BOX HILL COMMERCIAL PRECINCT, WHITEHORSE RD, BOX HILL   HO NO   244

Citation amended 31 August 2015

CONTRIBUTORY BUILDING.

EXISTING INDIVIDUAL PLACE IN HERITAGE OVERLAY

PROPOSED OVERLAY BOUNDARY

WHITEHORSE ROAD

MARKET ST

STATION ST
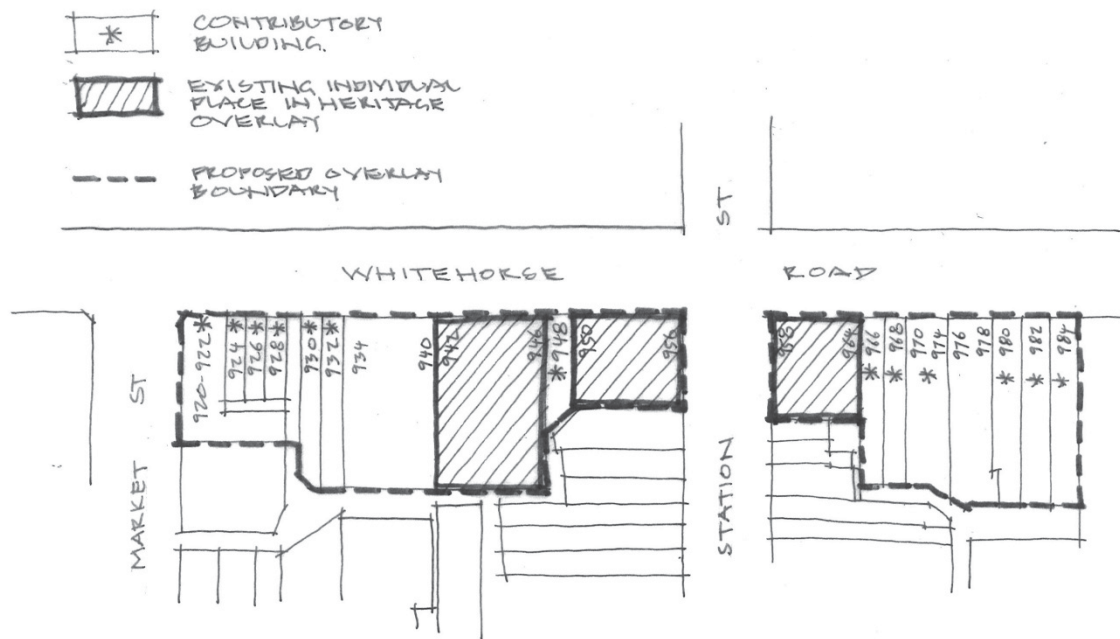
Background

Whitehorse Road between Nelson Road and Middleborough Road Box Hill was listed in Andrew Ward's 'Whitehorse Heritage Review 2001' as a potential Heritage Overlay Precinct. In 2002 Graeme Butler's 'City of Whitehorse Heritage Review: Heritage Overlay Precincts' confirmed the Heritage Overlay potential of three Whitehorse Road sub-precincts, including the commercial precinct. The others were the civic and residential precinct and the civic precinct.

The proposed commercial precinct included properties on the north side of Whitehorse Road west of Station Street and the south side of Whitehorse Road from Market Street in the west to the east of Station Street.

Butler described the commercial precinct as containing 'a core of early commercial and public buildings at or near the Whitehorse Road and Station Street corner.' It was assessed as significant as the early commercial core of the City of Box Hill with Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war commercial buildings representing major phases of early commercial development.

In 2003 the City of Whitehorse Council reviewed a preliminary assessment of the merits of the recommended precincts for heritage protection[29] and decided that the historic significance of the area relates more to its use as a thriving commercial area than the retention of existing building fabric. It was stated that it was not necessary to retain all the buildings to maintain the historical significance and a heritage overlay was therefore not appropriate.

In 2011 Coleman Architects were commissioned to appraise the remaining recommended precincts that have not been included in a Heritage Overlay, considering previous comments and recommendation that have been made. This included the Box Hill Commercial Precinct.

