

Heritage Overlay **093**
Citation No.: **245**
Place: **Melton South Railway Station**

Other Names of Place: Formerly Melton Railway Station, Exford Railway Station
Location: Brooklyn Road, Melton South
Critical Dates: Construction of platform and goods shed: 1884; re-erection of signal box and office on site: 1898; station extensions: 1900; station extensions and remodelling: c.1990s.
Existing Heritage Listings: None.¹
Melton Historical Theme: Transport
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL (at least)



Statement of Significance:

The Melton South Railway Station (including the station building, signal boxes and platforms), Brooklyn Road Melton South, is significant as a rare and moderately intact example of the

¹ Andrew Ward's 1988 recommendation for inclusion in the then Government Buildings Register was never considered.

‘Kaniva’ style of railway stations of the late nineteenth century for the extension of the western railway to the South Australian border. Originally built in the town of Leor in 1898, the station building was relocated to Melton South in 1898. The station represents the origin of the township of Melton South, and in particular its former timber and chaff mill industries.

The Melton South Railway Station is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). It demonstrates original design qualities of the Victorian ‘Kaniva’ style of railway station buildings. These qualities include the hipped roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel, single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, rendered brick chimney with multi-corbelled top, timber framed double hung windows and timber framed door openings, narrow eaves and the broad skillion post-supported verandahs on the road and platform facades. The bitumen platform and the signal boxes also contribute to the significance of the place.

Melton is the oldest of only two remaining Kaniva type stations, a type that was built for the Western (Adelaide) Line. Further, it is the only Kaniva type station to remain in operation as a railway station.

The Melton South Railway Station is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4) as the first stage of the direct Melbourne to Ballarat railway, whose opening in 1884 was attended by dignitaries including the Victorian Premier (Duncan Gillies), Minister for Railways (Alfred Deakin), Solicitor General (James Balfour), and the Sir William Clarke MLC. It was an important new development in the Melton district, which facilitated the development of a number of industries in the area, notably timber and chaff milling, and general rural and town growth. In particular it was the cradle of the township of Melton South. Its central role in the establishment and early community life of this hamlet is illustrated by the operation of a post office from the station in the period 1891 to 1918, and in the name of the area’s primary school (1911) as the ‘Melton Railway School’. The station is one of very few extant early buildings in Melton South and one of only two surviving Melton South public building (the other being the 1923/25 brick school building). It is also significant for its unusual origins, being transported from the small western town of Leor in 1898, and completed in 1900.

Overall, the Melton South Railway Station is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The Melton South Railway Station, Melton South, is a small weatherboard hipped roof building, with verandahs on both platform and road side. It includes a platform signal box, with signal frame. At the west end of platform is an intact galvanised corrugated steel - timber van goods shed. Interior passenger facilities have been extensively modernised since 1998, including sympathetic extensions to west end of main building. The east end platform storage building is thought to be of recent origin. The platform sides are sheeted in cement slabs of modern origin.

In his 1982 study of Victoria’s railway stations Andrew Ward described the station as unique, in that its ‘western’ half (this was incorrect - he meant the ‘eastern’ half), containing the ‘station master’s office’ (incorrectly labelled ‘residence’ in his plan) was removed from Leor, this being a standard design for its type. He described the 1900 alterations as having been undertaken ‘in a manner consistent with the style of the group’, the verandah valancing to both elevations, and the chimney stacks, as being in good condition. The capitals to the roadside verandah had been removed, and two sets of double glazed doors had been replaced with single doors.

The 'Kaniva type' of which Melton was an example, were built for western line to Adelaide. As this line was heavily trafficked the stations included 'a large booking lobby and general waiting room. It was accessible from the roadway via a porch fitted with two sets of double doors which opened onto verandahs along the roadside elevation. The station master's office combined booking, telegraph, parcels, and signalling functions and included an interlocking frame bay with a clear view over the tracks along the platform. And finally, the ladies' waiting room was situated at one end and adjoined the yard toilet. Both waiting rooms were provided with fireplaces'. In accordance with Departmental policy established during the mid 1880s it did not have an attached residence nor yard containing lamp room and toilet facilities but rather scattered them along the length of the platform in company with the van goods shed and similar facilities. The style of décor was limited with an eye to the budget, and the style featured timber lined walls and ceilings, decoration and verandahs: 'herein lay its charm'. The Kaniva style was 'certainly the most imposing "all timber" design created during the Victorian Age'.²

