
SPOTSWOOD PUMPING STATION

Location

2-18 BOOKER STREET SPOTSWOOD, HOBSONS BAY CITY

Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0145

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO6

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 3, 2005

What is significant?

The Spotswood Pumping Station completed in 1896 and built as the key component of Melbourne's first centralised sewerage system, was initiated by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works in 1892. Designed in the French classical revival style by engineer Christian Kussmaul, and constructed by contractor AG Shaw, the complex consists of a symmetrical arrangement of two pumping houses, with their associated boiler and coal bunker buildings, and two polygonal straining well houses which are constructed of red brick with contrasting cream detailing around three courtyards. The entrance to the central yard is flanked by imposing mansard towers. Important accretions include the two-storeyed, brick managing engineer's residence built in 1898, three WWII air raid shelters, two substations and a valve house. A unique collection of steam engineering equipment as well as tools, furniture and other objects, remain at the complex. Spotswood ceased operation in 1965, although sewage still flows under the site.

How is it significant?

The former Spotswood Pumping Station now managed by Scienceworks, is of historical, technical, architectural and social importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Spotswood Pumping Station is historically important as the key component of Melbourne's first centralised sewerage system which began operations in 1897 when the first connections between toilet and sewer pipe were made. The station is unique in Australia as an intact ensemble of buildings, sewerage pumping machinery, and objects. In terms of its integrity and rarity the complex has no parallel in Australia.

The Spotswood Pumping Station is technically important as an ambitious exercise in engineering that supplied the force to move millions of gallons of the city's sewage each day. Its 1901 English, Hathorn Davey steam engine, one of the most advanced pumping engines in the world at that time, is possibly the oldest extant engine of its type in Australia or Britain. With the 4 locally-made Austral Otis engines, the pumping installations at Spotswood form one of the largest collections of engines and devices functionally related to an industrial site in Australia and Britain. The station has further technical importance for its ability to demonstrate the processes of sewage treatment in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the machinery and associated tools chart the technological life of the complex from steam power to electricity.

The Spotswood Pumping Station is architecturally important as an extraordinary example of the Late French Empire style employed in an industrial complex, its decorative and formal qualities being illustrative of the grand tradition of nineteenth century industrial buildings built to celebrate the rise of technology.

Spotswood Pumping Station has significant social associations with the benefits its sewerage system brought to Melburnians; namely basic sanitation, and a dramatic improvement to its citizen's public health. The former managing engineer's residence, and the bacteriologist's laboratory (occupied by the only women ever employed on site), are both socially important for their associations with key staff and their specific roles.

[Source: Victorian Heritage Register.]

Hermes Number 8791

Property Number

History

Spotswood Pumping Station was built by the Metropolitan and Melbourne Board of Works (MMBW) in response to the city's sanitation problems. In 1892, the MMBW purchased land for the Spotswood Pumping Station, with construction commencing in 1894 (The Age, 2003; Pyke, Miller, & Dingle, 1990; Christoff, 1985). The design was undertaken by the engineer-in-chief, William Thwaites with some input from James Mansergh, while architect Cristian Kussmaul created the French Gothic design (Museums Victoria, 2023). The Spotswood Pumping Station was central to Melbourne's sewerage system and the most technologically advanced element. All waste travelled to the Spotswood Pumping Station, from which it was pumped into the Outfall Sewer and onto Werribee Treatment Plant (Pyke, Miller, & Dingle, 1990). The operation of the pumping station did not change to a large degree over the 60 odd years of its use (1895 to 1964), except in the volumes of waste that it pumped and a major change from steam to electric engines. The Spotswood Pumping Station closed down in 1964 when the Brooklyn Pumping Station opened to take over waste management and the Spotswood Pumping Station soon fell into disrepair (Christoff, 1985). A new use for the structure was finally initiated with the construction of the Science and Technology Museum also known as Scienceworks, opening in 1992. Scienceworks is run by Museums Victoria and has incorporated the Spotswood Pumping Station into its educational structure (Museums Victoria, 2023).

The New Structure likely related to the utilisation of the Spotswood Pumping Station and the associated upgrades the site underwent in the early to mid-20th century. Based on the limited subsurface investigations of the New Structure, the history of the structure as well as its relationship to the Spotswood Pumping Station is inconclusive

at this stage.

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/>