Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building), Porter Street, Prahran

Heritage Place: Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building)
Address: 90 Greville Street, Prahran
HO Reference: HO95
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 5 April 2024

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Bulte and McPherson (1895-1896)
W. Barry (1897 additions)
Year of Construction: 1895-1896, 1897



Photograph of Prahran Railway Station down-side station building (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022)



Location map and extent of HO95.

Heritage Group: Transport – Rail
Heritage Type: Station Building

Key Theme: Transport and communications
Key Sub-theme: Railways – Developing state railway systems in the late nineteenth century

Significance Level: Local

Controls:	☐	External paint controls	☐	Internal alteration controls	☐	Tree controls
	☐	Include on Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐	Outbuildings and fences not exempt
	■	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	■	Solar energy system controls

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Prahran Railway Station (down-side/Sandringham bound station building), fronting Porter Street at 90 Greville Street, Prahran, is significant. The height, built form, scale, chimneys, fenestration, and materiality of the late nineteenth-century station building and platform is of local significance. Later alterations and additions are not significant, including the bike lockup, cast iron light posts and palm tree.

How is it significant?

The Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) is historically and aesthetically significant to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) is of historical significance as a piece of public infrastructure related to the population increase and expanding modes of transport within the suburb of Prahran during the late nineteenth century. The station building is also historically significant as one of multiple late nineteenth century remnant station buildings on the Brighton Beach Line, demonstrating the grown of the suburban railway network in this period. (Criterion A)

The Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) is of aesthetic significance as a highly intact late-Victorian railway station building and associated platform. Physical features of the building which contribute to the aesthetic significance of the building include its form and scale, polychromatic masonry brickwork with tuckpointing, hipped roof form with corrugated iron sheeting, verandah with cast iron pillars, and substantial brick chimneys. The brick platform with bluestone edging adds further to the heritage setting and character of the station building. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) is of historical significance as a piece of public infrastructure related to the population increase and expanding modes of transport within the suburb of Prahran during the late nineteenth century. The station building is also historically significant as one of multiple early nineteenth century remnant station buildings on the Brighton Beach Line, demonstrating the grown of the suburban railway network in this period.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.

C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or* natural *places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) is of aesthetic significance as a highly intact late-Victorian railway station building and associated platform. Physical features of the building which contribute to the aesthetic significance of the building include its form and scale, polychromatic masonry brickwork with tuckpointing, hipped roof form with corrugated iron sheeting, verandah with cast iron pillars, and substantial brick chimneys. The brick platform with bluestone edging adds further to the heritage setting and character of the station building.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
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 the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- ### Physical Analysis

The Prahran Railway Station consists of a double tracked, bi-directional railway line with raised side platforms aligned on a north-south axis. The railway line is located at grade with the surrounding streets and includes a level crossing to the north of the platforms at Greville Street. The two platforms consist of painted brick laid with a Common Bond. The platform coping is finished with reinforced concrete on the trackside and with textured bluestone at the north end. The south extent of both platforms includes bluestone retaining walls set into the sloped

landscape. The platforms are finished with an asphalt surface. A station building is included on both platforms. The following analysis focusses on the down-side platform which is subject to the HO control.

The subject station building is located on the east side (down-side) platform. The single-storey structure consists of a dark brown face brick laid in a Flemish Bond which is tuck pointed. Face red brickwork with black special bricks for flush sill courses mirror the arched fenestration form. Entry to the building and platform is located at the centred arched opening on the east elevation. The entrance is set at a lower grade than Porter Street and is accessible via ramps running the length of the building. The ramp is demarcated by a low face red brick wall with a concrete cap. The east elevation features four additional arched openings that have since been infilled with brickwork in a sympathetic colour.

The down-side station building features a simple hipped roof clad with red corrugated sheet metal. Two di-chrome face brick corbelled chimneys extend from the roof. The wider southern chimney includes four withes. The north end of the building features an arched wall and roof emphasising its form. The platform side is protected under a bullnose verandah and features large timber doors with raised panels. The verandah features fluted cast-iron posts and a wrought-iron frame with decorative lacework.

