
FORMER MELBOURNE MORGUE AND CORONERS COURT

Location

BIRRARUNG MARR PARK, MELBOURNE, VIC, 3004

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2419

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 3, 2023

What is significant?

The site has the potential to contain features and artefacts relating to the former City Morgue and Coroner's courthouse that was situated along the Yarra Bank Road, later Batman Avenue, and now Birrarung Marr Park.

How is it significant?

The Former Morgue at Yarra Bank Road, now Birrarung Marr Park, was the first purpose-built coroner's courthouse in Melbourne and is of historical significance to the State of Victoria (Criterion A). The site is also important due to its strong association with Dr. Richard Youl (1821-1897), Medical practitioner and City Coroner (Criterion H). The high degree of disturbance from development activity has significantly compromised the sites archaeological integrity but there exists the possibility that archaeological remains might survive in the form of structural remnants and related artefact deposits (Criterion C).

Why is it significant?

The former Morgue and Coroners Courthouse at Yarra Bank Road is important in the course of Victoria's cultural history as it represented the first building of its kind in the state (Criterion A). The complex, built in the Queen Anne style, was designed by Mr. G. Watson of the Public Works Department and served the city and state from 1888 to 1951. Any archaeological finds or features associated with the Morgue would be of significance in providing insight into the construction and operation of this facility (Criterion C).

Interpretation of Site	Morgue 1888-1951. The site was subsequently demolished to make way for Children's Court built 1960
Hermes Number	209336
Property Number	

History

The Morgue was designed by Mr. G. Watson of the Public Works Department and operated from 1888 until 1951. The building, described as a handsome structure, was designed by Mr. G. Watson of the Public Works Department at the cost of £6,600. Externally the red bricked building, on bluestone foundations, was built in the Queen Anne style and was detailed with Waurn Ponds facing stone topped by a roof light. The interior contained the coroner's room and orderly's office either side of an entrance that led to a large inquest room with provision for jury seats, coroners' desk, witness box and lawyers and press tables. To the side were retiring rooms for the jury and witnesses. The 'dead house' to the rear of the complex had a glass-built viewing passage fronting the mortuary for the identification of remains. The mortuary with seven white marble tables on movable stands was well lit and ventilated by a large lantern light and was connected to a receiving room, a post-mortem examination room and requisite bathrooms with outhouses to the rear. The site was surrounded by a brick wall surmounted by iron railings and had a caretaker's cottage to the right of the main entrance. The opening of the new facility was widely reported in the press of the period including a notable satirical piece in Melbourne's Punch entitled 'The opening celebration at the New Morgue'. In 1936 the morgue and caretaker's cottage were renovated, and a new pathological room added at the cost of £4,000. The Batman Avenue morgue was in continual use until 1951 when it was replaced by a new Facility at Flinders Street Extension. The building was subsequently demolished to make way for a new children's court that open on the site in 1960.

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/>