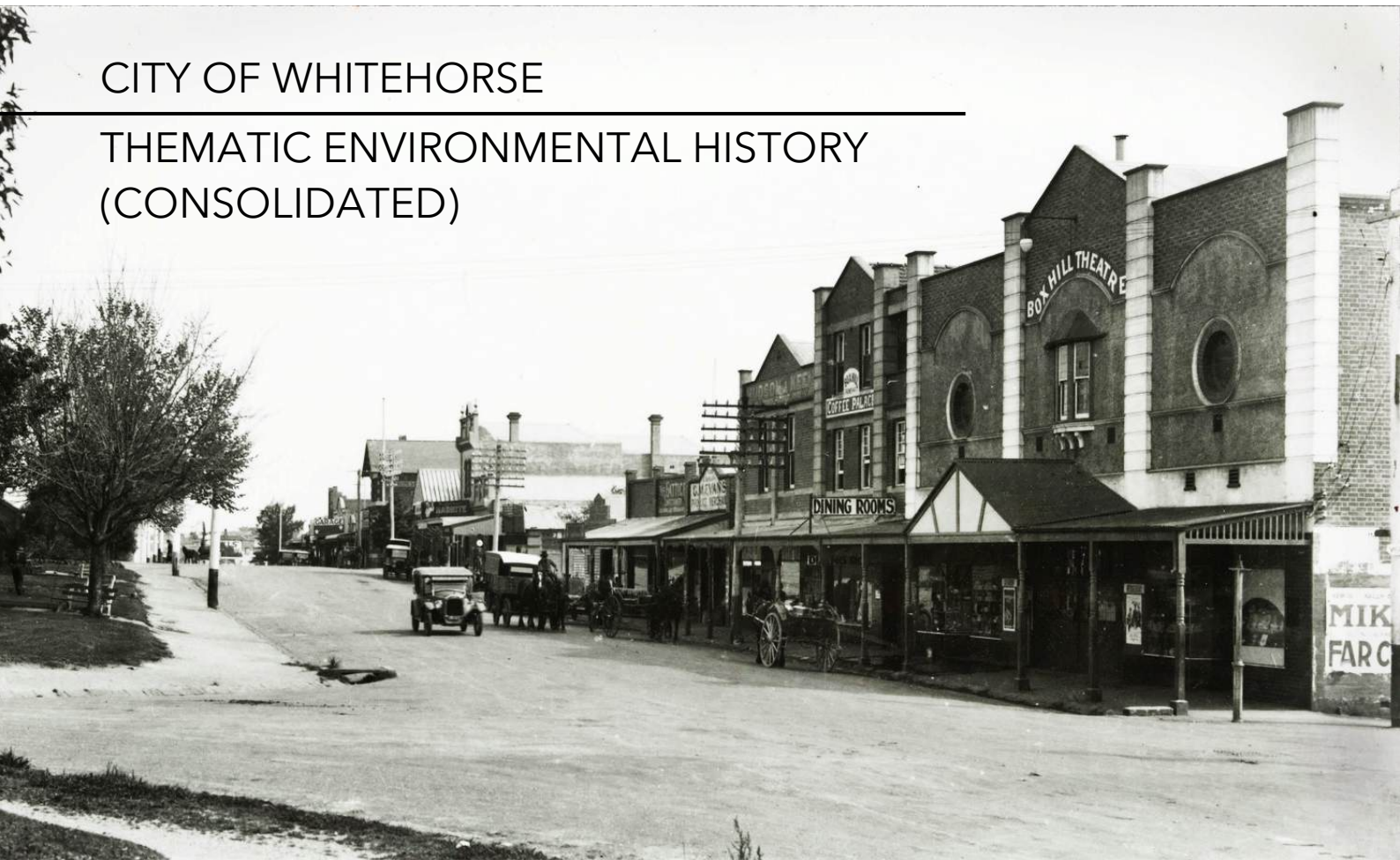


CITY OF WHITEHORSE

THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY (CONSOLIDATED)



PREPARED FOR: Whitehorse City Council
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Acknowledgements

Particular acknowledgement goes to Lovell Chen (previously Allom Lovell), authors of the *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review, Vol 1: Thematic History* (1999) and Built Heritage, authors of the *Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study* (2016). This document consolidates the work produced in these two previous studies into a single document and Lovell Chen and Built Heritage are therefore acknowledged as the principal authors of much of the content within this document.

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The Wurundjeri-Balluk people are the traditional custodians of the land on which the City of Whitehorse is located. The traditional language of the people is Woi-wurrung, and the Traditional Owners of this land are now known as the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung¹. This Thematic Environmental History generally focusses on the post-contact history of the area as it is this phase of the land's history that has largely created the landscape we see today. Nonetheless, we acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the land and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Cover page image:

Whitehorse Road, Box Hill in c 1920-35 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1683798)

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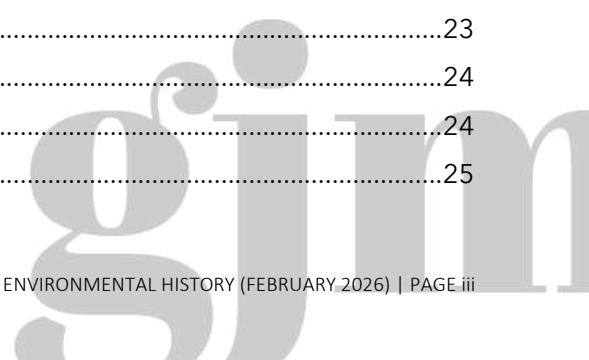
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¹ From <https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-heritage-whitehorse>

CONTENTS

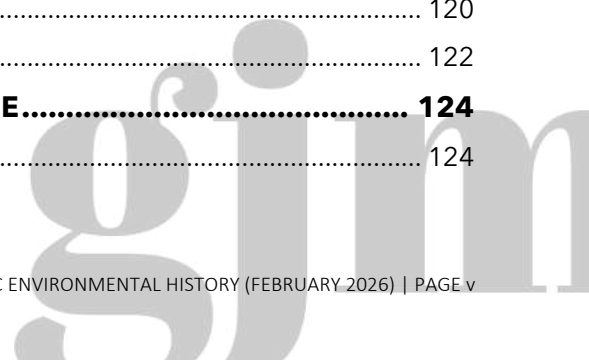
LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Brief.....	2
Methodology.....	3
Review of existing TEHs	3
Reformatting the 1999 TEH.....	3
Consolidating the Post-1945 TEH	3
Consolidating the 1999 and Post-1945 TEHs and identifying gaps	4
Additional research	4
Relevant historical images	4
Related places	4
Nomenclature.....	4
SOME KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS	5
Timeline.....	5
1 SHAPING WHITEHORSE’S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	7
1.1 Natural landscapes and waterways.....	7
1.2 Flora and fauna.....	7
2 PEOPLING WHITEHORSE	9
2.1 Living as Australia’s earliest inhabitants	9
2.2 The first European surveys	9
2.3 Early European settlement.....	11
2.4 Crown land sales	12
2.5 Migrating to a new land.....	14
3 CONNECTING WHITEHORSE.....	16
3.1 Roads	16
3.1.1 Creating roads.....	16
3.1.2 Twentieth century improvements.....	19
3.2 Rail.....	21
3.2.1 The Melbourne to Lilydale railway.....	21
3.2.2 Improvements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries	23
3.3 Trams	24
3.3.1 Early tramways.....	24
3.3.2 Expansion in the post-war period.....	25



3.4	Bus services.....	26
3.5	Communications	26
3.5.1	Establishing postal services.....	26
3.5.2	Developing electronic means of communication.....	28
3.5.3	Making, printing and distributing newspapers.....	30
3.5.4	Broadcasting in the municipality	31
4	TRANSFORMING AND MANAGING THE LAND	32
4.1	Timber and charcoal	32
4.2	Farming.....	32
4.3	Orchards and market gardens	34
4.4	Brick and tile manufacturing	36
5	BUILDING WHITEHORSE'S INDUSTRIES AND WORKFORCE	40
5.1	Manufacturing.....	40
5.2	Retailing.....	42
5.3	Banking and finance	46
5.4	Hospitality.....	47
5.5	Office and commercial development.....	51
6	CREATING WHITEHORSE'S SUBURBS	54
6.1	The early townships	54
6.2	Early residential development.....	55
6.3	The 1880s land boom.....	57
6.4	Early twentieth century development.....	59
6.5	Development in the post-war era.....	62
6.5.1	Modernist architecture and the architect-designed house.....	64
6.5.2	The Small Homes Service and project housing	66
6.5.3	Display villages and housing estates.....	68
6.5.4	Higher density living.....	68
6.6	Public housing	70
6.7	Parks and gardens.....	71
7	GOVERNING WHITEHORSE.....	76
7.1	Municipal origins.....	76
7.1.1	Road Districts.....	76
7.1.2	The Shire of Nunawading	76
7.1.3	Severance	77
7.1.4	The Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham	77
7.1.5	The City of Box Hill.....	78
7.1.6	The City of Nunawading	78
7.1.7	Amalgamation	79

7.2	Maintaining law and order	80
7.3	Providing essential services	81
7.3.1	Gas	81
7.3.2	Electricity.....	83
7.3.3	Water and Sewerage	84
7.3.4	Rubbish disposal.....	86
7.3.5	Fire services	86
8	BUILDING COMMUNITY LIFE	88
8.1	Religion and worship	88
8.1.1	Establishing churches in Whitehorse	88
8.1.2	Churches in the post-war period	89
8.2	Education	92
8.2.1	Pre-school education.....	92
8.2.2	Primary and secondary education	93
8.2.3	Tertiary education.....	97
8.3	Health and welfare	99
8.3.1	Hospitals and doctor’s surgeries	99
8.3.2	Maternal and child health	100
8.3.3	Children’s homes	100
8.3.4	Other welfare services.....	101
8.3.5	Changing attitudes and closure.....	103
8.4	Community organisations and services	104
8.4.1	Progress associations	104
8.4.2	Public libraries.....	105
8.4.3	Masonic lodges	106
8.4.4	Scouts and Guides.....	106
8.5	Community halls and centres	108
8.6	Commemorating	109
8.6.1	Cemeteries	109
8.6.2	Memorials	110
9	SHAPING WHITEHORSE’S CULTURAL AND CREATIVE LIFE.....	112
9.1	Sport and recreation	112
9.2	Drive-ins and cinemas.....	116
9.3	Music and drama	118
9.4	Visual arts.....	120
9.5	Film and television	122
10	PROTECTING AND PRESERVING WHITEHORSE’S HERITAGE.....	124
10.1	The National Trust.....	124



10.2 Designating historic sites 124

BIBLIOGRAPHY



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Blackburn Lake Sanctuary in 1945 (State Library of Victoria, ID H91.50/858).....	8
Figure 2. Plan of Elgar’s Special Survey in the parishes of Boroondara and Nunawading, 1841 (Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 8168 P2 Unit SS2A)	10
Figure 3. Country lands in the Parish of Nunawading as surveyed by Clement Hodgkinson, 1855 (Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 8168 P2 SALE38).....	11
Figure 4. Crown land sales in the Parish of Nunawading, 18 January 1853 (Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 8168 P2 SALE271)	13
Figure 5. Parish plan of Nunawading, 1864 (State Library of Victoria, ID 2014959).....	13
Figure 6. Eastbridge Migrant Hostel, c. 1940s (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1861).....	15
Figure 7. Eastbridge Migrant Hostel (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP4489)	15
Figure 8. Plan of proposed new road in the Parish of Nunawading, April 1863 showing White Horse Road and Delany’s (now Canterbury) Road (Public Record Office Victoria VPRS8168 P4 Plan 149)	17
Figure 9. Blackburn Road in 1912 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP23)	17
Figure 10. L L Road, Vermont in the early 1900s (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3644)....	18
Figure 11. Map of Nunawading showing the road system in 1921 (State Library of Victoria ID686892)	18
Figure 12. White Horse Road (as then named), Mitcham in the late nineteenth century (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2893).....	19
Figure 13. White Horse Road (as then named), Mitcham in the 1940s (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3315).....	19
Figure 14 and 15. Advertisements for the Box Hill Railway Station Reserve and Box Hill Township Estate, 1880s (State Library of Victoria, ID 1844743 & ID 1432447)	22
Figure 16. Advertisement for the Blackburn Township Estate, c1880s (State Library of Victoria, ID 2239306).....	22
Figure 17. Box Hill Railway Station in c1918 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP519).....	23
Figure 18. The electric tramway that ran between Box Hill and Doncaster, undated (State Library of Victoria, ID 1723374)	25
Figure 19. Advertisement for Australia’s first electric tram, running between Box Hill and Doncaster, undated (State Library of Victoria, ID 599153).....	25
Figure 20. L L Vale Post Office, 1889 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP7636)	27
Figure 21. Mitcham Post Office, c1924 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP816)	27
Figure 22. Blackburn Post Office in 1960 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP376).....	28

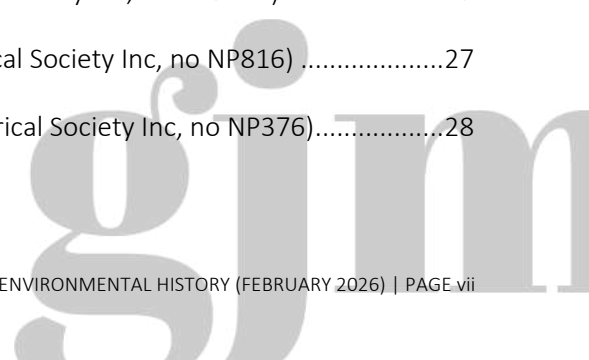


Figure 23. Design of the automatic telephone exchange, Box Hill, 1927 (Herald, 9 November 1927, p 14).....	29
Figure 24. Offices of The Reporter in Main Street, Box Hill, c 1890s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2990)	30
Figure 25. Third Schwerkolt cottage, built after the 1905 bushfires (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1779).....	32
Figure 26. The Schwerkolt family’s stone cottage, built in 1884-85 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1779).....	33
Figure 27. The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society flower farm (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2507).....	35
Figure 28. Blue Moon packing shed, 1960 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP746)	35
Figure 29. Aerial showing orchards in Box Hill, 1953 (State Library of Victoria, H2010.91/289)	36
Figure 30. Employees at the Australian Tesselated Tile Works, Mitcham (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3324)	38
Figure 31. Australian Tesselated Tile Works, Mitcham, c 1930s (State Library of Victoria, ID 1761532).....	39
Figure 32. Daniel Robertson brickworks, 2000 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2045).....	39
Figure 33. K G Luke factory in Mitcham, 1959 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3801)	41
Figure 34. Silas Padgham’s general store and post office, Box Hill, c1860s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0408)....	42
Figure 35. Pannam’s General Store, Vermont (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2096).....	42
Figure 36. Whitehorse Road, near the Station Street intersection, in the 1860s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0644)	43
Figure 37. Looking south west across Whitehorse Road, Box Hill from the fire station tower, 1905 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0915)	44
Figure 38. Whitehorse Road, Box Hill in the 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0147).....	44
Figure 39. Hamilton Street, Mont Albert in c 1920s (Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 12800 P3 ADV 0458)	44
Figure 40. Australia’s first Kmart, Burwood (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP4491).....	45
Figure 41. State Savings Bank at Mitcham, c1970 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP16).....	47
Figure 42. Traveller’s Rest Hotel, Blackburn in 1929 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1562)	48
Figure 43. The Hill Hotel in Mitcham (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1329)	48
Figure 44. The Reserve Hotel in Mitcham, c 1920 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3196) .	49
Figure 45. The White Horse Hotel in Box Hill prior to demolition, c 1933 (State Library of Victoria, H4841a)	50

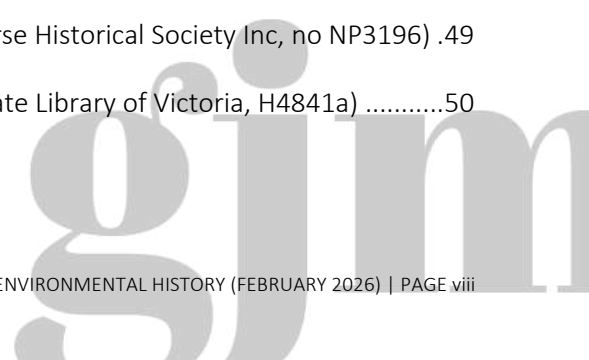


Figure 46. Looking south along Station Street, Box Hill, with the Railway Hotel to the right of the image (Box Hill Historical Society, no B9108).....	50
Figure 47. Aerial view of Tally Ho Technology Park in Burwood East, 1995 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2775).....	52
Figure 48. The township of Ballyshanassy, 1858 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1294016).....	54
Figure 49. The proposed township of Norwich, 1860s (State Library of Victoria, ID 2100195).....	55
Figure 50. Blood Cottage, March 1980 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1670300).....	56
Figure 51. ‘Turriff’, 40 Albion Road, Box Hill in the 1880s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2589).....	58
Figure 52. ‘Banff’ in Albion Road, Box Hill (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2026).....	58
Figure 53. Gordon Crescent in Blackburn in c1880s-90s (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP40).....	58
Figure 54. House in Gordon Crescent, Blackburn, c1880 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1366).....	59
Figure 55. Game family home, in Gordon Crescent in c1909 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2159).....	59
Figure 56. Elmore House, Laburnum in 1914 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3516).....	60
Figure 57. Advertisement for Koonwarra Estate, 1924 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP294).....	60
Figure 58. Advertisement for Electric Tramway Estate, Box Hill, undated (State Library of Victoria, ID 2240534).....	61
Figure 59. Aerial photograph showing development in the City of Whitehorse in 1945; large swaths of rural land remain to the south and east (Whitehorse Maps).....	63
Figure 60. Aerial photograph showing development in the City of Whitehorse in 1975; the municipality was almost completely urbanised by this time (Whitehorse Maps).....	64
Figure 61. Mirrabooka at 30-40 Moore Street, Vermont designed by Robin Boyd, 1957 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1698777).....	65
Figure 62. House at 1 Verona Street, Vermont designed by architectural firm Chancellor & Patrick, 1959 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1696683).....	65
Figure 63. Plans in the Age newspaper for T22 - the first SHS design ever published - and T2124 (Age, 2 July 1947, p 2 and Age, 5 April 1954, p 6).....	67
Figure 64. Hallmark Homes display home exhibition in Forest Hill in 1960 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3511).....	67
Figure 65. Vermont Park (Reproduced from Architecture Australia, July/August 2021, pp 82 and 86).....	70
Figure 66. Vermont Park (Reproduced from Architecture Australia, July/August 2021, pp 82 and 86).....	70

Figure 67. Blackburn Lake in 1906 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1323).....	72
Figure 68. The White Horse Road median strip with WW1 memorial and 1911 rotunda, 1927 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0919)	72
Figure 69. Wattle Park, c1925-1960 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1735003)	73
Figure 70. Nunawading Shire Hall, c1890 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2817).....	77
Figure 71. Former Mitcham and Blackburn Shire Offices, 1973 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP0010)	78
Figure 72. Box Hill Town Hall, c 1935 (Box Hill Historical Society, no 1025)	79
Figure 73. Nunawading Civic Centre, c1970 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3099).....	79
Figure 74. Photograph of Mitcham in c1910 showing original Mitcham Police Station to the right of the image (Courtesy of Whitehorse Historical Society, no NP1331)	81
Figure 75. The Colonial Gas Association showroom in Whitehorse Road, c 1940-50s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2081)	82
Figure 76. Colonial Gas Association gasworks, Box Hill, c 1945 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1642127)	82
Figure 77. Nunawading Shire Electric Supply Van and workmen in the 1920s (Courtesy of Whitehorse Historical Society, no NP920).....	84
Figure 78. Water tower at Mitcham, 1922 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3517).....	85
Figure 79. Water tower at Surrey Hills in 1928 (Argus, 19 December 1928, p 17).....	85
Figure 80. Wesleyan Church, Box Hill in 1980 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP676)	88
Figure 81. Wattle Park Presbyterian Church, Box Hill, 1964 (State Library of Victoria, Peter Wille collection, ID 1696103)	90
Figure 82. St Benedict’s Roman Catholic Church, Burwood, 1957-58 (State Library of Victoria, Peter Wille collection, ID 1708759).....	90
Figure 83. Forest Hill Residential Kindergarten, 124 Lake Road, Forest Hill in c1938 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP676).....	93
Figure 84. Vermont State School, c1888 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2099)	94
Figure 85. Blackburn State School, 185 Surrey Road Blackburn, c1910-20 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1850).....	94
Figure 86. Girls Technical School (undated) (State Library of Victoria ID 1683796)	95
Figure 87. Boys Technical School (1949), Box Hill (State Library of Victoria H2004.101/293)	95
Figure 88. Aerial view of Box Hill High School looking south, 1951 (State Library of Victoria, ID H2010.91/276).....	97

