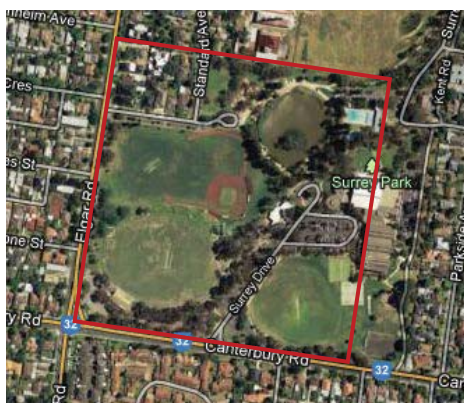


FORMER BOX HILL SWIMMING POOL PRECINCT

Building:	Former Box Hill Swimming Pool Precinct	HO No	257
Address:	354 Elgar Road Box Hill	Melway Map Ref:	47 B11
Building Type:	recreational	Construction Date:	1939
Architect:	not applicable	Builder:	not applicable



History

Establishment of Surrey Park and Surrey Dive

By 1884 the Houghton Park Brick Company (later the Box Hill Brick Company) had purchased a large expanse of land on the corner of Canterbury and Elgar Roads in Box Hill.⁹⁶ The land was also known as Houghton's Paddock and was regularly used by Surrey Hills and Box Hill cricket and football groups.⁹⁷ The success of the brick company was affected by the fluctuations in the property market and in 1905 surplus land was sold to Nunawading Shire Council, which at the time was purchasing land for recreation reserves.⁹⁸ This 44 acre (17.8 hectare) brickworks site contained a deep clay pit that had been abandoned in 1892 and which the Council envisaged turning into a swimming pool.⁹⁹ Half full of water, it was already used by local inhabitants as a swimming hole.

The Surrey Park Swimming (or Swimmers') Club was officially established in February 1906 and they asked the Nunawading Council for the use of the clay pit at Surrey Park.¹⁰⁰ The Council

⁹⁶ A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 80

⁹⁷ History Group Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre, *Surrey Hills: In Celebration of the Centennial 1883-1983*, p 50

⁹⁸ A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 121

⁹⁹ A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 121

¹⁰⁰ *Reporter*, 2 February 1906, p 4

had already fenced the site, built a bathing shed and platform at each end, and obtained equipment such as a boat, raft, springboard, life buoys and noticeboard.¹⁰¹ Surrey Dive was subsequently opened as a municipal swimming pool with the opening described in the *Box Hill Reporter* as 'one of the major events in the history of the two suburbs, the main attraction being a spectacular dive of over 80 feet from a tower on the highest point of the 40 feet high cliffs'.¹⁰² The Dive became very popular and many swimming carnivals and events were held there by the Surrey Park Swimming Club. Major events attracted up to 3,000 spectators and included swimming stars such as Frank Beaurepaire.¹⁰³

The inaugural carnival of the Surrey Park Club was held in February 1907 and at this time 'The Dive' was described in the *Argus* as 'a splendid sheet of water, surrounded by cliffs 50ft high. There is a straight course of 110 yards one way, and about 120 yards the other. Gathered round the banks on Saturday were between 4,000 and 5,000 people, including many ladies.'¹⁰⁴ It was at this carnival that Frank Beaurepaire set a new record for the one mile race. The following year 'The Dive', 100 feet deep and now described as having a straight course of 100 yards by 200 yards, was reported to be 'undoubtedly the finest swimming basin in Victoria'.¹⁰⁵

By 1933 a ten-lane course had been laid out at Surrey Dive, over 100 metres. This made it the first Olympic standard pool in Australia, albeit of great depth.¹⁰⁶ Large crowds continued to attend swimming carnivals there into the 1930s.

Severe droughts in 1967-68 and 1971-72 resulted in the demise of Surrey Dive, with its contents being used to water street trees in Box Hill. The reported occurrence of rocky outcrops close to the lower water surface resulted in the initial temporary closure of the swimming hole, but it was never re-opened.¹⁰⁷

Construction of Box Hill City Swimming Pool

Prior to the opening of the Box Hill City Swimming Pool, the Surrey Dive was the main swimming facility in Box Hill. In early 1938, the Council, together with a local Member of Parliament Ivy Weber, requested a grant for the construction of a new swimming pool which was to be designed especially for children. This was successful and excavations were completed by August that year with the Council giving £2,500 and the Government £2,000 towards its construction.¹⁰⁸ The chosen site was adjacent to Surrey Dive, so that the two could operate in conjunction. In fact the entrance to the new pool and the dive was through a common turnstile, with those wishing to swim in the dive needing to pass through an extra turnstile due to restrictions for its use by children.¹⁰⁹ The pool was described as rectangular in shape, 110 feet long and 42 feet wide, and a depth varying from 3 feet to 10 feet. It was formed from concrete, lined with brick and covered with tiles, with the brick and concrete structures being entirely independent with bituminous paper between. A brick entrance pavilion, located to the east, at the shallow end of the pool, contained dressing accommodation, ticket box and kiosk, and diving boards were located at the other end of

