

# FORMER HAWTHORN MOTOR GARAGE



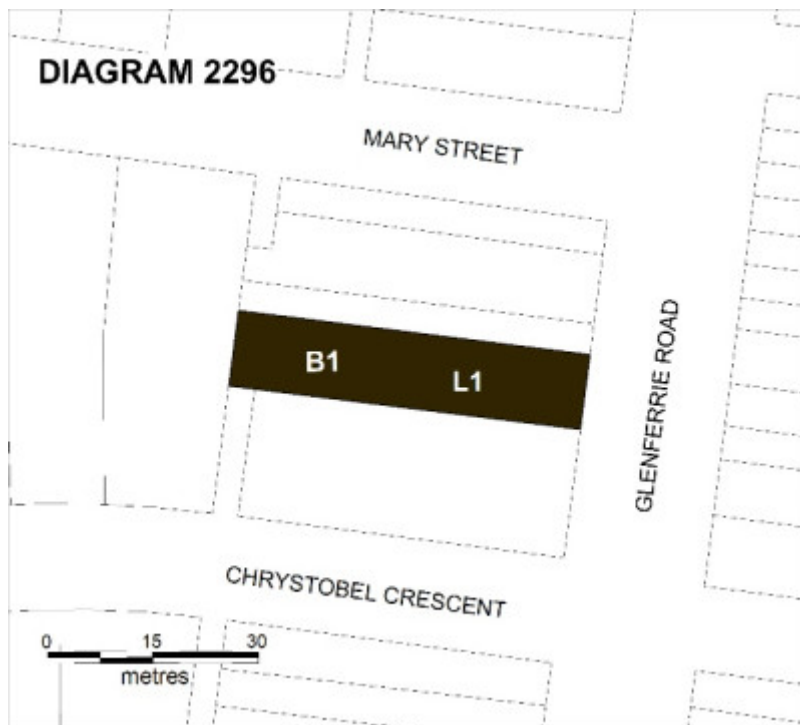
Former Hawthorn Motor Garage



Former Hawthorn Motor Garage



IMG\_4367.jpg



Hawthorn motor garage.jpg

## Location

735 GLENFERRIE ROAD HAWTHORN, BOROONDARA CITY

## Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2296

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO570

## VHR Registration

May 10, 2012

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The former Hawthorn Motor Garage is a single storey brick building which is now the oldest known purpose-built motor garage in Victoria.

The Hawthorn Motor Garage was commissioned from the architect Chris Cowper by the local auctioneer Ernest Hill in 1912. Christopher Alfred Cowper (1868-1954) was a prominent Melbourne architect, who lived in Hawthorn and is best known for the many red-brick Federation style houses he designed in the nearby Grace Park Estate, but he also designed flats (including Summerland Mansions in St Kilda, VHR H1808), theatres (including the Sun Theatre at Yarraville, VHR H679) and other commercial buildings. The garage was praised for its modern design. Its main business then was the storing, washing, repairing, hiring and selling of cars. Selling petrol was a sideline, and was sold from cans stored inside the garage. Petrol bowsers were introduced to Victoria in 1914, and were installed on the kerbs outside garages from about 1920. The Kane family, who ran the Hawthorn Motor Garage for more than twenty years from the 1920s, installed the first electric petrol pump in Hawthorn during that time. The building was used for car-related businesses until the early twenty-first century.

The former Hawthorn Motor Garage is located in the main shopping precinct on Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn. The building is essentially a long narrow brick shed, about 11 m wide and about 27 m in length. Facing Glenferrie Road is a decorative face brick and render facade, with a wide central brick-arched entrance flanked by large windows. The bays are divided by brick pilasters topped with cement balls and connected by brick arches, and there is a rendered arched parapet. The roof is of corrugated galvanised iron, though the original timber trusses have been replaced by steel. Internally no original features remain.

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

How is it significant?

The former Hawthorn Motor Garage is of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Hawthorn Motor Garage is architecturally significant as the oldest known surviving purpose-built motor garage in Victoria. It demonstrates the form of the first motor garages, which were basically large sheds with a wide central entrance, based on the earlier coach building and blacksmith workshops of the horse and buggy

period, but with a decorative street facade with a parapet above, typical of shopfronts of the Edwardian period. It is significant as the earliest architect-designed motor garage known in the state, and therefore reflects the importance of the appearance of such buildings at the time. It is significant for its association with Chris Cowper, a prominent Melbourne architect of the early twentieth century.