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[29] Minutes from Council meeting, 27 January 2004

Review and Recommendation

The commercial centre of Box Hill developed at the corner of Whitehorse Road and Station Street particularly after the railway line through Box Hill opened late in 1882. This was located just to the south of Whitehorse Road, with the station located at the west side of Station Street. Both sides of Whitehorse Road operated independently, with two way traffic operating in both sections of road until 1937, and a wide reserve was located in between.

The north side of Whitehorse Road, within the commercial precinct, has undergone significant development since previous recommendations have been made. This has resulted in a loss of integrity of the early commercial streetscape. The south side of Whitehorse Road, to the east and west of Station Street, has been less significantly altered, and as a result retains much of its late 19th and early 20th century streetscape. Despite alterations to this collection of street facades, the building stock from these periods has principally been retained and is illustrative of the main commercial centre of the City of Whitehorse. Together these buildings form a recognisable commercial precinct from the 1890s to the 1930s period.

Three properties in the proposed Box Hill Commercial Precinct are already listed individually in the Heritage Overlay. These include:

- former Colonial Gas Association Building, 942-946 Whitehorse Road (HO91)
- former Railway Hotel, 950-956 Whitehorse Road (HO92)
- shops, 958-964 Whitehorse Road (HO93)

The remainder of the properties in the recommended precinct are contributory but are not of sufficient significance to warrant individual protection.

The large reserve in between the two parallel sections of Whitehorse Road was developed as a central plantation from the 1880s. It separated the north and south sides of Whitehorse Road and developed as an individual garden precinct with the planting of trees and erection of memorials and structures. It does not relate specifically to the commercial streetscape on either side of Whitehorse Road.

It is recommended that the Box Hill Commercial Precinct comprises the south side of Whitehorse Road, from 920 to 984 Whitehorse Road.

History

Contextual History

Many of the main roads in the Parish of Nunawading were developed from stock routes under the guidance of the Nunawading District Roads Board which was established in 1857.[30] There was no indication of a track in the vicinity of the present Whitehorse Road on early 1850s maps because it was marshy and unsuitable,[31] however it developed not long after as the most suitable route from the city to the east. It was surveyed as a three-chain (c60 metre) road, the Great Gipps Land Road,[32] which ran along the northern boundary of allotments acquired by Patrick Trainor in 1851, abutting the eastern boundary of Elgar's Special Survey. It was at this intersection that Trainor built the Whitehorse Hotel c1853, and the road acquired this name.[33]

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[30] A Lemon, Box Hill, p 22
[31] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 6
[32] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 15
[33] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 17

By 1861 a 'fast rising township' was developing along the Great Gipps Land Road, with a store, blacksmith, butcher's shop, school and other establishments.[34] The first post office and public hall were established on the north side of this road and many people bought land along its length, expecting it to become the main route to the east. Whitehorse Road was proclaimed a main road as far as Lilydale in 1866 and the first toll gate was set up that year, just to the west of Elgar Road.[35] In 1871 development along Whitehorse Road spread from the Whitehorse Hotel, Elgar Road, to the Sagoe School at Middleborough Road, and part of the road was metalled.[36]

In the 1880s a centre plantation was created in Whitehorse Road on the actual road surface used at the time. There was a parallel track along the northern edge and a southern road was formed in 1884.[37] Both these roads continued as separate streets, each with two way traffic until 1937.[38] As a result the two sides of Whitehorse Road were separated both physically and visually. Eastern and western ovals were then formed between the two roads, one either side of the Station Street intersection, and these were fenced in 1889.[39] Trees were planted in these ovals at various times from the 1890s, memorials were erected and structures and buildings were constructed, including a rotunda in 1911 and a memorial RSL hall and club room in the easternmost reserve in 1920. The latter was subsequently used as a library for twenty years from 1951.

The extension of the railway line from Camberwell to Lilydale in 1882 put the isolated Box Hill settlement within easy reach of the city and resulted in large scale land development and subdivision particularly around the railway stations. The line ran parallel to, and south of, Whitehorse Road with the Box Hill station located at Station Street. In 1889 a tramway along Station Street, from Whitehorse Road to Doncaster, was opened and ran until 1896.[40] This reinforced the township centre of Box Hill at the corner of Whitehorse Road and Station Street.