¹⁰¹ Nunawading Shire Council Minute Book, 20 December 1905

¹⁰² *Reporter*, undated as quoted in History Group, *Surrey Hills: In Celebration of the Centennial 1883-1983*, p 50

¹⁰³ A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 122

¹⁰⁴ *The Argus*, 25 February 1907, p 4

¹⁰⁵ *The Argus*, 20 January 1908, p 7

¹⁰⁶ A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 167

¹⁰⁷ A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 218

¹⁰⁸ *The Argus*, 31 August 1938, p 8

¹⁰⁹ 'Pool Facilities are Public Necessities' in *Beach and Pool*, January 1940, Vol XIV, no 1, p 7

the pool. The site itself was described as an attractive sloping setting of lawns, trees and shrubs.¹¹⁰

On 28 January 1939, the pool was officially opened with the commencement of the Australian swimming championship carnival at the new pool.¹¹¹ It was reported that there would be seating for 6,000 at this event, with regular seating accommodation at the pool being for 2,000.¹¹² At the opening Mrs Weber stated that the government aimed to construct similar pools in all metropolitan suburbs. The Box Hill pool, measuring 110 feet by 42 feet and featuring underwater lighting, cost £7,000.¹¹³ The night opening enabled the underwater and overhead lighting to be appreciated fully, with the Reporter stating that 'the scene became as brilliant as day'.¹¹⁴

The pool was designed by City engineer, F W Kerr, who undertook extensive research into the design of pools both locally and overseas.¹¹⁵ G F Wright was the electrical engineer for the project and tiling was carried out by the Australian Tessellated Tile Co. Pty Ltd.¹¹⁶ Highly detailed specifications of the construction of the pool were provided in the American journal *Beach and Pool* in an article entitled 'Pool Facilities are Public Necessities' in January 1940. This included details of the pool structure, water circulation, quality and treatment, control of coagulation, lighting, building planning and management and three photographs showing the pool and other facilities.¹¹⁷ This indicates that the facilities were considered highly up-to-date at the time, particularly the pool structure, filtration, chlorination and lighting.

The Surrey Park Swimming Club moved to the newly built pool, although the Surrey Dive continued to be the focus of the Club until its closure in the early 1970s. The original 1939 kiosk was later converted into the Surrey Park's Swimming Club rooms.

During the height of World War II, membership numbers at the Surrey Park Swimming Club slumped as young men enlisted in the armed forces. However carnivals and social events were still held in an effort to maintain an interest in swimming amongst young people of Box Hill. In 1942 a successful Ladies Carnival was held at the Box Hill City Swimming Pool and included demonstration swims.¹¹⁸

With the closure of the Surrey Dive in the 1970s, the Box Hill City Swimming Pool became the sole training facility of the swimming club, as well as serving as the local municipal swimming pool. At this time the six lane pool was considered inadequate, particularly in comparison to indoor pools located in neighbouring suburbs. For this reason attendance numbers had started to dramatically decline as swimmers turned to more modern facilities elsewhere. Throughout the 1960s the Box Hill City Swimming Pool attracted over 106,000 visitors annually each summer, however this figure had dropped to 42,000 by the late 1970s.¹¹⁹ During this time Council sought Federal Government funding to help finance the construction of a new indoor swimming complex for Surrey Park, while in the interim, the Council spent \$160,000 refurbishing the outdoor pool and surrounds. Part of this entailed reducing the length of the

¹¹⁰ 'Pool Facilities are Public Necessities' in *Beach and Pool*, January 1940, Vol XIV, no 1, p 8

¹¹¹ *The Argus*, 28 January 1939, p 14

¹¹² *The Argus*, 28 January 1939, p 14

¹¹³ *The Argus*, 30 January 1939, p 5

¹¹⁴ 'The Box Hill City Baths: Official Opening' in *Reporter*, 3 February 1939

¹¹⁵ 'The Box Hill City Baths: Official Opening' in *Reporter*, 3 February 1939

¹¹⁶ 'Pool Facilities are Public Necessities' in *Beach and Pool*, January 1940, Vol XIV, no 1, p 8