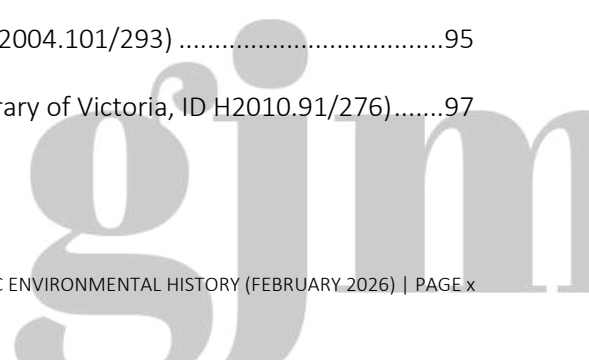


Figure 89. Box Hill Hospital, c1956 (State Library of Victoria, H32492/8685).....	100
Figure 90. Illustration of the new Kildonan Children’s Home, 1936 (Argus, 6 June 1936, p 32)	101
Figure 91. The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2508).....	102
Figure 92. Cottages at the Orana Peace Memorial Home in 1958 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1791355)	103
Figure 93. Box Hill Library in the old RSL building opposite the Town Hall, c 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B5137)	105
Figure 94. Opening of Blackburn Scout Hall in 1919 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP798)	107
Figure 95. Mitcham Guides (right) (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1798).....	107
Figure 96. East Burwood Hall, 1971 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1338).....	108
Figure 97. Halliday Park World War I Memorial (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2326)..	111
Figure 98. South Africa and China War Memorial in original location at intersection of Whitehorse Road and Station Street, Box Hill, 1902-10 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0835).....	111
Figure 99. Surrey Dive, Box Hill in c1920-54 (State Library of Victoria, H32492/8850).....	114
Figure 100. The outdoor swimming pool at Box Hill soon after opening in 1939 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0642 and B9300)	114
Figure 101. Aerial view showing the Standard Brickworks with the drained Surrey Dive and foundations for the Box Hill Swimming Pool and Recreation Centre to the rear, 1981 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0210).....	114
Figure 102. The ornamental lake at Surrey Dive, with the old brickworks behind, 1988 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B9132)	115
Figure 103. Nunawading Pool, 1973 prior to its enclosure (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3604).....	115
Figure 104. The Hoyts Skyline drive in cinema site at Burwood, c 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0928)	117
Figure 105. The Hoyts Skyline drive in cinema site at Burwood, c 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0069)	117
Figure 106. The Hoyts Skyline drive in cinema site at Burwood, c 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2623)	117
Figure 107. Architectural drawing for Nunawading Theatre Arts Centre, 1985 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3206)	119
Figure 108. Photograph of the Arts Centre in 1986 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NHP4274)	119
Figure 109. Architectural drawings for the Box Hill Community Arts Centre, 1991 (www.gbarch.com.au)	121
Figure 110. Former Channel O Studios at Forest Hill, 1964 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP4490).....	123



INTRODUCTION

The *City of Whitehorse Thematic Environmental History (Consolidated)* (hereafter referred to as the TEH) has been prepared to document and illustrate how various historical themes have shaped the environment and culture of the City of Whitehorse. In this way, the TEH provides a context for heritage places that have been – and will be – identified within the municipality.

The City of Whitehorse comprises the suburbs of Blackburn (incorporating Laburnum), Blackburn North, Blackburn South, Box Hill, Box Hill North (incorporating Kerrimuir), Box Hill South, Burwood East, Forest Hill, Mitcham, Mont Albert, Mont Albert North, Nunawading, Vermont, Vermont South, and parts of the suburbs of Balwyn North, Burwood (incorporating Bennettswood) and Surrey Hills.

The role of this consolidated TEH is not to provide a comprehensive history of the municipality. It is instead a concise document that identifies broad patterns to explain how the local environment has been shaped over time. As noted by Thom Blake, historian and author of the Queensland thematic framework², a thematic history:

... differs from traditional approaches to history by focussing on key historical and cultural processes rather than topics or a chronological treatment. It provides a means of developing a comprehensive and thorough framework by attempting to identify the key human activities that have shaped the built environment.

Arranged thematically and drawing on *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*, this TEH sets out the key themes that have influenced the historical development of the City of Whitehorse. It represents a consolidation of two existing TEHs that were prepared as key components of heritage studies completed for the City of Whitehorse in 1999 and 2016. The information contained within these two TEHs has been supplemented by additional research where appropriate to address any under-represented themes.

Background

This consolidated TEH is an outcome of the *Whitehorse Heritage Framework Plan 2020* (the Framework Plan), which was prepared by Council to provide a framework for the ongoing assessment and management of heritage places in the City of Whitehorse. One of the key recommendations of the Framework Plan was to update the existing TEHs to assist in improving the identification, protection, management and promotion of heritage assets within the municipality and to assist in identifying and prioritising future heritage work.

As outlined in the Framework Plan:

² Cited in Context Pty Ltd & Heritage Victoria, 'Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes', Final Report, vol. 1, September 2007 (draft format).



Contemporary heritage planning requires the preparation of a Thematic Environmental History to provide the underlying framework to assist in the identification and classification of heritage places. A Thematic Environmental History assists in the comparative analysis of places of similar type and how they demonstrate particular aspects of the historical growth and development of the municipality.

Two Thematic Histories have been prepared for the City of Whitehorse, one by Allom Lovell in 1999 for the City of Whitehorse Heritage Review, and another covering the post-WW2 period, by Built Heritage for the City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study.

The earlier Thematic Study sets out the themes in a format developed by the consultants specifically for the municipality. It covers the broad themes from first European settlement through to the Post-War Building Boom. The Thematic Environmental History prepared by Built Heritage, is more focused on the Post-1945 period, and is based on the themes set out in Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes, prepared by Heritage Victoria in 2010. It is now an expectation of Panels Victoria that assessments of heritage places be prepared with regard to the context set out in Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes.

The objectives of this project have therefore been to:

- Provide a revised and consolidated TEH, prepared in accordance with *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*, which identifies the key themes and sub-themes in the historical development of the City of Whitehorse;
- Explain how these themes have influenced settlement and development patterns within the study area; and
- Provide a clear context for the identification, assessment and on-going management of places of heritage significance in the municipality.

Brief

It was recommended in the Council's Heritage Framework Plan that a consolidated TEH be completed in accordance with *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* to create a common document for the ongoing assessment and evaluation of heritage places in the City of Whitehorse. GJM Heritage was subsequently commissioned by Whitehorse City Council to undertake a review of Council's two existing TEHs and to prepare a TEH that consolidates the following two documents:

- *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review, Vol 1: Thematic History* (Allom Lovell, 1999)
- *Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study* (Built Heritage, 2016).

The intent of the project has been to ensure that Council has a single TEH, referencing *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*, that can be used to support any future gap studies for the municipality.

Methodology

Review of existing TEHs

GJM Heritage undertook a high-level review of the existing TEHs to determine the most appropriate approach to the project. The review confirmed that consolidation of the two existing TEHs into one cohesive document represented the soundest outcome. This would involve reformatting the 1999 TEH using *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* and condensing the Post-1945 TEH to bring the consolidated TEH up-to-date and in line with current best practice.

The high-level review also noted which themes and sub-themes (drawn from *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*) were adequately covered by the existing TEHs, which ones required expansion or updating, and which ones were not covered and would require the preparation of new written content.

Reformatting the 1999 TEH

A new document was created that transposed the text verbatim from the 1999 TEH under each relevant theme drawn from *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*. The text remained largely unedited at this stage, with errors in grammar, spelling and formatting corrected where required.

The TEH was divided into the following historic themes, drawn from *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*, and adapted to reflect the municipal context:

- 1.0 Shaping Whitehorse's natural environment
- 2.0 Peopling Whitehorse
- 3.0 Connecting Whitehorse
- 4.0 Transforming and managing the land
- 5.0 Building Whitehorse's industries and workforce
- 6.0 Creating Whitehorse's suburbs
- 7.0 Governing Whitehorse
- 8.0 Building community life
- 9.0 Shaping Whitehorse's cultural and creative life
- 10.0 Protecting and preserving Whitehorse's heritage

Consolidating the Post-1945 TEH

The Post-1945 TEH comprises a very detailed analysis of the post-World War II history of the City of Whitehorse. To ensure that equal weight would be afforded to both the pre- and post-1945 developmental history of Whitehorse, a review of the Post-1945 TEH was undertaken. The editing process included the deletion of detailed references to specific places and the condensing of sub-themes. This review process allowed for a broader overview of the post-World War II history of the City of Whitehorse.

The 2016 Post-1945 TEH remains as a Background Document in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme and can be accessed if further detail on specific places is required.

Consolidating the 1999 and Post-1945 TEHs and identifying gaps

Text from the condensed Post-1945 TEH was inserted into the reformatted 1999 TEH under the corresponding themes and sub-themes. Following consolidation, a review was undertaken to identify and address any remaining gaps in the document. This review also ensured that the consolidated TEH adopted a consistent tone.

Additional research

The process of adding additional text to expand on the existing themes and sub-themes, and to address gaps, occurred through a review of primary sources available online – such as digitised newspaper collections, maps, plans and photographs – and published secondary sources. Sources that were not available at the time of the publication of the 1999 TEH and 2016 TEH were also utilised to expand on the various themes and sub-themes. These sources also assisted in bringing the information provided in the consolidated TEH up to the present day.

Relevant historical images

The consolidated TEH incorporates historical images to illustrate the various themes and sub-themes and to provide greater context to the municipality's historical development. Several images from the 1999 TEH have been incorporated; however, with greater access to online repositories and picture collections, historical images are now more readily available. A number of additional images have therefore been incorporated into the consolidated TEH to supplement the earlier documentation.

The post-1945 TEH did not include historical images. Historical images, largely provided by the Box Hill Historical Society and Whitehorse Historical Society, have been incorporated to illustrate the various post-World War II themes and sub-themes.

Related places

Following each sub-theme, the TEH includes examples of places and objects included in the Heritage Overlay to provide connections between the identified historical themes and heritage places and objects located in the City of Whitehorse.

Nomenclature

The names of suburbs within what is now the City of Whitehorse have been subject to change over time. For example, Burwood was established in 1854 as the township of Ballyshanassay, while Nunawading was originally known as Tunstall and Vermont as L L Vale.

This consolidated TEH uses original suburb names where they are considered chronologically appropriate, with the present-day counterpart in brackets.

SOME KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS

Timeline

1840s	Early contact between Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Europeans
1840	Parish of Nunawading named by Robert Hoddle
1840	Elgar's Special Survey authorised
1850	First Crown land sales
1851	Colony of Victoria established
1852	Survey of Nunawading area
1853	First hotel in the municipality, the White Horse, erected
1854	Parish of Nunawading first counted in census; First township in the Parish of Nunawading – Ballyshanassy – established
1857	Nunawading District Road Board established
1861	Box Hill Township proclaimed
1872	Shire of Nunawading established
1873	Box Hill Cemetery gazetted
1882	Railway extended from Camberwell to Lilydale
1884	First brickworks established in Federation Street for Box Hill Brick Company
1888	Blackburn Lake created
1889	Publication of the municipality's first newspaper, <i>The Reporter</i> (later the <i>Box Hill Reporter</i>) Opening of Australia's first electric tramway from Box Hill to Doncaster
1890	Gas street lighting first appeared in Box Hill
1894	Water supply reached the Shire of Nunawading
1917	Wattle Park opened to the public
1919	Manual telephone exchange established in Box Hill
1921	City of Box Hill declared a Dry Area



1923	Railway electrified between Box Hill and Ringwood
1925	Severance of Shire of Nunawading and creation of Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham and Borough of Box Hill
1927	Borough of Box Hill becomes City of Box Hill
1928	Sewering of the City of Box Hill and Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham commenced
1930	Box Hill's first automatic telephone exchange opened
1935	Box Hill Town Hall opened
1945	Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham became City of Nunawading
1950	Nunawading (later Eastbridge) Migrant Hostel built
1954	First drive-in cinema in Australia opened in Burwood
1956	Box Hill and District Hospital opened
1965	Channel O (later Channel 10) Television Studios opened in Forest Hill
1968	Nunawading Civic Centre opened
1969	Australia's first Kmart department store opened in Burwood East
1985	Nunawading Arts Centre (later Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre) opened
1994	City of Whitehorse established by the merger of the Cities of Box Hill and Nunawading
1997	Extension of Eastern Freeway from Doncaster Road to Springvale Road
2008	Final stage of Eastern Freeway extension constructed
2023	Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre redeveloped into 'The Round'

1 SHAPING WHITEHORSE'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Natural landscapes and waterways

The land within what is now known as the City of Whitehorse was largely formed 400 million years ago during the Middle Silurian period. Part of the Anderson Creek formation, the land comprises massive siltstones, interbedded with thin sandstones with occasional bunches of massive, laminated and current bedded greywackes, conglomerates and clast beds.³ Koonung Creek flows along Whitehorse's northern boundary on its way to the Yarra River while Mullum Mullum Creek – a tributary of the Yarra – forms part of the municipality's north-east boundary and Dandenong Creek flows along the south-eastern boundary.⁴ Gardiners Creek and its tributaries runs through the municipality from Blackburn to Box Hill South and Burwood before continuing on to Hawthorn where it meets the Yarra.⁵

The municipality's watercourses generally date from the Quaternary period (the last two million years), while parts of the south-west of the municipality comprise Red Bluff Sands (fine to coarse sands, with minor poorly sorted gravels, poorly consolidated) also dating from the Tertiary period.⁶ A small area in Box Hill North comprises part of the Dargile formation of laminated and current bedded sandstones, interbedded with massive siltstones and shales, dating from the Silurian period.⁷

The gently undulating land ranges from approximately 60 to 120 metres above sea level, with the highest points of the municipality being at Mitcham and Vermont.⁸

1.2 Flora and fauna

Prior to European settlement, about three quarters of Whitehorse was covered by heath and forest, comprising canopies of Red Stringybark, Silver Leaf Stringybark, Messmate Stringybark, Yellow Box, Long Leaf Box and Common Peppermint; a middle storey of species such as Black Wattle, Cherry Ballart, Sweet Bursaria and Victorian Christmas Bush; and an understorey of shrubs, sedges and grasses such as Common Heath and Kangaroo Grass. Flowering plants included Chocolate lily, Tasman Flax-lily and a variety of orchids, creepers and climbers.⁹ Some of these species can still be found in Blackburn Lake Sanctuary and the Mullum Mullum Valley

³ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 4.

⁴ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 4.

⁵ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 4.

⁶ Geological Survey of Victoria, Melbourne Sheet SJ55-1, Ringwood No. 849 Zone 7, Department of Lands and Survey, 1974.

⁷ Geological Survey of Victoria, Melbourne Sheet SJ55-1, Ringwood No. 849 Zone 7, Department of Lands and Survey, 1974.

⁸ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 4.

⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 4-5; Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 16.

while river red gums and Manna Gum continue to grow along the banks of Whitehorse's creeks.¹⁰

The western part of the municipality (which receives slightly less rainfall than the rest of the municipality) was once characterised by Grassy Forest and Grassy Woodland, where the forest was less dense and fewer shrubs grew. Remnants of the Grassy Woodland communities – which include Manna Gum, Red Stringybark, Swamp Gum and Black Wattle – are still evident at Wattle Park in Burwood.¹¹

The diverse flora throughout the municipality supported a wide variety of animal life, including marsupials, birds, fish, reptiles and insects.¹² The numbers of fauna species present in the municipality has dwindled substantially due to loss of habitat over time. There are however small pockets within Whitehorse – including at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary and the Mullum Mullum Valley – where animal life is protected.¹³



Figure 1. Blackburn Lake Sanctuary in 1945 (State Library of Victoria, ID H91.50/858)

¹⁰ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 4-5; Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 16.

¹¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 5.

¹² Gary Presland, Jane Calder & Malcolm Calder, 'Natural Environment, *eMelbourne*, <https://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00526b.htm>, accessed 9 November 2022.

¹³ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 5.

2 PEOPLING WHITEHORSE

2.1 Living as Australia's earliest inhabitants

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung are the traditional custodians of the land on which the City of Whitehorse is located. Woi-wurrung is the language of the Traditional Owners with Woi-wurrung country extending from the Werribee River to the west, Mount Baw Baw to the east, the Great Dividing Range near Lancefield to the north and the Yarra River to the south.¹⁴ The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung named parts of the local area *Namenarren* or *Nunawading*.¹⁵

Wurundjeri is made up of two words, *wurun* meaning white (or manna) gum and *jeri*, a tasty grub that lives in the bark of the gum.¹⁶ The manna gum grew in abundance along the banks of the Yarra River and its tributaries, including Koonung, Mullum Mullum and Gardiners creeks within Whitehorse. Historically, the Wurundjeri would camp along the banks of these creeks and archaeologists have identified at least one camp site by an artefact scatter – comprising a collection of stone tools and hunting implements – on the banks of Gardiners Creek in Box Hill.¹⁷

The diverse flora and fauna throughout *Namenarren* provided the Wurundjeri with an abundance of food sources. Creeks teemed with fish, ducks and yabbies, and local plants, including yam daisies (a staple of the Koorie diet) and Chocolate lily could be sourced locally. Natural resources were also utilised for making clothing, baskets and weapons. For example, grass trees provided nectar and resin for hafting spears and axes, while the tough fibrous leaves of the Tasman Flax-lily were used to weave baskets.¹⁸ Bark from trees, such as Red Gum and Box, was stripped to make canoes and food containers; two scarred trees have been found in Whitehorse – in Blackburn and the Dandenong Creek Parklands.¹⁹

2.2 The first European surveys

In 1840 the Colonial Office in England extended the system of 'Special Survey' – which had been in place in South Australia for a number of years – to Port Phillip. To encourage immigration, wealthy capitalists could purchase a block of 5,120 acres (2,112 hectares) from England, for £1 an acre. The surveyed land had to be at least five miles from Melbourne, and the Crown reserved a right to run a road through it. In the former Parish of Nunawading, Henry Elgar authorised a Special Survey by draftsman Thomas Nutt and purchased the area approximately bounded by Burke, Canterbury and Elgar Roads, and the Koonung Creek.²⁰ The deed was issued to Elgar in August 1841.²¹ Most of Elgar's Special Survey ended up in the Parish of Boroondara following an application to resurvey the land in 1844 although a substantial portion did remain in the Parish of Nunawading. Although Elgar's Special

¹⁴ <https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/>

¹⁵ <https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/>

¹⁶ 'History of Wurundjeri Walk', *Wurundjeri Walk*, <https://wurundjeriwalkhistory.wordpress.com/pre-1930/>, accessed 20 December 2022.

¹⁷ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 9.

¹⁸ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 9.

¹⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 9.

²⁰ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 23-24.

²¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 16.



Survey ultimately brought few settlers to the area, it still exerted a strong influence on the pattern of roads and settlements in the future City of Whitehorse.²²

The land acquired by Elgar in his Special Survey was subdivided and sold in advance of Crown land sales. The initial buyers of the land (which Elgar had never visited), were A Dyce, R Town, J Campbell, R Campbell, J Dacre (Elgar's agent), W G McCarthy, R Brooks and H Sea.

The remaining land in the Parish of Nunawading was surveyed by Clement Hodgkinson, District Surveyor of Victoria, in the 1850s. As part of his favoured 'survey before selection' policy, a detailed survey of all the area east of Middleborough Road was carried out before any land could be selected and farmed.²³ This policy was supposed to ensure a fairer distribution of potentially valuable agricultural land amongst would-be settlers, although this requirement was eventually abandoned in favour of a more liberal selection policy.²⁴

During the survey, it was noted that the area was not of much value for agricultural purposes, despite the relatively hilly topography and a number of watercourses, including Koonung Koonung (now Koonung) and Gardiner's creeks.²⁵ The area was described as being heavily forested, with such tree species as stringybarks and box gums. Hodgkinson himself noted that the land appeared 'barren'.²⁶



Figure 2. Plan of Elgar's Special Survey in the parishes of Boroondara and Nunawading, 1841 (Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 8168 P2 Unit SS2A)

²² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 16.

²³ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 31.

²⁴ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 33.

