

Hawksburn Primary School No. 1467, 369 Malvern Road, South Yarra



History and Description

Hawksburn Primary School was the first school built by the Education Department in Prahran after the introduction of compulsory education into Victoria in 1872. It has always been the largest primary school in the district. The school was opened in January 1875 on land purchased in 1873 from Mrs. Margaret Hobson. The new two-storeyed brick school was erected in 1874 from the designs of the notable Melbourne architects Crouch and Wilson.²³⁹ Crouch and Wilson, a very successful Melbourne architectural firm in the nineteenth century, were well-known for a wide variety of residential, commercial and institutional work, and especially church designs.²⁴⁰

Over a third of Victoria's schools were built between 1873-1875. Many schools of this time were of a symmetrical plan with two storeys, and were built in the inner metropolitan area to accommodate 500-1000 pupils each. Architectural competitions, were held for school designs in 1873 and a small number these designs became influential prototypes for schools designed by the Victorian Education Department (1876-1883), and later by the Public Works Department (1883-1900). Crouch and Wilson were competitors in one of these competitions with M. Schneider, W. H. Ellender, Wharton and Vickers, and Reed and Barnes.²⁴¹ Although this design was not a 'prototype', it has similarities to Buninyong, perhaps the most

239. J. B. Cooper, *The History of Prahran*, p. 249.

240. N. Lewis and R. Aitken, *Malvern Heritage Study*, 1992, Appendix 1, p.40.

241. Richard Peterson *Historic Government Schools: A comparative study*, chapter 3, p.3..

influential of the competition designs identified by R. Peterson as Early Education Department Competition Schools.

The large school building is a symmetrical polychrome brick with essentially Gothic detail which was the common design approach derived from the competition designs of the mid 1870s. The predominance of Gothic detailing in this building is given a Venetian character by the inclusion of polychrome in the window dressings and courses. The steep slate roof is decorated with gabled vents, complete with iron finials. The central section of the facade includes a bell tower which projects above the rest of the building, and is very similar to the bell-tower in Buninyong primary School, one of the most influential of the 1873 competition designs.²⁴² Several windows have been enlarged in the front gables and in the western wall. Additions to the north east of the building are sympathetic in scale, style and materials. Other comparisons with this school, are Albert Park No. 1181, by architect M. Schneider; Brighton No. 1542 (1875), by Terry & Oakden; Lee Street, Carlton (1878) and Gold Street, Clifton Hill (12874), by N. H. Kelleher.

The new school was known as Prahran Primary School until 1888, when its name was changed to Prahran North. Finally, in 1906 it became Hawksburn to distinguish it from other Prahran schools.²⁴³

A caretaker's cottage was built in 1882.²⁴⁴ The original building and caretaker's cottage (now demolished) are shown on an MMBW drainage plan dated 1901.²⁴⁵

In 1908, the original school site was extended by the purchase of adjoining land in Cromwell Road. A new infant building was erected on this in 1911 by the Public Works Department.²⁴⁶ The original school building was remodelled in 1924 with an extension on the north-east side of the building.²⁴⁷ Later, in the 1960s, the Education Department purchased four houses adjoining the school in Surrey Road. These houses were demolished and the school grounds extended.²⁴⁸

Significance

Hawksburn Primary School is of state significance as the first school built by the Education Department in Prahran after the introduction of compulsory education into Victoria in 1872. The school, designed by notable architects, Crouch and Wilson, and opened in 1875, with extension to the building in 1924 and to the grounds in 1908 and 1960s, has always been the largest primary school in the district. It has state design significance as one of a small number of competition designs by well-known architects, commissioned after the 1873 Education Act. The building has high architectural importance as an example of the work of the prominent nineteenth century architectural firm of Crouch and Wilson, and a very intact example of an early Education Department competition school.

242. R. Peterson, 1993, chapter 4. p.7.

243. Jane Chatham, *Across the Slate Prahran's Schools 1850s-1985*, 1985, pp. 23-24.

244. Shirley W. Wiencke. *Hawksburn School and District. A Short History*, p.9.

245. MMBW House Cover No. 20099.

246. J. B. Cooper, p. 249.

247. MMBW House Cover No. 20099; PWD Summary of Contract Books 1924-25 No. 135.

248. Wiencke, p. 27; MMBW House Cover No. 20099; Plan dated 31 March 1966.

The school has regional significance for the likely cultural sentiment attached to it by generations of pupils. It has aesthetic importance relating to the integrity of the site, maintaining the traditional detached status and landmark qualities of the building.

Sources

Burchell, L., *Victorian Schools. A Study in Colonial Government Architecture, 1937-1900, 1980.*

Chatham, Jane, *Across the Slate Prahran's Schools 1850s-1985, 1985, pp. 23-24.*

Cooper, J. B. *Across the Slate. Prahran's Schools 1850s-1985, 1985.*

Cooper, J. B., *The History of Prahran, p. 249.*

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Historic Buildings Council File No. 002040K.

Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken, *Malvern Heritage Study, 1992.*

MMBW House Cover No. 20099.

Peterson, Richard, *Historic Government Schools: A comparative study.*

Plan dated 31 March 1966.

PWD Summary of Contract Books 1924-25 No. 135.

Wiencke, Shirley W., *Hawksburn School and District. A Short History, 1975.*

Analysis & Recommendations

It is recommended that this building be retained at A1 level.