¹¹⁷ 'Pool Facilities are Public Necessities' in *Beach and Pool*, January 1940, Vol XIV, no 1, pp 7-11 & 27-28

¹¹⁸ G O'Donnell, *Fog on the Dive: 100 Years of the Surrey Park Swimming Club*, p 80

¹¹⁹ G O'Donnell, *Fog on the Dive: 100 Years of the Surrey Park Swimming Club*, p 105

original 33 metre pool to 25 metres to allow for the construction of a learners pool at one end.¹²⁰

Later Developments at Surrey Park

In 1979 a \$1.9 million tender was issued for a heated indoor pool complex, and Daryl Jackson and Scott & Furphy Pty Ltd were appointed as project architect and engineer respectively. It was estimated that the project would take 12 months, with the programme described as forming 'part of an overall development plan for the old Surrey Dive area and the existing outdoor pool which was upgraded and improved last year....'¹²¹

In 2012 the City of Whitehorse commenced a major redevelopment of the entire Whitehorse I Aqualink site, including both pools, indoor sports courts and adjoining oval. As part of the process, a Conservation Management Plan¹²² was commissioned by Council to provide a detailed historical analysis and assessment of the outdoor pool complex and to provide guidance for the conservation and/or development of the 1939 outdoor pool and associated entrance building.

Historical Themes

City of Whitehorse Themes

6 Recreation and the Arts

6.4 Sporting facilities

Victoria's Themes

9 Shaping cultural and creative life

9.1 Participating in sport and recreation

Description

The former entry building at the Box Hill outdoor swimming pool is a large rectangular shaped brick structure with distinctive elements, Moderne in style. The front, east elevation displays clean lines, horizontal motifs, glass bricks, integrated lettering and rounded corners. A parapet conceals a half-gabled roof which is clad in corrugated iron. The entrance pavilion, which is no longer used, is centrally located and projects from the main building with rounded corners in the functionalist style. This rounded form is distinctive from the straight lines of the rectangular shaped section. A single band of darker brickwork extends around the face of the building. On the entrance building, this band is located directly above the central door and flanking, symmetrically placed windows which contain glass bricks.

A decorative storey, smaller in scale but with matching rounded corners, is located above the entrance pavilion. The upper section has three projecting horizontal line motifs in two shades of blue and white, which follow the rounded curves. These colours represent the traditional colours of the Surrey Park Swimming Club.¹²³ Below this the words 'Box Hill Swimming Pool' are formed in steel letters on the front facade of the building. Two flagpoles sit atop the roof of the pavilion.

A similar blue and white motif detailing has been used on the corner edges of the main building. Doors and windows are variously located along the opposite, west elevation of the building which faces the swimming pool. Historical images indicate that the west elevation was originally a brick wall with a narrow opening below the eaves, and a centrally placed opening. It is not known when the present window and door openings were constructed,

¹²⁰ A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 222

¹²¹ Box Hill Historical Society, ephemera, *Green Light for Box Hill Sports Centre:\$1.9 million tender, 1979*, item no B3318

¹²² Heritage Alliance, *Conservation Management Plan, Box Hill Swimming Pool*, City of Whitehorse, May 2013

¹²³ G O'Donnell, *Fog on the Dive: 100 Years of the Surrey Park Swimming Club*, p 97

however the administration, toilet, change-room and gym facilities are presently located within the building. The outdoor swimming pool is particularly narrow and comprises six twenty-five metre lanes. A learners pool is located at the eastern end, closest to the building. A small brick structure is located to one end of the site and presumably contains water filtration and pump facilities. A separate and irregular shaped toddlers pool was constructed later (1960's) covered with shade protection, and was located south of the pool.

Comparative Examples

City of Whitehorse Comparisons

There are no other comparable swimming pool complexes that were constructed in the City of Whitehorse during the 1930s and 1940s period; however two schools were constructed at a similar period and in a similar style to the entrance building. These include the former Box Hill Girls' Technical School in Whitehorse Road, Box Hill (1936, HO117) and the former Box Hill Boys' Technical School in Dunloe Avenue, Box Hill (Percy Everett 1943, HO32).

The 1936 Girls' Technical School is a large double storey red brick building constructed in a Moderne style, probably to designs by Percy Everett of the Public Works Department. Bays of multi-paned windows on two levels are divided by contrasting cream brick piers. The hipped roof is concealed behind a parapet and the entry porch has a concrete slab roof with tower above displaying narrow vertical strip windows and a flagpole supported on concrete corbels. An adjacent projecting bay, of semi-circular form, contains a central band of windows. The original metal lettering reading BOX HILL GIRLS' TECHNICAL SCHOOL has been removed from the front facade.