²⁵ Country lands in the Parish of Nunawading, County of ourhe, Surveyor Generals Office Melbourne, 12 September 1855, VPRS 8168 P2 SALE38, Public Record Office Victoria.

²⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 33.

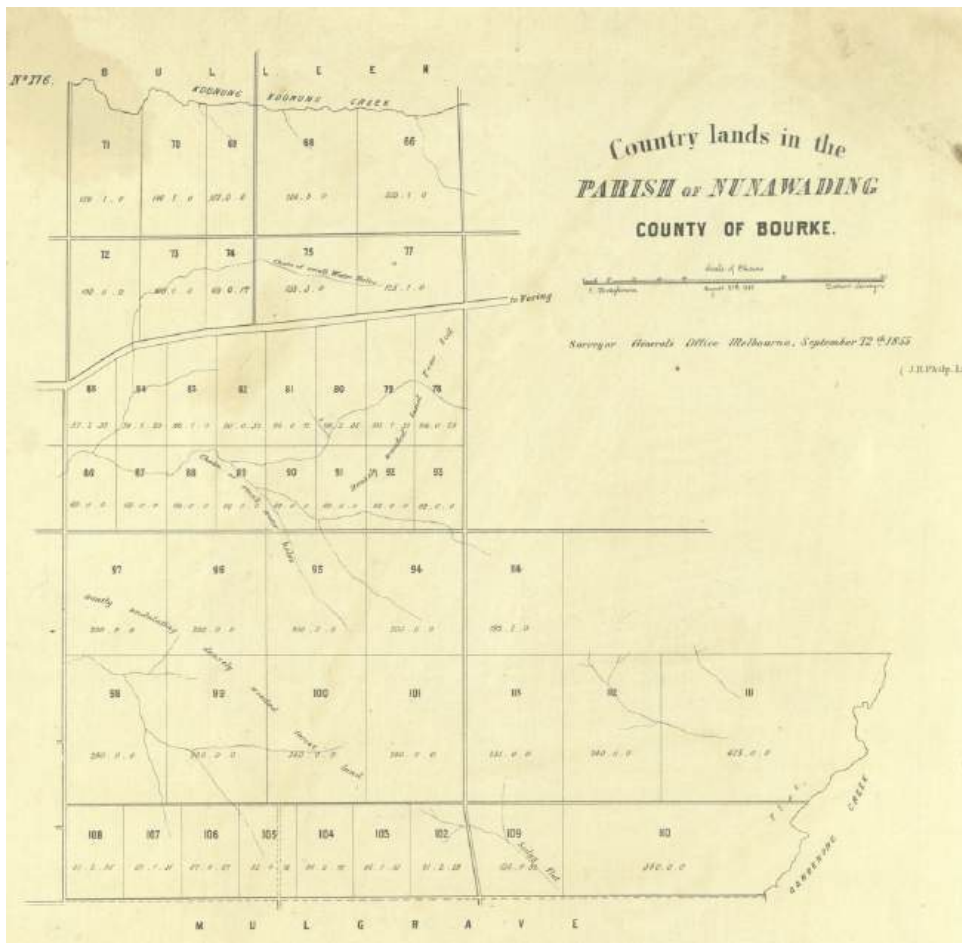


Figure 3. Country lands in the Parish of Nunawading as surveyed by Clement Hodgkinson, 1855 (Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 8168 P2 SALE38)

2.3 Early European settlement

Early European settlement in the City of Whitehorse largely centred on the western part of the then Parish of Nunawading as the forested hills to the east were largely unsuitable for grazing.²⁷

Box Hill's first landholder was London-born Tasmanian, Arundel Wrighte. Since the late 1830s, he had occupied the Government Paddock on the banks of the Koonung Creek, running upwards of 600 sheep which he had brought with him across Bass Strait. After several moves, Wrighte and his wife settled on the banks of Bushy Creek, in what is now Box Hill North.²⁸ Another early settler was Thomas Toogood, who had established a dairy on the Koonung Creek to the north-west of Wrighte's farm, from as early as 1840. He lived there with his wife, Edith and their children.²⁹ Irish-born Denis Delany, who had migrated to Victoria with his wife, Mary, in 1841, bought a 100-acre block of land opposite the future Wattle Park.³⁰

Gardiner's Creek was another preferred site for settlement in the 1840s. Several pastoralists settled along the creek during this time, including Mr Eyton in Box Hill,

²⁷ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 15.

²⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 13.

²⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 15.

³⁰ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 15.



James Farmer and James McAlpine in Box Hill South, and brothers George and William Bennett to the south of present-day Burwood Road.

2.4 Crown land sales

The first sale of freehold land in the City of Whitehorse occurred in 1850, when a series of large lots along the boundary of Elgar's Special Survey were offered for sale.³¹ This sale was not a resounding success, although several early settlers, including Arundel Wrighte and the Bennet brothers, were able to purchase the land that they had previously leased. Later that year, further portions of Box Hill North were surveyed and sold at the next sale in 1851. During 1852, the remaining parts of present-day Box Hill were surveyed. These blocks were smaller than those in the earlier surveys, ranging from 19 to 45 acres. Land sales were held again in late 1853 and early 1854, and virtually all of Box Hill south of Whitehorse Road was sold at these two sales.³²

Until the late 1850s, the Nunawading area had only been surveyed as far as Hunt's Lane (now Springvale Road).³³ Most of the land north of Whitehorse Road had been purchased by Patrick Riley. In 1861, German immigrant August Schwerkolt purchased some of Riley's land on the banks of Deep Creek in Mitcham.³⁴ The discovery of gold in Warrandyte in the 1850s made land in the Nunawading area attractive, not least of all because the *Grant Act* allowed that land, up to 80 acres in area, could be selected within 10 miles of a goldfield. Many took advantage of this, and 80-acre blocks were soon taken up by Francis Ainger in Mitcham, John McClelland in Tunstall (now the suburb of Nunawading), and Abraham Rooks in Forest Hill.³⁵ The latter area was then known as Scotsmans' Hill, after early Scottish settlers like David Boyle, who purchased land there in 1862.

In Burwood East and Vermont, land was sold in larger blocks, mostly about 200 acres. These were purchased by William Morton, Nelson Polak and others.³⁶ The most prominent landholder in this area was Dr L L Smith, who had purchased 119 acres off Canterbury Road in 1858, and a further 146 acres in the mid-1870s. Smith established an experimental farm, and although he never resided permanently on his property, he became well-known to the point that Vermont was known for many years as L L Vale.³⁷

This pattern of early land ownership in the City of Whitehorse – small blocks in Box Hill and Burwood, larger blocks in Blackburn, and the largest lots in Vermont, Burwood East and Mitcham – is clearly evident in a parish survey map from the early 1860s.

³¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 14.

³² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 15.

³³ Niall Brennan, *This is Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, p 22.

³⁴ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 47.

³⁵ Niall Brennan, *This is Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, p 56.

³⁶ Tim Shambrook, *This is Vermont*, Blackburn, 1989, p 10.

³⁷ Tim Shambrook, *This is Vermont*, Blackburn, 1989, p 17.

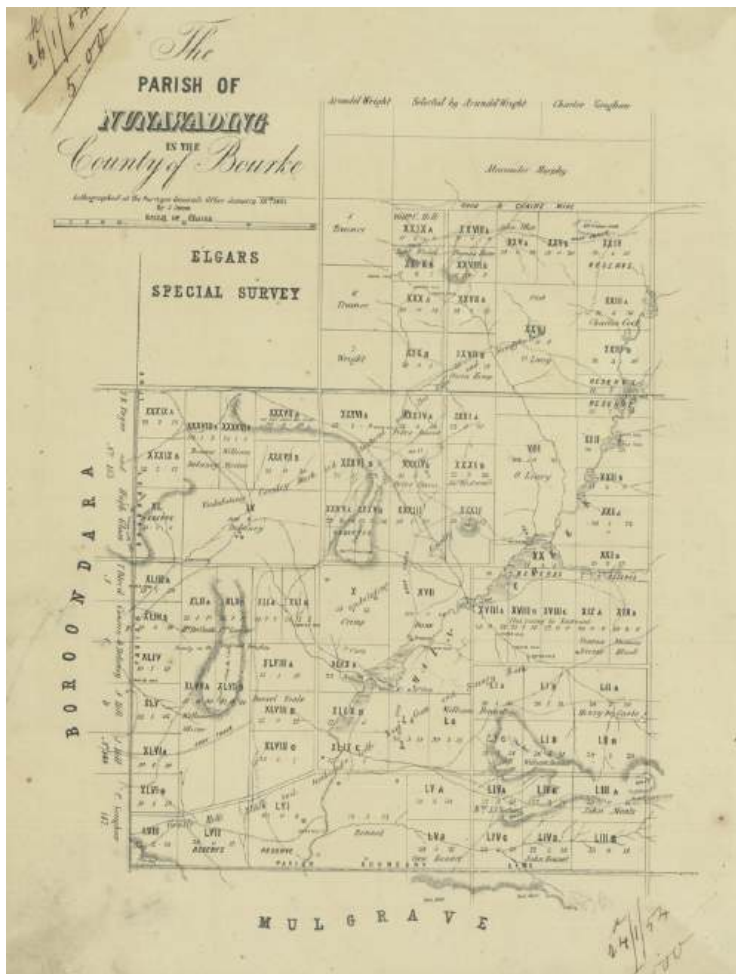


Figure 4. Crown land sales in the Parish of Nunawading, 18 January 1853 (Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 8168 P2 SALE271)



Figure 5. Parish plan of Nunawading, 1864 (State Library of Victoria, ID 2014959)

Related heritage places

HO30 – Schwerkolt’s Cottage, 2-10 Deep Creek Road, Mitcham

HO64 – House, 27 Morley Crescent, Mont Albert North

HO99 – Former Wesleyan Chapel, 147 Woodhouse Grove, Box Hill North



2.5 Migrating to a new land

The majority of early immigrants in the City of Whitehorse were of British origin. German migrants – many coming to Australia to escape religious persecution in their homeland – also took up land in the Parish of Nunawading in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, though no distinctive German community formed. Early German settlers included the Prussian Schwerkolt family who settled in the Mitcham area, and the Fankhauser family, who established farms and orchards in East Burwood.³⁸

Migration in the City of Whitehorse boomed in the post-World War II era when the Australian Government initiated a scheme to provide subsidised or free passage to Australia to British nationals. The programme was expanded two years later to include migrants from mainland Europe.³⁹ New arrivals were initially accommodated in a reception camp north of the Exhibition Buildings before being transferred to one of several outer suburban migrant hostels, including one at Nunawading that opened in 1950. The Nunawading Migrant Hostel was originally intended for unmarried British migrants, but ultimately accommodated many families, both from Britain and Europe.⁴⁰ The hostel was upgraded in the mid-1960s.⁴¹ Rebadged as the Eastbridge Migrant Hostel, the upgraded facility continued to function for another two decades. During this period, the demographic shifted from British and European migrants to south-east Asian refugees. The hostel was closed in 1987 when the Commonwealth-owned property was earmarked as the location for a new mail sorting centre.

Many former residents of the Nunawading Migrant Hostel – attracted by the availability of employment in the large factories that appeared in the area, and by the promise of plentiful land for housing – settled in the municipality following their time at the hostel. It has been noted that British nationals represented the largest group of migrants to settle in the former City of Box Hill in the 1950s, followed by Latvians, Poles and Dutch.⁴² In the former City of Nunawading, British and Dutch migrants were the most common, along with a number of Hungarians.⁴³ A small Italian community developed in Box Hill in the 1950s and 1960s, and an even smaller one in Nunawading.⁴⁴ By 1971, the proportion of migrants in Box Hill's population was 18%; of those that had arrived in the past decade, more than half were British, with smaller numbers of Italians, Greeks and Eastern Europeans.⁴⁵ During the 1970s, Greek families began to move out to Burwood East, while the large influx of Indo-Chinese migrants was drawn to Box Hill, Mitcham and Nunawading.⁴⁶ This trend has continued into the twenty-first century and by 2021, 41.5% of the population in Whitehorse were born overseas compared to 35.7% for Greater Melbourne. The

³⁸ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 27.

³⁹ Heritage Alliance, *Survey of Post War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One*, Volume 1, p 9.

⁴⁰ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 149.

⁴¹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 150.

⁴² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 200.

⁴³ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 157, 162.

⁴⁴ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 162.

⁴⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 217.

⁴⁶ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 165, 201.

largest country of birth is China where 13% of the population was born (compared to 3.4% in Greater Melbourne).⁴⁷



Figure 6. Eastbridge Migrant Hostel, c. 1940s (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1861)



Figure 7. Eastbridge Migrant Hostel (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP4489)

⁴⁷ 'Community Profile', City of Whitehorse, <https://profile.id.com.au/whitehorse/birthplace?WebID=10>, accessed on 25 May 2023.

3 CONNECTING WHITEHORSE

3.1 Roads

3.1.1 Creating roads

The municipality's first roads consisted of rough tracks that were mainly used by timber cutters and farmers. By the 1850s, these rough tracks began to appear on maps. These included an approximation of Mont Albert Road, which existed as a track from Barkers Road in the west, extending east to Elgar Road.⁴⁸

By 1863, the Nunawading District Road Board had overseen the establishment of the roads now known as Whitehorse Road, Canterbury Road and Burwood Highway.⁴⁹ By 1879, north-south roads – including the present Elgar Road, Station Street, Middleborough, Springvale, Mitcham and Heatherdale Roads – had been formed, formalising the municipality's present network of primary roads.⁵⁰ The opening of the railway in 1882, and the subsequent beginnings of suburban subdivision, saw the first residential streets laid out, commencing near Mont Albert and Box Hill railway stations, and stretching eastward along the railway line, although these were sparse east of Middleborough Road.⁵¹

Into the first decades of the twentieth century, the railway, not the road network, remained the primary catalyst for suburban development of the area. By the mid-1920s few residents had cars, and asphaltting of main roads did not begin until later that decade.⁵² It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that true suburban development was reflected in the street patterns of the municipality as a whole. The inter-war period had seen the road patterns of Surrey Hills and most of central Box Hill virtually finalised, but by 1945 the predominance of agricultural land use meant that most of the south-east of the municipality generally retained the road patterns of the 1910s.⁵³

⁴⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 6.

⁴⁹ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 20.

⁵⁰ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 20.

⁵¹ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, pp 20-21.

⁵² Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 19.

⁵³ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, pp 21-22.

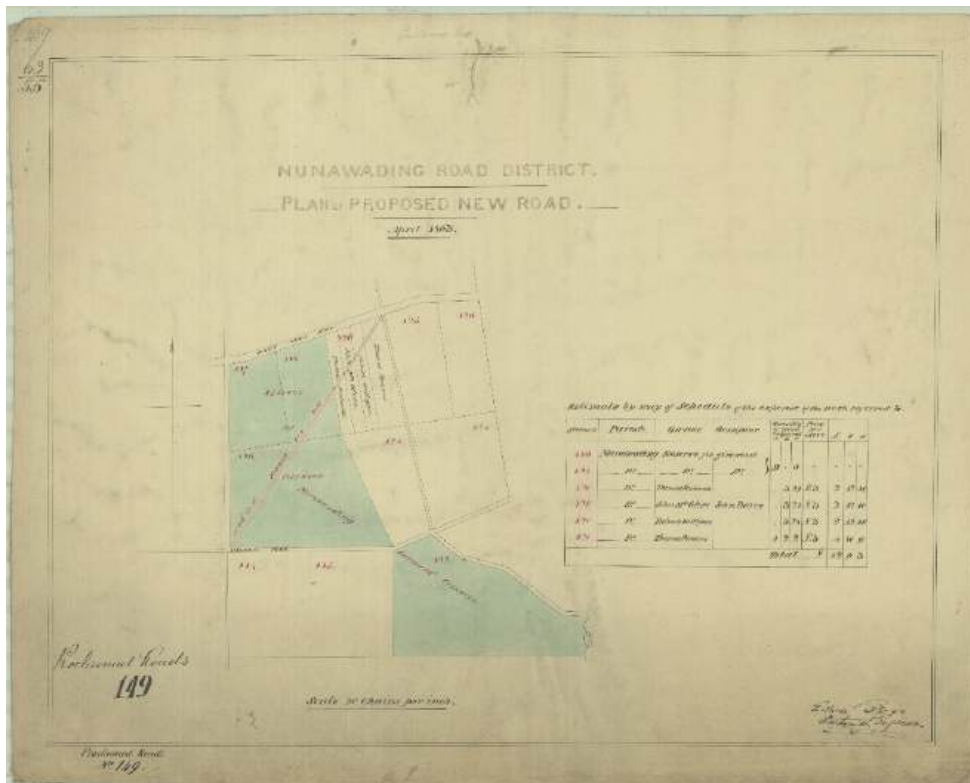


Figure 8. Plan of proposed new road in the Parish of Nunawading, April 1863 showing White Horse Road and Delany's (now Canterbury) Road (Public Record Office Victoria VPRS8168 P4 Plan 149)



Figure 9. Blackburn Road in 1912 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP23)



Figure 10. L L Road, Vermont in the early 1900s (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3644)

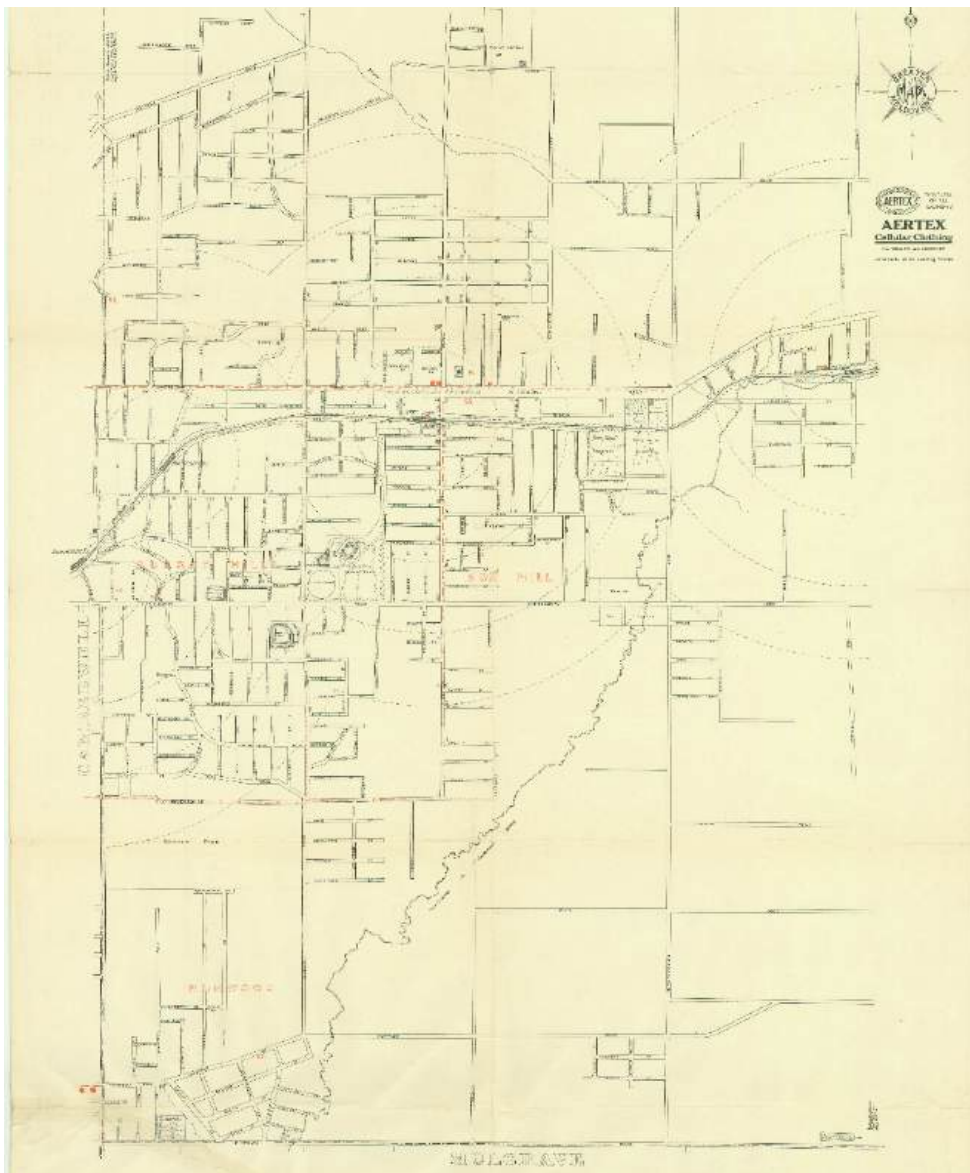


Figure 11. Map of Nunawading showing the road system in 1921 (State Library of Victoria ID686892)

3.1.2 Twentieth century improvements

The burgeoning local automotive industry, followed by the abolition of petrol rationing in 1950, saw the number of motor registrations in Melbourne treble between 1947 and 1954.⁵⁴ This was reflected in the municipality, where Box Hill's first traffic lights were unveiled in December 1948 at the corner of Whitehorse Road and Station Street.⁵⁵ Parking meters were also first installed in the same area in 1957, only two years after they had been introduced in central Melbourne.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, motor traffic along major roads increased dramatically. In 1959, the Country Roads Board calculated that 16,000 cars travelled along Whitehorse Road, between Station Street and Middleborough Road; by 1964, this figure had boomed to 20,000.⁵⁷ During the intervening years, it was deemed necessary to construct a new road bridge over the Koonung Creek at Middleborough Road.⁵⁸



Figure 12. White Horse Road (as then named), Mitcham in the late nineteenth century (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2893)



Figure 13. White Horse Road (as then named), Mitcham in the 1940s (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3315)

⁵⁴ Heritage Alliance, *Survey of Post War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One, Volume 1*, 2008, p 12.

