
Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School



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Location

213 Wonga Road WARRANWOOD, MAROONDAH CITY

Municipality

MAROONDAH CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO133

Heritage Listing

Maroondah City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

A large sequence of most interesting and unusual school buildings in an unique architectural style, according to the approach of Anthroposophical Society, derived from its founder Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Construction commenced in 1972, with buildings by the designer and architects Alex Podolinsky (1972-), David Morgan (1983-88), Ross Henry (1992-96) and Gregory Burgess (1993-99?). They are historically significant at state level as the embodiment of extending developments in the educational life of the state, demonstrating the effects of an educational movement, its association with an important and influential person in Rudolf Steiner and as a changing sequence of architectural stylistic development within certain parameters, over time. It is architecturally significant as innovative and extraordinary examples of the work of the four designers and architects and of fine and unusual craftsmanship and of social significance as known and valued by the community as a meeting place and as a repository of community memory.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Maroondah - Maroondah Heritage Study, Richard Peterson Architect & Conservation Consultant, 2010;
Hermes Number	146885
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

1. Community House

A pre-existing former farmhouse: a timber, asbestos-cement clad, gable-roofed pavilion, elevated with a red brick chimney and built in the 1930s(?)

The school buildings generally

A sequence of most interesting and unusual school buildings in an unique architectural style according to the approach of the Anthroposophy Society to its buildings, derived from Rudolf Steiner himself, as expressed initially in his Goetheanum, at Dornach⁸ (1913-14, 1924-28). The buildings are generally non-rectilinear and often non-geometric forms, faceted and chamfered, organic in natural materials and finishes, muted colours, and highly

⁸ Dan Cruickshank (ed.), *Sir Bannister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*, pp 1334 & 1335.

expressive, yet avoiding gimmickry and faddishness. There is a story and sense of domesticity and reassuring embrace.

The site gently rises from Wonga Road to a crest between buildings 3 and 5 (the kindergartens), then falls away consistently, to a valley below the school, so that the primary, then secondary buildings step down the site, with a minimum of excavation. It rises to the hill opposite which has the Michael Centre. The site is landscaped and gardened in a non-formalist way, set amongst remnant bushland. There is also a farm.

2. Peppercorn Kindergarten

Two irregular trapezoidal forms, with an open breeze-away between earth construction, with heavy timber trabeated members. A shallow, uneven gable with eaves lined with boards. the roof is actually a warped plane, with a convex ridge.

3. Linden Kindergarten

Off-form painted concrete walls, slightly battered, with a skillion-roof with deep eaves. A higher section within, allows a small clerestory. The entry is centred on the south. Rainwater is dispersed by chains. columns are heavy timbers painted a rich tan and light Indian Red walls. There is a wonderful densely planted 'cottage' garden around the building and to the east between the kindergarten is an aromatic and colourful walled garden of lavenders, herbs and roses etc.

4. Rotunda

An octagonal, shelter constructed of unsawn logs.

5. Hall

A strong and expressive form with a convex roof, also with a clerestory at the junction of the two planes. It is concrete block construction, with battered walls (with some vertical structural cracking at angles), and a cement wash over all. Beams are built up with laminated timber, exposed externally, tapering to the eaves. There is a very large fixed glazed window facing the north, with vertical mullions, overlapping glass and louvres as ventilation and a faceted, catenary curved wall. There is a small warped-plane canopy on steel pipe brackets at the south-eastern corner, with unsawn timber poles. It has an irregular deck to the north, stepping down to the building as an amphitheatre, with steel pipe balustrading, a natural log fence and palisade balusters. One roof valley discharges here, directly into a sump. The south elevation has highlight windows only.

The more recent Annexe (5a) is a generally elevated timber structure, weatherboard-clad. Part is clad with cement sheet or sheeted and with

unusually, a regular series of rectangular double windows. At the south-east corner is the Office (6) in concrete block, with a lower roof, deeper curves and window series.

7. Junior School

Lower again, brick cement washed walls with very deep shaded covered ways between and around the buildings here, which meet at a breeze-away (9). It has also rectilinear window series, but door-heads and door rails are unexpectedly

angled. A section of balustrade is irregular curved. It overlooks a valley garden courtyard with the 'Flow Form' fountain, a series of dished shaped basins, and tiered terraces. Balustrades beyond here are off-form concrete.

13. Science, Art & Craft

This building is also brick.

10 & 14. Senior School & Library

Brick, the classrooms step down the site. Windows have stepped-heads. There are complex downpipes, also penetrating through lower roofs. The buildings curve around the lower levels of the courtyard. Cills, wall caps and window-heads are exposed orange brick.

16. Junior Art.

Timber structure clad with vertical palings with coverstrips, with weatherboards below dado, and a pergola entrance. It is elevated over ground level on 'telegraph' poles, heavily braced with stainless steel cables and turnbuckles and heavy timbers. It has a rectangular skillioned roof. There are v-shaped oriels overlooking the valley below.

Beyond the school is natural bushland.

Michael Centre 37A Wellington Park Drive

Located in a cleared hilltop surrounded by bush, screening off encroaching houses.

Michael Building 1.

Timber-framed, with a warped plane hyperboloid roof. It has a highly abstract and expressive form. Walls are clad with corrugated Colourbond steel, horizontally applied. There is a shallow-curved vaulted entry, strutted with unsawn timbers. The entrance is lined with naturally varnished vertical timber lining boards. The double doors are metal-framed with interlaced curved mullions. An octagonal oriel window is at right, with suspended cables and

curved brackets. The verandah at the rear has pipe-columns linked by a screened covered way, linking to:

Michael Building 2.

A split skillioned roof, rhomboid-shaped, timber-framed with polygonal windows, with shallow gabled sections. The lower section at front allows a clerestory supported by angled wing-walls. At front is the verandah, on pipe columns, with curved brackets, forming a courtyard around a beautiful central tree, sheltered by the covered way.

Intactness

Excellent.

Physical Conditions

Very good. Some abrasive buffeting and some cracking (refer above).

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/>