

Public Transport Corporation Tramway Workshops



City of Darebin Heritage Review 2000



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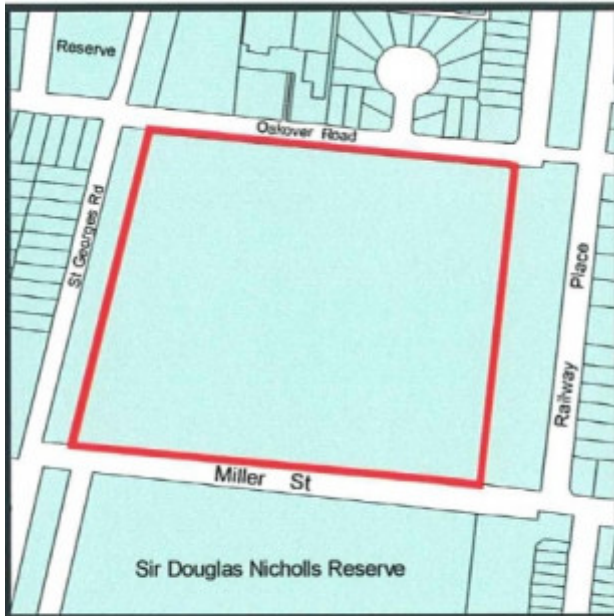
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Map Ref: **30 E 3**

NOT within Heritage Overlay Area.

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Location

Miller Street PRESTON, Darebin City

Municipality

DAREBIN CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2031

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO144

Heritage Listing

Darebin City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The tramway workshops at Miller Street, Preston were built for the former Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board in conjunction with its program of converting the cable tramway system to electric traction and for the purposes of maintaining existing rolling stock. The master plan was developed in 1923-24 and the first and principal stage undertaken between 1924-29. Design was the responsibility of the Board, its architect Allan Monsborough joining the service in 1926. The principal elements of the complex are the Foundry, the Machine and Electrical Shop, the Stores, the Car Erecting Shop, the Paint Shop, the Timber Stores, the Mess Room Block, the Substation, the Administration Block, the traversers and the network of tramway lines connecting the various functional elements. Contributory elements include the boundary fence, the Wheel Grinding Shop and lawn in front of the Offices. The complex meets the following criteria for cultural heritage significance:

Criterion A. It is historically significant as the principal centre for the construction and maintenance of the former Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board's fleet and for the maintenance of more recent rolling stock following the establishment of the Metropolitan Transit Authority in 1983.

Criterion B. It is important as the only surviving construction and maintenance facility for an entire tramway network in Australia, recalling the comparable places in all of the nation's capital cities progressively closed between the 1950s and the late 1960s.

Criterion C. The place is important for its capacity to inform present generations concerning the scale and nature of the undertaking required to support a large metropolitan tramway system, such undertakings once being an essential part of the transport infrastructure of the nation's principal cities.

Criterion D. It is important to the extent that it retains all of the functional elements representative of an undertaking of its type, some of the facilities such as the Wheel Grinding Shop being of recent origin.

Criterion E. The complex is aesthetically important to the extent that the principal buildings were designed and built over a short time interval resulting in a strong sense of stylistic harmony. Nevertheless, within this overall cohesive framework, there is a degree of diversity expressive of the diverse functions of the buildings making up the complex. Thus the workshops all conform to the same general design principles but the Administration Block is in the Georgian Revival Style, comparing with the South Melbourne depot administration block (demolished) and the Mess Room Block demonstrates Palladian influence externally but English Domestic influence internally. The complex, therefore, is important also for its capacity to demonstrate the manner in which the architectural profession at the time selected an architectural style for a building in accordance with its suitability to purpose.

Criterion F. The complex is important for its capacity to demonstrate the most up to date techniques in the construction and fitting out of a complex of its type during the early Inter war period, this significance being enhanced over time by the survival of the early infrastructure and by the introduction of the latest technology as required. Thus, the layout of the buildings was such that it could be extended at any time without interrupting the flow of work. The Paint Shop was located as far as possible from the Foundry on account of the dust and smoke produced by the latter, the prevailing winds coming from the west. The traversers provided for the efficient transfer of cars between the different Shops. Each Shop was sub divided into its separate operational activities with connections being provided by a network of sidings and turntables and a system of gantries. The equipment was of the latest type and has remained highly suited to its purpose today, the demand for traditional joinery and metalwork skills being supplemented by the concurrent need to maintain a modern tramway fleet. The scientific importance of the place is enhanced by the storage of a comprehensive range of vintage trams on the site, many undergoing maintenance at the time of inspection.

