

## FORMER ROYAL MINT



FORMER ROYAL MINT  
SOHE 2008



former royal mint williams  
street melbourne detail of  
front windows sep1985



1 former royal mint williams  
street melbourne side view  
feb1985



former royal mint williams  
street melbourne caretaker's  
cottage feb1985



former royal mint williams  
street melbourne front  
entrance sep1985



former royal mint williams  
street melbourne guard  
house feb1985



former royal mint williams  
street melbourne light on  
surrounding wall



## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 20, 1999

What is significant?

The Former Royal Mint was designed by John James Clark of the Public Works Office. Design work began in 1869 and it was built during 1871-72 by the contractors William Murray and Company of Emerald Hill, and Martin and Peacock of West Melbourne. The complex originally contained coin production facilities, administration and residential quarters and associated structures, but all that remains now are the two-storey office building and residence, two gate-houses, perimeter walling and palisading. The main two storey building is a rendered brick structure on a heavy rusticated base. Unlike the Palladian norm, the piano nobile is on the ground floor. The first floor features paired ionic columns, while an attic storey features oval windows. The perimeter wall is an imposing brick construction with large wrought iron gates and iron lamps.

How is it significant?

The Former Royal Mint is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Former Royal Mint is of historical significance because of its important role in the economic, financial and political development of Victoria for nearly 100 years. Lobbying for a mint to be established in Australia began soon after the discovery of gold. Such an institution was considered by its proponents not only as an efficient way of providing currency for the colonies, but as an important sign of colonial independence and maturity. As such it reflects the growing wealth and confidence of gold-rush era Melbourne. As a branch of the Royal Mint, London, it initially bought gold and minted only gold sovereigns until 1916. The first Australian silver coins were minted in 1916, after the Federal Constitution gave the Commonwealth sole powers in the minting of coinage. The first Australian pennies and halfpennies were produced in 1927. When the Sydney Mint closed in 1926, the Melbourne Royal Mint became the only mint in Australia until it ceased operations in 1968.

The Former Royal Mint is of architectural significance as one of the most impressive 19th century government buildings in Victoria, and for its associations with John James Clark.

The administration building was styled after Raphael's Palazzo Vidoni-Caffarelli in Rome (1515). Its restrained ornamentation and dignified portico reflect the prestigious yet functional nature of the Mint. It is one of the finest examples of conservative classicism in Australia. Clark (1838-1915), who had a distinguished career in the office of the Colonial Architect (later Public Works Department) from 1852, when he was 14, until 1878, was responsible for designing a number of important colonial government buildings including the Government Printing Office (1856) and the Treasury (1857). He later went on to design major buildings in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

## 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](#).

Construction dates	1869,
Architect/Designer	Clark, John James,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	830
Property Number	

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

Lobbying for a Victorian mint, to mint the gold discovered locally, began in 1852. However, New South Wales' had made an earlier application to the Imperial Government, which decided to establish a branch of the Royal Mint in Sydney in 1853. The issue was not raised again in Victoria until the 1859 elections, after which the Home Government was again petitioned to construct a branch of the Royal Mint in Melbourne. It eventually acquiesced and the Melbourne establishment was commenced in 1869.

The extant building is not the original design for the Mint building. The original was deemed too large and expensive, and Clark was asked to produce a more modest and less ornamented structure. Because the machinery for the coin minting was already on the way, however, the floor plans of the operative departments could not be altered.

The site that was chosen for the new Mint was originally occupied by an Exhibition Building. The mint operated from 1872 producing colonial and Australian coinage for 96 years. It was then occupied by the National Gallery of Victoria until a permanent gallery was completed. It has since served as a Teacher's Tribunal and a Marriage Registry Office.

Associated People: Owner VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT;

## Plaque Citation

This outstanding Renaissance Revival style complex was designed by Public Works Department architect J J Clark. It was built in 1869-70 to mint coins for the colony using Victorian gold and British dies, and operated from 1872 to 1968.

## Extent of Registration

## AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic Building No. 770, former Royal Mint, 280 William Street, Melbourne 3000.

(All of the buildings and land shown hatched on the plan hereunder).

[Victoria Government Gazette No. G13 28 March 1990 p.932]

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*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/>*