Place History

The commercial centre on the south side of Whitehorse Road, Box Hill was established on Crown Allotments 28A and 29A in the Parish of Nunawading. Allotment 28A, to the east of Station Street was acquired by Francis Cooke in 1854 and allotment 29A, to the west of Station Street, by William Hill in 1853. The latter abutted Patrick Trainor's allotment at the corner of Elgar Road. The line of the western portion of Whitehorse Road originated from Elgar's survey of 1841 and was one chain (c20 metres) in width, however the 1852 survey of Nunawading surveyed the remainder of Whitehorse Road and provided for a width of three chains (c60 metres).[41]

The extension of the railway from Camberwell to Lilydale in 1882, and the construction of the Box Hill station in Station Street just to the south of Whitehorse Road, coincided with the Land Boom throughout Melbourne, and resulted in the construction of new and substantial buildings in the main thoroughfare of Box Hill. A commercial building had been erected at the east corner of Station Street in c1878 by Alfred Serpell as a drapers and general store[42]

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[34] *South Bourke Standard*, 28 June 1861
[35] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 47
[36] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 63
[37] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, pp 78-79
[38] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 173
[39] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 99
[40] R Green, *The First Electric Road: a history of the Box Hill and Doncaster tramway*, pp 53-63
[41] A Ward, 'Heritage and Conservation Study', p 132
[42] E Perrin, *Professional and Business People in Box Hill to 1925*, p 7

and the first bank in Box Hill was opened in this building in 1883.[43] Further east, small timber buildings began to appear in the late 1870s.[44] Silas Padgham owned the land to the west of Station Street and on this he built the Railway Hotel in 1882 to coincide with the opening of the railway.[45] This was then leased to Alfred Rawlings (Shire President 1883), who sub-let the hotel to Annie Meader and in 1883 built a butcher's shop and residence next door. A consortium, including Rawlings and Serpell, floated a company to build a substantial recreation hall, west of the hotel, and this was erected in 1885. [46]

In the 1890s premises to the east of Serpell's building included a newsagent, then post office and savings bank, run by William Ellingworth from 1893; a branch of the successful grocer, Moran and Cato from 1897, a watchmaker, saddler, confectioner and draper.[47] By 1905 the 'Business Area' of Box Hill had been firmly established on the south side of Whitehorse Road, either side of Station Street.[48] Photographs show that a group of two storey brick buildings had replaced earlier timber ones to the east of Station Street by the early 20th century. The exception was Serpell's store which remained at the corner until the 1930s.

Many new buildings in the commercial centre date from 1911-1912. These include the largely rebuilt Railway Hotel with its distinctive tower, more premises to the east of Serpell's store, a new railway station and new post office and court house on the north side of Whitehorse Road.[49]

Buildings to the west of Station Street underwent various changes from the 1920s. Box Hill's three hotels, including the Railway Hotel, were delicensed on 1 January 1921 as a result of a district local option poll which supported prohibition.[50] At this time the Railway Hotel was remodelled and became known as Tait's Corner, with a draper occupying the corner premises. The 1885 recreation hall was transformed into the *Rialto* in 1929;[51] a venue where pictures were shown and regular dances were held. This building was remodelled into Palmer's Arcade in 1961.[52]

A market, selling livestock, fruit, vegetables, furniture and farm goods, was established adjacent to the recreation hall (later the *Rialto*) from c1901.[53] In 1929 this market site was subdivided and Market Street was constructed. The selling of livestock was abandoned and the property was offered for sale as 36 shop sites fronting an arcade from Whitehorse Road.[54] The market however continued as a smaller produce market and egg board within the development into the 1930s. The facades of two buildings erected facing Whitehorse Road, to the east of the Rialto, stylistically reflect development in the 1930s.

In 1936 the Colonial Gas Association constructed a modern showroom between the former *Rialto* and the Railway Hotel and G J Coles opened their first Box Hill store in a part of this building.[55] They purchased the whole building in the early 1950s.

