ROYAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

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Royal Society Of Victoria Victoria Street Melbourne Rear View Oct 1986

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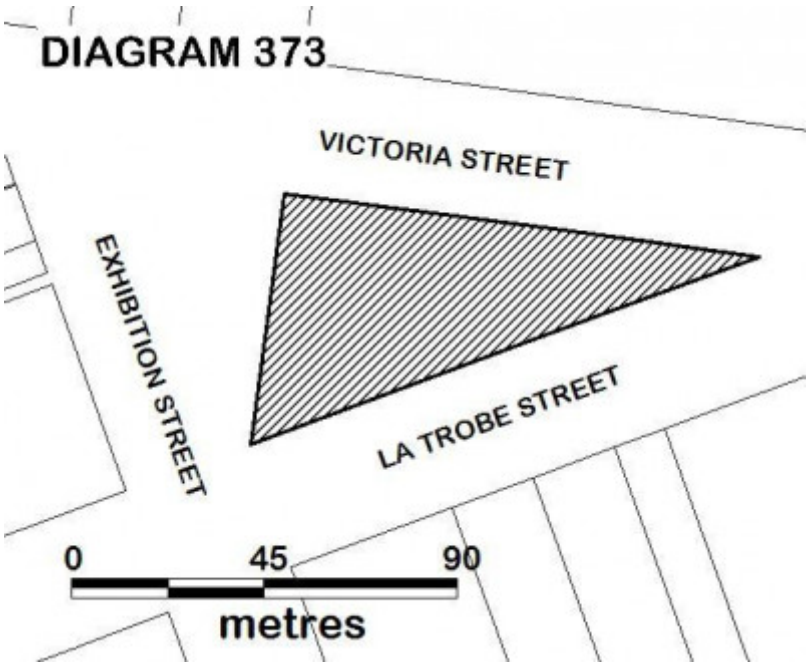

diagram 373

Location

2-8 LA TROBE STREET AND 1-9 VICTORIA STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0373

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO494

VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

Amendment to Registration

April 10, 2014

Heritage Listing

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 15, 2000

WORLD HERITAGE ENVIRONS AREA OF GREATER SENSITIVITY

What is significant?

The Royal Society of Victoria, located on a triangular site at the northern edge of the city opposite the Carlton Gardens. The main features are the two-storey Royal Society building, a caretaker's cottage and the Bureau of Meteorology instrument enclosure at the eastern corner of the site.

History Summary

The Royal Society of Victoria, first known as the Philosophical Institute, was established in 1855 by the amalgamation of the Philosophical Society of Victoria with the Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science (both formed in 1854). The name was changed to the Royal Society of Victoria in 1859. Its aim was to encourage the growth of scientific knowledge, especially in areas related to the development of Australia's natural resources. A grant of land at the northern edge of the city was given in 1857 to construct a hall for meetings and a caretaker's cottage. Joseph Reed of the firm Reed & Barnes designed the buildings on an honorary basis, and in 1859 the contract for the building of the hall was awarded to Matthew Taylor for a price of £2750. The building then comprised only the three northern bays of the existing building, and the interior was one large open space. In 1869 Reed drew up plans to subdivide the interior to provide a double height meeting room, a council room and a secretary's room on the ground floor and a library and reading room above. The contract for the alterations was awarded to John Wood for £415. Wood also built the adjacent caretaker's cottage, which was completed in 1869 and extended in 1886. In 1880 the hall was again subdivided internally, to provide a supper room on the ground floor and a meeting room above, and the exterior was then rendered. Between 1953 and 1954 a two-storey addition was built along the south side of the building for the use of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. This added another two bays in the same style as the 1859 building, resulting in a building with a square plan form. Following the transfer of the responsibility for Victoria's meteorological activities to the Commonwealth in 1907, the Bureau of Meteorology (at that time known as the Meteorological Branch/Bureau. Commonwealth of Australia) leased the eastern end of the site from the Society for use as a weather station. Most of Melbourne's weather-recording instruments were installed in 1908 within an enclosure on the eastern corner of the site, and the station has continuously monitored the city's atmospheric and meteorological conditions to the present (January 2014). To mark the centenary of the Royal Society of Victoria in 1959, a small monument, designed by the architects Grounds Romberg and Boyd and incorporating a glacial boulder from Antarctica, was erected on the west side of the site to mark the special interest of the Society in Antarctic exploration and research.

