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# MORDIALLOC HIGH SCHOOL CARETAKER'S COTTAGE

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## Location

1 STATION STREET ASPENDALE, KINGSTON CITY

## Municipality

KINGSTON CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7921-0137

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 15, 2024

### What is significant?

Archaeological features and deposits and /or artefacts associated with the former Caretaker's Cottage. While surface features associated with the historical fabric of the Caretaker's Cottage have been removed, subsurface components exceeding 75 years old are potentially present below the ground surface. The site dates from c. 1928, and is shown on archival photographs from the 1930s until at least the late 1970s. The exact demolition date is uncertain, but the cottage and its outbuildings were removed by 2006, based on satellite imagery. Although the cottage was built of timber, there could be archaeological features and deposits associated with brick chimney and fireplaces, timber floor and wall stumps, postholes, a cesspit, refuse pits and possibly artefacts.

### How is it significant?

The Mordialloc High School Caretaker's Cottage is historically and archaeologically significant to the state of Victoria. The Caretaker's Cottage was constructed in 1929 (Whitehead 2018b). Although there are numerous school sites from suburban Melbourne registered on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), such as H1641 MacRobertson Girls' High School in Melbourne, H2183 University High School in Parkville, and H1636 Melbourne High School in South Yarra, school sites in general are not well-represented on the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI). Caretakers' cottages have a similar representation on the state heritage lists, with numerous standing buildings associated with public institutions included on the VHR and National Trust lists. There are only a few

caretakers' cottages listed on the VHI, including H7922-0466 Maroondah Aqueduct former Caretakers Hut in the Yarra Ranges, and H7922-0490 Former Preston Reservoir Caretaker's House Cellar in Reservoir. Neither of these sites are associated with schools. As such, the Mordialloc High School Caretaker's Cottage is unique as there do not appear to be other such sites listed in the Victorian Heritage Database and inventory.

#### **Why is it significant?**

The Mordialloc High School Caretaker's Cottage is associated with the construction of employee housing and the development of the education system in Mordialloc in the early 20th century. The site is over 75 years in age and has significance within the Mordialloc community, being an early residence associated with the development of the Mordialloc-Chelsea High School. This relates to the themes of Educating People (8.2) and Making homes for Victorians (6.7) as set out in Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes.

#### Interpretation of Site

The architectural plans for the cottage provide good information about its design and type of construction (Department of Public Works 1927; Figure 7). The house has two bedrooms at the front (southern side) with a central hallway and front verandah. A small bathroom was located in the middle of the cottage, on the east side, containing a bath and small basin only. At the rear (north side) was a living room and kitchen, with a small pantry off the kitchen. A single chimney was present between the living room and kitchen with two fireplaces, one facing into each of these rooms. At the rear (north) end of the house was another small verandah and rear external door providing access to the rear garden and Mordialloc Creek. One of the outbuildings shown on the 1931 and 1945 aerial photographs must have been a toilet as the original cottage plan the bathroom did not include a toilet. The plans show that the cottage was timber stud framed and clad in timber weatherboards. The front (southern) and side (east and west) elevation drawings show that the upper section of the external walls was clad with what appears to have been rough-cast plaster, while the rear (northern) external wall was only weatherboard. The doors and windows and verandahs were made of timber also. The roof was hipped and steeply sloping. The roofing materials are not indicated on the plans but were likely to have been corrugated steel sheeting or possibly terracotta tiles. A single chimney is shown at the rear of the house. These plans indicate that the archaeological remains likely to have been present at the site would include timber stump/post holes, remains of the brick chimney and fireplace, a cesspit or toilet building (timber stumps) and the remains of garden features such as a front and rear paths and fencing. The cottage remained visible on aerial imagery from 1931 up to and including 1977 (Figure 16 to Figure 21). It is possible that over this time, the residence had been renovated and modernised although the footprint of the building appears to be essentially unchanged, except at the northern end where the rear verandah may have been replaced with a lean-to addition. An additional shed and fence had been erected on the site by the 1960s (Figure 19, Figure 20). Through a review of available Google Earth imagery from 2000 to the present, it appears that definitely by 2006, the structure had been demolished, and no further construction occurred on the site in the following decades. A review of aerial imagery from Nearmap from November 2009 to the present, demonstrated that the location of the former cottage was used to store spoil mounds as well as waste and landscaping materials. This indicates that there has likely been deposition across the site and possibly levelling of the introduced material, rather than disturbance or stripping of the site (Figure 22, Figure 23, Figure 24, Figure 25, Figure 26). The spoil mounds can still be seen in aerial imagery from 2018 until April 2023 (Figure 24, Figure 25, Figure 26); however, the August 2023 imagery indicates that the spoil mounds have been removed or reduced and spoil spread around the site (Figure 26). The amount of ground disturbance that has occurred across the site remains to be confirmed, although an archaeological survey undertaken in 2023 passed beside the site along the public footpath along the western side of the site (the Caretaker's Cottage itself was not included in the survey area). The site was open with trees and large bushes around the western, northern and eastern perimeters. The open ground in the centre was partially covered in grass and the remainder was earth with numerous vehicle tracks (Figure 14, Figure 15). This brief inspection of the site suggests that the spoil mounds have been removed, but that no substantial ground disturbance may have occurred. The preliminary assessment of the current condition of the site, the review of archival aerial imagery and the lack of redevelopment of the site is that there is potential for some archaeological features, deposits and possible artefacts to be present below the current ground surface.

