

H0229

1050- 1054 WHITEHORSE ROAD, BOX HILL

Building:	Fire Station		
Address:	1050 -54 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill	Melway Map Ref:	47 E9

Building Type:	Fire Station and residence	Construction Date:	1935
Architect:	S.P Calder and H.S Winbush	Builder:	Owen D Hams



Image: Box Hill Fire Station, north elevation.
Source: HLCD Pty Ltd, 2009.



Image: Aerial view.
Source: City of Whitehorse, 2009.

History:

The number and distribution of Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) buildings underwent significant change during the 1920s and up until the 1940s. This was due to the period of transition from the use of horse and cart to motorised fire vehicles. Stations with facilities for motorised vehicles could service a wider area than those previously relying on horse and cart for access to fire emergencies. A number of stations therefore became redundant because there were no longer so many Fire Stations required within a particular area. A number of existing fire station buildings also became redundant as they could not be suitably upgraded to house motorised vehicles due to various building and site limitations.¹

The design of fire station buildings also changed significantly after the 1920s. Oakden and Ballantyne had originally been the Metropolitan Fire Board architects, and their designs were often in red brick in the Federation style from the 1890s to about 1915 and then in the domestic revival style from 1915 until the 1920s. The designs often included stucco bands and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade wording expressed on light colour bands in contrast to the red brick. In many respects the fire stations resembled domestic buildings although in a much larger form, with the garage doors dominating the front façade.² The domestic design of fire stations in the 1920s was in response to the vision of the then General Fire Chief to make the suburban fire station a suitable work place for the men, and a suitable home for the fireman's family. Hence, the strong presence of residences, gardens and other domestic amenities. After the 1920s, use of designs

¹ Sally Wilde, *Life under the Bells: a history of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Melbourne 1891-1991*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, p. 80.

² *Ibid.* p. 84.

by other architects charted the departure from the red brick domestic style architecture and to modernist style more industrial looking buildings in cream brick. It was not until architects, Seabrook & Fildes's contemporary and industrial design of the Brunswick Fire Station in 1936 that fire station design moved away from the conservative domestic style to a more European industrial modernist style.³

The fire station building located at 1050 – 1054 Whitehorse Road was constructed in 1935 and replaced an earlier Box Hill fire station located in Watts Street. The need to replace the earlier fire station was most likely due to the limitations of the size of the building and access for new motorised vehicles. This earlier building is still extant but in a much altered state. The former station was later used as a dancing hall and function hall⁴ and as the local ANA hall and office (1940-1992)

Box Hill was situated in what was known as the 'C' district which included stations from Hawthorn (District Station), Kew, Surrey Hills, Canterbury, Camberwell, Malvern, Oakleigh and East Malvern, with later stations established post 1925, at Ringwood, Croydon, Nunawading and Waverley.

The new Box Hill Fire Station No. 20 was opened in October 1935.⁵ The cream brick building on Whitehorse Road was designed by architects, Calder and Winbush and ceased the traditional use of red brick that had been used for many earlier fire station buildings.⁶ The inter-war building included an onsite residence adjacent to the main fire station building.

Harry Winbush of Calder and Winbush went on to independently design a number of other fire stations in Melbourne.⁷

In 1992, a new garage was added to the Box Hill Fire Station at the rear on the southern side to enable easier exit by fire brigade vehicles onto Linsley Street. The original Whitehorse Road exit for vehicles is no longer used. The building is still in use by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

Description:

The Fire Brigade building in Whitehorse Road is an asymmetrical cream brick, double storey, inter-war styled building. It is a combination of the domestic revival and streamlined moderne inter war styles. The strongest visual element of the front façade (Whitehorse Road) is the streamline moderne styled balcony bay. This bay includes the original double entrance for fire vehicles from Whitehorse Road. The roof of the bay provides a balcony for the front first floor rooms and the brick parapet forms a balustrade to the balcony. The streamlined modern bay is cream brick with horizontal banding of contrasting brown brick. A thick brown brick trim is used as capping to the balcony wall. The bay has an eight-paned double casement window on the end wall facing Linsley Street. On the first floor of the Whitehorse Road elevation there is one single window to the west side and a set of four windows above the original fire engine entrance. On the front elevation, adjacent to the balcony bay is an eight-paned double casement window on the ground

³ Graeme Butler, *Former Essendon Fire Station Building Citation*, City of Moonee Valley, 2000, not paginated.

⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Lothian, Melbourne, 1978, p. 172.

⁵ Box Hill Historical Society *Those Were the Days 1930-1960*, p.12; Sally Wilde, *Life under the Bells: a history of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Melbourne 1891-1991*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, p.109.

⁶ Lemon, op.cit., p.172.

⁷ http://www.architecture.com.au/i-cms_file?page=4048/20thCenturyRegister.htm⁷

floor facing Whitehorse Road (in the north).

On the east side of the front façade is a single storey residence set back from the main frontage of the building. This section provides the more domestic appearance. The residence has one door, flanked by a small single four-paned window on the Whitehorse Road façade. It has a matching gabled terracotta clad roof.

There is a matching cream-coloured, low brick fence which is offset by a small hedge along the Whitehorse Road frontage. This is consistent with the inter war style.