The Hawthorn Motor Garage has historical significance for its association with the early history of motor transport in Victoria. It is a rare surviving example of a garage built at a time when petrol was sold from cans stored inside the building, before the introduction of kerbside bowsers.

## 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 Conditions:** 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 Conditions: 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 Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the 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 Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. **Minor Works :** Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Interior works:

Interior works which are not visible from outside the building are permit exempt.

## Theme

### 5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce

|                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Construction dates      | 1912,                              |
| Architect/Designer      | Cowper, Christopher,               |
| Heritage Act Categories | Registered place,                  |
| Other Names             | HAWTHORN TYRE SERVICE, THE GARAGE, |
| Hermes Number           | 183558                             |
| Property Number         |                                    |

---

## History

[The following information is largely from Daniel Catrice & Michele Summerton, 'The Motor Garage & Service Station in Victoria. A Survey', for Heritage Victoria February 1997.]

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

During the twentieth century the motor car revolutionised the lives of Australians. Australia's first locally-made practical motor car was a steam car built in Armadale by Herbert Thomson in 1899. Twelve of these cars were built, but by 1903 imported cars, especially the Model T Ford, had taken over the market. By June 1911 there were 2722 motor cars and 2122 motorcycles registered in Victoria, mostly in Melbourne.

#### Motor garages and service stations in Victoria

Petrol for cars was at first sold only in four-gallon drums, which many motorists stored in private garages. They could be purchased at a variety of outlets, including cycle shops, grocers, blacksmiths and hardware stores. The first commercial motor garages were established after 1903, primarily for the storage and repair of automobiles. They also began to sell petrol, poured from the drums into a gallon measure, then into the tank of the car. The earliest motor garages adopted the form and scale of blacksmith and coach building workshops, being large sheds with double doors at the front opening into the street. The facades were often adorned with typical Edwardian-period parapets, like many of the shops being built along the rapidly-expanding shopping strips.

The dangers of the unregulated storing and selling of petrol prompted the introduction of a Petroleum Act in 1912, which regulated its transport, storage and sale. Garage proprietors could more easily satisfy these new conditions, and so capture a greater share of the trade, and the number of motor garages increased from 12 in 1910 to 76 in 1914.

'Bowser' pumps, made by the North American firm S F Bowser & Co, could pump petrol more safely, from an underground storage tank into a graduated glass cylinder attached to the bowser, to measure the quantity being sold, and then into the car tank. By 1915 these were installed inside all motor garages in the City of Melbourne. In 1921 the Melbourne City Council began to approve the installation of kerbside pumps. The use of bowsers was encouraged by the oil companies, as it allowed the bulk distribution of petrol by tank wagons.

As car ownership increased there were concerns that kerbside pumps could cause personal injuries and damage to property, leading to the development of the drive-in service station, the first of which was built in 1926, which emerged as an important new building type in the inter-war period.

The architect: Chris A Cowper (1868-1954)

Chris Cowper was born in South Africa in 1868 and settled in Melbourne in 1883. A year later he was apprenticed to the building engineer and architect Evander McIvor. In 1892 he established his own practice, and became an Associate of the RVIA, but this was at the beginning of the 1890s depression, and in 1895 he discontinued his practice and took up farming. From 1898-1900 he worked for the Equitable Life Assurance Co (USA) in Melbourne. In 1906 he travelled overseas to study domestic architecture, and was the RVIA delegate at the International Congress in London. On his return to Melbourne he re-established his architectural career and moved into an office at 359 Collins Street, Melbourne. He lived in Linda Crescent at Hawthorn, and in the years immediately following his return he focused his energies almost entirely on residences in the Grace Park Estate at Hawthorn, mainly in the Queen Anne Revival, better known as Federation, style.

Cowper began branching into commercial architecture in 1912, and in that year he was elected fellow of the RVIA. He designed houses and commercial buildings in Camberwell, Kew and Canterbury, and in Brighton and St Kilda, including Summerland Mansions in St Kilda (1920-21, VHR H1808), the ANZ Bank in Glenferrie Road, and cinemas at Yarraville (the Sun, 1938, VHR H679), Hawthorn (the Palace), Brighton (the Dendy), Camberwell (the Broadway), in the City (the Mayfair) and St Kilda (St Moritz). After 1915 he appears to have played a diminishing role in design, leaving it to his young associate Gordon Murphy. By 1921 he had formed a partnership with Gordon Murphy and Reg Appleford, and a year later moved into Chancery House, 440 Little Collins Street, a building owned by Cowper, and which was also the head office of his own finance company. The partnership dissolved in 1930 but the name continued and in 1949 was changed to Cowper, Murphy & Associates.