A partially enclosed steel structure with an arched roof used for secure bicycle parking and a Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) are located north of the station building and are included within the extent of the HO. The length of the platforms is demarcated by black steel post and panel fencing. Additional platform elements include red cast-iron light posts refitted with contemporary lighting.

The station building is located at the north end of the platform which extend significantly to the south. The overall complex is bounded by the level crossing at Greville Street to the north, and Porter Street to the east. It is located within an area characterised by medium-density residential and commercial development. Recent alterations to the down-side station building includes the infilling of the arched openings fronting Porter Street. The down-side station building, and platform have also undergone additional ancillary upgrades including lighting, security cameras and signage required for the daily operation of the railway station. The down-side station building, and associated platform are in good condition overall and of high integrity.

- Alterations and Additions

- Arched openings on the 1896 station building fronting Porter Street infilled with sympathetic brickwork;
- Slate roof replaced on the station 1896 building with corrugated sheet metal;
- Arched steel structure relocated to the north extent of the east platform (2011);
- Black steel post and panel fencing added to the station boundary (after 2014); and
- Standard ancillary station building and platform upgrades for lighting, safety, signage and equipment.

History

- ### Historical Context

The area presently known as Stonnington is the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. Formerly characterised by pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot) and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), this once thriving habitat provided Traditional Owners access to a range of water, plant and animal resources integral to their way of life. The onset of colonialism not only saw the transformation of these landscapes, but also Woi wurrung and Bunurong displacement through violence and land dispossession, as is evident in the establishment of George Langhorne's Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve along the southern banks of the Yarra River in present day Prahran and Toorak. Operating under the guise of 'protection', this reserve ultimately became a focal point for segregation, dislocation, and colonial control of Aboriginal people's lives (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31).

Despite decades of ongoing dispossession, the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington has an enduring presence to this day. Through continued resistance and the passing down of Indigenous knowledge, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people maintain an ongoing connection to, and care for Country.

European settlement in what would become the suburb of Prahran grew gradually following the 1849-1850 Crown Land Sales, which saw the subdivision of land bounded by present day Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road into fifty-one allotments (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). George Langhorne, the Commissioner of an 1837 Aboriginal mission in the area south of the Yarra River around Punt Hill, called this area 'Pura-ra-ran', a compound of two Bunurong words believed to mean land partially surrounded by water (O'Callaghan 1922, 54). In 1840 the name was changed to Prahran for official use.

While higher ground overlooking the Yarra to the north of Prahran was quickly acquired and settled by the colonial elite following the 1840 Crown Land Sales, the majority of present-day Prahran, being of poorly drained low-lying land characterised by wetlands, was primarily purchased by land speculators. These areas were subsequently and re-sold for farming, industry and housing the working classes. The high level of natural deposits of alluvial clay in the area meant that pockets of low-lying land were used as brickyards (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 17). By 1856, the land encompassing Prahran was primarily characterised by a scattered series of timber and brick workers cottages set on narrow allotments to the west of Williams Road, while land to the east and south remained undeveloped or in use as paddocks (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The area was also distinguished by its strong market garden character during this period, with much of the land awaiting development being used for cultivation during the 1850s and 1860s (Malone 1983, 12).

The area underwent a period of rapid change following the 1880s land boom, which spurred the replacement of many small, mid-nineteenth century cottages with more ornate, single-fronted Victorian and Edwardian style terraces that could house the influx of factory workers as part of the area's growing brick manufacturing, food processing and textiles industries around Chapel Street and Commercial Road. Additionally, upper-middle class enclaves and mansion estates in the formerly undeveloped area of eastern Prahran were also developed to house the wealthy settling adjacent to the suburb of Armadale (Malone 2000, 20). Comprising higher ground with

no major drainage problems, this area attracted comparably wealthier residents (Malone 2003, 1). These transformations were also compounded by the construction of impressively detailed shops along Chapel Street, solidifying the strip as a popular retail and commercial centre by the late nineteenth century (Allom Lovell 2000, 45).