⁵⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 193.

⁵⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 203.

⁵⁷ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 207.

⁵⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 207.

From the early 1950s, the number of local service stations also increased, with new American-style single-branded facilities replacing the older style independent motor garages of the pre-war era.⁵⁹ Inevitably, most of these appeared along the district's principal thoroughfares; in 1953, one was erected on the south-west corner of the prominent intersection of Whitehorse and Elgar Road.⁶⁰ By 1962, new service stations had been built on three of the four corners of Whitehorse and Springvale Roads in Nunawading. The increasing use of motor vehicles in the municipality was otherwise reflected by the opening of a drive-in cinema at Burwood – the first in Australia – in 1954.

Away from the district's major thoroughfares, the most pressing car-related issue for ratepayers in the 1950s and 1960s was the sealing of unmade roads in residential areas. Prior to 1956, the City of Box Hill had managed to construct only about five streets per year.⁶¹ However, in 1960, the council secured a bank loan that, in the words of one Councillor, meant that 'the end of the era of unmade streets in this City is now in the foreseeable future'. At that time, some forty miles (64 kilometres) of road was still unsealed in the municipality. This, however, had dropped to only nine miles (14 kilometres) by 1964. Two years later, 'only a miscellaneous group of short streets' remained unmade in the City of Box Hill. Much the same progress took place in the City of Nunawading, where, by 1967, only 10% of the municipality's roads had not been sealed.⁶² Moreover, those that remained unsealed were at the specific request of residents, such as parts of the Bellbird Estate in Blackburn. By the 1980s, the present road network within the City of Whitehorse was almost completely established.

In 1997, the character of the municipality's northern boundary was substantially changed by the extension of the Eastern Freeway from Doncaster Road to Springvale Road. Its infrastructure included new road bridges at Elgar Road, Station Street, Middleborough Road and Blackburn Road, and several footbridges. Two particularly distinctive footbridges, at Koonung Road and Cabena Street in Nunawading, were designed by Gazzard Sheldon Architects.⁶³ The final stage of the freeway, connecting Springvale Road to the Frankston Freeway via the Eastlink tunnel (just outside the boundaries of the City of Whitehorse), was completed in 2008.

Related heritage places

HO23 – Australian Road Research Board, 500 Burwood Highway, Vermont South

HO196 – Service station, 683 Canterbury Road, Surrey Hills

HO281 – Burwood Skyline Drive-In Cinema, Burwood Highway, Burwood

HO296 - 'Minamere', 42-48 Glenburnie Road, Mitcham

⁵⁹ Heritage Alliance, *Survey of Post War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One, Volume 1*, 2008, p 12.

⁶⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 191.

⁶¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 204.

⁶² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 135.

⁶³ *Constructional Review*, February 1997, pp 16-21.

3.2 Rail

3.2.1 The Melbourne to Lilydale railway

In 1880, the *Railways Construction Bill* was introduced into the Legislative Assembly. The Bill provided for the construction of 23 new railway lines throughout the State of Victoria, including linking Hawthorn with the distant township of Lilydale. The Hawthorn-Camberwell section of the new line opened for service in April 1882; by June the line had reached Box Hill; and on 1 December of that year, the line to Lilydale opened.⁶⁴ The Melbourne to Lilydale line originally provided ten new stations along its route, spaced at long intervals – Glenferrie, Auburn, Camberwell, Canterbury, Box Hill, Blackburn, Mitcham, Ringwood, Warrandyte (renamed Croydon in 1884) and Lilydale. The long distance between stations on the line was reduced with the establishment of Surrey Hills Station in 1883, Mooroolbark in 1887-8, Tunstall (Nunawading) in 1888 and Mont Albert in 1890.⁶⁵

The opening of the Camberwell to Lilydale railway on 1 December 1882 stimulated an extraordinary wave of large speculative subdivisions in Box Hill and Surrey Hills, and to a lesser extent Blackburn, in the 1880s. The railway, which ran approximately parallel to Whitehorse Road, the municipality's main east-west road, was integral to the advertising of new housing estates, and to lure businesses to the east. The original 1880s railway stations at Mont Albert, Box Hill, Blackburn, Tunstall (Nunawading) and Mitcham all attracted some degree of building development near them.

The railway was also the reason for the flourishing tourism industry in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The opening of the railway line to Lilydale in 1882 brought excursionists to the region. Later, visitors changed railways at Lilydale to travel on to Healesville (1889-1981) and Warburton (1901-1965). From 1889 access to the Dandenong Ranges was facilitated when sections of the Belgrave line opened with an extension from Ringwood. Initially terminating at Upper Ferntree Gully, the arrival of the railway line brought more visitors to the foothills of Mount Dandenong and by the early twentieth century, Ferntree Gully and Belgrave were resort destinations.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Mark Fiddian, *Commuters, Shoppers and Scholars: A History of the Melbourne-Lilydale Railway*, Pakenham, 1988, p 8.

⁶⁵ Mark Fiddian, *Commuters, Shoppers and Scholars: A History of the Melbourne-Lilydale Railway*, Pakenham, 1988, p 13.

⁶⁶ 'Lilydale', 'Belgrave' and 'Ferntree Gully', *Victorian Places*, <https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/>, accessed on 11 July 2023.



Figure 14 and 15. Advertisements for the Box Hill Railway Station Reserve and Box Hill Township Estate, 1880s (State Library of Victoria, ID 1844743 & ID 1432447)



Figure 16. Advertisement for the Blackburn Township Estate, c1880s (State Library of Victoria, ID 2239306)

Figure 17. Box Hill Railway Station in c1918 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP519)



3.2.2 Improvements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

Real improvement to the train service came at the same time that Council was acknowledging the need to seal roads. The railway was electrified between Box Hill and Ringwood in 1923, whilst the construction of two additional stations – Laburnum and Heatherdale – in 1958 reflected the demands of post-war commuters.⁶⁷ A significant improvement to the local railway network was the construction of a third track between East Camberwell and Box Hill in 1971.

In early 1973 the State Government announced that, on the recommendation of the Metropolitan Transportation Committee, Box Hill's railway station was to be redeveloped as a major regional transport interchange, which would involve placing the station underground.⁶⁸ Slated to commence in 1975 and be completed to coincide with the opening of the new city rail loop in 1977, the project was repeatedly delayed. Construction did not begin until 1979, and the Box Hill Central shopping centre, incorporating the new underground railway station and rooftop bus interchange was eventually opened by Premier John Cain in November 1984.⁶⁹

More recently the railway line has seen extensive changes due to level crossing removal projects. In 2013-14 a new station was built at Mitcham as part of a VicRoads grade separation of the Mitcham and Rooks roads level crossings. In 2017, as part of the Victorian Government's Level Crossing Removal Project to remove Melbourne's most dangerous level crossings, the level crossing at Heatherdale Station was removed by lowering the rail line under the road and a new station rebuilt on the east side of Heatherdale Road. In 2020, it was announced that the level crossing at Union Road, Surrey Hills would also be removed as part of the Level Crossing Removal Project. Construction works involving the demolition of the Surrey Hills Railway Station, the relocation of the Mont Albert Railway Station building,

⁶⁷ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 19.

⁶⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 224.

⁶⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 212.

lowering of the railway line, and construction of the new Union Station were completed in 2023.

The first stage of the Victorian Government's Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) East project linking Cheltenham to Box Hill commenced in 2022 and is due for completion in 2035. Within the City of Whitehorse, the project includes the construction of an underground station at Box Hill and realignment of Whitehorse Road between Nelson Road and Linsley Street to create a pedestrian promenade.⁷⁰ The City of Whitehorse engaged with the government on ways to minimise the impacts of the SRL project on heritage places in the municipality. This includes buildings in Box Hill covered by a Heritage Overlay, in particular the Colonial Gas Association building at 942-946 Whitehorse Road (HO91), protection of heritage structures and monuments; and land associated with the site of the Burwood Drive-in Cinema (HO281).

Related heritage places

HO27 – Mont Albert Railway Station, 7 Windsor Crescent, Mont Albert

HO91 – Colonial Gas Association Building, 942-946 Whitehorse Road

HO281 – Burwood Drive-in Cinema, Burwood Highway, Burwood

3.3 Trams

3.3.1 Early tramways

The City of Whitehorse was the location of Australia's first electric tramway. The tram, operated by the Box Hill and Doncaster Tramway Co. from October 1889 until January 1896, ran along Station Street from Whitehorse Road to Doncaster Road.⁷¹ The establishment of tram services in the west of the municipality came 20 years later, at the time of Melbourne's second wave of tramway development in the 1910s. The first tram service proper to reach within the Shire's boundaries was the Riversdale Road route. Integral to its establishment was the establishment of Wattle Park, which was used to justify the extension of the Riversdale Road tram to Warrigal Road in March 1917, and then to its present Elgar Road terminus in June 1928.⁷²

While tram routes were laid out through the contiguous suburbs of Balwyn, Surrey Hills and Camberwell during the 1920s and 1930s, these stopped short of what was then the City of Box Hill. The Whitehorse Road tram, for example, terminated at Union Road, and the Burwood Road tram at Warrigal Road. The sole exception was Riversdale Road where, in the mid-1920s, the tramline was extended from Warrigal Road to Elgar Road in Box Hill South.

⁷⁰ Victoria's Big Build, Suburban Rail Loop East, <https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/suburban-rail-loop/srl-east>, accessed on 11 July 2023.

⁷¹ Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Box Hill Heritage and Conservation Study*, Volume 1, p 55.

⁷² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 139, 159.



Figure 18. The electric tramway that ran between Box Hill and Doncaster, undated (State Library of Victoria, ID 1723374)



Figure 19. Advertisement for Australia's first electric tram, running between Box Hill and Doncaster, undated (State Library of Victoria, ID 599153)

3.3.2 Expansion in the post-war period

Expansion of the tramway network further into the municipality was on the agenda as early as 1946, when Box Hill's Town Clerk appeared before a Parliamentary Committee to urge 'in the strongest terms' that the Whitehorse Road tram route be extended at least as far as Station Street, in order to assist those who had recently settled in the area.⁷³ While the committee agreed, the government did not and no extension occurred at this time. Such decisions, however, did not stop canny

⁷³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 185.



property developers from using the possible future extension of tram routes as a lure for potential purchasers.⁷⁴

It was not until the early 1970s that there was a resurgence of interest in the expansion of the tram network, when the district's original tramline along Riversdale Road – then one of the last remaining stretches of single tram track left in Melbourne – was duplicated.⁷⁵ In 1973, the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (MMTB) began extending the Toorak Road tramline from its terminus at Warrigal Road along Burwood Highway as far as Middleborough Road – the project was completed in 1978.⁷⁶ The route was subsequently extended even further, initially to Blackburn Road (early 1990s) and then as far as Vermont South (2005).⁷⁷ The Whitehorse Road tramline was also extended from Union Road all the way to Box Hill Central shopping centre.⁷⁸ This new line, constructed at a cost of \$28 million, opened in June 2003.

Related heritage places

VHR H0904/HO4 – Wattle Park, 1012 Riversdale Road, Burwood

3.4 Bus services

Bus services first served the Shire of Nunawading in the early 1920s. The Mitcham and Vermont Community Bus, established in 1923 by Councillor Norman Armstrong, provided a link to the railway line for residents of Vermont,⁷⁹ and in the following decades private bus routes gradually made the outlying parts of the municipality accessible to prospective residents. From 1937, Burwood, without its own fixed rail route, was served by a bus to Box Hill via Box Hill South.⁸⁰ By the 1970s an extensive network of bus routes had been established throughout the municipality to connect commuters with railway stations.

3.5 Communications

3.5.1 Establishing postal services

Postal services in the municipality were established by the early 1860s, with the first post offices at Ballyshanassy township and in Box Hill.⁸¹ A post office was established in Forest Hill in 1874. In 1881 a post office, originally named L L Vale, opened in the Vermont district. This was renamed the Vermont Post Office in 1890 after residents petitioned Council for a name change. The Tunstall Post Office commenced operations at the newly opened railway station in 1889. Mitcham's first post office also operated from the local railway station.⁸²

Purpose-built post offices were erected at Box Hill in 1910 and Mitcham in 1924. The service in Nunawading meanwhile, was accommodated in temporary premises until

⁷⁴ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 156.

⁷⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 225.

⁷⁶ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 156.

⁷⁷ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 210.

⁷⁸ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 217.

⁷⁹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 65.

⁸⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 173.

⁸¹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 121.

⁸² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 121-22.



1954, when it was relocated to a prefabricated aluminium building at the corner of Springvale Road and Silver Grove.⁸³ In December 1951, Blackburn’s postal service transferred to similarly temporary premises in Chapel Street.⁸⁴ In 1954, a post office opened at Bennettswood and, the following year, two more began operation in Box Hill’s developing northern fringe – one at Kerrimuir and another in Box Hill North.



Figure 20. L L Vale Post Office, 1889 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP7636)



Figure 21. Mitcham Post Office, c1924 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP816)

In Blackburn South, the new post office was accommodated in a portable building on Canterbury Road that had been relocated from the Olympic Village in Heidelberg.⁸⁵ Another opened in Vicki Street in 1960. Around the same time, Blackburn’s temporary post office on Chapel Street was replaced by a new flat-roofed building on the same site, which opened on 12 September 1960. In 1961, the old fibro-cement shed was relocated from Blackburn to Nurlendi Road in Vermont,

⁸³ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 122.

⁸⁴ Robin da Costa, *Blackburn: a picturesque history*, Lilydale, 1978, p 17.

⁸⁵ O S Green, *From orchard to brick veneer: Malcolm Street, Blackburn & Environs, 1955-1985*, Blackburn, 1987, p 7.

where it continued to serve as a post office well into the 1970s.⁸⁶ In November 1962, a post office opened at Laburnum. Meanwhile, the prefabricated aluminium post office at Nunawading was replaced by a large two-storey brick building in 1970.⁸⁷ Four years later, a post office opened at Vermont South. In 1975, a new mail sorting centre was established in Blackburn.⁸⁸ This was in turn replaced by the new Eastern Mail Centre, erected in 1992 on the former site of the Eastbridge Migrant Hostel in Rooks Road, Nunawading.⁸⁹



Figure 22. Blackburn Post Office in 1960 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP376)

Related heritage places

HO161 – Mitcham Post Office, 528 Whitehorse Road, Mitcham

3.5.2 Developing electronic means of communication

Telegrams were reportedly first issued from Box Hill on 12 May 1888.⁹⁰ Not long after, *The Reporter* newspaper expressed its surprise that ‘telephonic communication’ had not yet been established between Box Hill and Melbourne considering ‘the importance of Box Hill and the large amount of business that is daily transacted with the city’⁹¹ and by the end of the nineteenth century, proposals had been put forward to extend Melbourne’s telephone service to Box Hill.⁹² In 1899, postmaster Mr W H G Ellingworth had established a telephone bureau within the Box Hill post office.⁹³

⁸⁶ Robin da Costa, *Blackburn: a picturesque history*, Lilydale, 1978, p 17.

⁸⁷ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 122.

⁸⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 224.

⁸⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 208.

⁹⁰ *Box Hill Reporter*, 1 July 1927, p 4.

⁹¹ *The Reporter*, 4 December 1891, p 2.

⁹² *Argus*, 26 July 1898, p 6.

⁹³ *The Reporter*, 17 November 1899, p 2.

In 1907, calls began for a telephone exchange to be established at Box Hill. At the time, Box Hill and the surrounding area was connected to the Canterbury exchange. This was seen as inconvenient and expensive, with messages seldom relayed in reasonable time.⁹⁴ A manual exchange was finally established in 1919, though frequent delays and disconnections were a source of frustration for residents.⁹⁵

Box Hill's first automatic telephone exchange opened in May 1930 at the north-west corner of Whitehorse Road and Station Street.⁹⁶ Designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works and Railways to meet the increasing telephone requirements of the Box Hill District, it was trunked to a parent exchange at Hawthorn.⁹⁷ The large Hawthorn facility supported several other branch exchanges, including those at Kew East (1941) and Camberwell (1946). These branches were collectively designated as the W Group, each having a different prefix for the telephone numbers of its subscribers. The code for the Box Hill exchange was WX, which remained the telephone number prefix for residents from Mont Albert to Mitcham well into the 1950s. While some residents of Nunawading also had telephone numbers starting with WX, others had the prefix WU, which referred to the branch exchange at nearby Ringwood.

A branch exchange was established in the City of Nunawading in 1959, erected alongside St John's Anglican Church on Whitehorse Road, Mitcham. With the introduction of a new six-digit telephone number system, Box Hill's area code became 89. In 1961, following the introduction of the 88 prefix, the capacity of the Box Hill branch exchange was doubled to 20,000 phone lines.

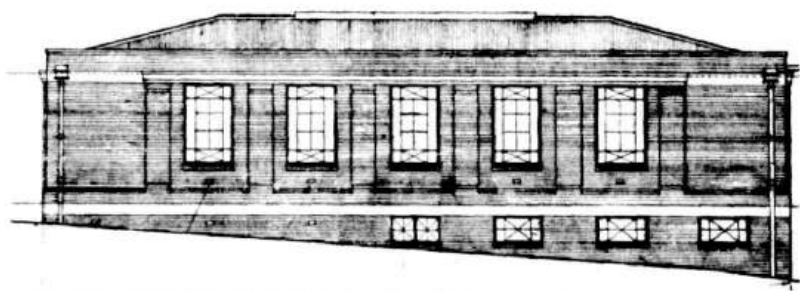


Figure 23. Design of the automatic telephone exchange, Box Hill, 1927 (*Herald*, 9 November 1927, p 14)

The early 1960s saw significant development in telecommunications technology in the City of Whitehorse. In July 1961, the Postmaster General's Department announced that an elevated site in Canterbury Road, Surrey Hills, would be the site for a new microwave radio repeater station to transfer signals from the City West Telephone Exchange to other suburban stations. Taking advantage of what was one of the highest points in the metropolitan area, the station comprised a tall tower and what was described at the time as 'a contemporary styled building designed to blend with the surrounding area enhanced by a landscaped setting'.⁹⁸

Another technological development in the municipality was the Aussat Earth Satellite Station – the first of its kind in Australia – which commenced operation in

⁹⁴ *The Reporter*, 23 August 1907, p 2.

⁹⁵ *The Reporter*, 19 September 1919, p 2; *The Reporter*, 24 December 1920, p 5.

⁹⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 168.

⁹⁷ *Herald*, 9 November 1927, p 14.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 208-209.

the mid-1980s on an elevated site to the rear of what was then the ABC building on Highbury Road.⁹⁹

3.5.3 Making, printing and distributing newspapers

The publication of Box Hill's first newspaper, *The Reporter*, launched in June 1889 at the height of Victoria's land boom.¹⁰⁰ The paper was established by S B Cumpston and managed by two brothers, Thomas and George Bright.¹⁰¹ *The Reporter* (later called the *Box Hill Reporter*) dominated the local press and was still going strong at the end of the World War II.

As the district's population increased in the early post-war era, rival publications began to appear. This included the *Box Hill Community News* (1951), the *Eastern Times* (1953), the *Box Hill Gazette* (1953) and the *Balwyn & Box Hill Observer* (1954). While some of these were relatively short-lived ventures, they were sufficient to challenge the monopoly that the *Box Hill Reporter* had maintained on newspaper advertising. The *Box Hill Reporter* eventually ceased publication in 1968.