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[43] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 75
[44] Allom Lovell & Assoc, 'City of Whitehorse Heritage Review: Thematic History', p 17
[45] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 76
[46] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 83
[47] *Sands and McDougall Melbourne Directories* and Shire of Nunawading Rate Books
[48] F Bamford, Plan of Box Hill in 1905, July 1965
[49] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 130
[50] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 148
[51] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 158
[52] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 211
[53] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 117
[54] Auction Notice for subdivision of Box Hill Market site, 1929
[55] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 173

On the eastern corner of Station Street, the single storey timber Serpell's store was finally demolished in 1936 and replaced with an English Domestic Revival building which contained six shops and residences above.[56]

In 1937 one way traffic on either side of the centre reserve was enforced.[57]

Description

The Box Hill Commercial heritage precinct is located on the south side of Whitehorse Road to the east and west of the Station Street intersection. It contains a range of buildings dating from the 1890s to the 1930s, some of which have been altered or obscured, but which still retain fabric to illustrate the township centre of the former Shire of Nunawading and City of Box Hill. Buildings are principally of two storeys, with the exception of one which is a single storey building.

The first substantial development of the commercial centre of Box Hill is reflected in the buildings at the east end of the precinct. A group of nine two storey buildings, dating from the 1890s to the 1910s, stands at this end of the precinct. They are parapeted brick buildings which originally had post verandahs to Whitehorse Road, and are principally of red brick with contrasting render detailing. The facades of the central group are obscured by a false facade, however the earlier facade is visible behind. There is some loss of detail, including pediments, and some facades have been painted, however the general form of this group has been retained. No original shop fronts remain. Other 19th century commercial buildings in the precinct have been remodelled or replaced with later buildings. This includes the 1885 recreation hall which remains behind a later facade. As a result the remainder of the buildings reflect the growth of Box Hill from 1910 through to the 1930s. Two distinctive buildings flank Station Street; the remodelled Railway Hotel, 950-956 Whitehorse Road (HO92), which incorporates a distinctive corner tower with oval openings and sinuous Art Nouveau-influenced detailing, and the English Domestic Revival style retail building, 958-964 Whitehorse Road (HO93),with rendered brick facades and contrasting tapestry brickwork; hipped tiled roof and paired gables.

Buildings to the west of the precinct, including the former Colonial Gas Association building, 942-946 Whitehorse Road (HO91), are principally Moderne in style and variously incorporate Art Deco detailing, parapeted facades, strong horizontal and vertical lines, curved corners and cream brickwork. Together they form a varied collection of commercial buildings built in the popular style of the 1930s.

The precinct therefore largely reflects the development of the commercial centre of Box Hill from the 1890s to the 1930s. The scale of the buildings is consistent throughout the precinct and any later development has retained the two storey height limit.

Comparative Analysis

There are no comparative precincts in the City of Whitehorse. The township of Box Hill developed as the largest commercial centre in the municipality and this portion of Whitehorse Road demonstrates this character most clearly. The remaining streetscape demonstrates the developing nature of the commercial centre and retains a range of commercial buildings from the 1890s to the 1930s. The loss of integrity of the early commercial streetscape on the north side of Whitehorse Road, results in a less significant streetscape.

[56] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 173
[57] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 173

Statement of Significance

What is significant?
The Box Hill Commercial heritage precinct comprises properties on the south side of Whitehorse Road, to the west and east of the Station Street intersection. They are numbered 920 to 984 Whitehorse Road.

How is it significant?
The Box Hill Commercial heritage precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Whitehorse.

Why is it significant?
The Box Hill Commercial heritage precinct is of historical significance as a representative collection of commercial buildings which reflect the development of the business centre of Box Hill from the 1890s to the 1945.

The Box Hill Commercial heritage precinct is of aesthetic significance for its collection of diverse building styles as applied to commercial buildings. These include the Italianate facades of the late 1890s to the 1910s, and fine examples of the Art Nouveau, English Domestic Revival and the Moderne style.

References

Directory of Maps of the County of Bourke, Melbourne, Victorian Shire Map Company, 1892
Auction notice for subdivision of Box Hill Market site, 1929, Box Hill Historical Society
MMBW Detail Plan no 176,1933
Sands and McDougall Melbourne Directories
Shire of Nunawading Rate Books
Andrew Ward, 'Whitehorse Heritage Review 2001'
Graeme Butler, 'City of Whitehorse Heritage Review: Heritage Overlay Precincts', 2002-03
'City of Whitehorse Council Report', 2004
A Lemon. *Box Hill.* Box Hill 1978
E Perrin. *Professional and Business People in Box Hill to 1925.* Box Hill City Historical Society 1994
Various photographs, Box Hill Historical Society collection and State Library of Victoria

