



Former Ward Five

FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL,
FORMER QUEEN'S MEMORIAL INFECTIOUS DISEASES HOSPITAL,
YARRA BEND DRIVE

In the theme of Northcote as a remote rural area, ideal for such institutions as the Inebriate Retreat (1875) on the Merri Creek and the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum: qv (1848), came an investigation of sites for an Infectious Diseases Hospital at Yarra Bend in the 1870's.¹

The subject was renewed in 1890 when Dr. Dan Astley Greenwell came to the Board of Public Health and submitted a report on 'Sanitary Conditions and Sanitary Administration of Melbourne' which stressed again the need for an infectious diseases hospital, separate from the existing Melbourne and Alfred Hospitals.²

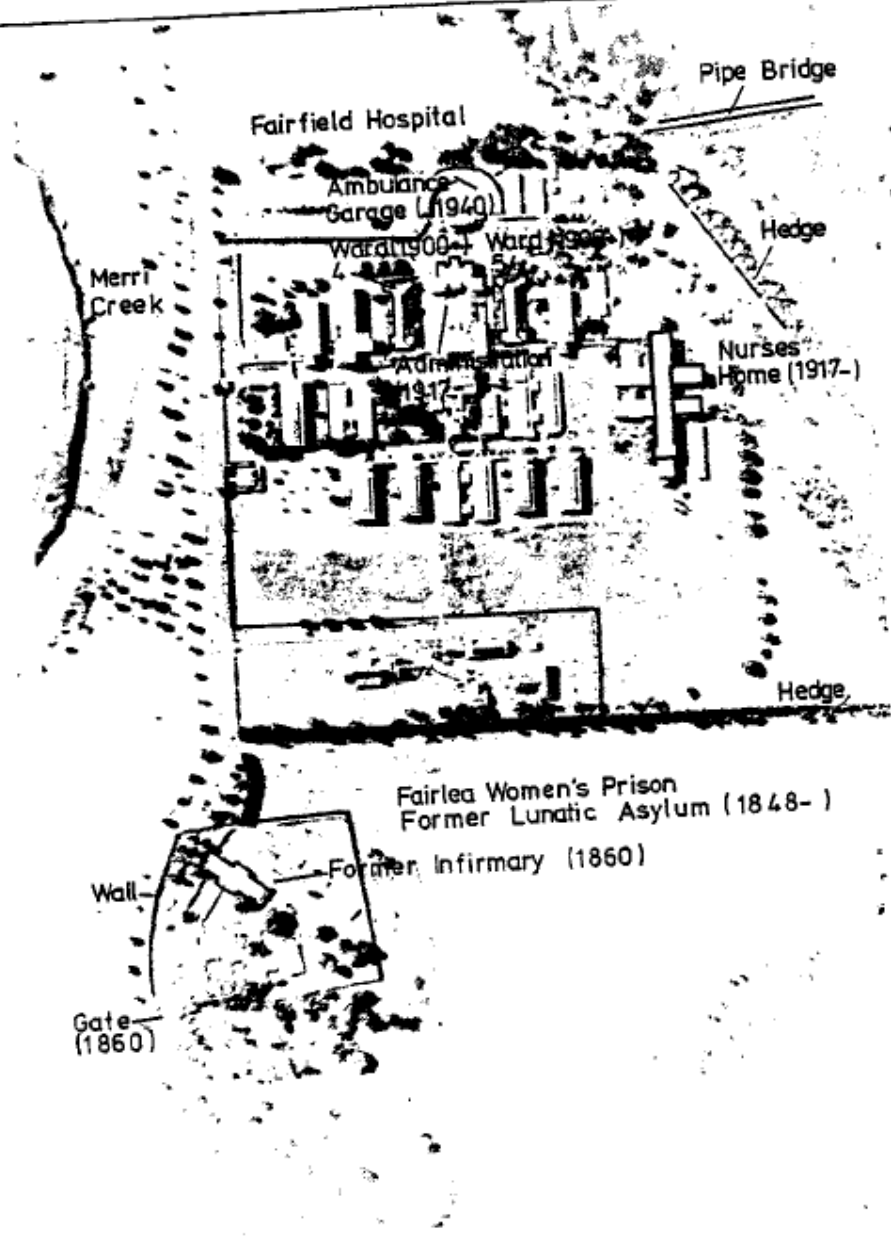
In 1897, which was the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the Mayor of Melbourne, Cr. Strong

convened a meeting at the request of Lord Brassey, the Governor of Victoria on the subject of a Fever Hospital and the raising of funds to construct it. It would be the Queen's Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital.

The municipalities of Prahran, South Melbourne, Hawthorn, Footscray, St. Kilda, Brighton, Williamstown, Essendon, Flemington and Kensington, Northcote, Kew, North Melbourne, Brunswick, Heidelberg, Booroondara and Malvern were all represented on a fund raising committee. By 1897, 16,000 pounds had been received and 15 acres of land granted by the government. Tenders were called in 1900 for the hospital's first buildings and these were completed, unfurnished, in 1901.