The 1943 Boys' Technical School is also a large double storey red brick building constructed in a Moderne style, designed by Percy Everett of the Public Works Department. It displays strong vertical and horizontal elements, contrasting dark brickwork and curved forms.

State Comparisons

There are few extant examples of early swimming pools in Victoria.

The Maryborough Municipal Olympic Swimming Complex was opened by Sir Frank Bearepaire in 1940 to designs by local architect EJ Peck and was one of a number of other municipal council pools built in a similar period. The original complex comprised a concrete and brick modern-styled entrance pavilion, an Olympic swimming pool, an octagonal wading pool, and service buildings all within a garden setting and the site remains highly intact. It is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (H1319).



Maryborough Municipal Olympic Swimming Complex, 1940

Hepburn Springs Swimming Pool was built in the early 1930s with a concrete dam constructed across a natural basin, deepened by blasting. It was one of the early competition pools in Victoria, was utilised for State swimming titles in the 1930s and was visited by Frank

Beaurepaire on a number of occasions. It is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (H1865).



Hepburn Springs Swimming Pool, early 1930s

Significance

What is significant?

The 1939 Box Hill swimming pool facility, but excluding the Box Hill Aquatic Centre, was a development of the recreational precinct, particularly swimming, within Surrey Park from the first decade of the twentieth century. Over this time the facilities at Surrey Park have undergone many changes from the original use of the former quarry pit (the Surrey Dive) as a highly popular swimming pool, to the construction of the new outdoor adjacent pool in the late 1930s and the addition of the indoor complex in the late 1970s.

How is it significant?

The former Box Hill Swimming Pool precinct is of historical, technical, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Whitehorse.

Why is it significant?

The 1939 Box Hill swimming pool complex is of historical significance as an example of a pool complex which illustrates the development of swimming in the municipality during the inter-war period as a recreational pursuit. It is of historical significance for its association with Mrs Ivy Weber, a local Independent and the first woman elected to the Victorian Parliament, and City Engineer, Frank Kerr who designed the pool and buildings. Weber, together with other Council members, lobbied the government for a suitable teaching pool in Box Hill, at a time when the Surrey Dive was the only swimming facility at this location. [Criterion A]

The 1939 swimming pool is of technical significance for its well resolved design that was subsequently described in great detail in the American journal, *Beach and Pool* in 1940. [Criterion F]

The 1939 swimming pool complex is of aesthetic significance as a rare, intact example of a swimming pool complex designed in the late 1930s. The entrance building is an excellent example of a public building designed in the Moderne style. The semi-circular entry bay and the emphasis on horizontal lines are key features of this style. [Criteria D & E]

The former Box Hill Swimming Pool precinct is of social significance for its use as a local swimming venue for the Surrey Park Swimming Club and as the location for many social, community and sporting gatherings since its establishment. [Criterion G]

Recommended Extent of Overlay

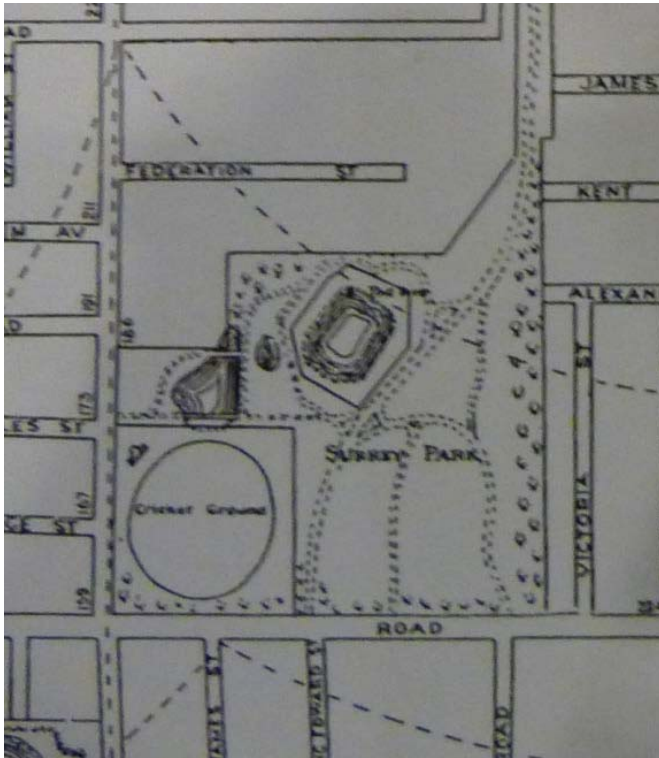
To the extent indicated on the map below; generally from the boundary of the existing Heritage Overlay on the Surrey Dive (HO217) to the west, the southern alignment of the existing (2012) carpark to the north of the swimming pool, a parallel alignment 30 metres to the south, of the swimming pool, and 10 metres to the east of the entry building.



