgarn. Pre colonization the Yilgarn was inhabited by Aboriginals from the western desert and south west areas. The name 'Yilgarn' is aboriginal for 'white stone' or 'quartz'. Gold was discovered in Bullfinch in 1910 and it subsequently became a gazetted town in the same year. For the next 60 years Bullfinch had multiple mining lease holders and by 1950 the Copperhead mine was employing 130 men. Electricity to Southern Cross and Marvel Loch was provided by the Copperhead Mine. Gold production ceased in 1963.



Halfway Rocks



Bullfinch



*Produced & printed by the
Shire of Yilgarn*

Bullfinch



Bullfinch

Bullfinch is situated some 35km north of Southern Cross and serviced by a sealed road, Western Power and water from the Goldfields Scheme. Although nearly deserted a few inhabitants still live in the town site which saves it from ghost town status.

The history of Bullfinch commenced in 1909 when Charlie Jones unearthed a fabulous reef containing gold beneath 6ft of clay. The reef was close to the road from Golden Valley to Southern Cross where prospectors had walked past for twenty years.

The find at Bullfinch received a blaze of publicity; soon a row of banks, shops, boarding houses, agencies and mining offices stretched for half a mile before a proper township was surveyed and named after the Bullfinch mine, which continued bagging the ore which was so rich it had to be especially treated, in six months 964 tons was treated for the phenomenal return of 11,117 ounces.

The town of Bullfinch was connected to the railway line and water in 1911 but by the end of the year the Bullfinch boom was no longer booming and big money was lost as shares tumbled. The rich gold was tapering off but there was plenty of lower grade ore available and the decision was made to build a treatment plant and treat the ore onsite rather than send the ore to Kalgoorlie.

The new poppet head was 80ft high and constructed of Oregon and gave the mine an important appearance, but the boom was over, and by 1912 hundreds of leases pegged during the boom had been surrendered back to the Crown as worthless.

In 1914 the Radio Mine, which was destined to become the richest private mine in Australia, was pegged by Barr & Hughes. Mining continued during WWI despite the lack of man power and the district was picking up again by 1920 but the grade of ore at Bullfinch Proprietary continued declining and the mine closed at the end of 1921.

Bullfinch was saved from becoming a ghost town when the district was thrown open for farming. The town went through a revival, not one of gold, but of golden grain, and by 1925 Bullfinch was regaining some of its former glory, and the Bullfinch district developed as a farming area until the depression and increased gold prices rejuvenated gold mining.



Great Western Consolidated G.M. 1958

1932 saw the old Bullfinch leases being transferred to a syndicate known as Copperhead, a name which was to become synonymous with Bullfinch in coming years. Prospecting was again gaining momentum, helped along by a sustenance scheme for out of work men. By the mid 30s the Copperhead was again turning out a steady stream of gold, despite having been closed more than a decade earlier because there was no gold to be found. Production continued until a lack of labour, brought about by WWII forced the mine to close in 1942.

Western Mining reopened the old Copperhead Mine in 1952. At its peak Bullfinch had a population of about 1500 with some 400 men employed on the mine, but following its closure in 1963 most of the people moved on quickly leaving the town with a small predominantly farming community.

For a quarter of a century Bullfinch remained in the doldrums. The Town Hall and swimming pool fell into disuse and finally only the hotel and a small deli

remained. The school closed in 1984 and the students were bussed into Southern Cross.

It looked like the end for Bullfinch, but an increase in the price of gold saw gold mining take off again, in 1987 the Copperhead was taken over by Burmine Ltd and for the next 15 years the sounds of mining activity again resounded from the Copperhead mine. Huge machines, undreamed of earlier, were wringing another fortune from the ground. This time the town did not share the wealth as in the past. The workforce was mainly single men or transient with no intention of improving the town. The houses became dilapidated and compared with previous booms the town was only a shadow of its former glory.

The boom of the 90s is over, and Bullfinch has returned to its slumbers. Whether it rises again from its ashes will depend on the price of gold rising dramatically, or unearthing another Golden Mile buried beneath the mulga trees.

Taken from "Hamlets and Ghost Towns of Yilgarn" by Lance Stevens 2005



Bullfinch Town Hall 2003 ~ since dismantled

Shire of Yilgarn

23 Antares Street
Southern Cross WA 6426
PO Box 86

Southern Cross WA 6426
Phone: (08) 9049 1001

Email: yilgarn@yilgarn.wa.gov.au
Website: www.yilgarn.wa.gov.au