Other Names	Mordialloc-Carrum High School Caretaker's Cottage; Mordialloc-Chelsea High School Caretaker's Cottage; Former Mordilloc College Caretaker's Cottage,
Hermes Number	212338
Property Number	

## History

The site was originally bushland on the southern bank of the Moonee Ponds Creek, and from 1841 was part of the Mordialloc Aboriginal Reserve. The landform at this location is a modified inland dune. This location was favourite summer camp of the Bunurong/Boon wurrung people where they fished and hunted (Barnard 2008). The Mordialloc Aboriginal Reserve was established in 1841 and was later revoked in 1863; however, the reserve remained in use until 1878. The area was known as a good place to catch eel and other water-based resources. Jimmy, Eliza and Nancy Dunbar are noted to have lived on the reserve, who were possibly the last full-blood Bunurong people. Eliza died in the reserve in 1877, with Jimmy's passing occurring six days later in the Alfred Hospital. (Sheehy 1970) From 1861 until c.1871, the land on the southern bank of the Mordialloc Creek was used as Moorabbin-Mordialloc Farmers Grazing Common, on the southern side of the creek. The Farmers Common was established to allow local farmers to graze their cattle and sheep on this area when their pastures were very dry or drought-affected. The Farmers' Common was opened up for selection and broken up into private property parcel from 1871. (Barnard 2008; Whitehead 2018a; 2021). Early parish plans from 1876 to 1890 indicate that the allotment was gazetted for public use within Attenborough Park, with a second undated parish plan showing the lot as zoned for a High School. Indeed, an early recommendation to the council suggested that Attenborough Park be offered to the Education Department as a site for the proposed Mordialloc High School. Local council, Education Department and state ministerial representatives visited the site to investigate this proposal in 1923 (Whitehead 2018b). The push for a high school originated partly from the desire to commemorate the sacrifices of World War I and to address the evolving educational needs of the community. While early proposals included a technical school, the focus shifted towards establishing a comprehensive high school. Despite setbacks and disagreements over funding and site selection, the determination of local leaders and residents prevailed (Whitehead and Gamble 2014). In February 1924, Mordialloc-Chelsea High School, then named Mordialloc-Carrum High School, officially opened its doors in temporary accommodations, with Mr. E. Brine serving as the temporary headmaster. The initial establishment faced challenges, including financial demands and inadequate facilities (Whitehead and Gamble 2014). By late 1927, construction began on a purpose-built school building. The official opening in March 1928 was attended by dignitaries, including the Minister of Education J. Lemmon, and community members. In 1929 its name was changed to Mordialloc-Chelsea High School when the Borough of Carrum became the City of Chelsea (Whitehead and Gamble 2014). Plans for a caretaker's cottage for the Mordialloc-Chelsea High School were made in 1927-1928, and the cottage was built in 1929 ( PROV VPRS 3686, 1928; Whitehead 2018b). The plans show a one storey-building with two sizeable bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and pantry, bathroom, as well as two veranda's at the front and rear of the property. The plans were signed by the Chief Architect of the Victorian Public Works Department, E. Evan Smith, and dated 29 September 1927. (PROV VPRS 3686). Entries in the 1930 and 1935 Sands and McDougall Directories list "W.M.P. Barker" as the caretaker of the Mordialloc-Carrum High School, situated on Main Street near the Mordialloc Creek reserve and Railway (Sands & McDougall Directory, 1930-1935, State Library of Victoria). William Palmerston Barker, a Mordialloc resident and former A.I.F. corporal, No.2 Section, Railway Unit, occupied the position of caretaker from c.1929 to 1941 (Age, 16 December 1941, p.1). Barker was born in Victoria on 22 November 1890. He worked as a fireman in South Yarra until he enlisted in 1917 with the Australian Armed Forces as a locomotive fireman for the Railway Unit (Figure 12, Figure 13; Australian War Memorial 2024; Virtual War Memorial 2024). In November 1917, Barker was medically discharged after falling from a moving train and breaking his leg in five places (Australian War Memorial 2024; Virtual War Memorial 2024). In May 1945, J. Plier, a Mordialloc resident and returned soldier was appointed as the new caretaker at Mordialloc-Chelsea High School (Argus, 2 May 1945, p. 15). The Mordialloc-Carrum High School Caretakers Cottage remained visible on archival aerial photos from 1931 until at least 1977. Satellite imagery from April 2006 shows that the cottage and

outbuildings had definitely been removed by that date.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*