Description Summary

The Royal Society building is a rendered brick two-storey Renaissance Revival style building with a solid parapet. It is divided into five bays along each side by Tuscan pilasters with arched windows between. The unusual rounded corners of the building are repeated at both the cornice and parapet levels. The 1859 building comprises the three northern bays and the 1953-54 addition comprises the two southern bays of the present structure. The library contains a collection of books and journals dating back to the establishment of the Society. The caretaker's cottage to the east of the hall is a single storey asymmetrically-planned brick building with a hipped slate-clad roof. There are various plantings of shrubs and trees around the perimeter of the main building and in the garden of the cottage. The surroundings are complemented by plantings of *Lophostemon confertus* (Queensland brush box), *Melaleuca styphelioides* and three old *Schinus molle* (Peppercorn). On the eastern corner of the site at the junction of Victoria and La Trobe Streets is the meteorological station, which is a grassed area enclosed by a high cyclone fence. It has on the west side a small wooden shed which dates from the establishment of the station, and located around the site are various recording instruments, all of which have been continually updated and replaced since 1908.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Kulin Nation.

How is it significant?

The Royal Society of Victoria site is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places

Criterion H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

Why is it significant?

The Royal Society of Victoria site is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Royal Society of Victoria is historically significant as the oldest scientific and philosophical society in Victoria. The Royal Society provided the main forum in Victoria in the nineteenth century for the exchange of intellectual and scientific knowledge, and its members were among the colony's most prominent intellectuals. The Society organised and supported early exploration, including the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition in 1860, and their bodies lay in state in the hall in 1863. The Royal Society buildings are among the oldest surviving buildings in the City of Melbourne. The Bureau of Meteorology instrument enclosure reflects the scientific interests of the Royal Society. It is historically significant for its role in monitoring the changing atmospheric and meteorological conditions in Melbourne for over a century from 1908. [Criterion A]

The Royal Society of Victoria building is an outstanding example of the many public and other halls which were built in the city and suburbs in the nineteenth century as venues for the numerous lectures, recitals, concerts, meeting and theatrical productions which provided entertainment and intellectual stimulation for the population. It is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of the Renaissance Revival style, with the rounded corners on the exterior being particularly unusual. The interiors of the hall and library are notable for their decorative scheme, with Corinthian pilasters which rose the full height of the hall before it was divided horizontally in 1869 and 1880. [Criterion D]

The Royal Society of Victoria building is significant for its association with Joseph Reed, one of the most important and prolific of Victoria's nineteenth century architects. Reed dominated the architectural profession in Melbourne at the time and designed many of Melbourne's major buildings in the late 1850s and early 1860s. [Criterion H]

The Royal Society of Victoria is also significant for the following reasons, but not at the State level:

The Royal Society building is significant as an important meeting place for Melbourne's scientific and intellectual community since the 1850s. The caretaker's cottage is probably the oldest single-storey house in the City of Melbourne still used as a residence.

[This Statement of Significance was adopted by the Heritage Council of Victoria at its meeting on 3 April 2014]

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don’t harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must notify the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions here.

Specific Exemptions:

General Condition: 1.
All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

General Condition: 2.
Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.

General Condition: 3.
All works should be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

General Conditions: 4.
Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

General Condition 5

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

Specific exemptions:

Exterior

. Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.

. Installation or removal of external fixtures and fittings such as hot water services and taps.

. Removal of any non-original items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc and making good in a manner which does not affect the cultural heritage significance of the place.

. Installation or repair of damp-proofing by either injection method or grouted pocket method in a manner which does not affect the cultural heritage significance of the place.

Interior

. Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.

. Installation, removal or replacement of non-original carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.

. Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted art or religious works or icons.