Pockets of the suburb continued to be used as a centre for small-scale manufacturing into the early- and mid-twentieth centuries. Although business restructuring and trade liberalisation in the late twentieth century ultimately resulted in the closure and demolition of many of these factories, built remnants of this era can be seen at the c.1910 Former Kia-ora Cordial factory chimney at 181-187 High Street, Prahran and at the former milliner factory at Grattan Street, Prahran (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 95). Today, Prahran's working-class history is best represented through the relatively modest late nineteenth and early twentieth century single fronted cottages and dwellings that dominate the suburb's building stock. Meanwhile, traces of late nineteenth century middle-class residential development are best seen in the grand Victorian dwellings adjacent to Armadale along Grandview Grove.

• Place History

The land on which the Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) currently sits comprised Crown Portion 40 during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Surveyor General's Department 1849). Consisting of 34-3/8 acres bounded by Commercial Road, Chapel Street, High Street and the line of Hinton Lane, the portion was purchased by land speculator William Highett in May 1850, who was interested in selling the land quickly for a modest profit (Malone 1999, 4). The lot was consequently resold and subdivided into smaller sections by 1856. Characterised by small streets and narrow allotments, the nature of the subdivision was designed to give developers a maximum return and to provide cheap cottages for rent for the working class (Malone 1999, 3). Indeed, by 1856, the allotment was characterised by a scattering of cottages set on small allotments (Surveyor-General's Department 1856) (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. 1856 map showing the approximate location of Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) (then occupied by residential buildings). *Source:* Public Record Office Victoria.

The development of Prahran Railway Station was spearheaded in the late 1850s when the Melbourne and Suburban Railway acquired a strip of land from owners in Lot 40 for the extension of the railway line between Princes Bridge Railway Station in Melbourne and South Yarra (Malone 1999, 2; Context Pty Ltd 2009, 65). This effectively split the allotment into three sections – east, railway and west (Malone 1999, 2). While the railway station, then known as Greville Street Station, was opened in 1858, the extant station buildings were not erected until after the Victorian Government purchased the railway in 1878 as part of its project to build a line through Oakleigh to Gippsland (The Herald 1861, 5; Context Pty Ltd 2009, 65). Construction of the present station subsequently began in 1895 following calls for improvements to the dilapidated state of the existing 1858 east station building throughout the late twentieth century (The Age 1892, 7; Prahran Chronicle 1894, 3; Prahran Chronicle 1895, 2; The Herald 1895, 1). Completed in 1896 by builders Bulte and McPherson at a cost of £600, the new station building initially comprised a small building and unenclosed verandah. It subsequently provoked backlash from local residents, with many news reports noting the modest and unimpressive nature of the works (Prahran Chronicle 1896, 2; Prahran Chronicle 1896, 3; Nigel Lewis and Associates 1983):

> The small mushroom-shaped building recently erected on the down side at the Prahran railway station has not been received with feelings of satisfaction by the citizens. Since its construction it has proved the medium for many jokes, expressions of wonderment and all round surprise on the part of the travelling public, whilst the query, “What are the Commissioners givin' us?' has also been thrown about broadcast (Prahran Chronicle, 6th July 1892, pg. 2).

Substantial additions were subsequently carried out over the next year in a sympathetic style and included a sixty-foot extension of the building in 1897 (The Argus 1897, 7; The Prahran Telegraph 1897, 5) (see Figure 2).