In 1959, the *Box Hill Observer* merged with the *Burwood Observer* and, four years later, the *Eastern Times* joined the *Box Hill Gazette* to create the *Eastern Times Gazette*. The latter was renamed the *Box Hill Gazette* in 1967, and remained in publication until it was absorbed into the *Progress Press* in 1978. That same year, Melbourne's largest publisher of local newspapers, the *Leader Community Newspapers*, established a presence when it took over the former Cottee's cordial factory in Whitehorse Road, Blackburn, as its new printing headquarters.¹⁰² The building was demolished in 2009.

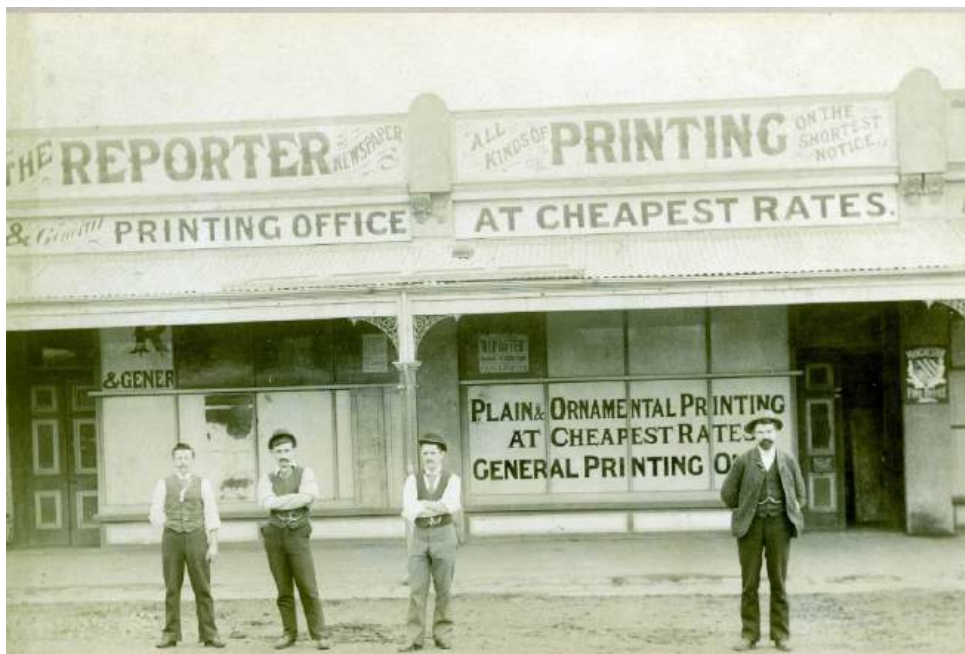


Figure 24. Offices of The Reporter in Main Street, Box Hill, c 1890s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2990)

⁹⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 209-10.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 93.

¹⁰¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 93.

¹⁰² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 208.

The principal local newspaper in the former City of Nunawading was the pre-war *Blackburn & Mitcham Reporter*, which, following the municipality's change of name and status in 1945, was re-badged as the *Nunawading Reporter*. Published under that name until 1964, when it became the *Nunawading Gazette*, the newspaper finally ceased publication in 1995. That same year, the *Whitehorse Post* was formed from a merger of two other local newspapers, the *Box Hill Post* and the *Nunawading Post*, reflecting the recent council amalgamation.

3.5.4 Broadcasting in the municipality

Television studios for Channel 0 (later Channel Ten) were built in Forest Hill in 1965. In 1992 the television station relocated its administrative functions to the Como Centre in South Yarra but continued to use the Forest Hill studios for the filming of many programmes, including the long-running soap opera *Neighbours*. The complex is now known as Global Television Studios.

In 1971 the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) acquired land in Burwood East for its new administrative centre.¹⁰³ The modern multi-storey building at the site was completed a decade later. Originally, it was proposed that the new centre would accommodate all the ABC's administrative functions, which were then based in the city. Due to internal opposition however, only the staff of Radio Australia was transferred to Burwood East. The service commenced broadcasting from its new location in 1982.¹⁰⁴ It remained there until 1994, when the ABC consolidated its administrative functions in a new building at the redeveloped Southbank precinct.¹⁰⁵

Related heritage places

HO22 – Former ATV-O Television Studios, 104-168 Hawthorn Road, Forest Hill

¹⁰³ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 224.

¹⁰⁴ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 224.

¹⁰⁵ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 209.

4 TRANSFORMING AND MANAGING THE LAND

4.1 Timber and charcoal

Until the first Crown land sales of 1850, the eastern portion of the City of Whitehorse was known primarily as a source of timber and charcoal. Timber-felling within five miles of Melbourne's city centre was banned, so wood from outlying areas was in demand for fuel and building timber, and procurement of timber was only lightly regulated. Some wood-cutters burnt wood to produce charcoal as it was easier to transport. The charcoal was bagged and sold as fuel.¹⁰⁶ Various 'splitters huts' occupied the area in the 1840s and even after several farms had been established in the 1850s and 1860s, ongoing drought forced many farmers back into wood carting as a basic source of income.¹⁰⁷

4.2 Farming

Before early European settlers realised the potential of orchards, agriculture was the main occupation in the former Parish of Nunawading and by 1861 cattle and sheep grazing, dairying and crop growing dominated the municipality.¹⁰⁸ The establishment of agriculture however was hampered by dry, often drought, conditions in the 1850s and 1860s; by 1862, "less than ten percent of the land in the parish was under crop, and of this half was hay and a good proportion of the rest potatoes. There were thirteen acres of vineyard, 116 of market garden, and only thirteen acres of orchards".¹⁰⁹ The 1863 Rate Books showed a small number of unusual small industries, including Pierce Boardmans' distillery, which produced eucalyptus, peppermint, caraway and melaleuca oils, and W H Slater's distillery which produced poppy and rose oils for perfumes.¹¹⁰ Early settlers in the area included the Schwerkolt family in Mitcham, who established a farm beside the Mullum Mullum Creek in the 1860s.¹¹¹



Figure 25. Third Schwerkolt cottage, built after the 1905 bushfires (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1779)

¹⁰⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 30-31.

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 31; Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 17.

¹⁰⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 28-29.

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 29.

¹¹⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 31.

¹¹¹ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 6.



Figure 26. The Schwerkolt family's stone cottage, built in 1884-85 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1779)

Despite the lack of arable land, promotion of the area for agriculture went ahead, led by Dr L L Smith, of L L Vale (later becoming known as Vermont). Substantial agricultural infrastructure developed too. A bull paddock adjacent to the gasworks on the corner of Elgar and Whitehorse Roads was closed in 1910, when a Council-owned abattoir was opened in Woodhouse Grove, Box Hill North, where it existed until 1924.¹¹² T R B Morton opened a livestock market adjacent to the Box Hill railway station in July 1895, and this continued to operate until 1930.¹¹³ The municipality even had its own Agricultural Show, organised by the Box Hill Progress Association and Doncaster Fruit-growers' Association at the market and adjoining Recreation Hall from 1901 until 1921.¹¹⁴

Poultry farming also thrived in the municipality and in 1946 the newly-formed Victorian Egg & Pulp Board opened an egg grading depot in a disused warehouse at Box Hill. This depot closed in 1954 and the following year a huge poultry farm on the south side of Canterbury Road at Forest Hill was sold off for the construction of Nunawading High School.

Notwithstanding technological improvements, local farmers of all kinds inevitably found that they could not compete with the encroaching suburban development of the 1950s and 1960s. By the mid-1970s, local poultry farming had long since disappeared, with the sole remaining example in the City of Box Hill – on Highbury Road in Burwood – closing in 1968. The Gould family's 36-acre market garden, also on Highbury Road, remained in operation until as late as 1983 – the last of the Burwood farms, and one of the last in the entire municipality before being converted for suburban development.

¹¹² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 121, 131.

¹¹³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 110, 149.

¹¹⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 117.

Related heritage places

HO30 – Schwerkolt’s Cottage, 2-10 Deep Creek Road, Mitcham

HO62 – Willowbank, 29 Moore Road, Vermont

HO107 – Greenways, 142 Boronia Road, Vermont

4.3 Orchards and market gardens

By the early 1860s, there was a major increase in land under cultivation, mostly due to orchards. Relatively small land holdings could generate much greater income from orcharding instead of grazing, and apple, plum and pear trees were seen to enhance the previously deforested landscape. Between 1871 and 1881, the area under orchards increased from 284 to 664 acres. These were generally concentrated in the northern parts of Box Hill and Blackburn.¹¹⁵ By 1886, this figure had reached 100 acres, making it the Victorian shire with the third largest acreage of orchards, surpassed only by Echuca and Bulleen.¹¹⁶ The orchard boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was reflected in the construction of cool stores for fruit, built in Blackburn and Mitcham in the late 1910s.¹¹⁷ The orchard industry was boosted by soldier settlement schemes in the district.¹¹⁸

Market gardens co-existed with orchards and from the early days vegetable growing was a common sideline for many farmers, although lack of transport to markets in Melbourne was a hindrance to success.¹¹⁹ Flower growing was also prevalent in the area. The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society, which had established itself on a large site at Blackburn Lake in 1908, was one of several suppliers of cut flowers, including dahlias, gladioli and roses.¹²⁰ Other local families specialised in particular species: the Albers with daffodils in Burwood, and the Chandlers with Boronia in Blackburn South.¹²¹

By the 1930s, several co-operative cool storage facilities were established. The most successful of these ventures was the Blue Moon Fruit Co-operative, formed in Blackburn in 1930, which grew into one of Australia's largest fruit exporters, opening other branches in Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia.¹²² The orchard industry was affected by the pressure of suburban development from the 1940s as orchards and farmlets were gradually subdivided.

In Blackburn, Gill’s orchard was sold off for residential subdivision as early as 1950. In 1956, a portion of Pearce’s orchard in Blackburn North was similarly redeveloped for a new high school, while the remaining portion later became the site of a small retail development (1967) that, in homage to the land’s former use, took on the name of the Old Orchard Shopping Centre. During the 1960s, the Matheson family of Forest Hill donated part of their orchard for the Strathdon Home for the Aged; the

¹¹⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 55.

¹¹⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 88.

¹¹⁷ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 6.

¹¹⁸ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 6.

¹¹⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 54.

¹²⁰ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 85, 88, 99.

¹²¹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 99.

¹²² Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 6.

remaining six acres were later presented to the City of Nunawading for preservation as a living museum of local orcharding, although this did not eventuate.¹²³

Such was the decline of orcharding in the post-war period that the Blue Moon company's cool stores in Blackburn began to store fruit grown from outside the municipality, as there was not enough local produce to sustain it. In 1974, the facility finally ceased storing fruit altogether, and was adapted for the storage of meat and egg products.¹²⁴



Figure 27. The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society flower farm (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2507)



Figure 28. Blue Moon packing shed, 1960 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP746)

¹²³ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 209.

¹²⁴ Robin da Costa, *Blackburn: a picturesque history*, Lilydale, 1978, p 118.



Figure 29. Aerial showing orchards in Box Hill, 1953 (State Library of Victoria, H2010.91/289)

Related heritage places

HO98 – Glendale, 63 Woodhouse Grove, Box Hill North

HO113 – Strathdon, 449-465 Springvale Road, Forest Hill

HO221 – 115 Shannon Street, Box Hill North

4.4 Brick and tile manufacturing

High-quality clays in the Box Hill and Nunawading areas had been identified as early as the 1850s, with a number of clay workers and potteries opening from the 1850s to the 1870s.¹²⁵

The railway-led land boom of the 1880s prompted the expansion of the brickmaking industry with suburban development creating a high demand for building materials. In Box Hill, the Box Hill Brick Company established its works in Federation Street in 1884, and prospered until the Depression hit in 1892, at which time the works was closed.¹²⁶ Other major brick, pipe and tile works of this period included the Blackburn Brickworks (established 1885, closed 1895) the Walker family's Australian Brick Pipe

¹²⁵ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 6.

¹²⁶ VHR citation, Former Standard Brickworks.

and Tessellated Tile Company in Mitcham (established 1886), and the Geal Brothers works in Springvale Road, Forest Hill, which made pots and pipes for orchardists from 1903.¹²⁷

By the mid-1910s, the Box Hill Brickworks site had been re-established by the Standard Brickworks¹²⁸. In 1916, brick and tile making had joined fruit growing as a leading industry in the area, and by the 1920s and 1930s, the area was known as Victoria's major tile-producing region. It was at this time that Wunderlich established its site in Vermont; Daniel Robertson Bros., established its Tunstall brickworks; and Vitclay, established its complex at Blackburn South, which had been the site of a pottery operated by the White Brothers since the 1860s.¹²⁹ The New Northcote Company purchased 40 acres of land in Middleborough Road in Burwood to establish a secondary clay pit at this time too.

While virtually all of the local brickworks were forced to close down for the duration of World War II, they experienced renewed vigour in the 1950s and 1960s as the demand for building materials increased with the post-war housing boom.¹³⁰ The Standard Brickworks in Box Hill re-opened in 1946 and its machinery was electrified in 1952.¹³¹ When the former New Northcote Brick Company works in Middleborough Road re-opened in 1948, it boasted new wire-cut brick making machinery and the first bricks bearing the Burwood stamp became available in 1950.¹³² Eight years later, the company installed Australia's first tunnel kilns, and added more in 1961. The company also released the 'Nubrick' brand brick from c1960, which became a common building material for housing in the developing eastern suburbs.¹³³ The Blackburn works of Brick & Pipe Industries (formerly Commonwealth Pottery) were similarly upgraded with tunnel kilns in 1969 and further expanded through the acquisition of adjoining land owned by orchardist Vic Lawford.

During this period, several local manufacturers embraced demand for new products. The Daniel Robertson works in Mitcham expanded in the 1950s to manufacture textured bricks. Brick & Pipe Industries began manufacturing clay sewerage pipes for local authorities and, by 1971, claimed to be the largest manufacturer of these products in the southern hemisphere. The 1960s was also characterised by consolidation as smaller manufacturers were acquired by larger ones. Brick Industries Ltd in Burwood took over the Standard Brickworks in Box Hill, the Commonwealth Pottery site in Blackburn and the premises of the Blackburn Tile Company, eventually becoming Victoria's largest brick company.¹³⁴

Ironically, while the post-war housing boom prompted a huge demand for building materials, it was the resulting encroachment of suburbia that led to the closure of local brick and tile manufacturers as new residents complained about the noise and the pollution. At the same time, local clay deposits were beginning to run out. As manufacturers started to source raw materials from outside the locale, the

¹²⁷ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 9.

¹²⁸ VHR citation, Former Standard Brickworks.

¹²⁹ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 9; Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 85, 88, 99; Information received from Nunawading Historical Society.

¹³⁰ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 137.

¹³¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 184.

¹³² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 139.

¹³³ 'Burwood Brickworks', *Bricks in Victoria*, <bricksinvictoria.blogpost.com>, accessed 14 December 2022.

¹³⁴ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 139.

justification for maintaining factories in their present locations was becoming more tenuous.

The Australian Tessellated Tile Company in Mitcham, latterly taken over by Rocla, closed down in 1965. By 1977, only five clay product manufacturers were still operating in the municipality: two in Nunawading and one each in Vermont, Burwood and Blackburn.¹³⁵ The Standard Brickworks in Box Hill ceased production in 1988 and the Nubrick (former Brick Industries Ltd) site in Burwood in the early 1990s.¹³⁶ The last remaining brickworks in the municipality, operated by Daniel Robertson in Mitcham, ceased production in the early 2010s. The buildings on the Nubrick site were demolished in the late 1990s. In 2019, 'the world's most sustainable shopping centre'¹³⁷ opened on the site as Burwood Brickworks¹³⁸ and the Daniel Robertson site is currently being developed as 'Tunstall Village', a residential development.



Figure 30. Employees at the Australian Tessellated Tile Works, Mitcham (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3324)

¹³⁵ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 140.

¹³⁶ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 207.

¹³⁷ 'Press release, 24 April 2021', *Burwood Brickworks*, <burwoodbrickworks.shopping>, accessed 14 December 2022.

¹³⁸ *Whitehorse Leader*, 19 August 2019.



Figure 31. Australian Tesselated Tile Works, Mitcham, c 1930s (State Library of Victoria, ID 1761532)



Figure 32. Daniel Robertson brickworks, 2000 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2045)

Related heritage places

VHR H0720/HO3 – Former Standard Brickworks, 14 Federation Street, Box Hill

HO5 – Wunderlich/Monier Terracotta Roof Tiles Complex, 656 Mitcham Road, Vermont

HO78 – Daniel Robertson Brickworks, 58 Station Street, Nunawading

5 BUILDING WHITEHORSE'S INDUSTRIES AND WORKFORCE

5.1 Manufacturing

A small number of factories, including Harvey's agricultural implements foundry and Tully and Russell's motor spray works, opened in Box Hill before World War I.¹³⁹ Sewering of the municipality, which began in 1928, was another attractor for industry, but the growth which did occur in the 1930s was reversed or slowed by wartime shortages and demands in the 1940s.¹⁴⁰

Decentralisation of industry was a significant theme in the early post-war era, with many of Melbourne's pre-war manufacturers, already well-established in the inner suburbs, looking eastward for expansion opportunities.¹⁴¹ While the municipalities of Box Hill and Nunawading were both subject to major industrial expansion from the late 1940s, large tracts of vacant land were especially plentiful in the latter.¹⁴² In 1948, clothing manufacturers Holeproof began building a new factory along Whitehorse Road at Box Hill.¹⁴³ It was soon followed by the new premises of art pottery manufacturers E G Greenway Pty Ltd, which relocated from small premises in Fitzroy to a large architect-designed factory on Whitehorse Road in Blackburn. Many other manufacturers were attracted to sites along Whitehorse Road, including Cottee's cordials at Blackburn (1950), Turner Industries at Nunawading (1951) and K G Luke Pty Ltd at Mitcham (1952).¹⁴⁴ Befitting their prominent positions along the district's principal commercial thoroughfare, many of these factories were attractive buildings that challenged the traditional notion of the utilitarian factory.¹⁴⁵

During the 1950s, several other large factories were established on comparably isolated sites. In 1954, architect John Rivett was reported as preparing a scheme for a factory complex on 3½ acres (1.4ha) at Highbury Road, Burwood, which provided staff recreation facilities including a swimming pool, tennis courts, squash courts and playground.¹⁴⁶ Five years later, paper manufacturers Bowater Scott established a vast new factory on thirty acres off Middleborough Road at Box Hill South, overlooking the Gardiners Creek. During the 1960s, these areas developed into recognisable industrial precincts. For example, the Baekert factory in Joseph Street, Blackburn North, was joined by the new Dominion Press printing works (designed by architects Rosman, Hastings & Sorel in 1965) and later by the premises of Aubedal Pty Ltd and others. In Burwood, the portion of Highbury Road to either side of Gardiners Creek attracted numerous large factories, with many smaller ones being built in the side-streets extending north towards Burwood Road. Similar development also spread north of the Bowater Scott factory in Box Hill South, with smaller factories extending as far as Canterbury Road.

¹³⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 131.

¹⁴⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 182.

¹⁴¹ Heritage Alliance, *Survey of Post War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One*, Volume 1, p 15.

¹⁴² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 146.

¹⁴³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 184.

¹⁴⁴ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 150.

¹⁴⁵ *Argus*, 20 July 1954, p 18.

¹⁴⁶ *Herald*, 28 January 1955, p 10.

Elsewhere in the City of Whitehorse, comparable precincts of industrial development remained focused on Whitehorse Road. The well-established Luke & Singer complex on the corner of Cook Street expanded with the construction of a new administration block in the late 1950s as several other factories appeared either alongside or fronting Cook Street, including the new premises of the Terry Engineering Company, designed by architects Meldrum & Partners in 1960. The most dominant local industrial precinct was that between Whitehorse Road and the railway line, extending from Railway Road in Blackburn to Rooks Road in Nunawading.

The 1960s and 1970s was a period of consolidation for industry in Whitehorse. During that time, many of the manufacturers that had been based there since the early 1950s including Baekert Australia, Cottees and Turner Industries were taken over by overseas corporations. By 1977, there were still more than sixty factories operating in the City of Nunawading.¹⁴⁷ But, as new offshore owners consolidated their facilities around the world, many factories in the area eventually became surplus to requirements and were closed.



Figure 33. K G Luke factory in Mitcham, 1959 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3801)

¹⁴⁷ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 151.