. Installation of honour boards and the like.

. Removal or installation of notice boards.

. Demolition or removal of twentieth century stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings or non-original wall linings (including plasterboard, laminate and Masonite), non-original glazed screens, non-original flush panel or part-glazed laminated doors, aluminium-framed windows, bathroom partitions and tiling, sanitary fixtures and fittings, kitchen wall tiling and equipment, lights, built-in cupboards, cubicle partitions, computer and office fitout and the like.

. Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.

. Removal of non-original glazing to internal timber-framed, double-hung sash windows, and replacement with clear or plain opaque glass.

. Installation of stud walls, which are removable, other than in corridors.

. Refurbishment of existing bathrooms, toilets and kitchens including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.

. Removal of tiling or concrete slabs in wet areas provided there is no damage to or alteration of original structure or fabric.

. Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and that the central plant is concealed.

. Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed and any original light switches, pull cords, push buttons or power outlets are retained in-situ. Note: if wiring original to the place was carried in timber conduits then the conduits should remain in situ.

. Installation, removal or replacement of electric clocks, public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.

. Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

. Installation of plant within the roof space.

. Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces other than significant decorative features.

. Installation of new built-in cupboards providing no alteration to the structure is required.

Landscape Exemptions

. The process of gardening, including mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead shrubs and replanting the same species or cultivar, disease and weed control, and maintenance to care for existing plants.

. Removal of dead or dangerous trees and vegetation, works to maintain fire safety and to conserve significant buildings and structures and emergency works, provided the Executive Director is notified within 21 days after the works have occurred.

. Replanting removed or dead trees and vegetation with the same plant species to conserve the significant landscape character and values.

. Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373-1996.

. Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970-2009.

. Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or services outside the canopy edge of significant trees in accordance with AS4970 and on the condition that works do not impact on archaeological features or deposits.

. Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act* 1994.

. Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.

Specific Exemptions:

Works and alterations, including removal, to buildings and features of no cultural heritage significance are permit exempt:

. The recording equipment in the Bureau of Meteorology Enclosure The fence around the instrument enclosure The carport adjacent to the cottage.

. The fence around the instrument enclosure

. The carport adjacent to the cottage.

Construction dates	1859, 1869, 1880, 1953,
Architect/Designer	Reed, Joseph, Heath, HJ,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	823
Property Number	

History

(Information from Allom Lovell, Royal Society of Victoria Buildings, Conservation Analysis and Management Plan, 1994)
Many of Victoria's scientific, cultural and educational institutions, including the University of Melbourne, the Public Library and the Natural History Museum, were established in the 1850s. Victoria's first scientific societies were the Philosophical Society of Victoria and the Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science, both formed in 1854. These two organisations merged in 1855 to form the Philosophical Institute, whose name was changed in 1859 to the Royal Society of Victoria, with its first President being Ferdinand von Mueller. The Royal Society of Victoria was modelled on the institution of the same name in Britain, and its aim was to 'embrace the whole field of science, with a special reference to the cultivation of those departments that are calculated to develop the natural resources of the country'.

In 1857, with a membership of over 230, the Philosophical Institute had approached the President of the Board of Land and Works for a grant of land. A vacant triangular site of 0.22 ha at the corner of Victoria and Latrobe Streets was approved and reserved for the Institute (it was officially granted by the Crown in 1867). At a special meeting of the Institute held in 1857 it was decided that a building containing a meeting room capable of holding 300 people, together with a museum, a space which could be used for a Secretary's Room, Library and Council Room, an entrance hall, a laboratory and caretaker's quarters should be erected immediately. Eventually Joseph Reed of the firm Reed & Barnes, who offered his services on an honorary basis, was commissioned to design the building. It was planned as a single open space for meetings, which could be partitioned in the future as funds allowed. Tenders were called in May 1859 and the contact was awarded to Matthew Taylor for a cost of £2,750, with £350 saved by postponing the rendering of the exterior. The first meeting was held in the new building in December 1859. The main entrance was then on the north side of the building.