Historical Images
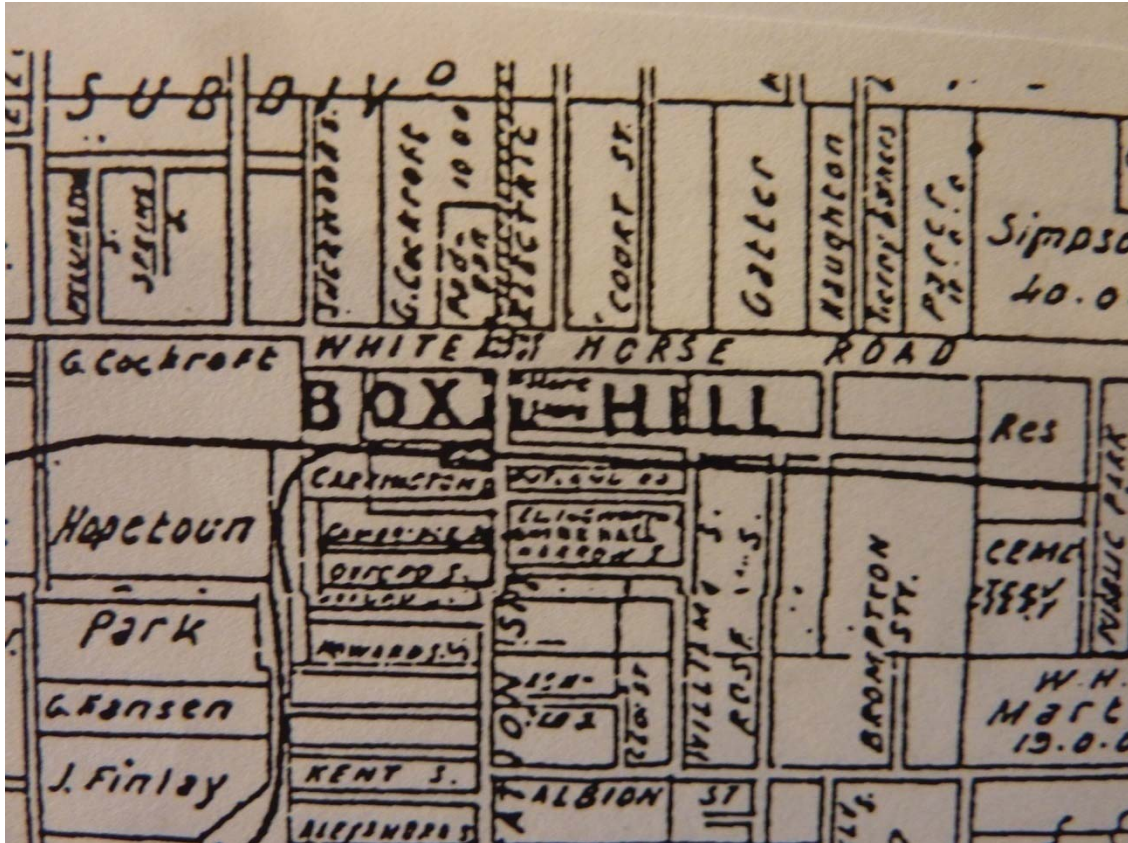
Map showing the widening of Whitehorse Road, the electric tramway along Station Street to Doncaster and Serpell's store on the corner of Whitehorse Road and Station Street; Directory of Maps of the County of Bourke, Melbourne, Victorian Shire Map Company, 1892