5.2 Retailing

The first shopping district in the City of Whitehorse was established along Whitehorse Road and Station Street, Box Hill. By 1876, businesses were being operated by blacksmith Robert Sutton, Silas Padgham (general store and post office), butcher George Cockroft and bootmaker John Ragg. There was also a general store run by Alfred Serpell, and the Railway Hotel.¹⁴⁸ Further east, small timber buildings housing general stores began to appear in the late 1870s: Blackburn's first shop was built around 1878,¹⁴⁹ and Vermont's in 1881.¹⁵⁰



Figure 34. Silas Padgham's general store and post office, Box Hill, c1860s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0408)



Figure 35. Pannam's General Store, Vermont (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2096)

¹⁴⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 52.

¹⁴⁹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 123.

¹⁵⁰ Tim Shambrook, *This is Vermont*, Blackburn, 1989, pp 10-11, 20.

Although the municipality's only official government-surveyed township, Ballyshanassy, had existed since 1854, commercial development in Burwood centred on the Boroondara side of Warrigal Road, and only a few shops appeared on the Nunawading side in the 1800s. Walter Clarke, storekeeper, baker and postmaster in Ballyshanassy, also became a banker when the Post Office Savings Bank opened in his premises in April 1879.¹⁵¹

A 1905 photograph shows Box Hill's commercial centre had developed substantially by the turn of the century, with the modest timber single-storey shop buildings joined by larger double-storey Italianate shops.¹⁵² The years immediately preceding World War I saw the first major wave of retail development in the municipality. It was at this time that many of Box Hill's major commercial buildings were erected, including the new post office, J R Ellingworth's real estate agency, and two large banks.¹⁵³

In Mont Albert, although the Phoenix Park Estate had been subdivided in 1887, the first shops in Hamilton Street, adjacent to the railway station did not appear until 1912, and most of the shops date from the 1920s.¹⁵⁴ Blackburn's shopping centre also grew substantially in the inter-war period, and there are remnants of 1920s shops in Mitcham and Nunawading, which also underwent expansion in the 1920s.



Figure 36. Whitehorse Road, near the Station Street intersection, in the 1860s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0644)

¹⁵¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 55-56.

¹⁵² Eleanor Findlay & Marjorie Morgan, *The Days before Yesterday: a picture book of early Box Hill*, Box Hill, 1993, p 9.

¹⁵³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 130-131.

¹⁵⁴ M S Webster, *The history of Mont Albert Shopping Centre 1887-1985*, Box Hill, 1986.



Figure 37. Looking south west across Whitehorse Road, Box Hill from the fire station tower, 1905 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0915)



Figure 38. Whitehorse Road, Box Hill in the 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0147)



Figure 39. Hamilton Street, Mont Albert in c 1920s (Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 12800 P3 ADV 0458)

The enormous post-war growth in the municipality gave rise to a massive proliferation of shopping centres of all sizes. Many housing estates incorporated rows of four or five shops, often on corner sites, and shopping strips along major arterials grew. In 1954, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) master plan identified Box Hill's commercial hub as one of several in the metropolitan area that warranted upgrading to include larger shops and department stores along with adequate car-parking and public transport interchanges.¹⁵⁵ While this proposal met with some local criticism, it was otherwise instrumental in attracting several larger retailers to the area.¹⁵⁶ The smaller pre-war retail centres at Surrey Hills, Blackburn, Nunawading and Mitcham were all similarly upgraded during this period.

At Forest Hill, one of Melbourne's first American-style shopping centres was opened in 1964.¹⁵⁷ Australia's first K-Mart department store was built in Burwood East in April 1969. In Box Hill, Whitehorse Plaza was constructed on the site of the old market in 1974, whilst the Box Hill Central shopping centre and public transport interchange was completed in 1983.¹⁵⁸ The new transport interchange opened in November 1984, and the retail centre – known as the Market Street Mall – in January 1985.

The Forest Hill Shopping Centre, which had already been enlarged in 1974, underwent even more radical transformation from 1987, when the original strip mall portion was demolished and replaced by a new three-storey block, providing space for several large chain stores and a Hoyts multiplex cinema. The centres at both Forest Hill and Box Hill have each been considerably enlarged and refurbished since then, as has the K-mart complex at Burwood East.

Other medium-scale developments included shopping centres at Vermont South, Brentford Square (Forest Hill), Burwood East, and North Blackburn Square. Major retailers were also attracted to the Whitehorse Road corridor in particular in Nunawading, the location of one of Melbourne's largest bulk goods retail strips and homemaker centres known as MegaMile by 2008.¹⁵⁹



Figure 40. Australia's first Kmart, Burwood (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP4491)

¹⁵⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 202.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 194.

¹⁵⁷ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 168.

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 221.

¹⁵⁹ City of Whitehorse, *Nunawading MegaMile Major Activity Centre and Mitcham Neighbourhood Activity Centre Structure Plan*, 2008, p. 19.

Related heritage places

HO92 – Former Railway Hotel, 950-956 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

HO103 – Mont Albert Shopping Centre Precinct, Mont Albert

HO115 – Former Ellingworth’s Estate Agency and Shops, 580 Station Street, Box Hill

HO116 – Former State Savings Bank, 953 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

HO244 – Box Hill Commercial Area

HO290 – Former ES&A Bank, 153-155 Springvale Road, Nunawading

5.3 Banking and finance

In October 1883 a branch of the ES&A bank opened in Station Street, Box Hill.¹⁶⁰ A bank was also opened in Mitcham by 1892.¹⁶¹ In 1911, the State Savings Bank commenced construction of new premises in Box Hill on a site next to the post office in Whitehorse Road.¹⁶² The two-storey building was designed by architects Billing, Son and Peck.¹⁶³ At the same time, the Bank of Victoria negotiated for purchase of a building site in Station Street, Box Hill and erected a permanent building in 1912.¹⁶⁴ The Box Hill branch originally opened in February 1910 in temporary premises.

By 1927, the Blackburn Progress Association was agitating for a branch of the ES&A bank to be established in the suburb. Meanwhile, a branch of the State Savings Bank opened in Blackburn in 1930 opposite the railway station.¹⁶⁵ Mont Albert’s first bank, a branch of the State Savings Bank, opened in 1930.¹⁶⁶ A grand two-storey bank building for the State Savings Bank – designed by architects Sydney, Smith, Ogg and Serpell – opened in Mitcham the same year.¹⁶⁷ A new ES&A bank was also constructed in Mitcham in 1930 to provide more commodious accommodation for the local branch.¹⁶⁸

Changes in legislation, namely the *Banking Act 1947*, brought about the nationalisation of private trading banks and the establishment of savings bank subsidiaries. The result was a boom in the establishment of branch banks, with the government-run State Savings Bank of Victoria expanding its own facilities to keep up with the growth of the private banks.

While many of these banks engaged the services of noted architects in the post-war era, it was the ES&A Bank that represented what has been described as ‘the leading patron of modern bank architecture’.¹⁶⁹ This was evident in the municipality from 1951, when architect Horace Tribe designed new manager’s residences for the

¹⁶⁰ *Kew & Hawthorn Express*, 12 October 1883.

¹⁶¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 63.

¹⁶² *The Reporter*, 11 August 1911, p 4.

¹⁶³ *The Reporter*, 11 August 1911, p 4.

¹⁶⁴ *The Reporter*, 21 April 1911, p 4.

¹⁶⁵ *Box Hill Reporter*, 28 February 1930, p 3.

¹⁶⁶ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 167.

¹⁶⁷ *Herald*, 5 February 1930, p 13.

¹⁶⁸ *Box Hill Reporter*, 7 March 1930, p 9.

¹⁶⁹ Heritage Alliance, *Survey of Post War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One, Volume 1*, 2008, p 18.



existing branches at Blackburn and Mitcham. An entirely new branch at Blackburn, designed by architects Barlow, van Rompaey & Kerr, was subsequently erected in 1956. A particularly striking example at 153-55 Springvale Road, Nunawading, dating from the late 1950s, was designed by the ES&A Bank's in-house architect Stuart McIntosh, a resident who lived in a house of his own design in Mont Albert North.



Figure 41. State Savings Bank at Mitcham, c1970 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP16)

Related heritage places

HO116 – Former State Savings Bank, 953 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

HO290 – Former ES&A Bank, 153-155 Springvale Road, Nunawading

5.4 Hospitality

The first hotel in Whitehorse gave rise to the municipality's name. In 1853, Patrick Trainor erected a two-storey brick hotel, which he named the White Horse, on what was then known as the Great Gipps Land Road. The hotel enjoyed a monopoly until Dennis Delaney opened the Royal Hotel in 1856, on the corner of present-day

Canterbury and Broughton Roads, Surrey Hills.¹⁷⁰ By 1858, the Harkaway Inn had been built on the corner of Blackburn and Highbury Roads in Burwood East, and this was followed by several other hotels in the Burwood area, including the Tally-Ho, the Thornecombe, the Boundary, and the Burwood Family.¹⁷¹ The first hotel in Blackburn was the Traveller's Rest, erected on Whitehorse Road in 1861 as a changing station for horses on the Cobb and Co. coach service from Melbourne to Lilydale.¹⁷² It was followed in 1868 by the King George Hotel at Blackburn Creek. In Mitcham, the Hill Hotel and the Reserve Hotel were built on opposite corners at the intersection of Mitcham and Whitehorse Roads.¹⁷³



Figure 42. Traveller's Rest Hotel, Blackburn in 1929 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1562)



Figure 43. The Hill Hotel in Mitcham (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1329)

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 17, 21.

¹⁷¹ *Sands and McDougall's Victorian Directory*, 1885, 1901.

¹⁷² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 138.

¹⁷³ Niall Brennan, *This is Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, p 54.



Figure 44. The Reserve Hotel in Mitcham, c 1920 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3196)

Historian Andrew Lemon has noted that Box Hill's earliest hotels were 'a mixed bag, and none of them seemed to have been very profitable'.¹⁷⁴ Many that were built failed to see out the century. The Harvest Home Hotel in Mitcham, which operated from the front room of John McGlone's house in Whitehorse Road, closed in 1889.¹⁷⁵ The King George Hotel in Blackburn ceased operating in 1905, and most of the hotels in Burwood had also closed by that time. However, the two oldest hotels in the area, the White Horse and the Royal, thrived and both were completely rebuilt in the late 1880s.¹⁷⁶ The new Railway Hotel was erected in 1882 on the prominent corner of Station Street and Whitehorse Road in Box Hill, and was extensively remodelled in 1911.

The Temperance movement, which had always had a strong presence in the Box Hill area, was further strengthened by Prohibition in the United States. In 1920, a fervent anti-liquor campaign was begun by local politician E W Greenwood.¹⁷⁷ At that time, hotel licensing legislation had a Local Option clause, so voters in any district could support prohibition without forcing it onto other districts who were not in favour.

Following a state-wide referendum in 1921, the City of Box Hill became one of two municipalities in Victoria (along with the adjacent City of Camberwell) that declared itself as a Dry Area, where existing hotels and other licensed premises were closed and no new ones permitted.¹⁷⁸ Box Hill's three hotels, along with two in Burwood and seven in Camberwell, were closed on New Year's Day, 1921.¹⁷⁹ Most were subsequently demolished, although the Railway Hotel was remodelled as a shop and coffee palace, and the eponymous White Horse Hotel reopened as a boarding house. When the latter was demolished in 1934, an enterprising citizen obtained the White Horse statue and the original doorway on which it stood. They were offered to the Council for re-erection, and John Gawler, architect and Box Hill Councillor, designed a setting on the reserve in the middle of Whitehorse Road. The statue has since been replaced by a replica, and the original placed on display in the Box Hill Town Hall.

¹⁷⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 33.

¹⁷⁵ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 25.

¹⁷⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 89.

¹⁷⁷ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 145-48.

¹⁷⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 189-90.

¹⁷⁹ Alyssa Clarkson, *Ballyshanassy: a history of the Burwood District*, Burwood, 1991, p 20.



Figure 45. The White Horse Hotel in Box Hill prior to demolition, c 1933 (State Library of Victoria, H4841a)



Figure 46. Looking south along Station Street, Box Hill, with the Railway Hotel to the right of the image (Box Hill Historical Society, no B9108)

In the early post-war period, several attempts were made to break Box Hill's Dry Area. In 1951, a company purchased land on the southwestern corner of Whitehorse and Elgar Roads with the intent of erecting a new hotel, although public opposition prevented this from proceeding. A subsequent proposal to establish a licensed club premises in Dorking Road was similarly overturned. Not long afterwards, Dry Areas were abolished following a 1954 revision to the Licensing Act. However, an amendment to the Act required that any new licensed premises in former Dry Areas still required a poll of electors living in the immediate vicinity of the site. The first venue to take advantage of this was the Box Hill Golf Club which, in 1956, became the first licensed premises to operate in the City of Box Hill for over thirty years.¹⁸⁰ Soon afterwards, two local grocery stores were also granted liquor licenses. In the mid-1990s, there were only four licensed premises in the former City of Box Hill – the clubrooms of the Returned & Services League (RSL) and golf club, the Tudor Motel, and a restaurant at Box Hill TAFE set up for the training of hospitality students.¹⁸¹ In 1999, residents voted to allow licensed restaurants, but not hotels.

¹⁸⁰ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 176.

¹⁸¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 218.



No hotels have been built in the Box Hill Dry Area since the liquor ban, although they have appeared elsewhere in the municipality. In 1929, the Traveller's Rest Hotel in Blackburn was rebuilt as the Blackburn Hotel, which was demolished in the 1980s for the present hotel.¹⁸² The Reserve Hotel in Mitcham, although considerably altered, remains as one of the earliest surviving hotels in the municipality. Two completely new hotels were erected in the 1960s – the Burvale in East Burwood (1969), and the Whitehorse Hotel, on the corner of Whitehorse and Moncrieff Roads, Nunawading.¹⁸³ The latter, like its famous namesake, has since been demolished.

The Motel Maroondah at 768 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill, which opened in 1963, was the first example of a modern American-style motel in the City of Whitehorse. Following the opening of the much-heralded Burvale Hotel-Motel in 1969, several other motels emerged on or near Burwood Highway over the next few years, including the Sunstrip Motel (now Box Hill Motel) (c1971) and the Burwood East Motel on Blackburn Road. During the 1980s, these were supplemented by venues geared towards commercial travellers rather than casual holidaymakers, offering motel-style accommodation with licensed restaurants and facilities for conferences or receptions. Mostly located along Whitehorse Road, these new-generation motels include the Tudor in Box Hill, the Nunawading Motor Inn and the Quality Hotel Manor in Mitcham.

The first of Box Hill's many Chinese restaurants was the Yang-Tse Café on Whitehorse Road, which opened as early as 1961.¹⁸⁴ By the end of that decade, several others had followed including the Dragon Palace in Blackburn. This anticipated the boom of Asian migration over the remainder of that decade, which saw innumerable Asian restaurants appear along the retail strip of Station Street and the adjacent parts of Whitehorse Road.

Similar development took place in both Nunawading and Mitcham, where Asian restaurants were established both in retail strips and as purpose-built freestanding buildings. The latter were sometimes designed in a pseudo-oriental manner, such as Emperor Court in Mitcham Road (c1980) and the later Formosa House in Springvale Road.

Related heritage places

HO92 – Former Railway Hotel, 950-956 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

5.5 Office and commercial development

Non-retail commercial development is a relatively recent theme in the history of the municipality, and it has only really been from the 1970s that major office developments have appeared in the area. Commercial developments which preceded this boom include Agfa-Gevaert, which established headquarters in Nunawading in 1957, and the Channel 0 (later Channel 10) studios, built in Forest Hill in 1965. The latter, designed by architects Hassell McConnell & Partners, was

¹⁸² Information provided by Nunawading Historical Society.

¹⁸³ Niall Brennan, *This is Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, p 49.

¹⁸⁴ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 212.

awarded a medal in the General Buildings category at the 1965 RIAA Awards. The complex is now known as Global Television Studios.

Office buildings became more ubiquitous in the municipality from the early 1970s, when demand increased for commercial premises near major retail centres such as Box Hill. The impact of the growing trend towards decentralisation, which saw city-based companies starting to relocate their headquarters to the eastern suburbs, was also apparent. As early as 1974, Hewlett Packard erected a new office block in Joseph Street, Blackburn North – an area previously associated with industrial development.¹⁸⁵ From the late 1970s, as work progressed on the redevelopment of Box Hill's central commercial and transport hub, identifiable corporate precincts emerged along nearby streets including Prospect Road, Carrington Road, Rutland Road and Ellingworth Parade.¹⁸⁶ Dating from the mid-1980s, the first of many new office buildings along Prospect Road was the premises of a local legal firm, which was officially opened by Melbourne's Anglican Archbishop.¹⁸⁷ A three storey example at 20 Prospect Road, completed in 1988, represented an early application of tilt-up concrete slab construction in office building design in Melbourne.¹⁸⁸ Telecommunications, water, gas and electricity providers also maintain a corporate presence in the municipality.

Factors which have influenced the change in land use of many large sites in the City of Whitehorse include the closure of welfare institutions and schools, and the selling-off or subdivision of agricultural properties. A case in point was the subdivision of land in Burwood East, formerly occupied by the Tally Ho Boys' Farm. A commercial estate, initially known as the Tally Ho Technology Park, was developed by the Lend Lease Corporation, with its first new building (for Phillips Australia) opening in 1988. Subsequent additions to the estate included the new headquarters of World Vision (Lawrence Harkin & Ziersch, 1992) and the Eastern Regional office of VicRoads (Synman Justin Bialek, 1997). The remainder of the site was developed for housing.



Figure 47. Aerial view of Tally Ho Technology Park in Burwood East, 1995 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2775)

¹⁸⁵ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 209.

¹⁸⁶ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 213.

¹⁸⁷ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 213.

¹⁸⁸ *Constructional Review*, November 1988, pp 48-49.

Related heritage places

HO272 – Former ATV 0 Television Studios, 104-168 Hawthorn Road, Forest Hill



6 CREATING WHITEHORSE'S SUBURBS

6.1 The early townships

The first township in the Parish of Nunawading was Burwood, then known as Ballyshanassy. Proclaimed in 1854, the village was bordered by present-day Gilmour Street, Burwood Highway, Highbury Road and Gardiner's Creek.¹⁸⁹ The township was named in honour of Victoria's Irish-born Premier, John O'Shanassy, with *bally* being an Irish word for 'town'.¹⁹⁰

Ballyshanassy remained the only official township until 1861, when the Box Hill Township was proclaimed.¹⁹¹ Box Hill Township comprised a blacksmith, general store, butcher's shop and school and was considered the main town centre for Nunawading.¹⁹² The opening of a post office in the township in 1861 is said to have been the first official use of the name 'Box Hill'.¹⁹³

Also in 1861, land speculator Thomas Graham proposed the so-called Norwich Township, which was located west of Dandenong Creek in present-day Vermont South.¹⁹⁴ Graham's scheme envisaged vineyards along the river, and a market square with a rectilinear grid of streets. Graham had hoped that the proposed Lilydale railway line would pass through his new town. However, it never did, and the Norwich Township subsequently failed. Traces of the original layout remain as present-day Morack and Terrara Roads. Several other townships were proposed in the Vermont, Tunstall and Mitcham areas under such names as Springfield, New Brunswick and Studley. They were equally unsuccessful.¹⁹⁵

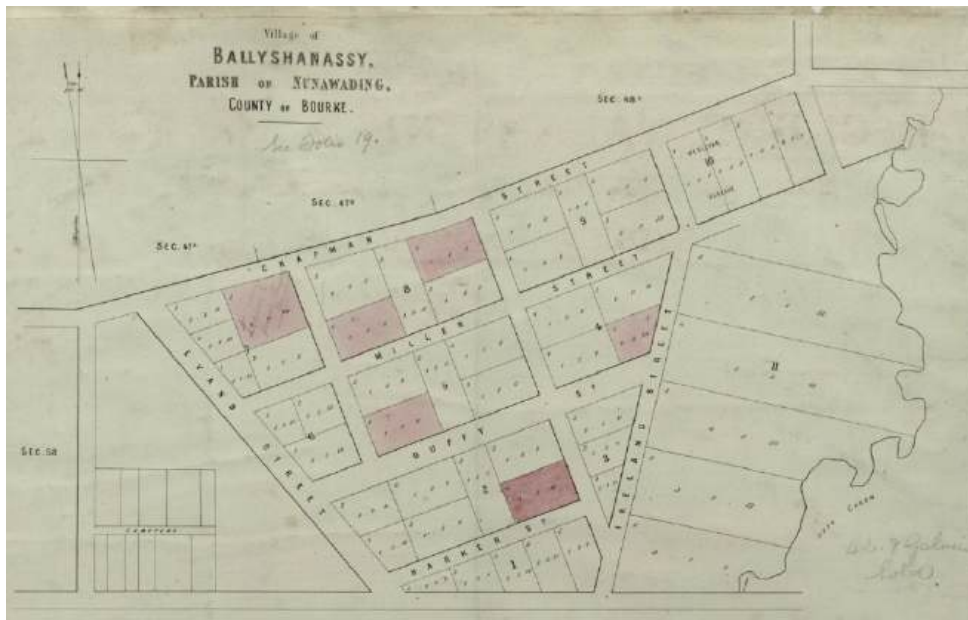


Figure 48. The township of Ballyshanassy, 1858 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1294016)

¹⁸⁹ Alyssa Clarkson, *Ballyshanassy: a history of the Burwood District*, Burwood, 1991, p 7.