On the Linsley Street façade there is a recent addition of a porch supported by red columns with four steps leading from the footpath to the building entrance. The new garage at the rear of the fire station includes a new vehicular exit into Linsley Street. At the rear of the fire station is a steel tower with an antenna attached.

Comparative Examples:

The examples discussed may demonstrate similar aspects of heritage significance to the City of Whitehorse. Those already in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme have a HO number. Others are drawn from *Final Heritage Assessments Report*, HLCD Pty Ltd, 2010 and *Whitehorse Heritage Review 2001, Places of Potential Cultural Heritage Significance*, Ward, 2001 which both include properties being reviewed by Council for potential future inclusion in the Heritage Overlay. In some cases where the use of the property is significant, comparisons may be made with places which are not recommended for heritage protection but provide a historical context for analysis.

While the earlier Box Hill Fire Station is still extant at 8 Watts Street, it is substantially altered (the original parapet, side walls and openings have been removed or altered) and no longer distinguishable as a former fire station.

The only other comparable fire station within the City of Whitehorse is the Surrey Hills fire station, at 1 Balmoral Crescent constructed in 1925 (included in the heritage overlay HO195). The building is single storey red brick in the domestic revival style. There are residential and office wings either side of a contrasting projecting bay with stucco decoration housing the double garage. The style of this building is substantially different to the 1935 Box Hill example which demonstrates a distinct move away from this domestic revival style. The Surrey Hills Fire Station is no longer in use by the MFB and is now used as private residential units.

While the Box Hill fire station is later than the Surrey Hills building it is possibly one of the earliest examples of a cream brick fire station building in metropolitan Melbourne. It predates other notable cream brick MFB buildings such as the former Camberwell Fire Station No.23., 578 Camberwell Road, Camberwell (1938); Port Melbourne Fire Station No. 41., 425 Williamstown Road (1939) [still operational as a fire station]; and the former Brighton Fire Station No. 32, 10 Boxshall Street, Brighton (1939).

Earlier inter-war period stations that predate the Box Hill example, although constructed in red brick, include the Surrey Hills Fire Station; the former Carlton fire station No. 3, 650 Swanston Street, Carlton (1929) by architect Cedric Ballantyne; and the former North Essendon fire station No. 52, Cnr Bulla Road and Woodland Street, Essendon North, (1931) architect unknown.

Out of these examples, the Essendon North building is the most stylistically similar example to the Box Hill building. The Essendon example is predominantly domestic revival style with a single storey residence adjoining a double storey brigade building. However, it does not have any streamline moderne features like the Box Hill building.

The Box Hill MFB building is a good example and possibly the only example of the transitional period when fire station design merged between traditional domestic revival style and the streamlined modern or European industrial design.

Significance:

What is significant?

The property at 1050-1054 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill containing the 1935 Box Hill Fire Station and residence. The 1992 garage extension does not contribute to the significance of the place.

How is it significant?

The property at 1050-1054 Box Hill is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Whitehorse.

Why is it significant?

The Box Hill Fire Station is of historical significance to the City of Whitehorse as an important civic building within the Box Hill Centre. In 1935 it replaced the earlier Box Hill fire station which was located in Watt Street and demonstrates the continuing importance of the Whitehorse Road and Station Street area as the centre for civic activities. (Criterion A)

The property is of historical significance as it demonstrates changing fire station design which responded to the implementation of new technology and facilities. The design of fire station buildings reflects the change from horse-drawn carts and primitive fire equipment to motorised vehicles. The Box Hill Fire Station also demonstrates another design change which involved the inclusion of residential premises on fire station sites. This reflected the approach taken by the MFB in the early 20th Century. It is important as a public building that demonstrates the principal characteristics of metropolitan fire stations from the 1930s era. (Criterion D)

The Box Hill Fire Station is of aesthetic significance for its transitional style demonstrating attributes of the domestic revival style used by the MFB in the 1920s and the streamlined moderne style used in the 1930s. The pitched tile domestic style roofs are more typical of the 1920s style buildings while the use of cream brick and the curved garage bay to the front of the building are more characteristic of the style of buildings developed in the early 1930s. In this regard the building is also of historical significance for its demonstration of the shift between the conservative domestic style and the modernist industrial period for fire station design in Victoria. Box Hill Fire Station is one of the earliest examples of cream brick fire stations, which marked the move away from the use of the traditional red brick. The 1992 garage extension does not contribute to the aesthetic significance of the place. (Criteria B & E)

Historical Images:



Image: Whitehorse Road Elevation with the attached residence on the left.
Source: Box Hill Historical Society *Those Were the Days 1930-1960*, p.12.



Image: Linsley Street elevation with the 1992 garage extension.
Source: Box Hill Historical Society *Those Were the Days 1960-1994*, p.18.

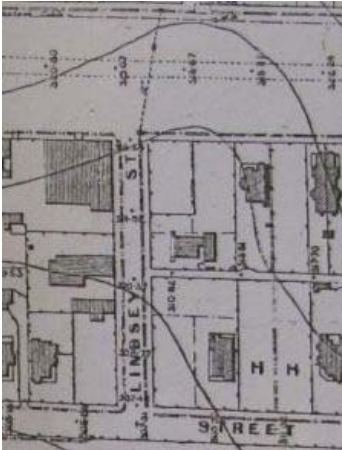


Image: MMBW 160' to 1 inch plan Municipal of Box Hill, c 1920.
Source: State Library of Victoria.