Fairfield Hospital Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum

Base: Lands Department 1960





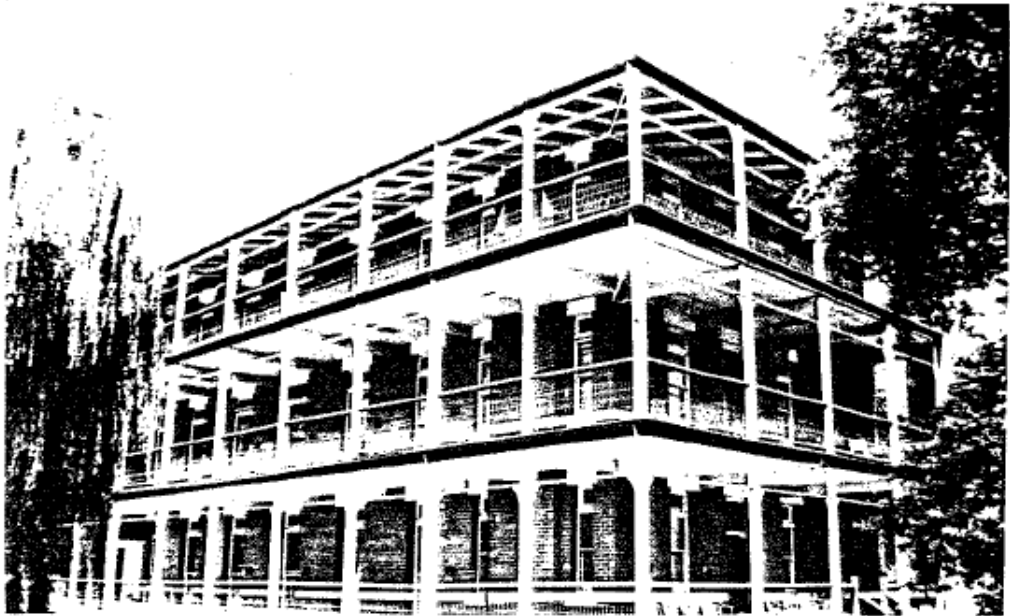
Administration

When the hospital opened in October, 1904, all but seven municipalities had withdrawn from the hospital management committee; leaving Melbourne, Fitzroy, Richmond, St. Kilda, North Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg.³

Dr. Sydney Allen was the first Medical Superintendent whilst Miss Evelyn Conyers became the Matron. By then the reserve had grown to 22 acres and, upon it, were a receiving house, with separate areas for scarlet fever and diphtheria, and two large wards which again represented the two diseases dealt with by the hospital. Each ward had 25 beds, was well ventilated and had bitumen floors which could be washed down as required. The circulation, between the buildings, was by asphalt paths under verandahs. The kitchen block (now demolished) was at the centre of the complex;

from where food trolleys would traverse the paths to the wards. The nurses home was on the eastern part of the complex; this has been since greatly enlarged by architects, A. and K. Henderson, in 1916 and 1932.⁴ Externally, the first buildings were of cavity face brickwork with stucco dressings and Marseille pattern terracotta tiles;⁵ they generally followed the Queen Anne or Federation style of architecture.⁵

The two original ward blocks 4 and 5 (now the Pathology Building and the Pay Office and Fitters and Turners' Building) have survived from 1901. They are characterised by two conically roofed octagonal cover-rooms on the north end, presumably acting as service rooms for the staff. The balance of the building being a long, hipped roof and verandahed pavilion which illustrates the Oriental aspects of this style of architecture.⁶



Nurses' Home

The approaches and main elements of these ward blocks remain today; being further enhanced by the mature cypress hedges, Canary Island palms and cedar trees which stand nearby. Of the two, ward 5 seems externally more original, although both have been altered extensively, but superficially, inside. Presumably these buildings were to the design of the Public Works Department, under Chief Architect J H Marsden.

June 1917 was the opening dates of the new administration buildings (plus two ward pavilions) to cater for a new disease, cerebro-spinal meningitis. Architects, A. & K. Henderson, P.R.V.I.A. A.R.V.I.A.,⁷ were the designers of a two-level austere brick building which was a derivation from the earlier Edwardian period. The marseille-pattern tiles were used but on a less fanciful roof shape with a Dutch-hip as the only embellishment. The plan was a symmetrically arranged series of bays; the central recessed bay of each facade being gabled and capped with stucco. The west facade was completed after additions in 1939.⁸ The entrance porch has been extended and roofed since.⁹

A. & K. Henderson became involved with the hospital in 1914 and planned and executed an extensive building program which was approved during 1916. This included the massive extension to the original (1901-4) Nurses home, on its eastern side, making it a three-level, verandahed building overlooking the Yarra River. This was extended again to the south in 1924; the builder for the 1917 section being W. Machin. The innovative use of fabric balustrading makes these verandahs, with their sparse timber supports, brackets and friezes, look almost skeletal against the red face-brick of the building. Tall, gabled bays punctuate

the roofline and give some focal points to the facade.