¹⁹⁰ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 24-25.

¹⁹¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 30.

¹⁹² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 25.

¹⁹³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 30.

¹⁹⁴ Tim Shambrook, *This is Vermont*, Blackburn, 1989, p 11.

¹⁹⁵ Niall Brennan, *This is Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, pp 33-34.

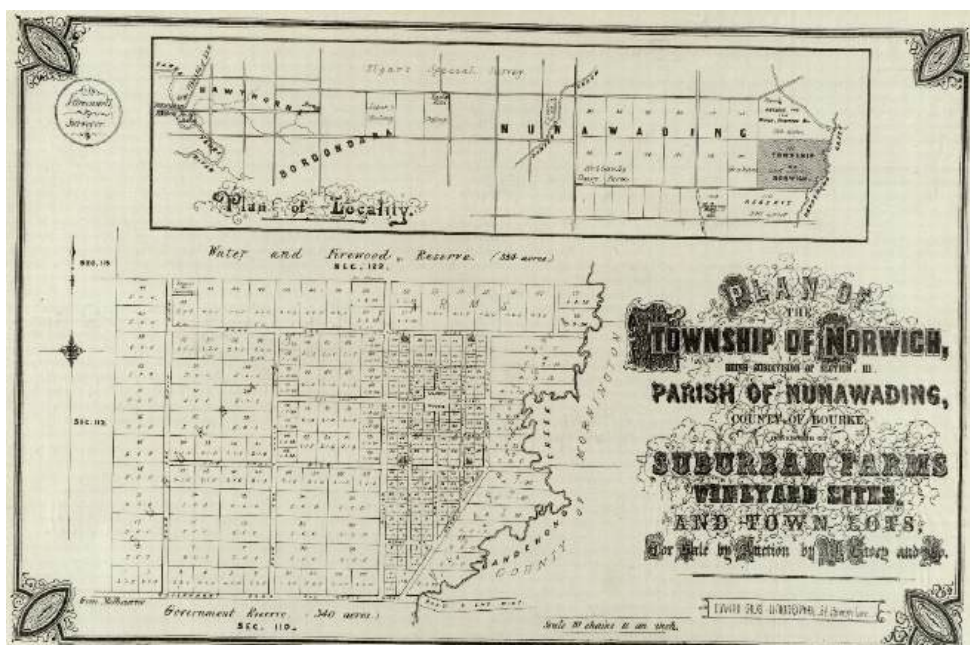


Figure 49. The proposed township of Norwich, 1860s (State Library of Victoria, ID 2100195)

6.2 Early residential development

According to the 1841 census, Thomas Toogood occupied a mud house on his land in Box Hill North.¹⁹⁶ Such crude houses, built of mud, timber or wattle and daub, would have been erected by many of the earliest European settlers in Whitehorse. One of these, a mud house built by the Bennett brothers in Burwood, even survived until the 1950s.¹⁹⁷ The first substantial house was Arundel Wrighte's house, Beadesert, a timber and stone dwelling which he had erected on his Box Hill North property by 1844.¹⁹⁸

Others engaged in farming activity also erected permanent homesteads. Edward Crossman built his farmhouse in Box Hill North, as did Gad Eley in Burwood.¹⁹⁹ In the mid-1850s, George Blood and William Ellingworth both settled in central Box Hill, and built timber houses for themselves on opposite sides of Station Street.²⁰⁰ The latter was demolished in 1956, and Blood's cottage was dismantled in the 1990s.

¹⁹⁶ Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Box Hill Heritage and Conservation Study*, Volume 1, p 13.

¹⁹⁷ Niall Brennan, *This is Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, p 18.

¹⁹⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 8.

¹⁹⁹ Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Box Hill Heritage and Conservation Study*, Volume 1, pp 49-50, 61-62.

²⁰⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 17, 20.



Figure 50. Blood Cottage,
March 1980 (State Library of
Victoria, ID 1670300)

The earliest houses in the former municipality of Nunawading appeared in the early 1860s. Once again, they were mostly crude dwellings of mud, timber and wattle and daub. David Boyle built a wattle and daub house on his land at Forest Hill, and German immigrants August and Paulina Schwerkolt built their first stone house in Mitcham.²⁰¹ John McClelland, one of Nunawading's earliest settlers, built a wattle and daub house on the south side of Whitehorse Road in 1869, and soon extended it into a substantial timber house which he named The Elms.²⁰² It was relocated to Springvale Road in the 1940s, and has since been demolished.²⁰³

Related heritage places

HO30 – Schwerkolt's Cottage, 2-10 Deep Creek Road, Mitcham

HO64 – House, 27 Morley Crescent, Mont Albert North

²⁰¹ Tim Shambrook, *This is Vermont*, Blackburn, 1989, p 15; Information provided by Valda Arrowsmith, Nunawading Historical Society.

²⁰² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 34-35.

²⁰³ Information provided by Valda Arrowsmith, Nunawading Historical Society.

6.3 The 1880s land boom

In 1882, the Camberwell railway line was extended to Lilydale, and the area of what is now the City of Whitehorse suddenly became an attractive location for large-scale land development. Subdivisions rapidly emerged around stations, including Elgar Park Estate in Surrey Hills (1882) and the Railway Station Estate in Box Hill (1883). The latter had been the property of long-time Box Hill resident George Sims, who made a considerable profit from the sale.²⁰⁴ Another pioneer landholder, Arundel Wrighte, did not live to make a similar fortune. He and his wife both died in 1887, and their vast property was acquired by a concern called the Box Hill Township Estate Company.²⁰⁵ Wrighte's land was promptly subdivided, and the ensuing lots were progressively sold over several months in 1888. Similar estates appeared throughout Box Hill, Surrey Hills, Mont Albert and, to a lesser extent, Box Hill South, at this time.²⁰⁶

The Freehold Investment and Banking Company, purchased a thousand acres in Blackburn for a proposed estate. Streets were laid out, community facilities were established, and as a centrepiece, a watercourse was dammed to create Blackburn Lake.²⁰⁷ The 138-lot subdivision, bordered by Central Road, Blackburn Road and Wellington Avenue, was declared in early 1889.²⁰⁸ By that time, the secretary of the company, T RB Morton, had built several large houses in Gordon Crescent. But this was not enough to attract potential purchasers, and the company soon went into liquidation. Morton set up his own estate agency in Blackburn, but the remaining land took many years to sell.

Developers were less keen to subdivide land further east, in the Tunstall and Mitcham areas, although a few did appear along the north side of Whitehorse Road. A wedge-shaped area of land, bordered by Mitcham and East Doncaster roads, was subdivided in 1889 as the 163-lot Mitcham Township Estate.²⁰⁹ Between 1888 and 1890, land on the opposite side of Mitcham Road was subdivided in three stages.²¹⁰ A railway station opened at Tunstall (now Nunawading) in 1888, and the following year saw the subdivision of land on the corner of Whitehorse and Springvale roads.²¹¹ All of these modest estates, like their more substantial counterpart in Blackburn, developed slowly, often with only one or two houses built in an entire street before 1900.

The land boom had ended by the early 1890s, but not before a few so-called 'Boom mansions' were erected, many in the central part of Box Hill. These included Albion, Banff and Turriff in Albion Street, Box Hill, Tyneholm in Elgar Road, Box Hill and Urara in Gordon Crescent, Blackburn.²¹²

²⁰⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 71.

²⁰⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 87.

²⁰⁶ Subdivision plans in Vale Collection, Map Room, State Library of Victoria.

²⁰⁷ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 82.

²⁰⁸ Lodged Plan No 2400, declared 28 February 1889, Land and Survey Information Centre.

²⁰⁹ Niall Brennan, *This is Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, pp 3 63.

²¹⁰ Lodged Plans Nos 1968, 2180, 2525, 3045, variously dated, Land and Survey Information Centre.

²¹¹ Lodged Plan No 2494, declared 15 April 1889, Land and Survey Information Centre.

²¹² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 96.



Figure 51. 'Turriff', 40 Albion Road, Box Hill in the 1880s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2589)



Figure 52. 'Banff' in Albion Road, Box Hill (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2026)



Figure 53. Gordon Crescent in Blackburn in c1880s-90s (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP40)





Figure 54. House in Gordon Crescent, Blackburn, c1880 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1366)

Figure 55. Game family home, in Gordon Crescent in c1909 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2159)

Related heritage places

HO10 – Albion, 50 Albion Road, Box Hill

HO14 – Banff, 29 Albion Road, Box Hill

HO40 – Urara, 2 Gordon Crescent, Blackburn

HO108 – Tyneholm, 310 Elgar Road, Box Hill

HO125 – Turriff, 40 Albion Road, Box Hill

6.4 Early twentieth century development

With the turn of the century came signs of a slow return to prosperity following the 1890s depression. One early subdivision was Austral Park in Mitcham, which was auctioned for sale in 1906. Located close to Mitcham Station, the Estate offered ‘suburban conveniences and country advantages’.²¹³ In 1910, the Blackburn Township Estate was laid out around the railway station, to the immediate west of the Blackburn Model Town estate. Two years later, builder Algernon Elmore erected a timber bungalow for himself, Kyalite, in what is now Laburnum Street. Over the next decade, Elmore erected almost thirty similar houses in the immediate vicinity, which forms most of what is now known as the Bellbird Streets area.²¹⁴

In the 1910s and 1920s, much of the land in the Nunawading area remained rural. In 1911, an expanse of land between Springvale and Mitcham roads was auctioned as nine huge lots, obviously intended for farming.²¹⁵ Box Hill meanwhile began to lose its rural character in the 1920s, as orchards were increasingly replaced with residential development. In 1924, one of the district’s leading orchardists, Henry Hatfield, subdivided his Koonwarra orchard, located between Box Hill and Blackburn, into ‘108 choice residential lots’. Lots within the Mascot Estate, located equidistant between Blackburn and Tunstall (Vermont) and with frontages to White Horse Road, were also released for sale at this time.²¹⁶

²¹³ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 59.

²¹⁴ Angela Taylor, ‘Craftsman Bungalows in Blackburn’, *Historic Environment*, Volume 1, 1986, p 41.

²¹⁵ Subdivision plan in Vale Collection, Map Room, State Library of Victoria.

²¹⁶ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 67.



Figure 56. Elmore House, Laburnum in 1914 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3516)

KOONWARRA ESTATE
BOX HILL

This magnificent Estate is most centrally situated (as you will see on reference to the Plan), being only 7 to 12 minutes from either the Box Hill or Blackburn Railway Stations. The proposed New Railway Station between Box Hill and Blackburn will be almost on the Property. The Land is subdivided on the very latest plans showing separate, having full regard for the comfort of purchasers. The Estate has an Eminent aspect, and commands very extensive views. ELECTRIC LIGHT ON PROPERTY AND WATER AVAILABLE AS REQUIRED.

HATFIELD'S ORCHARD
Some of the Finest Export Apple Fruit Trees in the State are on this Land

108 CHOICE RESIDENTIAL LOTS 108
Right in the Heart of the Box Hill - Blackburn District

H. V. PALMER & CO. PTY. LTD.
395 Collins Street, Melbourne.
Vendors Representatives: **WALTER G. HISCOCK**
Royal Bank Chambers, 70 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

Figure 57. Advertisement for Koonwarra Estate, 1924 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP294)

During the 1920s and 1930s, many of the failed Boom subdivisions were finally developed. To this day, there are entire streets of inter-war houses in Blackburn, Nunawading and Mitcham which reveal their nineteenth century origins with their grid layouts and rear lanes.

Just as the extension of the railway line promoted land development in the 1880s, the extension of tram lines promoted land development in the early twentieth century. The existing tram line was extended to Wattle Park in 1917, and then to Elgar Road in 1928. This gave rise to an influx of land subdivisions in the Burwood, Box Hill South and Surrey Hills areas. Several were named in honour of the new mode of transport in the area, including the Tramway Estate (1916) in Burwood and the Tram Terminus Estate (1936) in Box Hill South.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Subdivision plans in Vale Collection, Map Room, State Library of Victoria.



Figure 58. Advertisement for Electric Tramway Estate, Box Hill, undated (State Library of Victoria, ID 2240534)

ELECTRIC TRAMWAY ESTATE

BOX HILL Close to Wattle Park

WHITE HORSE ROAD
BOX HILL RAILWAY STATION
CANTERBURY ROAD

ELECTRIC TRAMWAY ESTATE

LOOKING NORTH WEST OFF THE ESTATE

For
Private
Sale

BOX HILL
is only 9 miles
from Melbourne

**Grandly
Situated**
on the Crest of
the Hill with
**Glorious
Views**
extending
to the
**Dandenong
Mountains**

This is
**Magnificent
Land
Beautifully
Elevated
Perfectly Drained**

When the WATTLE PARK Electric Tramway is extended to Elgar Road, the Estate will then be within 10 minutes walk of the Electric Tramway direct to the City. It is proposed to further extend this Tramway to the Box Hill Railway Station via Sialden Street, and if this is carried out, the Electric Tram will pass this Estate

The Electric Train will be running to Box Hill in October, the time running will then be reduced to about 25 minutes.

There are only a limited number of Allotments available, so select yours today.

The line indicated here indicates the route of the proposed Electric Tramway.

Related heritage places

- HO144 – House, 28 Laburnum Street, Blackburn
- HO178 – Black’s Estate Precinct, Mont Albert
- HO179 – Thomas Street Precinct, Mitcham
- HO180 – Mount View Precinct, Burwood
- HO191 – Mate’s Housing Development Precinct
- HO202 – House, 64 Laburnum Street, Blackburn
- HO243 – Windsor Park Estate, Surrey Hills



6.5 Development in the post-war era

From the 1950s, the City of Whitehorse underwent its most rapid period of residential development. In the context of the overall development of the municipality, the grand subdivisions of the 1880s cover a very small area set against the vast acreages which were transformed by building activity in the post-war period. Rural areas developed rapidly in the post-war period, and the predominant theme of development in this period was the subdivision of former orchard and farming properties into large residential estates, the names of many revealing their origins, such as the Cherry Orchard Estate (East Burwood, 1958) and the Boronia Farm Estate (Blackburn South, 1956).²¹⁸

After 1946, when the City of Box Hill revised its land valuation system, residential subdivision started to boom across the municipality. Undeveloped land near railway stations was the first to be subdivided, typified in Nunawading by the Nunawading Estate (1949), the Rosedale Estate (1951) and the Sunnyside Estate off Springvale Road (1955), and in Mitcham by the Central Hill Estate (1953). The opening of new railway stations at Laburnum and Heatherdale in 1958 also prompted subdivisions.

By the late 1950s, residential subdivision had spread even further north and south of the established settlements of Box Hill, Mitcham, Blackburn and Nunawading. These varied from small developments such as the 28-lot Best Estate on Middleborough Road in Blackburn (1957) to larger ones such as the 51-lot Highbury Crest Estate in Burwood, or the 62-lot Lakeview Estate in Blackburn (both 1958). Much larger estates were atypical, with the extensive Parkmore Estate on the south side of Canterbury Road in Forest Hill (1957) being exceptional. Developed by the Southern Construction Company, it was publicised as a new community for upwards of 500 families with every essential service provided.²¹⁹

The Collins Street Directory for 1960 shows that residential subdivision in the City of Box Hill was virtually complete by that time. Box Hill South and Burwood were both almost fully subdivided, as was the portion of Box Hill North beyond Belmore Road and Woodhouse Grove. The bulk of unsubdivided land was to the south of the municipality. Most of the area of Fulton Road and Eley Road in Blackburn South remained undeveloped, as was the area south of Hawthorn Road and along Mahoneys Road in present-day Forest Hill. At that time, the land bounded by Blackburn Road, Highbury Road and Burwood Highway (partly occupied by the Tally Ho Boys Farm) still did not contain a single side street, while Terrara Road and Stanley Road were virtually the only roads in what is now Vermont.²²⁰

For the most part, the boom of residential subdivision across the municipality abated during the 1960s. By the end of that decade, the City of Box Hill had been fully subdivided – the last of the large rural properties, located on Highbury Road, was subdivided in 1968 as the Hillside Estate.²²¹ Development was otherwise focused on the fringes of the City of Nunawading, where new subdivisions included the Grovedale Estate to the south of Canterbury Road (1964). As noted by historian

²¹⁸ Subdivision plans in Vale Collection, Map Room, State Library of Victoria.

²¹⁹ *The Age*, 12 June 1962, p 17.

²²⁰ Niall Brennan, *This is Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, p 131.

²²¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 206.

Lesley Alves, Burwood East and Vermont South were the last parts of the municipality to be transformed from rural areas to suburbs.²²²

The 1970s and 1980s saw the last rural frontiers of the municipality subdivided as housing pressed up against parklands along the Mullum Mullum and Dandenong creeks to the north and east. A small part of the municipality in which suburban development retained a somewhat rural feel was in Vermont and Vermont South, where land along Terrara, Moore and Morack roads was carved up into large blocks, usually exceeding an acre (0.4ha). Many large houses were built on such blocks, often designed by noted contemporary architects.²²³ Such houses existed side by side with the early farming homesteads which survived on greatly reduced blocks. By 1976, virtually all of Vermont South had been developed.

From the late 1980s, new housing development has occurred on sites formerly occupied by schools, factories and welfare institutions. Examples include the former Vitclay site in Springfield Road, Blackburn North, the Tally Ho Boys' Training Farm, now housing a retirement village and technology park, and numerous state schools which have been closed and subsequently demolished.



Figure 59. Aerial photograph showing development in the City of Whitehorse in 1945; large swaths of rural land remain to the south and east (Whitehorse Maps)

²²² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 165.

²²³ See list of addresses in Daryl Jackson et al, *Homebuilder's Handbook*, Melbourne 1968, p 41.

plain, unadorned surfaces.²²⁴ The Modernist house type, with its flat or shallow roof, box-like forms and generous glazing, flourished in the 1950s and 1960s, and came to embody the forward-looking optimism of the post-war era.

Architects including Robin Boyd, Neil Clerehan, and Chancellor and Patrick, designed houses in the Cities of Box Hill and Nunawading in the 1950s and 1960s. The suburbs of Vermont and Vermont South, which retained a somewhat rural feel, were particularly popular and a number of architect-designed Modernist houses remain in these suburbs.²²⁵



Figure 61. Mirrabooka at 30-40 Moore Street, Vermont designed by Robin Boyd, 1957 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1698777)



Figure 62. House at 1 Verona Street, Vermont designed by architectural firm Chancellor & Patrick, 1959 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1696683)

²²⁴ P Goad, 'Modernism' in P Goad & J Willis (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, 2012, pp 464-467.

²²⁵ See list of addresses in Daryl Jackson et al, *Homebuilder's Handbook*, Melbourne 1968, p 41.

Related heritage places

HO63 – Mirrabooka, 30-34 Moore Road, Vermont

HO278 – Former Franciscan Mission Hospital Appeal House, 453 Whitehorse Road, Mitcham

HO285 – House, 1 Gracefield Drive, Box Hill North

HO287 – House, 7 Norris Court, Blackburn

HO291 – House, 1 Verona Street, Vermont

HO292 – Wildwood, 3 Villa Mews, Vermont

6.5.2 The Small Homes Service and project housing

The Small Homes Service (SHS), established in 1947 by the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in conjunction with *The Age* newspaper, was conceived in response to the desperate need for housing after World War II.²²⁶ Aiming to bring architecturally designed houses within everyone's means, the service offered a range of standard house plans, which could be purchased cheaply by prospective homebuyers. The SHS proved to be a particularly popular option for those purchasing land in developing outer suburbs and the cities of Box Hill and Nunawading were no exception with SHS houses built across the municipality. This included a timber house at 111 Main Street, Blackburn, which was erected in 1948 using standard plan T22²²⁷ – the first SHS design ever published – and another at 17 Sheehans Road, Blackburn, built in 1956 to plan T2124 designed by Neil Clerehan.²²⁸ Two demonstration houses designed by Clerehan on opposite corners of Whitehorse Road and Linden Street, were incorporated into the SHS range as T2143 and V271.

