

Information Sheet No. 30



Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

ALBERT (BERT) PEPPERELL MBE – Geraldton Building Co.

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| 1917, May 15 | - Born in Melbourne, Victoria. |
| 1946 | - Co-Founder of Geraldton Building Company. |
| 1983 | - Appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire. |
| 1984 | - WA Citizen of the Year. |
| 1986 | - Retired from GBC. |
| 1988 | - Awarded Life Membership of the Master Builders Association. |
| 1988-1994 | - Chairman, Geraldton Mid West Development Authority. |



Bert Pepperell. Photograph courtesy of Bert Pepperell.

Albert John Pepperell was born in Melbourne on 15 May 1917. He first came to Geraldton in 1933 as an apprentice carpenter/joiner and worked for 5 years for his uncle, Mr A E Crothers. He returned to the East to work on various building projects in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane but in 1939 his uncle advised that A E & T P Crothers had won the contract to build the Geraldton High School and Bert moved back to Geraldton in 1939 to work on this project.

With the outbreak of World War II Bert joined the Air Force in 1940 and served as air crew, wireless operator and air gunner in Africa, the Middle East, India and Burma with No 60 Squadron. After the war he and the Crothers brothers established the Geraldton Building Company in 1945 with a small staff of a few men and uncertain prospects, with work and material being scarce at the time.

Married to Georgina Warwicker and with four daughters, Sue, Jill, Lee and Gay, Bert took over

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the role of Managing Director in 1959 after the death of Alf Crothers. Under his directorship, the Geraldton Building Company went from strength to strength and constructed almost all the public buildings in Geraldton. GBC employed the largest workforce of any WA contractor and maintained an extensive apprenticeship programme.

Awarding Bert Pepperell a life membership of the Master Builders Association in 1988, President Mr Ron Doubikin said, "The Geraldton Building Company has been a landmark throughout Western Australia and has joint ventured with major international companies. Many towns in the north of the State have literally been put on the map by his company".

During the years of his directorship, long hours and pressure of work left Bert with little time for sport or community activities but he joined the Geraldton Golf Club and the Geraldton Club. His retirement in 1986 allowed him more time for golf and to become the inaugural Chairman of the Geraldton Mid West Development Authority in 1988. During his six years as chairman of GMWDA he was involved in a number of projects that will benefit Geraldton and surrounding areas, including a sealed major road-link to Kalgoorlie, the marina project, an airport at Kalbarri, a management plan for the Greenough sand dunes and the development of a heavy industry area.

Bert Pepperell was made "Freeman of the City" on 30 July 1993. The presentation was made by Governor Sir Francis Burt on 29 September 1993.

References

*Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 134.*

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).