In 1869 Joseph Reed, again in an honorary capacity, drew up plans to subdivide the interior to provide a meeting room (rising the full height of the building) and two smaller rooms to be used as a council room and a secretary's room on the ground floor, and a library and reading room on the first floor (above the two smaller rooms), as well

as a separate caretaker's cottage. The contract for the alterations to the hall was awarded to John Wood for £415. Wood was also awarded the contract for the brick cottage, which was completed in August 1869 (and extended in 1886). The first caretaker was the policeman Sergeant O'Flaherty, whose duties included gardening, clerical work, cleaning of the hall and lighting fires when meetings were to be held.

Further alterations were completed in 1880. The full-height meeting room was divided horizontally to form a supper room on the ground floor and a meeting room above, the whole of the interior was repaired and Venetian blinds were added to the windows. The exterior of the building was also rendered at last. Only minor changes were made to the hall and the cottage from then until the mid-twentieth century.

In 1951 it was decided to build a two-storey addition along the south side of the building for use by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, whose honorary architect, H J Heath, designed the addition in the same style as the original building. The interiors of the old building were also remodelled. The works were begun early in 1953 and opened in August 1954. These additions comprise the southern two bays of the present building.

In the late 1950s it was proposed to convert the site for use as a service station, and later to build a new library east of the hall and demolish the cottage for car parking. Fortunately neither of these plans ever eventuated.

The centenary of the Royal Society of Victoria in 1959 was marked by the erection in the grounds on the Exhibition Street side of a small monument, designed by the architects Grounds Romberg and Boyd and comprising a low pedestal with a glacial boulder from Mawson in Antarctica.

In 1990 works were carried out to the interior, including the insertion of a new kitchen in the original pantry and secretary's office, and the refurbishment of the supper room. In 1992 part of the hall building was underpinned.

The Bureau of Meteorology Instrument Enclosure

[Information from Godden Mackay Logan, 'Bureau of Meteorology Instrument Enclosure, Melbourne', Report prepared for the Bureau of Meteorology July 2012.]

On the eastern corner of the site is an enclosure containing weather-recording instruments, which is leased from the Royal Society by the Bureau of Meteorology.

Victoria's first weather recording site, which operated from 1840, was at Flagstaff Hill, where the atmospheric pressure, temperature, humidity, rainfall, wind and a description of the weather were recoded until 1851. By 1855 Victoria had twenty observing sites. From 1863-1907 Melbourne's weather recording equipment was located at the Melbourne Observatory adjacent to the Botanical Gardens. In 1907 responsibility for meteorological activities of all the states was transferred to the Commonwealth and the Bureau of Meteorology was formed following the *Meteorology Act* 1906. In 1908 most of Melbourne's meteorological instruments were transferred to an enclosure at the Royal Society site. Within the enclosure is a small shed of an unknown date, but engraved graffiti by Bureau staff on the interior walls dates back to 1922.

An automatic weather station was added to the Instrument Enclosure in August 1986, but wind speed and direction sensors were switched off in September 2009. This site has remained in use until the present (2013) but it the Bureau of Meteorology has plans to close it in 2014.

History of Place:
(Allom Lovell, Conservation Analysis and Management Plan, 1994)
In October 1857 the Philosophical Institute approached the President of the Board of Land and Works for a grant of land. The triangular site at the corner of Victoria and Latrobe Streets was approved and reserved for the Institute. The land was officially granted by the Crown in 1867. In 1859 the Philosophical Institute merged with Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science and was renamed the Royal Society of Victoria. These two bodies were Victoria's first scientific societies. Scientific life in the mid 1850s centered on Government departments. The University of Melbourne was recently formed and the foundation stone of the Public Library laid. The Natural History Museum was established, on an albeit small scale, in the office of Crown Lands under the guidance of the Surveyor-General , Catain Andrew Clarke.
Associated People: Burke and Wills

Extent of Registration

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 373 encompassing all of Crown Allotment 1 Section 25A City of Melbourne Parish of Melbourne North.
[Victoria Government Gazette NoG1510 April 2014p.678]

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/