In conclusion, regarding Melton, Ward reported that:

'Melton is an important example of its group retaining the character of the original standard design. The cantilever verandah is unique.'³

In his 1988 study for V/Line Andrew Ward described the Melton Station as 'a standard single storeyed timber station building with corrugated iron clad nipped roof, posted verandah to roadside elevation and cantilevered platform verandahs'. The buildings were listed as being in good condition, and of fair integrity.

Ward described the station as being 'representative of a small group of station buildings erected during the Speight era on the Western line, although it is better represented in this respect by Kaniva. Of the others, only Nhill (much altered) remains.'⁴ He recommended the Melton Station Buildings for inclusion in the then Government Buildings Register.⁵

The station building remained generally in its c.1898-1900 state until sometime after 1988,⁶ when a substantial western extension and other alterations were carried out. The extension was undertaken with the same materials (timber wall cladding and corrugated iron roof cladding), overall plan, and hipped roof as the original. The interior remodelling and renovation included the installation of new large glass doors and windows on both the platform and the road side of the main passenger area of the station. One of the two chimneys (the western one) was removed. Both the platform and roadside verandahs were extended in the original style. The western (1898) end is largely intact, with platform signal box, chimney, and two roadside windows remaining.

A corrugated iron van goods shed with large wooden doors at the west end of the platform has been retained (probably with an unobtrusive skillion verandah and timber seats added on the platform side). A similar sized timber shed with large wooden doors on the platform to the east of the station, in the approximate position of an early 'waiting shelter and room' identified in Ward's 1982 study, is reported to be a new storage structure.

History:

² Ward, A, Donnelly, A, 'Victoria's Railway Stations' (ARHS, March 1982), Vol.3, pp.198-200

³ Ward (1982), *op cit*, Vol. 3, pp.191-192

⁴ Andrew C Ward & Associates, 'Study of Historic Railway Buildings and Structures for V/Line' (March 1988), Vol.4, pp.484-486.

⁵ Ward (1988), *op cit*, Vol.1, Appendix, p.8.

⁶ Ward (1982), *op cit*, p.198; Ward (1988), *op cit*, p.484 (photo)

The Establishment, Development and Local Impact of the Melton Railway Station.

In 1880 survey parties were in the Melton district surveying a railway about 3 kilometres south of Melton. Meetings and public deputations to have the rail brought closer to the town were to no avail. Some had argued that it should be north of the town.⁷

The final stage of the Ararat to Serviceton link in 1887 had finally completed the Adelaide-Melbourne-Sydney rail connection. However all this traffic went by way of Geelong until the direct route from Melbourne to Ballarat was built. This Braybrook Junction (Sunshine) to Warrenheip (Ballarat) link, was first proposed in 1855, but it was not until 1883 that a contract was awarded for the work. On 9th February of that year the contract for the ‘construction of line of railway, Footscray to Bacchus March’, was gazetted. John Robb would carry out the work for a price of £151,330/4/0.⁸ In March 1885 W Buckley was granted the contract to construct the line from Bacchus March to Maddingly (£39,265/16/11), and in February 1886 Lewis, Roberts and Glover were awarded the contract to construct the line between Gordon and Ballan (£27,273/5/4).⁹ In all the Footscray to Ballarat Railway took ten years to build, and was completed in 1889.¹⁰

On 20th March 1884 the Victorian Railways called for tenders for the construction of a ‘gate cottage’ at the Melton Station, no doubt on Exford Road.¹¹ On 1st April 1884 the Railways invited tenders to build a ‘goods shed and platform at Melton’.¹² This contract was awarded to William Blackwood on 25th April, for a sum of £429/5/1.¹³ This was likely the goods shed and platform that was situated on the upside of the line, opposite the station, and now removed. Blackwood erected numerous other stations, platforms, goods sheds lamp rooms etc on the line, and was remembered in the town for many years.¹⁴