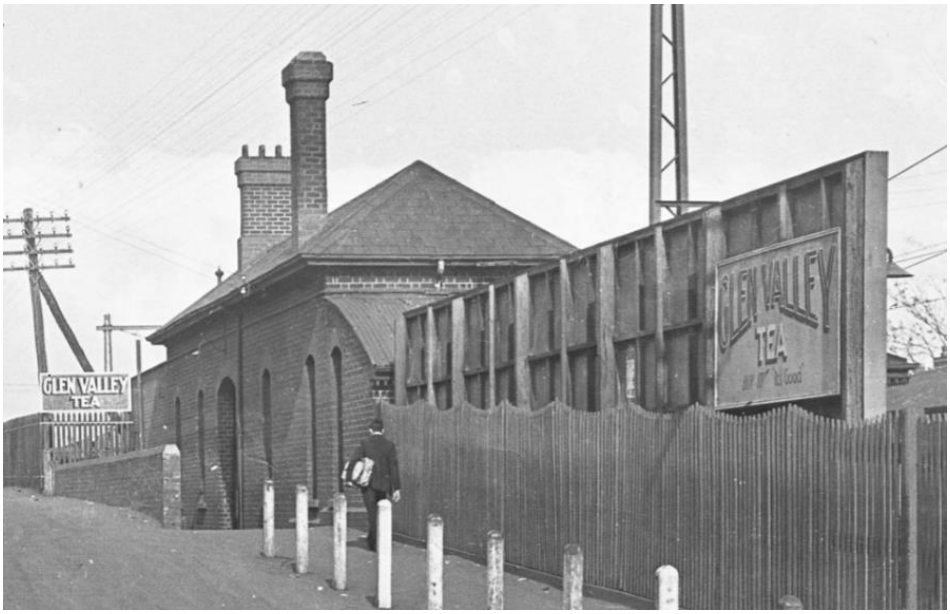


Figure 2. Early photograph of Prahran Station Building (east side), date unknown. *Source*: Public Record Office Victoria).

The Victorian Railways' electrification of railway lines in the early twentieth century saw further calls for improvements to the overall railway station, particularly the declining state of the west side station building, however works were not carried out due to World War I (Prahran Chronicle 1915, 2; Prahran Chronicle 1916, 5). In 1939, a new station building was finally erected on the west side following agitation from the Prahran Council (The Argus 1939, 14; The Argus 1939, 9). This building is not included in the HO.



Figure 3. c.1930 photograph of Prahran Station Building (east side) and platform advertisement, *Source*: Public Record Office Victoria.



Figure 4. c.1940s photograph of Prahran Station Building (east side) and platform advertisement*. Source:* Stonnington History Centre).

Contemporary alterations to the east side station building include the filling in of arched window openings fronting Porter Street, as well as additional ancillaries including lighting, security cameras and signage. The current shelter situated north of the station building was moved to its current position in 2011. It remains unclear if this was formerly part of the site or if it is of a more recent construction.

Comparative Analysis

The Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) is included in the City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay as an important example amongst a series of Victorian era railway stations on the Brighton Beach Line. Whilst it is individually significant, the railway station building on the down-side platform is directly comparable with other significant examples represented in both the municipality and in surrounding metropolitan municipalities.

Comparable examples include:

- **Windsor Railway Station Complex, 167 Peel Street, Windsor, City of Stonnington (HO92 and VHR No. H1600).** The Windsor Railway Complex at 167 Peel Street, Windsor, and the Prahran Railway Station were both constructed in the same period of rail development in late nineteenth century. However, the Windsor Railway Complex was constructed in 1885-86, some ten years prior to the completion of the Prahran Railway Station. Comparable physical elements include di-chrome brick masonry, as well as platform shelters that utilise hipped roof forms and cast-iron pillars supporting deep verandahs. However, the Windsor Railway Complex is a significantly more substantial complex than the Prahran Railway Station, with multiple original buildings dating to the late nineteenth century remaining intact along with a footbridge overpass. As a result, the Windsor Railway Complex is of a higher level of significance than the Prahran Railway Station building, as indicated by its inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR).
- **North Brighton Railway Station (Down Side), Bay Street, North Brighton Railway Station, Bayside City Council (HO59, and precinct HO651).** The North Brighton Railway Station (Down Side) on Bay Street Brighton, is recorded as an individually significant building in the broader HO651 Brighton Beach Railway Precinct. The down side railway building is comparable as a station building constructed on the Brighton Beach line in 1895, in the same period as the Prahran Railway Station building. Both buildings are physically comparable, sharing similar built features including di-chrome brick masonry, a verandah with cast iron pillars and corrugated iron roofing, and a hipped roof form. A key difference, however, is the roofing material, with the North Brighton Railway Station building fitted with a slate roof and the Prahran Railway Station building equipped with a later replacement painted galvanized iron roof. Of the two, the Prahran Railway Building is larger and more elaborate in terms of its detailing, with the down side station building at the North Brighton Railway Station appearing very modest in scale. However, both buildings comparable as highly intact examples of late nineteenth century railway structures with comparable historical elements and aesthetic features.