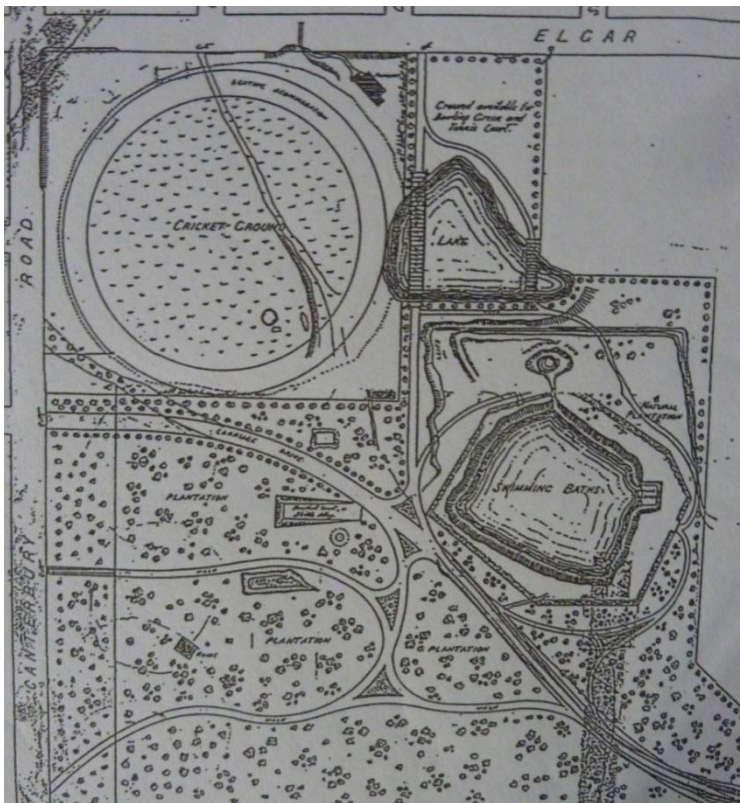
References

- The Argus*, various dates incl 25 February 1907, p 4; 20 January 1908, p 7; 27 October 1915, p 2 and 1 April 1916, p 2; 31 August 1938, p 8; 28 January 1939, p 14; 30 January 1939, p 5
- Nunawading Shire Council Minute Book, 20 December 1905
- 'Pool Facilities are Public Necessities' in *Beach and Pool*, Vol 14, No 1, January 1940, pp 7-11 & 27-28
- 'The Box Hill City Baths: Official Opening' in *Reporter*, 3 February 1939
- MMBW Detail Plan showing Surrey Park, c 1920
- General Plan, Surrey Hills Park, showing cricket ground, swimming baths, plantations and walks, City of Box Hill [undated, pre-1939]
- A Lemon. *Box Hill*. Box Hill 1978
- History Group Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre, *Surrey Hills: In Celebration of the Centennial 1883-1983*, Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre, reprinted 2001, p 50
- A Ward, 'Heritage and Conservation Study, City of Box Hill', vol 1, 1990
- Leslie Lobban, Surrey Park Swimming Club, *The Story of the Dive*, unpublished notes held by the Box Hill Historical Society, item B4596
- G O'Donnell, *Fog on the Dive: 100 Years of the Surrey Park Swimming Club*, The Club, Box Hill 2004
- Box Hill Historical Society, ephemera, *Green Light for Box Hill Sports Centre: \$1.9 million tender*, 1979, item no B3318
- Heritage Victoria Database
- Heritage Alliance: *Conservation Management Plan Box Hill swimming Pool*, May 2013

Historical Images



Detail of Plan of Nunawading, 1921, State Library of Victoria



A Ward, 'Heritage and Conservation Study', undated plan



Box Hill Swimming Pool soon after opening, Box Hill Historical Society Collection, no 642



Swimming Pool soon after opening, from E Finlay & M Morgan, *Those Were the Days, Box Hill in Pictures 1930-1960*, p 49; 1994



Swimming Pool soon after opening , Box Hill Historical Society Collection