View from Whitehorse Road, looking south along Station Street in 1905. It shows the South Africa and China War Memorial, Serpell's store on the left and the original Railway Hotel on the right. Box Hill Historical Society
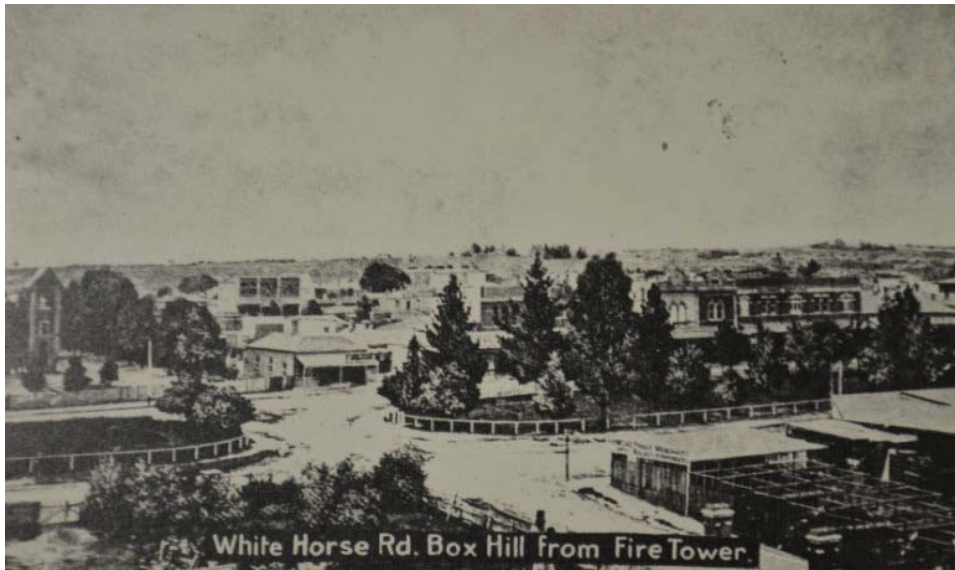
View looking to the south from the fire tower, across Whitehorse Road and the centre plantation, 1905. The group of two storey Italianate buildings in Whitehorse Road to the east of Station Street can be seen to the right of the photograph. Box Hill Historical Society
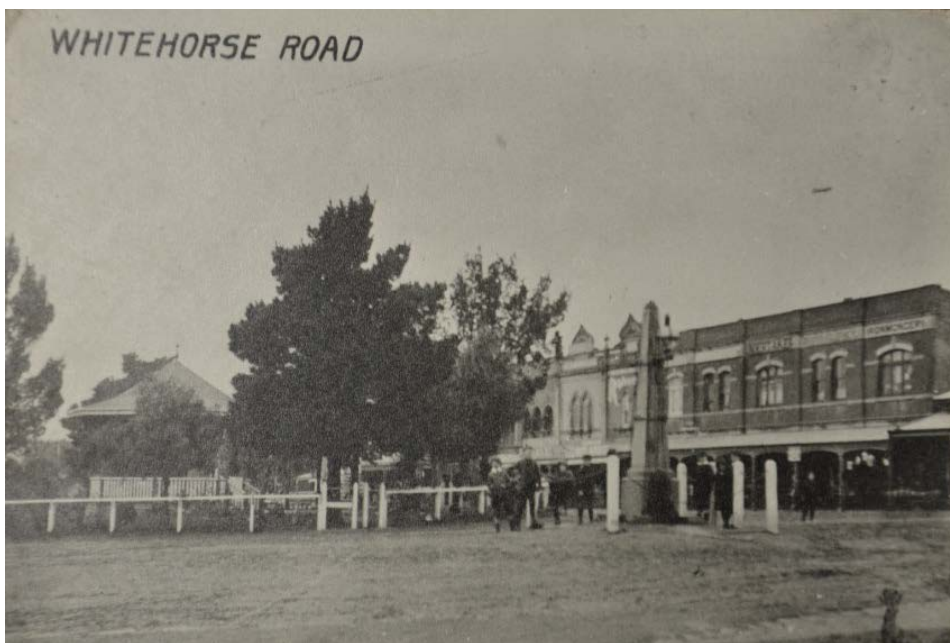
View of south side of Whitehorse Road, east of Station Street, after 1911. The two storey commercial facades remain. Box Hill Historical Society
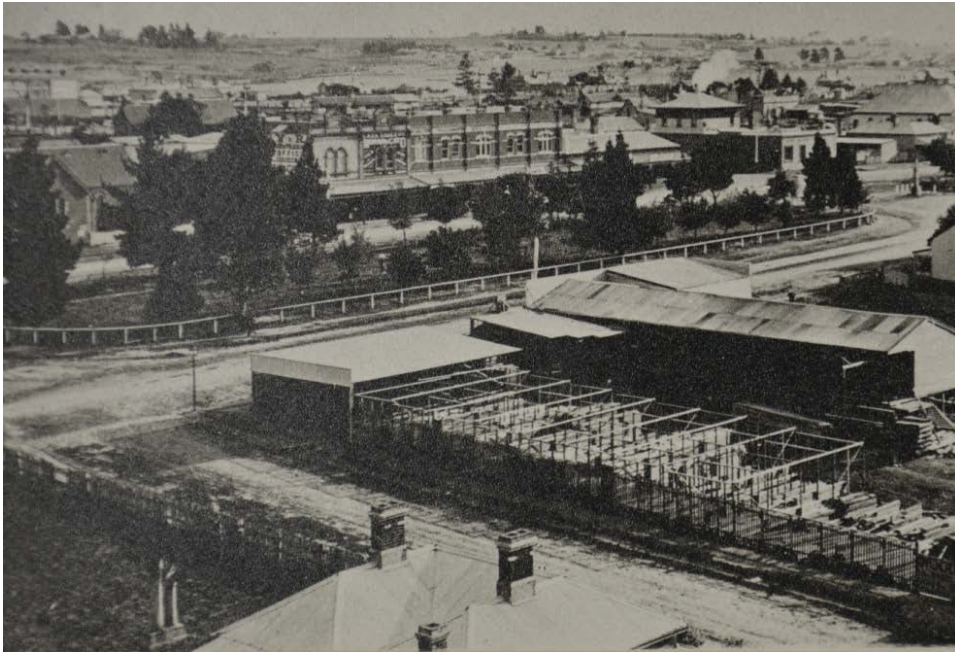
View looking to the south from Watts Street, across Whitehorse Road. The group of two storey facades are again visible. Undated, Box Hill Historical Society