By this time Robb had built the timber bridges over the Kororoit and Toolern Creeks and the railway had arrived in Melton. The line from Braybrook Junction to Melton was officially opened for passengers on 2nd April 1884.¹⁵ Dignitaries attending the celebratory banquet at the Shire Hall included Premier Duncan Gillies, Minister for Railways Alfred Deakin, Chief Secretary and Solicitor General who represented West Bourke (now Bulla) Mr James Balfour, and MLC for Southern Province Sir William Clarke.¹⁶

The subsequent sections of the railway presented many more engineering challenges than had the Kororoit and Toolern Creeks. A cutting brought the railway to the Werribee River, over which the huge viaduct (375 metres long, and 38 metres high) had to be built, a remarkable construction in its day. The cuttings, embankments and loops required around Bacchus Marsh were also major undertakings, and it was not until 2nd April 1886 that the next section of the railway, to Parwan, was opened to passengers.¹⁷ As such, Melton was the terminus of the line

⁷ Robert Macdonald, ‘A History of Melton’, typescript held by MDHS, c.1969, p.11

⁸ *Victorian Government Gazette*, Feb 9th 1883, p.263

⁹ Waugh, A, ‘Sunshine - Ballarat Station Notes’, pp.13-15

¹⁰ Harrigan, LJ, *Victorian Railways to 62* (Victorian Railways, MelbourneP, p.90

¹¹ Waugh, *op cit*, p.9

¹² Lewis, M (ed.), *The Australian Architects Index*. (Source: *The Argus*, 1 April 1884, p.3).

¹³ Waugh, *op cit*, p.9; The platform was 161 feet (51 metres) long in 1884 (MDHS Notes).

¹⁴ *ibid*, also Alex Cameron ‘Melton Memoirs’ (MDHS), p.23

¹⁵ Waugh, *op cit*, p.9

¹⁶ Cameron, *loc cit*

¹⁷ Waugh, *op cit*, p.9

for almost exactly two years. The town would have attracted extra business during this time, but there is no record of any substantial development at the station during this time.

The transformation of dairying from a farm craft to a modern industrial process and export industry (with hundreds of regional creameries and dairy factories being built over the next two decades) began in the late 1880s. On 29th April 1889 a contract to erect a shelter shed for dairy produce at the station was awarded to Owen and Shepherdson, for £88/15/9. This same building may have been upgraded the following year when a contract was awarded to T Whight to erect a ‘wooden cool storage shed’ at the station for £351/15/11.¹⁸ The growth of dairying was a major factor in the revival of farming around the turn of the twentieth century: in 1901 the Victorian Municipal Directory reported that dairying was ‘increasing’ in Melton Shire, and in 1910 dairying was listed amongst Melton’s ‘leading industries’ for the first time.¹⁹ The 1890 wooden cool storage shed is unlikely to be the shed that survives to the east of the station building, as Ward’s 1982 study indicates that the ‘Cream Shed’ in this location had been or was about to be removed, and local information suggests that the existing shed is of relatively recent date.²⁰

In the 1890s there was probably some rudimentary shelter and office at the station (as in 1891 a post office was opened at the station itself). However, the depression of the early 1890s resulted in major cuts to railway expenditure, and it was not until the late 1890s that the economy recovered. This was probably a factor in the delay, until 1898, in the construction of a permanent station building at Melton. On 27th July of that year the Government Notices in the *Age* advised that on Monday 15th August it was intended to remove the ‘combined signal box and office’ from Leeor to Melton, where it would be re-erected.²¹ This contract was issued to J Amess. The building was cut in half and moved by rail.²² Leeor was near Serviceton, and was one of a number of similar stations erected nearby on the Horsham - Serviceton section.²³

On 13th August 1900 FE Shillabeer was awarded a contract for £261/2/9 to ‘erect additions to station buildings’ at Melton.²⁴ Ward states that this was for the western part of the station that contain the station master’s office.²⁵ (This portion, which contained the booking office and signal frame and platform box is actually at the eastern end of the station.) The booking lobby and ladies waiting room were added on, together with the roadside verandah and cantilevered platform verandah, in the 1900 extension.²⁶

The station building remained generally in its c.1898-1900 state until sometime after 1988,²⁷ when a substantial western extension and other alterations were carried out.