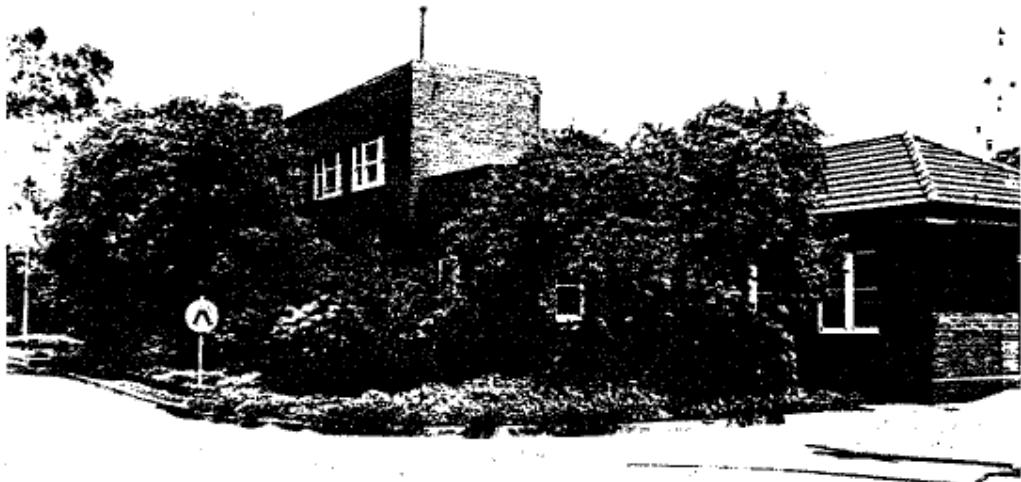
Minimal external alterations have occurred to this block.¹⁰

Another building in the complex is the ambulance garage, workshops and men's quarters, designed under Public Works Chief Architect, Percy Everett in 1940.¹¹ The distinctive aspect of this building is the typically Everett, huge curved brick wall which is the garage for the ambulances. Set as the focus of this semi-circular wall is a two-level brick building; designed with Everett's Northern European influence being evident. The curved wall achieves most, visually, outside of the complex and presents an unusual form as one perimeter to Fairfield Park.

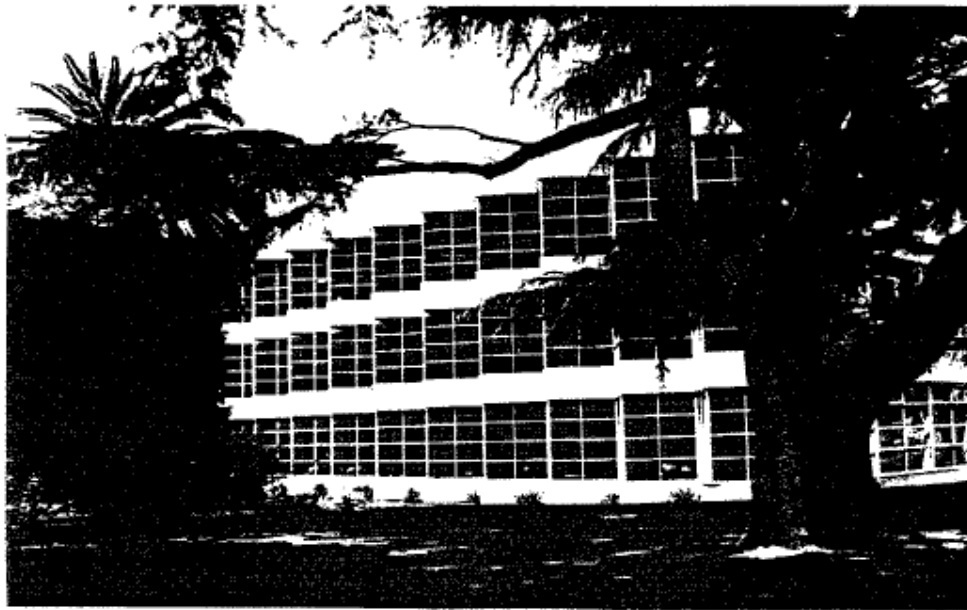
Of further note is the exotic landscape prevalent throughout the northern section of the complex: cypress, palms, cedars and hedges lend a contemporary setting to the complex.

The above elements comprise the more important aspects of the visual character of Fairfield Hospital; forming an avenue of approach to the building and the river.

Although the complex has grown dramatically since 1900, the materials and roof shapes used have been generally in harmony over the major period of building (1900-40); hence it is both an important homogeneous environment and a catalogue of distinctive buildings from this period. (The F.V.G. Scholas block of 1949, although outside of this period, is a particularly important modern building, designed under Percy Everett.¹²).



Ambulance Garage and Workshop



F G Scholes Block