## HISTORY OF PLACE

The Hawthorn Motor Garage was commissioned by Ernest Hill, a well-known local auctioneer, who was presumably keen to capitalise on the increasing number of cars in this prosperous suburb. The building's sewerage and associated works, which included a paved car wash at the rear, which had access from a rear laneway, were installed by May 1912, and the tenants Tweddle and Graham occupied the garage soon after. Constructed of brick with a rendered parapet and a central arched workshop entrance, the new garage was lauded for its modern design, which was described on 5 July 1912 in the *Hawthorn and Camberwell Citizen*:

Many fine buildings are now being erected in the city, and one which commands special notice is that of the Hawthorn Motor Garage, situated in Glenferrie-road, near the corner of Mary-street. For some time the firm occupied premises at 299 Burwood-road, adjoining Glenferrie House, but, owing to want of room for workshops, it was found necessary to secure larger premises.

The building is of brick, with corrugated iron roofing, being 90 feet long by 36 feet in width. It is illuminated throughout with electric light, and skylights in the roof provide ample light in the day. A large portion of the floor space is provided for the storage of cars there at a very nominal sum, and every care is taken to ensure safety of the cars from fire, extinguishers being placed about the building.

The remainder of the floor space is used as a workshop. The most up-to-date machinery for repairing work is fitted up, and any class of repairs can be executed with the utmost despatch. The firm have secured the services of the best mechanic in Melbourne as foreman of the workshop. The extreme corner of the room is used for washing cars, and traps are used to prevent petrol from getting in to the sewerage. This is absolutely essential in all garages, and the firm have taken every precaution to comply with Board of Health requirements.

There are many fine second-hand cars for sale, and new ones can be obtained. The firm have the contract to supply cars to the Metropolitan Board of Works for twelve months. Taxis and Maxwell touring cars can be hired day and night, and telephone messages will be promptly [sic] attended to. Tyres and tubes can be repaired and vulcanised on the premises. Retreading a specialty. Petrol and accessories can always be obtained at city prices

Petrol was then sold in drums, and was merely a sideline to the garage's main business of storing, washing, repairing, hiring and selling cars, both new and second-hand. After the introduction of the first petrol bowsers to Australia in 1914 pumps would have been added to the kerb at the front of the building.

In 1915 William Fenton became the proprietor of the garage, followed in 1918 by Richard A Allan, trading as Richard Allan Hawthorn Motors. By the early 1920s the garage was occupied by the Australian Motor Industries Company, and a few years later by James Kane and his family, who ran it for 20-30 years. They introduced the first electric pump in Hawthorn during that time. It later traded as the Langham Motor Service, and later as the Hawthorn Tyre Service. In 2011 the interior is divided into two retail outlets, Paddy Pallin on one side and a

hairdressing salon on the other.

## Assessment Against Criteria

a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

The Hawthorn Motor Garage has historical significance for its association with the early history of motor transport in Victoria. It is a rare surviving example of a garage built when petrol was sold from cans stored inside the building, before the introduction of kerbside bowsters.

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.

The Hawthorn Motor Garage is architecturally significant as the oldest known surviving purpose-built motor garage in Victoria. It demonstrates the form of the first motor garages, which were basically long narrow sheds with a wide central entrance, based on the earlier coach building and blacksmith workshops of the horse and buggy period, but with a decorative street facade with a parapet above, typical of shopfronts of the Edwardian period. It is significant as the earliest architect-designed motor garage known to survive in the state, and therefore reflects the importance of the appearance of such buildings at the time.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

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

The former Hawthorn Motor Garage is significant for its association with Chris Cowper, a prominent Melbourne architect of the early twentieth century.

## Plaque Citation

Designed in 1912 by the architect Chris Cowper, this is the oldest known purpose-built motor garage in Victoria. Its main business was the storage, repair, hire and sale of cars, with petrol sold from drums stored inside.

## Extent of Registration

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 2296 held by the Executive Director, being all of the land described as Lot 1 on Title Plan TP806267
2. All the building marked B1 on Diagram 2296 held by the Executive Director.

---

*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/>*