
Richmond Police Station



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Richmond Police Station -
bluestone police cells at the
rear

Location

319-323 Bridge Road, RICHMOND VIC 3121 - Property No 193695

Municipality

YARRA CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO230

Heritage Listing

Yarra City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

This site was removed from the Government Building Register on 21 May 1998 and placed in the Yarra Planning Scheme. The Statement below was provided to the City of Yarra by Heritage Victoria on 25 May 1998.

ASSESSMENT REPORT

NAME: Richmond Police Station

LOCATION: Bridge Road Richmond

CATEGORY: Heritage Place

FILE NO: 602047

OFFICER/S REPORTING: Monash Public History Student Claire Turner

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Richmond Police Station is located on Bridge Road next to the Town Hall. The Station is comprised of a number of buildings. Of historical significance is the main building that faces Bridge Road and the older lock-up at the rear. Connecting the two are a series of later, stylistically inconsistent smaller buildings. Built in 1878, the main, two-storey building is constructed in Italianate style contrasting red and cream Hawthorn brick on a bluestone base. It has a main entrance and seven windows that face the street, surrounded in round-headed brick arched openings. It has a slate roof. There are fourteen rooms in the original building. The original joinery is mostly intact and structurally the building is in good condition. There are obvious extensions to this main building. A single storey addition is attached to the front of the building in darker brick and in an unsympathetic style.

The lock-up was constructed in the 1860's and was moved to this site in 1872-3. It is a single-storey and contains four cells. It is built of bluestone and also has a slate roof

CONTEXTUAL STORY AND HISTORY OF PLACE:

Since its settlement and until recent times, Richmond had always been represented as a struggletown and a rough neighbourhood. As an industrial suburb with a large working class population, Richmond was the site of enormous political activity. Tensions between the workers and the comparatively few wealthy business owners were high and their battles through both the depressions and the wars were acted out in the streets and in the dominating Town Hall. Naturally Richmond Police Station played an important role throughout the regular social turmoil.

The presence of the Police in Richmond was certainly an essential one. Since 1843 they served the community from various locations. Before the consolidation of public buildings on Bridge Road, there were four known police stations and there are suggestions of even more. There was one in the drill hall in Swan street, one in Stanley street, Harvey street South Richmond and one Burnley. In other words the area required plenty of Police support. The public response to the Police strike in 1923 exemplifies the dependence on Police support in an area like Richmond. The very real threat of larrikin riots in the absence of Police created enormous fear in locals. Police presence was a consistent back-drop to everyday life for the residence of the slum areas. The Police controlled unemployment riots during the depression, they fought against the frequent union protests, occasionally intervened in domestic violence and were there to pick up the alcoholics, vagrants and homeless children that were certainly not an uncommon sight in Richmond. Given the social environment of Richmond, it is no of surprise that the final choice of building for the new station was one that loomed ominously with its two-storey stature, in league with the equally imposing political symbol of the Town Hall.

The lock-up building was obviously considered an important asset, having served the community throughout the 1860's. The architect's plans from 1873 show that the lock. up was intended to be incorporated in the new Bridge Road building, which demonstrates the importance placed upon it. The main building stands today as the only substantial remains of what was once an impressive civic strip. Of course the Town Hall still exists, but it underwent renovations in 1935, much to the horror of the locals. Its Italianate features were buried under the Egyptian Monumental style, upgrading it extravagantly so that locals were alienated from using it for dances and so on. Part of the little Court House stands next to the Police Station as a suggestion of the line of buildings that once existed. Essentially the Police Station is the only reminder of Richmond's struggle to change its reputation from a rough area to a dignified one. Its public buildings were symbols of solid government and respectability, regardless of what the reality may have been. Pride was important to many of the locals who struggled to rise above the mostly slum conditions and Richmond Police Station is all that remains of that attitude.

COMPARISON:

Richmond Police Station is one of a number of two-storey, contrasting brick Italianate style police stations in Victoria. Examples of this are the Police Station in Carlton, which also has an older lock-up, the Police station in Sale, Ballarat and Port Melbourne. However, Richmond Police Station is significantly distinguished by its place in what was once a grand civic strip of buildings, originally constructed in a uniform style that was intended to reflect the solid, progressive unity of Richmond's Government. It is also most unusual for a police station to be erected on the same strip as the post office. It is this aspect and the fact that the Police Station is the only intact remaining building from a once symbolically and functionally important group of government buildings that make it a fine contribution to Victoria's heritage.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA:

CRITERION A: The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

RECOMMENDATION

Richmond Police Station was built in 1878 as part of a civic strip comprising of the Town Hall, Court House and Post Office. The Lock-Up located at the rear is thought to have been erected in the 1860s and was moved to this site in 1872-3. Richmond Police Station is important because of the role it played in the colourful history of the community of Richmond. Police authority and local government were highly involved in the struggles of union development, industry and the political battles between the ALP working class and the conservative middle class of Richmond. The prominence of the building is representative of the high profile of police authority, in conjunction with local government in Richmond during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of architectural importance is the intact government complex including the police lock-up. Architectural details include polychrome brickwork, arched windows and stone work in the lock-up. A better and more intact example of this building type and style exists at Carlton (1878) and has been transferred to the Victorian Heritage Register. The Richmond Police Station does not warrant inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register as it is not of State significance and a more intact example of its type has been transferred to the Victorian Heritage Register. It is however of local significance. The Richmond Police Station has been removed from the Government Buildings Register and included in the Heritage Overlay of the relevant Planning Scheme.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Yarra - Richmond Conservation Study, John & Thurley O'Connor, Ros Coleman & Heather Wright, 1985; Yarra - City of Yarra Heritage Review, Allom Lovell & Associates, 1998; Yarra - City of Yarra Review of Heritage Overlay Areas, Graeme Butler & Associates, 2007;
Construction dates	1877,
Hermes Number	87752
Property Number	

Physical Description 2

see Building Identification Form; Known as 319-323 Bridge Road (Proclaim), shown as 333 Bridge Rd in Clause 43 schedule- paint control

Integrity

Good

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/>