
NORTH MELBOURNE LOCOMOTIVE SHED

Location

300-372 FOOTSCRAY ROAD WEST MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0166

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Why is it significant?

The main shed and depot complex played a key role in the regional rail network and the Victorian Railways operations. The site may also add to the understanding of the development and expansion of Melbourne and Victoria in the late 19th century when steam and coal were the main sources of energy for major infrastructure.

As an employer of hundreds of rail workers for 77 years, it was a major employer in Melbourne and saw many strikes, demonstrations, and other industrial action throughout the 20th century.

The site was also associated with major development works in Victoria such as the expansion of the railway lines, the reclamation of the West Melbourne Swamp and the construction of the Railway Coal Canal, which is now the Moonee Ponds Creek.

The Former Coal Wharf formed an intrinsic part of the North Melbourne Locomotive Depot, transporting fuel to supply the steam engines of the Victorian Railways trains, providing essential transportation within Melbourne and the state for people and goods.

The Coal Wharf meets both Threshold A and Threshold B of Heritage Victoria's Policy for Determining Low Archaeological Value 2020 and s. 118(1)(a) of the Heritage Act 2017. Historical maps indicate the coal loading wharf on the eastern bank of the Moonee Ponds Creek, from c. 1888 until the 1920s. Subsurface components of the former wharf exceeding 75 years old may therefore be present below the ground surface. This may include timber wharf piles and structures, and possible artefact-bearing deposits below the wharf. The eastern Moonee Ponds Creek bank has been filled and extended to the west and previous ground disturbance appears to have been limited. Any archaeological remains of the former Coal Wharf could provide breath to our understanding of the connections between the 19th and early 20th century maritime and rail transportation systems in Victoria and Australia. Associated themes, as set out in Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes, of the Coal Wharf include 'Travelling by Waters' (3.2) and 'Linking Victorians by rail' (3.3).

Previous archaeological excavations within H7822-0166 have occurred for the West Gate Tunnel Project, under consents C1382 and C1479. Significant remains of the main Loco Shed K188 were excavated in archaeological test trenches, geotechnical test trenches, NDD services detection, VicTrack communication trenches, and trenches excavated for Bridge 81 permanent structures (strip footings for support walls). The results confirmed that the entire brick paved floor, three large rail turntables, entry and exit access rail lines, maintenance pits, rails, wall bases and wall footings of the Loco Shed K188 and associated sheds on the western side are well-preserved below shallow crushed rock, clay and building rubble fill deposits, at depths of between 150 mm to 2000 mm (the northern half of the site has been covered in deeper fill deposits). At the northern edge of the VHI site, there were also highly significant historical artefact-bearing deposits found at 1.8–2m depth below the ballast laid for the Melbourne Rail Yard. This deposit contained a late 19th century domestic and commercial artefact assemblage from contexts that were deposited as refuse in the former West Melbourne Swamp, prior to the formation of the rail yard and Loco Depot. Regarding the Coal Wharf, it likely dates from the opening of the North Melbourne Locomotive Depot operations in 1888, and most likely went out of use after the construction of Footscray Road and its road bridge in the 1920s. This date range is based on a review of historic plans of the area. The Coal Wharf is seen on the MMBW 1895 plan of the area, on the east bank of the Railway Canal (later named the Moonee Ponds Creek) (MMBW 1895; Figure 6). The wharf is still present on the 1912 nautical chart of Hobsons Bay and the Yarra River (Cox 1912; Figure 7). However, in the 1936 nautical chart, the Coal Wharf is no longer present (Martin 1936; Figure 8). The 1936 plan also shows the construction of Footscray Road and the narrowing of the Coal Canal. The wharf was most likely timber framed and similar in construction to other late 19th century wharf structures in Melbourne's west, such as the Newport Coal Wharf (H7822-0535) (Duncan 2006: 159–160) and Footscray General Cargo Wharf South (H7822-0478) (Duncan, 2003, VHI site card). A large building was also present close to the wharf on the eastern creek bank, that may have been used for storing coal or other materials. There was also the former reversing loop rail line that encircled the northern, western, and southern sides of the North Melbourne Locomotive Depot site. The approximate location of the wharf and the wharf building have been marked on Figure 2, based on georeferencing the historic plans and aerial photography.

Hermes
Number 8810

Property
Number

History

The North Melbourne Locomotive Depot was constructed to store and re-coal Victorian Railways steam trains, replacing the former Spencer Street and Williamstown Locomotive Depots. The rail was established on the eastern end of the former West Melbourne Swamp (Leader, 10 April 1886). The Swamp was divided in 1888 by the excavation of the artificial Railway Coal Canal (later known as the southern end of the Moonee Ponds Creek). The western side of the swamp then was drained and used for the West Melbourne Rubbish Tips, while the

eastern part of the Swamp was also drained, filled-in and used as the Melbourne Rail Yard with railway lines extending through this area the northern and western railways lines out of Melbourne's Spencer Street station. As many as 200 locomotives were serviced and housed in the shed. It was in continual operation from its opening in 1888 until its demolition in 1965 with the phasing out of coal-powered trains (Ward et al. 1991: 185). The main depot shed was a large building, approximately 210 m long by 60 m wide and contained three large rail turntables for the storage and maintenance of steam engines. It was known as Depot K188 (Langford 1965, 105433). This building was located in the central part of the site. The K188 shed was demolished on the 20 January 1965 (Lee 2007). The area was levelled, and additional railway tracks were constructed over the site after 1965 and the area remained in use by the railways until the present. Area surrounding the main K188 shed, the Locomotive Depot complex was filled with rail lines leading into and out of the main K188 shed, a Coal Loading Wharf on Moonee Ponds Creek/Railway Coal Canal, and a coal loading stage, and other buildings at various stages between the 1880s–1960s. Review of archival maps of the area indicate that there were no structures built on the south-eastern end of the North Melbourne Locomotive Depot area, aside from the large brick water tower.

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/>