Impact of the Railway Station on Melton

The railway had been optimistically awaited in Melton. The Victorian Municipal Directory kept predicting that the “...completion of the railway line to Ballarat making the direct line to

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *Victorian Municipal Directory*: 1901; 1910.

²⁰ Ward (1982), *op cit*, p.198

²¹ *The Age*, 27th July 1898.

²² Ward (1982), *op cit*, p.198; Bilszta, J (MDHS), notes.

²³ Ward (1982), *op cit*, p.198

²⁴ Waugh, *op cit*, p.9

²⁵ Ward (1982), *op cit*, pp.198-199

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ Ward (1982), *op cit*, p.198; Ward (1988), *op cit*, p.484 (photo)

*Adelaide will cause a prosperous township to spring up at the railway station.*²⁸ In the event, the impact of the railway was immediate, but small, and mixed. On the one hand, the railway facilitated some existing industries:

‘The opening of the railway made the town busier, with quite a good trade being done in firewood. It was not long before two saw mills were in operation, and some milk traffic was developing.’²⁹

Also Melton South seems to have been touched by the 1880s land boom fever, with speculators paying very large prices for land near the station.³⁰

For a few years, until Parwan station opened, the town also benefitted from being the terminus for the Ballarat coaches. However, after the line to Ballarat was completed, coaches, bullock wagons and horse-drawn vehicles continued in competition with the railway for a short time, but were relegated to local transport.³¹ Local hotels may have suffered as a result. By the first World War both the Royal and the Raglan hotels, which had had extensive stabling buildings for the Melbourne - Ballarat stage coach teams, had been delicensed.³²

The coming of the railway to Melton had been relatively late, and apparently far enough away as to limit its impact on the original township. Unlike many towns where the railway was built much closer to an early township (on its outskirts) the original township maintained its primacy.

Development of the Melton South Township

However a new hamlet did slowly establish around the Melton South railway station. The establishment of the first post office at the station on 1st September 1891 illustrates the central role of the railway station in this development. Despite the opening of another post office in Melton South, this post office only closed in 1918.³³

The new Exford (Closer Settlement) Estate farming district to the south, and the break-up of other big pastoral estates, also contributed to the growth of the area. In 1910 the community built the large timber ‘Victoria Hall’, which became the focus of community life for several generations. The ‘Melton Railway School’ (a ‘prep school’ only) commenced in this hall in 1911.³⁴ In 1923 the Melton South No. 3717 became a separate school, and in 1925 it had its own brick building. A teachers residence was purchased in 1923.³⁵

By about 1912 Melton South had a boarding house (probably for chaff or sawmill employees), store, and small church. The Melton Valley Golf Club originated near the railway station; it was officially declared open by Mr H Staughton, President, on 11th June 1927. In 1931 the club moved to the present Melton links.³⁶

²⁸ *Victorian Municipal Directory*: 1890; 1895.

²⁹ Macdonald, *op cit*, p.12

³⁰ Macdonald, *op cit*, p.14

³¹ Pollitt, JH, *An Historical Record of Melton* (Melbourne, nd), pp.56-58

³² Minns, *op cit*.

³³ Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), p148.

³⁴ Anna Curry ‘Victoria Hall’ (Community Development Theory and Practice essay, 1993), pp.1-2

³⁵ Blake, *op cit*, pp.121-122

³⁶ Johnson, *op cit*

Apart from the 1925 brick school building,³⁷ and the railway station, none of the principal early Melton South public buildings survive. Few early residential sites remain. Those in Brooklyn Street, including the mill manager's house, have been demolished. There are a few post war owner-built brick houses on Exford Road, and a row of weatherboard houses on Staughton Street, probably built post-war.³⁸

Chaff Mills

The railway played a critical part in the development of Melton's important early twentieth century chaff mill industry. The demand for hay reached a peak in the early twentieth century, as chaff eating horses had taken over road transport almost completely from bullocks by this time, and as the early twentieth century farming boom required feed for dairy cattle and farm horses. By 1911 over half of the cultivated land in the region was sown to hay.³⁹ The goods soils and dry climate of the Melton-Werribee area were particularly suited to high quality hay production, and the very high quality of Melton chaff was known throughout Australia.

