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# SURREY HILLS AND MONT ALBERT RAILWAY STATIONS ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRECINCT

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## Location

UNION ROAD TO ELGAR ROAD SURREY HILLS, MONT ALBERT, BOROONDARA CITY

## Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7922-0511

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 12, 2021

### What is significant?

The Station Master was responsible for the daily operation of the station, overseeing ticketing, public relations, and maintenance, which kept the line operational to and from Melbourne to the burgeoning suburbs. Moreover, the gatekeeper was integral for the operation of trains running to schedule and ensuring the safety of the public. The residence's of both the Station Master and the Gatekeeper included main buildings and outbuildings. The boundary and archaeological deposits as part of these structures form an integral part of the railway and has potential to provide detail regarding the daily life of early 20th century Melbourne.

### How is it significant?

### Why is it significant?

The site is significant as both Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Railway Stations formed an integral part of the railway and contributed to the development of their respective townships and the economic development of the region. The different features have the potential to provide information about the early development of the railway and the engineering and technology in use at the time of construction. In addition, they have the potential to provide insights into the passenger use and staff operation at the stations.

The Surrey Hills Railway Station and Mont Albert Railway Stations formed an integral part of the Lilydale/Belgrave line and operated in conjunction with each other sharing staff and facilities. Surrey Hills Station was constructed in 1883 but the steepness of the track made it difficult for steam trains to travel up the slope after stopping at the station. Mont Albert Station was established in 1890 and allowed steam trains to stop and start without losing traction, which was difficult at Surrey Hills due to the steep gradient. Reports of the early 20th century (The Age 1904; The Reporter 1904; The Reporter 1912) also talk of upgrades to both station facilities together, with local councils looking favourably on Mont Albert Station as it was initially built with residents own resources. In addition, the stations were close enough that they could share resources. A station master operated the Mont Albert Railway Station until 1905 but after this time the Surrey Hills Station Master operated both with the assistance of a station mistress at Mont Albert Station. Gradual improvements to the railway stations occurred through out the early 20th century including the construction of footbridges, gardens, subways, and signal boxes. The electrification of the line was completed in 1922. Major track upgrades in 1971 resulted in the addition of a third line and the reconfiguration of the stations. Both stations (only approximately 800 m apart) are therefore connected through a shared history and are linked to one another from their initial inception due to adverse landscape factors and shared staffing. West Creek was a significant water source in the region with the headwaters of the main branch of West Creek between Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Railway stations. Poor drainage and repeated flooding which were exacerbated by the low-lying topography caused issues for the properties and railway stations in the area. The rapid urbanization led to changes in the drainage and alterations to the landscape. The creek began to be diverted underground at the beginning of the 20th century. This was completed in stages with sections of brick barrel drains installed within the alignment of the creek. Eventually, the entire creek and its main tributary along Whitehorse Road were diverted underground into a drain. The brick barrel vaulted drain at Surrey Hills station shows the importance of adequate drainage in the area highlighted by the construction of the more complex drain close to the railway in an area prone to flooding. Based on a review of historic and current plans some sections of the drain may have had minimal damage from road works, while other sections may have more significant damage. There is a chance that some of the feature, which could be of an intricate design, is intact.

Hermes  
Number 208303

Property  
Number

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## History

The establishment of Melbourne's rail system emerged from the first private lines in 1854 to the formation of the Victorian Railway Department in 1956 (McKenna 2017:11–12). The Lilydale/Belgrave Line, originally running to Hawthorn and owned and operated by the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay Railway Company, was incorporated into Victorian Railways in 1878. The railway from Camberwell to Lilydale opened as a single-track line in 1882. Surrey Hills Station was then added to the line in 1883 and Mont Albert in 1890.

During earthworks for the Lilydale Line in 1882, engineers were unwilling to allow trains to stop at the newly constructed Surrey Hills platform claiming to foresee difficulties with the gradient (History Group at the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre 2001: 5-8). Adding further difficulties, a creek originally flowed alongside the railway line in this area (Lovell Chen 2011:25) and as a result the station regularly flooded. By April 1883, a request was made for Surrey Hills to be a flag-station so that passengers wanting to detrain could inform the guard at the previous station, while those wanting to embark could show a red flag during the day and a lamp at night. This was approved, and trains stopped on request in August of that year, while regular services and the official opening of the station commenced a month later. A double line and second platform to the north side of the line was constructed in 1888 due to the station's popularity and increase in passenger numbers. In 1890 interlocked gates and a signal box were erected at the station and a 30,000-gallon tank built. Local petitions to enhance the station continued in the early 20th century and improvements occurred gradually. By 1906, a Gatekeeper's Cottage had been removed and a Station Master's Residence positioned at the northeast corner of the railway

reserve. An overhead footbridge was erected in 1913 and a second siding provided in 1914. Gardens and fernery were also planted around the station to enhance its visual appeal. The line was electrified in 1922, and a boom barrier installed in 1962. Goods sidings were taken out of use in 1966. The station was rebuilt in 1971, and at this time a third track was brought into service and a second subway replaced the overhead footbridge (History Group at the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre 2001:5-8).

The construction of Mont Albert Station was initially at the expense of a syndicate of residents (Evans 1978:15), with a paling shed the first building erected at the station used for shearing. Mont Albert station officially opened in 1890 and by 1901 it was made a block station accommodating trains on the line. This was necessary as the gradient from Surrey Hills to Mont Albert caused smaller steam trains to struggle up the line, making them incapable of pulling heavy loads (Evans 1978:51). The station therefore allowed early steam trains to stop at the station without loss of traction. From 1890–1905 a station master managed the site but from 1905 onward the station was supervised by the Surrey Hills Station Master with assistance at Mont Albert from a Station Mistress (Allom Lovell & Associates 1999). The station building, a footbridge, signal box and block post for signalling were erected in 1910/1911. The overhead footbridge was replaced by a subway in 1926. Track amplifications in the 1960s resulted in Box Hill bound platforms being rebuilt and converted into an island platform (Padula 2013). Further, an automatic gate was installed in 1962, ending the need for a gatekeeper. The 1971 upgrades to the line saw the implementation of a third line at Mont Albert Station and the creation of the current island platform, while the 1911 Shelter/Ticket Office was replaced.

*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.*

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