The unveiling of the World War One Memorial in 1922 at the corner of Whitehorse Road and Station Street. Serpell's store can be seen at the rear. Box Hill Historical Society

Auction notice for subdivision of Box Hill Market site, 1929, Box Hill Historical Society

Plan in Auction Notice for subdivision of Box Hill Market site, 1929, Box Hill Historical Society

Undated view looking west along the south side of Whitehorse Road towards Station Street, Box Hill Historical Society

View of the south side of Whitehorse Road, 1936, from left to right: Tait's corner, the Colonial Gas Company Building, the Rialto (former recreation hall), a 1930s commercial building and the Box Hill market, Box Hill Historical Society

Similar view showing Coles occupancy of the Colonial Gas Company building, and the remodelled facade of the Rialto, c1955, Box Hill Historical Society
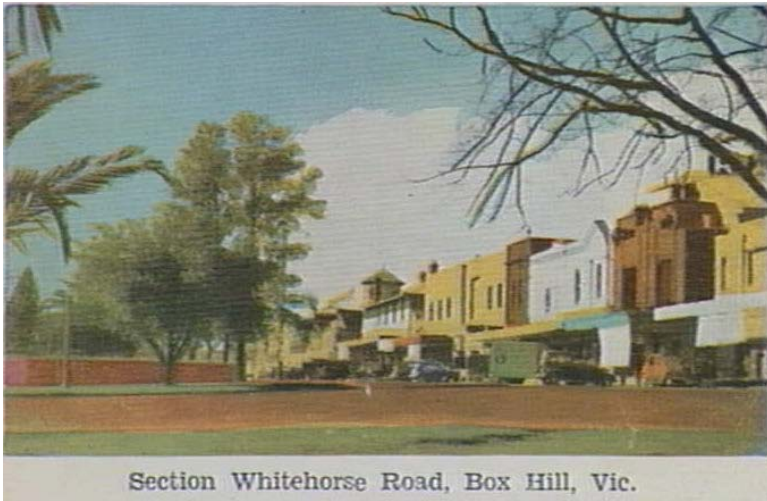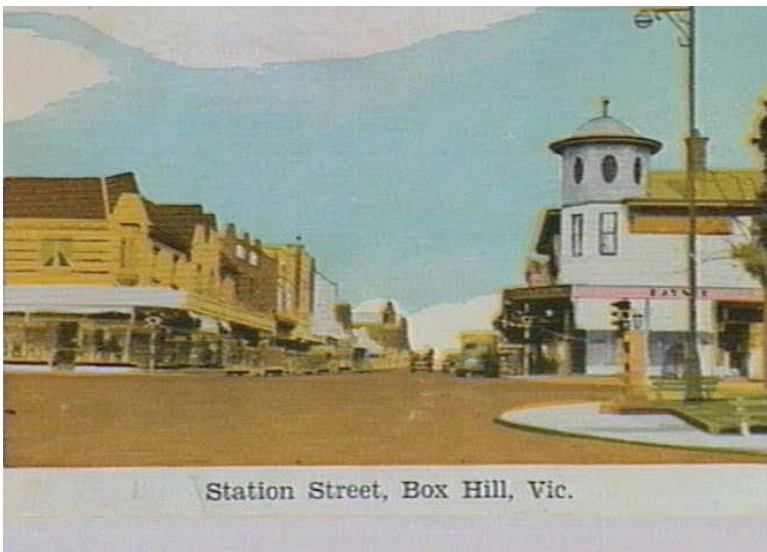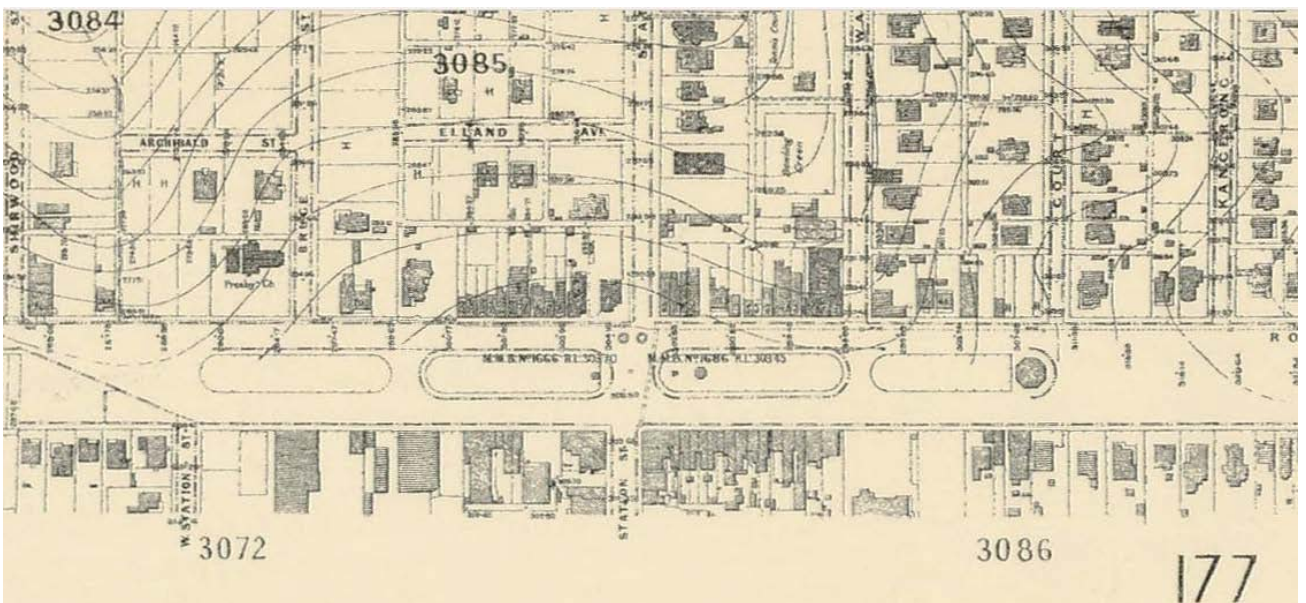
2 post card views of Whitehorse Road, c1950, State Library of Victoria

MMBW Detail Plan no 176, 1933

WHITEHORSE ROAD - SOUTH

No:	984-984
Style:	Edwardian

No:	980
Style:	Late Victorian/Edwardian

No:	976-978
Style:	Late Victorian/Edwardian? (altered)

No:	972-974
Style:	Late Victorian/Edwardian

No:	968-970
Style:	Late Victorian/Edwardian

No:	958-966
Style:	English Domestic Revival

No:	950-956	No:	948
Style:	Art Nouveau	Style:	Moderne

No:	940-946	No:	934-938
Style:	Moderne	Style:	Victorian with later facade

No:	930-932	No:	920-928
Style:	Art Deco	Style:	Modern