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# MOOROOLBARK RAILWAY STATION ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRECINCT

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## Location

66 MANCHESTER ROAD MOOROOLBARK, YARRA RANGES SHIRE

## Municipality

YARRA RANGES SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7922-0504

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 6, 2023

### What is significant?

No archaeological features are visible on the surface. The level of impact caused by Car Park construction is unknown. Any features/deposits which do remain will be buried beneath the sealed car park surface. The house was an important element of the Mooroolbark station complex, especially in its earlier years when accommodation was necessary for the people staffing the isolated town's vital railway connection. Any archaeological remains associated with the house, especially those related to its 19th and early 20th century use and occupation (early outbuildings and cess pits) have potential to provide valuable information on the development of transportation in the region and the nature of early domestic settlements in Mooroolbark. If any structural features or buried deposits/artefacts remain they will have significant archaeological potential for investigating late 19th/early 20th century domestic and transportation features in the Yarra Ranges east of Melbourne.

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When constructed in 1887 the Mooroolbark Station Master's House was a modest 4 room design with two bedrooms and a few outbuildings. The earliest occupants of the house are unknown, and the property likely remained unchanged until atleast shortly before 1935 when the earliest extension, an additional bedroom, was installed. By the early-mid 20

th century extensions to the house included additional rooms and a storage shed. The building served as a Victorian Railways owned family home for ~86 years before falling into disrepair and being Abolished in 1973-74.

#### Interpretation of Site

Today, the location of the house is used for station car parking. The site has been sealed by the concrete surface of the car park. A large oak tree, visible in the backyard of the house in historic aerial imagery remains in a small garden plot in the southeast corner of the site. The level of impact caused by the house demolition, levelling /grading and pouring of concrete is unknown. The surrounding land is generally flat was likely levelled out prior to the house's construction. It is possible only minimal ground disturbing works were required for the car park construction and no other structures have ever been built on the site. Depending on the level of ground disturbance, there is significant potential for structural remains of the house, its outbuildings and potentially cess/refuse pits to remain preserved below the car park surface.

Other Names MOOROOLBARK STATION MASTERS HOUSE,

Hermes Number 206138

Property Number

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## **History**

Officially numbered Departmental Residence 135 (DR. 135), the Mooroolbark Station Master's house was built with the station in 1887. The location of the house is known from early 20th century Imperial general staff maps and detailed 1935 plans of the Mooroolbark Station Complex. The house sat on a rectangular plot measuring 843.9m<sup>2</sup> and situated on the northeast corner of the Manchester Road/Lilydale Railway Line level crossing.

The house was constructed according to standardised late 19th century Victorian Railways plans for a 3rd Class Stationmaster's Residence. The T shaped house, known as a '3 T' design, included a living room at the front (12" x 18"), kitchen at the rear (12" x 12") and two bedrooms on either side forming the T (10" x 10"). The original

house included a simple gabled roof with a central chimney and adjacent fireplaces in the kitchen and living room. It served as a residential dwelling from 1887-1973, owned by the Victorian Railways and occupied by a series of Station Masters and their families. Occupancy records exist which detail the names and dates for 13 consecutive occupants between 1920 and 1973. The longest occupants of the house were Andrew Bell and his family who lived there for 20 years (1940-1960) during which time he had eight children and and no hot water, septic sewage or gas connection.

A 1935 Victorian Railways plan of the station shows the outline of the house which includes an extension at the northeast. Original occupancy documentation for the residence shows this extension was an additional bedroom (12" x 13") built some time prior to 1935. The 1935 plans also show the locations of three outbuildings. Though unlabelled, VR residences of this period would have typically included a wash house, a woodshed and a toilet (pers com. Ian Jenkins 2019). A record of alterations and additions between (1946-1973) is also available which details a series of renovations to the property including construction of a storage shed in 1946 and construction of an additional room and repairs in 1949.

The most recent available image of the station master's house is a 1972 aerial image of Mooroolbark. In 1972 the house remains standing and a large oak tree is visible in the backyard. Land north of the station and surrounding the house property has been cleared and is being used for car parking. In a 1973 memorandum issued by the Victorian Railways chief civil engineer, Departmental Residence 135 at Mooroolbark is described as "very old and in poor condition [and] to avoid further expenditure is proposed [to] be abolished" (Australian Railway Historical Society archives). The last resident of DR 134, P. J. Butler, vacated the residence on October 13, 1973. The house was demolished shortly afterward though the exact date is not known. Today, the location of the house is used for station car parking, though the Oak Tree is still present.

*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/>*