Criterion G. The place is important as an institution directly linked with and expressive of Melbourne's tramways which have become an icon for this City since the 1970s. It is valued by the community for this reason and also for the traditions established by generations of employees going back to the time when over 500 staff were employed here at a particular time. The Mess Room is especially demonstrative of the way of life that was a part of the Workshops' ethos for approximately three quarters of a century.

Criterion H. Whilst the extent of involvement of the Board's architect, Allan Monsborough, in the design has not been clarified in this assessment, his obvious involvement since 1926 is of note, given his distinguished work undertaken for the Board during its period of greatest growth well into the 1930s

Heritage Study/Consultant Darebin - Darebin Heritage Review, Andrew Ward, 2000;

Hermes Number 24276

Property Number

Physical Description 1

Proceeding from west to east the principal elements of this complex demonstrating the various manufacturing and maintenance functions of the place are as follows:

The Paint Shop has ten bays with later additions at the north end. The walls are of red brick construction and are trabeated, each bay being subdivided vertically into two parts, the upper section corresponding with the height of the concealed sawtooth roof behind. The parapet coping is stepped with a cement facing and some of the pilasters are terminated with ornamental panels creating a barely legible symmetrical composition in the manner of pavilions at either end of a wide central section. Inside, a riveted steel frame incorporates a sawtooth roof and the sloping ceilings are lined with ripple iron and insulated to help maintain an even temperature. There is a timber lined floor with a basement and the presumed original pot belly stoves remain alongside concrete sinks down the centre of the shop.

There are three Timber Stores of all steel construction having a central spine of columns and cantilevered open web girders either side. A standard gauge tramway connects the Stores with the Car Erecting Shop and is serviced by flat topped trucks used to convey timbers to the joinery and wood machining section. Whilst most of the stock of timber has been recently sold, some rare timbers remain for specialised use. A narrow gauge tram has trolleys to support timbers being taken through the docking saw.

The Paint Shop is connected to the Car Erecting Shop by means of a traverser, the drivers' cabins having been recently re-built. Architectural treatment is similar to the Paint Shop. There are later additions at the north end and the saw tooth roof linings are uninsulated. There is an extensive wood block floor and it is understood the greater part of the machinery was supplied at the commissioning of the workshops and soon afterwards.

The Car Erecting Shop is connected with the Machine and Electrical Shops by means of a traverser, the drivers' cabins having been recently re-built. Architectural treatment is similar to the Paint Shop. There are later additions at the north end and the saw tooth roof linings are uninsulated. Inside, a standard gauge tramway system has two turntables.

The Stores are located to the south of the Machine Shop, being separated from it by an east west siding originally serving the east traverser and the Machine and Electrical Shops and Foundry by means of turn tables. Architectural expression is similar to the Paint Shop.

The architectural treatment of the Foundry is also similar to the Paint Shop although every second pilaster is terminated by ornamental panels and there are extensive steel framed windows in the elevations. The Foundry has been closed.

The recent Wheel Grinding Shop at the north end of the main workshops is a steel framed and clad building accommodating a state of the art imported wheel grinding machine.

The Administrative Offices face Miller Street and have been extended sympathetically at their west end. They have been designed in the Georgian Revival Style characteristics of the Inter War period and have a central protruding section with a Tuscan Order porch protecting the entry. The upper level windows are round arched and the roof of the porch functions as a terrace of the first floor level. The ground floor level walls are in red face brickwork and the upper level is in stucco, the roof being hipped. Inside, the lobby has a green tinted cement floor with a black border. The joinery is varnished and the ceilings plastered with strapwork. The M. & M.T.B. logo has been cast into the porch floor in terrazzo with a mosaic tiled border. The south facing facade overlooks lawns and a semi-circular driveway. A bluestone foundation stone in the lawns may have been relocated from the Essendon

depot.

The Mess Room complex to the immediate west has a plain loggia facing east and a Classically derived facade to Miller Street conceived along Palladian lines with pavilions either side of a recessed entry. Inside the Mess Room itself has an extraordinary stained timber lined ceiling supported by Queen post timber trusses and there is a small stage at the north end complete with proscenium arch and curtain bearing the M. & M.T.B. logo in dark brown and gold, recalling the liveries of the Board's initial fleet of cars. The wall surrounding the proscenium has a grid of stained strapwork, the ambience of this space recalling English Domestic architectural forms seen also at the Board's chalet in Wattle Park.

There is a brick fence with wire mesh panels and decorated galvanised steel posts representative of the early Inter War period, the main gates having been rebuilt. The comprehensive system of tramway sidings is mostly insitu.

Integrity

Condition: Sound. Integrity: High.

Historical Australian Themes

- 4. Building settlements, towns and cities.
- 4.2 Supplying urban services (transport).

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/>