Although there are many Victorian era station buildings protected by municipal heritage overlays across the state of Victoria, there are few comparable examples that share a similar built form to the Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building). The two examples addressed above were constructed in the same period as the Prahran Railway Station (down-side station

building) on the same line as the Prahran Station, utilising similar physical elements and forms. However, when compared to the two other examples, the Prahran Railway Station (down-side station building) is of local heritage significance as an intact nineteenth century railway building.

References

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Victorian Railways. n.d. *Prahran Station and Hoardings for Phoenix Silver Plate and Hoyts Deluxe Theatre; GLS; Station; Suburban.* Negative. Photographic Collection: Railway Negatives: Alpha-numeric Systems. VPRS 12800/P0003. Public Record Office Victoria.

Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain as well as desktop resources.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

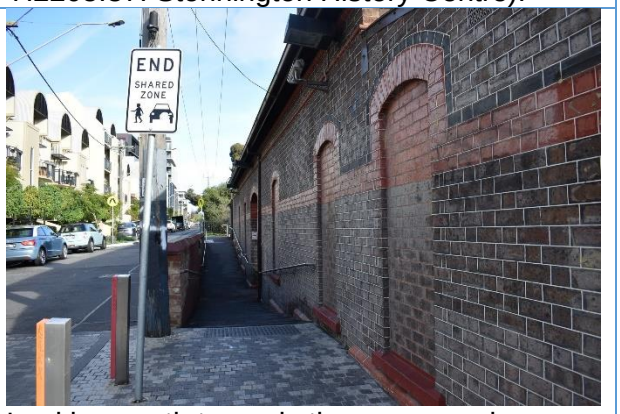
Images



1972 photograph of Prahran Railway Station, the east side station building can be seen on the left (source: Cooke, Mardi. 1972. Prahran Railway Station (viewed from Porter Street). Graphic materials. Prahran Collections, ref no. PH2205.37. Stonnington History Centre).



Oblique view of the station building from Porter Street (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



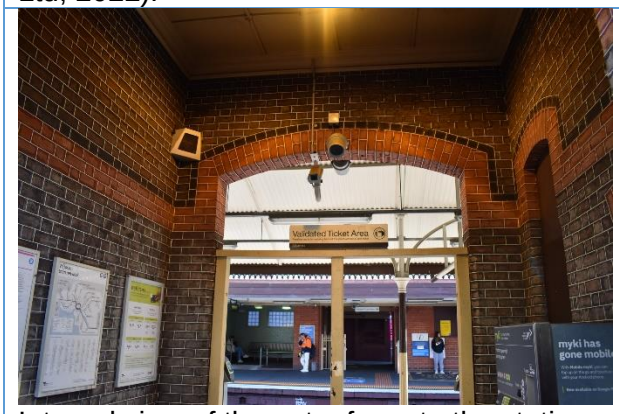
Looking south towards the ramps and entrance to the station building (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



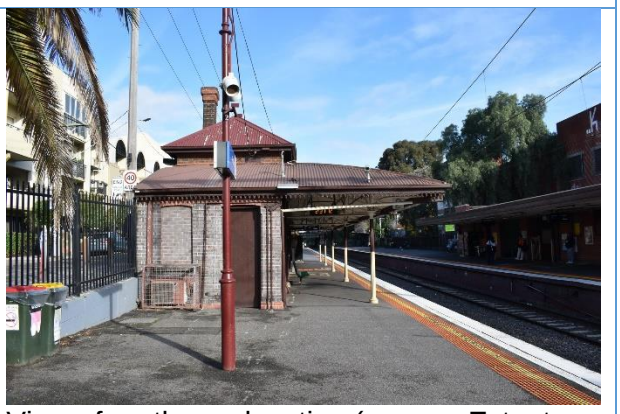
Oblique view of the eastern elevation of the station building (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



View of chimney on the station building (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



Internal view of the entry foyer to the station building, looking west (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



View of northern elevation (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



Detail view of the verandah and roof form on northern elevation of the station building (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



Verandah trussing and pillar construction on the station building verandah (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Nigel Lewis and Associates, 1983.
Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd (Benjamin Petkov, Vivian Lu and Reuel Balmadres), 2022.
Quality assurance review conducted by: Michelle Bashta and Corinne Softley, 2022.