

<b>Building:</b>	Former Shire Offices	<b>Significance:</b>	B
<b>Address:</b>	360 Whitehorse Road, Nunawading	<b>Melway Map Ref:</b>	48 F9
<b>Building Type:</b>	Municipal Offices	<b>Construction Date:</b>	1928
<b>Architect:</b>	R M & M H King (Sybil Taggart)	<b>Builder:</b>	Unknown



**Intactness:**  
G[x] F[ ] P[ ]

**Condition:**  
G[x] F[ ] P[ ]

**Existing Heritage Listings:**

Victorian Heritage Register	[ ]
Register of the National Estate	[ ]
National Trust	[x]

**Recommended Heritage Listings:**

Victorian Heritage Register	[ ]
Register of the National Estate	[x]
Heritage Overlay Controls	[x]

## History

The Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham was formed in 1925, when those ridings separated from that of Box Hill. The first shire headquarters was a modest four-room house in Whitehorse Road, which the council viewed very much as temporary accommodation. By December 1926, negotiations were taking place for the site of a new purpose-built council chambers.<sup>1</sup> These plans were unexpectedly brought forward in October 1927, when the interim shire hall was destroyed by fire. The council immediately resolved to raise the funds for their new premises, although there was some opposition from ratepayers and past councillors who preferred to see money spent on services.

Despite the protests, the project for a new shire hall went ahead, and the commission went to the architectural firm of R M and M H King. According to Julie Willis, architect Sybil Taggart was responsible for the design and documentation of the building. Taggart (1901-1982) was one of the first female architects to practice in Victoria. She entered King's office in 1928, and soon rose to the position of chief draftsman. The shire office at Tunstall is one of her few known works.<sup>2</sup>

The council had moved into its new home by November 1928, although an official opening ceremony was not held. After all the protests over the cost of the building, the shire president decided that 'it would not be in good taste for this council to have a festive opening'.<sup>3</sup> The shire hall became the Nunawading Town Hall in 1945, when the Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham was upgraded to a city. At this time it was proposed to extend the offices by adding a single-storey brick wing at the rear. Designed in the Moderne style by Len Payne, it was to contain a large reception hall as well as staff offices. It was not built, and it was not until 1954 that a larger but less distinguished single-storey wing was built, this time to the design of architects A S and R E Eggleston.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1960s, the council had once again outgrown their premises. An entirely new civic centre was proposed, and land was purchased on the opposite side of Whitehorse Road. In 1966, the County Roads Board approached the council and expressed interest in purchasing the old municipal offices.<sup>5</sup> After protracted negotiations, the council eventually sold the building to them for \$160,000. The County Roads Board continued to occupy the building, under various names, until the mid-1990s. At the time of inspection the building was vacant.

## Description

The former Shire Offices is a Classical Revival style building, consisting of a double-storey brick block facing Whitehorse Road, with a single-storey rear wing. Both sections have hipped terracotta tiled roofs, and the front wing has eaves supported on elongated brackets. A central porch, with a pair of windows on either side, forms a symmetrical facade. The porch entry has a pair of *in antis* Ionic columns, with three brackets above which support a narrow iron-railed balcony. The upper level is rendered, with arched windows, while the lower level is face brick (forming pilaster strips) with rectangular windows. Each window has a clinker brick surround, and contains steel-framed casement sashes.

Internally, all of the walls have been removed, however the coved cornices, featuring a moulded anthemion pattern, have been retained and consequently the original plan form is evident. The original entrance lobby is clearly indicated by two large Classical columns. One side has been partitioned out to form offices.

A stair with a timber panelled balustrade leads to the first floor where the rooms, other than for the front room, are very plain with strapped fibrous plaster ceilings nevertheless they are typical of their time. The front room, possibly an original board room, has a ceiling enriched with Classical mouldings.

### Comparative Examples

Nunawading Shire Hall, corner Cambridge and Station Streets, Box Hill (1889, demolished)  
Box Hill Town Hall, 1022 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

### Significance

The former Mitcham and Blackburn Shire Offices are of historical and aesthetic importance. Historically, the building has associations with the severance that took place in 1925 when the ridings of Blackburn and Mitcham separated from Box Hill. The building's association with Sybil Taggart, a pioneer female architect, is also of considerable interest. Aesthetically, the building is an elegantly composed example of a 1920s Classical Revival public building. Externally, it retains a high level of intactness, probably due to having had only two tenants in almost seventy years. The interior has been considerably altered.

### Source

Context Pty Ltd. *City of Nunawading Heritage Survey Project*. 1994. (Graded B)

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- 1 Diane Sydenham. *Windows of Nunawading*. North Melbourne, 1990. p 69.
  - 2 Julie Willis. 'Women in Architecture in Victoria, 1905-1955.' Ph D thesis. University of Melbourne, 1997. pp 92-93.
  - 3 Quoted in Diane Sydenham. *Windows on Nunawading*. North Melbourne, 1990. p 72.
  - 4 Both sets of drawings in Stephenson and Turner Collection, State Library of Victoria.
  - 5 Diane Sydenham. *Windows on Nunawading*. North Melbourne, 1990. p 189.