In the early twentieth century chaff mills were built beside railway lines across Melbourne's western region: an area from Footscray to Werribee, and Bacchus Marsh to Sunbury. A number of chaff mills were in the Melton Shire, and two of these were situated beside the Melton South railway station (including the last of the chaff mills in Melbourne's western district, operated by Trethowan at the time of its destruction by fire in recent decades). They were situated on the Brooklyn Road (north) side of the railway line, and 1924 railway records show that both were connected to sidings.⁴⁰ These were the Barrie Bros. siding (to the mill erected c.1910), and the Ebbot Kebby mill (probably originally built by the Dixon Bros. also c.1910). The Ebbot Kebby mill was subsequently operated by the Robinson Brothers of Truganina, and then BJ Trethowan and Jack Butler before being owned by Wright Stephenson and the Trethowan family at the time of its destruction by fire in the early 1980s, and the siding to this 'chaff and grain mill' was dismantled in 1984.⁴¹

No sidings or evidence of these chaff mills, or of the Melton South cattle siding, remain today. However the large modern 'Melton Produce' ('Trethowan's') grain store near the station on Brooklyn Road, and the nearby road weighbridge, provide some link with this history of the Melton's hay, stock-feed and grain industries, and the role played by the railway in its establishment.

Earlier style signal posts (but not semaphore signals) survive at Melton South.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Melton Historical Themes: 'Transport'

Known Comparable Examples in Melton Shire:

The only other surviving railway station in the Shire is the Diggers Rest station, which comprises buildings from a much earlier and later eras: the 1859 bluestone platforms and the

³⁷ 'Melton South Primary School No.3717 Diamond Jubilee 1923-1983'

³⁸ Other old houses include that on the corner of Station St and the railway line (the 1923 teachers residence?); and Ronnie Robertsons at the end of Brooklyn Road. Staughton's 1910 'White Gate' was taken away from Brooklyn Road.

³⁹ Vines, G, *Outline of Chaff Milling* (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West), p.15

⁴⁰ Waugh, *op cit*, p.9

⁴¹ *ibid*, p.10; also MDHS collection; also Starr, *op cit*, pp.215-230.

1928 brick station building. This is not comparable historically or architecturally with Melton South. The other station on the line, at Rockbank, has no station building or early fabric remaining.

Apart from the station the only other early public building of any type remaining in Melton South is the c.1923 brick Melton South State School building.

In 1988 the ‘Melton Station Buildings’ were recommended for inclusion in the then Government Buildings Register.⁴² This recommendation was never considered. Ward described Kaniva as a better example than Melton of this architectural style, but noted that Nhill (much altered) was the only other remaining example. Since his early study (1982), the other stations of this style - Diapur and Miram - had been demolished. Other examples at Kiata, Lillimur, Wail (and Leeor, which was removed to Melton) had already been demolished or removed.⁴³

In his 1996 study Roger Beeston reports that Kaniva station, built 1910, no longer operates as a railway station, and had been modified internally as part of its conversion to a restaurant.⁴⁴ In 1996 Kaniva had also had many other alterations, including the removal of over half of its station platform, its roadside verandah, its interlocking frame bay (replaced in a modern style), together with the removal of its van goods shed, lamp room and toilet. Unlike Melton however it did retain both of its chimneys, as well as its downside corrugated iron goods shed (although without a platform).

Melton is therefore the oldest of only two remaining ‘Kaniva’ type stations, that were built for the Western (Adelaide) Line, and the only such station type to remain in operation as a railway station. Given that the 1996 Beeston study did not consider sites that were not already on the Government Buildings Register (therefore excluding places such as the Melton station which had been recommended for the register in Ward’s 1988 study), it is not known how Melton ranks with Kaniva in terms of integrity and condition, as potentially the best remaining representative example of the style.

Condition:

Good

Integrity:

Moderately intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>No</i>

⁴² Ward (1988), *op cit*, Vol.1, Appendix, p.8.

⁴³ Ward (1982), *op cit*, Vol.1

⁴⁴ Beeston, R, ‘A Review of Country Railway Places on the Government Buildings Register: Summary Report’ (16th January 1996), Part 2: Site Record Sheet, Kaniva Railway Station Complex.

Outbuildings and/or Fences: *No*