The SHS underwent renewed popularity from the late 1960s when it was renamed as the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Housing Service. During this time, fresh designs were introduced into the range by holding annual competitions for local architects and students, with winning entries sometimes erected at suburban display villages. This culminated in 1970, when entries in the previous year's competition formed the basis for a display village of twenty houses at Vermont South. Co-sponsored by the Gas & Fuel Corporation, it became known as the Blue Flame Project and included houses by noted architects such as Albert Ross, Ronald Monsbourgh, Sergei Halafoff, John Herniman and John Reid.²²⁹

By this time, the RAIA Housing Service was competing against a growing number of project housing companies that also offered affordable modern houses, including Contemporary Homes Pty Ltd, Australia's first project housing company. During the company's heyday in the mid to late 1950s, at least a dozen examples are known to have been built (or proposed) in developing parts of the City of Whitehorse such as

²²⁶ Phillip Goad, *The Modern House in Melbourne 1945-1975*, Melbourne, 1992, p 3/30.

²²⁷ '111 Main Street, Blackburn' Heritage Citation, *City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study*, 2016, Citation E012, pp 143-44.

²²⁸ '17 Sheehans Road, Blackburn' Heritage Citation, *City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study*, 2016, Citation E016, pp 163-64.

²²⁹ 'Blue Flame Project (residential precinct' Heritage Citation, *City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study*, 2016, Citation F003, pp 226-229.



Forest Hill, Mitcham, Burwood East and Blackburn. Several remain in various states of alteration. A number of other display homes were erected along Canterbury Road between Blackburn and Forest Hill by various project housing companies (including Lewis Cote Homes, Hallmark Homes and Concept Constructions Pty Ltd) – in 1964, the Sands & McDougall Directory specifically identified six properties along Canterbury Road, Forest Hill.²³⁰

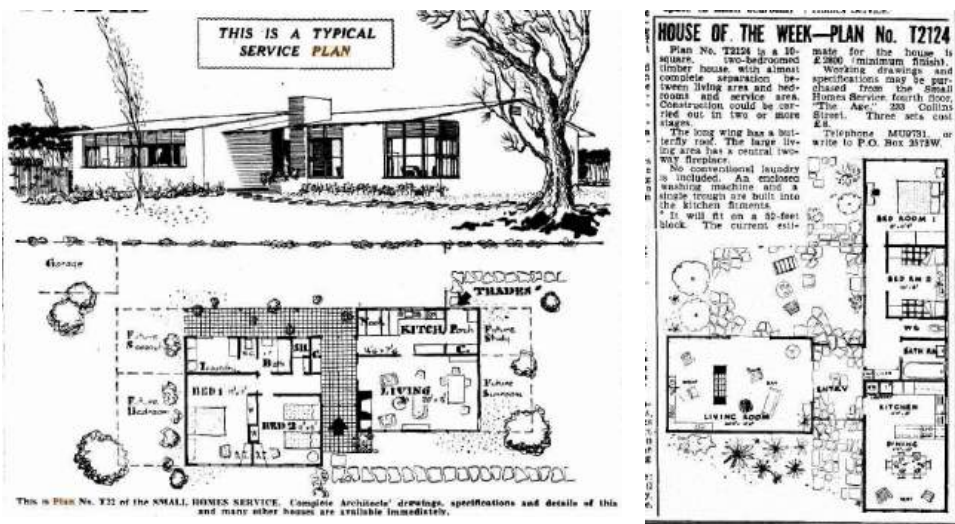


Figure 63. Plans in the Age newspaper for T22 - the first SHS design ever published - and T2124 (Age, 2 July 1947, p 2 and Age, 5 April 1954, p 6)



Figure 64. Hallmark Homes display home exhibition in Forest Hill in 1960 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3511)

Related heritage places

HO282 – Concept Constructions Display Homes Precinct, Canterbury Road, Forest Hill

HO283 – House, 24 Arnott Street, Mont Albert North

²³⁰ Sands and McDougall's Victorian Directory, 1964.



HO284 – House, 150 Canterbury Road, Blackburn South

HO286 – House, 4 Ian Grove, Burwood

6.5.3 Display villages and housing estates

A step up from individual display houses was the establishment of an entire group of display houses. The concept of the ‘display village’ of project housing had been introduced in Melbourne in early 1959, when the Futurama estate was unveiled in Glen Waverley. The first display village to open within the City of Whitehorse was a small group of timber dwellings in Henwood Street, Blackburn, which was erected in 1959 by Mutual Constructions (Melbourne) Pty Ltd. Two years later, Carmel Builders Pty Ltd built a similar development in Douglas Street, Box Hill South.

Display villages that included examples by multiple housing companies appear to have emerged in the City of Whitehorse from the mid-1960s. In Spencer Street, Nunawading, A V Jennings erected a group of weatherboard houses that essentially used the same plan, but with some variation introduced into the external elevations.²³¹ Homesville, on the west side of Springvale Road at Forest Hill, included display houses by Beaumaris Constructions Pty Ltd, Holwerda & Hayes Homes, and others. Other examples, dating from the late 1960s, included groups of houses in Minerva Crescent, Burwood East (representing Moorehouse Construction Company and P D Pastellas Pty Ltd), Ritz Street, Vermont (representing Spaceline and Stewart Craig Pty Ltd) and Stanley Road, Vermont South (representing Tompkins Homes, Williams Quality Homes and Holwerda & Hayes).

In early 1971, Inge Brothers opened its Granada display village on Burwood Highway, Vermont South, with a series of Spanish-flavoured house designs designated as La Costa Rustic, La Granja Spanish, the Ponderosa Spanish and the Supreme Spanish. Well into the 1970s, Burwood Highway remained a significant focus for such smaller-scaled display villages, including one at Beacon Street (Glenwill Homes Pty Ltd), two on opposite corners of Fortescue Road (one by Deva Ideal Homes and the other by Executive Homes & Associates) and another at the junction of Terrara Road (Civic Constructions).

Related heritage places

HO280 – AV Jennings Estate Precinct, Spencer Street/Springvale Road, Nunawading

6.5.4 Higher density living

The former City of Box Hill experienced a boom in the construction of apartments after 1960, when strata titling was introduced into Victoria in 1960.²³² Initially, this phenomenon was most noticeable in the more well-established eastern fringe of the municipality, around Mont Albert and Surrey Hills.²³³ Larger and more ambitious developments, representing new types of multi-unit dwellings, began to emerge over the next few years. Another new development in higher density living was the

²³¹ ‘A V Jennings Estate’ Heritage Citation, *City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study*, 2016, Citation F001, p 210.

²³² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 214.

²³³ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 193.



introduction of the villa unit; one early local manifestation in the municipality was the block of five units at 4 Albion Road, Box Hill, designed by Ben Alexander in 1970.

Changes to strata title legislation in 1968 prompted a boom in the construction of flats around Melbourne, and the City of Whitehorse was no exception. By 1971, there were reportedly 1,000 flats in the City of Box Hill, compared to 14,600 occupied single dwellings, and the municipality underwent an 'unmistakable flat building boom' during 1973-74.²³⁴ By that time, the proliferation of flats in the area had become a sensitive issue, and, in 1976, the City of Box Hill adopted policies to control the location, scale and density of flat development. Certain parts of the municipality still remain strongly characterised by flats. Townhouses and villa units proliferate along the east-west thoroughfares to the north of Whitehorse Road (for example, Thames Street, Severn Street, Medway Street and beyond) while numerous larger blocks of flats can be found south of Whitehorse Road (for example, Albion Road, Ashted Road and Merton Street). Similar patterns are evident in the City of Nunawading, where villa units define entire streetscapes along Surrey Road, Mount Pleasant Road, Mitcham Road and elsewhere.

A parallel development in the early 1970s was the emergence of cluster housing, where individual dwellings were sited in a landscaped setting with communal pathways and vehicular access. This type of higher density living was effectively introduced into Melbourne by Merchant Builders, a building company that was formed in 1965. Merchant Builders developed its first cluster housing estate, Winter Park, at Doncaster (1970-74). This proved such a success that a larger and more ambitious estate was subsequently established in Vermont.²³⁵ Known as Vermont Park, the estate comprised more than fifty individual dwellings in a landscaped setting with connecting pathways, roadways and communal facilities including a swimming pool and barbecue area.

While Vermont Park has been described as a unique development in the City of Whitehorse, a number of comparable and contemporaneous cluster housing projects are known to have been realised. The Vermont Village, located at 457-467 Canterbury Road, comprised 92 dwellings in an open landscaped setting with communal hall, swimming pool and two tennis courts.²³⁶ Commenced in 1975 and completed by 1977, it was designed by architects Clive Fredman and John Malina, who had recently created similar cluster housing developments in Dandenong, Frankston and Ringwood.²³⁷ A slightly later example, Blackburn Rise, is located in Burwood East at 313 Blackburn Road. Completed in 1979, this comprised 17 dwellings on a 2.5-acre site, also with a communal hall and swimming pool.²³⁸

From the later part of the twentieth century even greater levels of higher density living became part of the Whitehorse landscape, especially around Box Hill where high-rise apartment towers, such as the 36-storey 'Sky One' development on Station Street, now dominate that part of the municipal sky line.

²³⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 217, 220-21.

²³⁵ Allom Lovell & Associates, *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review, Volume 2, Part 1: Datasheets A-K*, 1999.

²³⁶ *The Age*, 15 November 1977, p 30.

²³⁷ *The Age*, 5 May 1985, p 12.

²³⁸ *The Age*, 2 March 1979, p 16.



Figure 65. Vermont Park
(Reproduced from *Architecture Australia*, July/August 2021,
pp 82 and 86)



Figure 66. Vermont Park
(Reproduced from *Architecture Australia*, July/August 2021,
pp 82 and 86)

Related heritage places

HO118 – Vermont Park Precinct

HO277 – Indiana (Flats), 96 Severn Street, Box Hill

6.6 Public housing

A minor theme in the history of the municipality was the building of public housing in Box Hill South in the immediate post-war period. In early 1947, the Victorian premier announced that the Housing Commission would acquire land for 1,000 house sites in Box Hill South.²³⁹ Despite industrial disputes and a change in government, the project went ahead and the estate was laid out on the south-east

²³⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 183.

corner of Elgar and Riversdale roads. By 1951, the Commission had erected over 400 houses. Today, many of these early concrete houses have been demolished or enlarged and few cohesive streetscapes still remain.

A small amount of public housing was erected in the municipality in the 1980s and 1990s, but its extent has been limited. In a similar manner, a number of houses were constructed in Box Hill North for employees of Roger de Sloop's textiles factory, which was established on a 50-acre site on the Koonung Creek in 1950. The housing was part of a grand plan to build a 'model suburb' with recreational, educational and shopping facilities complementing the housing.²⁴⁰

6.7 Parks and gardens

The pockets of remnant bushland in the municipality have long been used to attract suburban development to the area. Blackburn Lake, long a passive recreational focus for Blackburn, was created as the centrepiece of the 1888 Blackburn Model Town estate, and is now an important bird habitat. Owned by the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society since 1909, it was re-zoned as a public park by the MMBW in 1954, and gradually taken into Council ownership from 1975.²⁴¹ The nearby Blackburn Creeklands Reserve and Furness Park have similarly influenced the semi-rural, landscape character of the surrounding streets. Other such natural open spaces within the municipality generally occur along or near watercourses, including Yarran Dheran (originally a quarry) and Antonio Park in Mitcham, and Campbells Croft and Bellbird Dell in Vermont.

One of the earliest formally landscaped spaces in the locale was The Ovals in Box Hill, on the site of the present Whitehorse Road median strip. In 1883, Whitehorse Road comprised a three-chain wide road reserve with two narrow strips of roadway. By 1889, the central roadway had been moved to the south boundary, and the median fenced. Improvements over the years included tree planting and the erection of the South African and China War memorial drinking fountain and the bowling green (1900), a rotunda (1911), the RSL Hall and Clubroom (later used as the library, demolished c 1974) and the White Horse statue (1934).²⁴²

The 1920s saw the creation of the Kingsley Gardens, near the corner of Whitehorse and Elgar roads, on the site of the former Lloyd's abattoir (1921), and the Box Hill Gardens, the competition for the design of which attracted a prize of ten guineas, and included new courts for the Box Hill Tennis Club.²⁴³

Wattle Park, officially opened to the public on 31 March 1917, was established on land which had been acquired by the Hawthorn Tramways Trust (later the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board, M&MTB). Comprising a mix of formal landscaping and natural bush, it was developed as a recreation facility in conjunction with the opening of the electric tram route along Riversdale Road, first to Warrigal Road, then to Elgar Road. The Park remained under the ownership of the

²⁴⁰ 'Worker's paradise factory at Blackburn – Belgian's Scheme', *The Sun*, 11 May 1951.

²⁴¹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 96.

²⁴² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 78-79, 99, 115, 117, 131, 145.

²⁴³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 149, 159.

M&MTB until 1983, then by its successors, and includes golf and tennis facilities, chalet, picnic grounds and remnant natural bushland.²⁴⁴



Figure 67. Blackburn Lake in 1906 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1323)

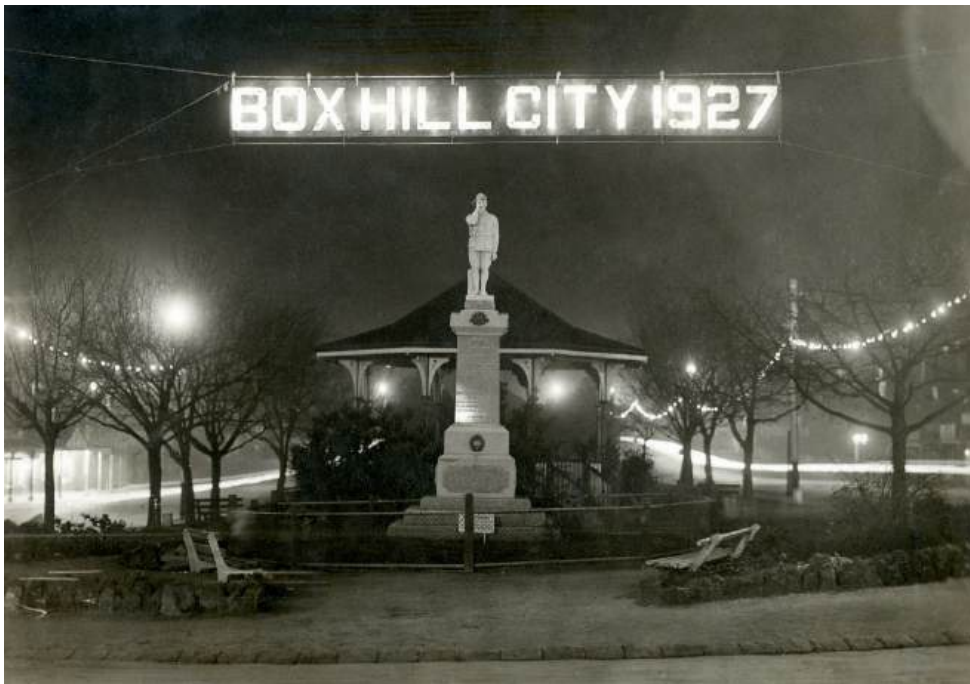


Figure 68. The White Horse Road median strip with WW1 memorial and 1911 rotunda, 1927 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0919)

²⁴⁴ Allom Lovell & Associates with John Patrick Pty Ltd, *Wattle Park Heritage Conservation Plan*, 1993.



Figure 69. Wattle Park, c1925-1960 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1735003)

During the post-war period, the residents of many parts of suburban Melbourne became increasingly aware of the importance of the provision of public open space such as parklands and reserves. This, however, presented a problem in the City of Box Hill, where little vacant land remained available for this type of use by the 1960s.²⁴⁵ A few small reserves had been established in the developing Box Hill North area in the early post-war era, including the recreation reserve at the corner of Springfield and Dorking roads (by 1954) and the Box Hill Memorial Park along the Bushy Creek at Station Street (by 1957). There was little scope, however, for larger reserves even in that area. Elgar Park, overlooking the Koonung Valley in Box Hill North, was created only because the land had originally been set aside in 1961 for a high school that was subsequently erected elsewhere.²⁴⁶

Community concern for the preservation of the natural landscape came to the fore in 1959 with the establishment of the Blackburn & District Tree Preservation Society. This group campaigned against the removal of remnant trees along Springvale Road – slated for removal when the road was widened in the early 1960s – and the ongoing protection of the Blackburn Lake area. The latter, which had long been recognised as a place of natural beauty (as well as a source of inspiration for artists such as Tom Roberts), did not become formally protected until it was acquired in 1964 by the MMBW, which jointly managed it in conjunction with the City of Nunawading.

From the mid-1960s, the City of Nunawading embraced the protection of natural landscapes on a grand scale. As early as 1966, the Council had commissioned a specialist consultant, Alan J Brown & Partners, to undertake a study of open spaces

²⁴⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 217.

²⁴⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 206.

in the municipality.²⁴⁷ In the same year, the council negotiated with Vermont orchardist Cecil Rhodes to acquire seven hectares of bushland that formed the basis of Bellbird Dell. Halliday Park in Mitcham, which dated back to 1938, was extended in the late 1960s, while Antonio Park in Mitcham, which had been acquired by the Council in 1963, was enlarged in 1975. More land in the area was acquired from the Campbell family in 1969, creating present-day Campbell's Croft.²⁴⁸ Soon afterwards, work began on Yarran Dheran at Mitcham, which was conceived as a native botanical garden in the tradition of the Maranoa Gardens at Balwyn.²⁴⁹ During the same period, the City of Nunawading acquired the Ronald E Gray Reserve in Nunawading (1977) and preserved the last remaining portion of natural bushland in Blackburn North as a linear park known as the Cootamundra Walk (1978).²⁵⁰

By that time, a number of entirely new local parks had also been created as residential subdivision filled out across Vermont and Vermont South, including Terrara Park, Charlesworth Park and Billabong Park. Such was the Council's concern for the provision of public open space that, in 1977, a Director of Parks & Recreation was appointed.²⁵¹ Several new reserves were created during this period, including Ballyshannassy Park in Burwood East (1975) – formerly a quarry site – and Slater Reserve in Blackburn North (1979).

The proposed Eastern Freeway extension was the subject of an extensive Environmental Effects Statement (EES) in 1998. The EES predicted an 18.5% increase in carbon dioxide, impacts on groundwater and wetlands, high impacts on areas of conservation value and the potential to affect 38 species of rare or threatened fauna and flora if the freeway was built. The Friends of Yarran Dheran²⁵² was established to protect the Mullum Mullum Valley together with strong support from Whitehorse, Maroondah and Manningham Councils and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and a range of community groups and individuals. They campaigned for 'the long tunnel option' to go under the valley, and in so doing, protect bushland in Yarran Dheran and some residential streets. Support also came from the local Councils as well as politicians including the Victorian Planning Minister Robert McClelland.

The tunnel option was finally accepted as a political decision in the face of strong community opposition. As part of an election promise by the Victorian Labor Party, the Victorian government announced that it would seek federal funding support for building Eastlink, with the 'long tunnel' option to be included. It was agreed that the tunnel would protect the length of the Mullum Mullum Valley. At Yarran Dheran on 11 October 2000, Premier Steve Bracks announced the \$326 million extension to the freeway featuring a 1.5 km tunnel.²⁵³ Transport Minister Peter Batchelor described the announcement as ...'a victory for local residents, a victory for the environment and a victory for common sense...'.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁷ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 206.

²⁴⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 205.

²⁴⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 134.

²⁵⁰ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 241.

²⁵¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 241.

²⁵² <https://yarrandherannaturereserve.wordpress.com/friends/>

²⁵³ Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve Advisory Committee, *The History of Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve*, c. 2020, p.

18.

²⁵⁴ *Whitehorse Gazette*, 18 October 2000 p. 1



Following the completion of the Eastern Freeway in 2008, Yarran Dheran Reserve was linked to the Mullum Mullum Creek Reserve and the Eastlink Trail. In 2020 the City of Whitehorse re-vegetated a site it had purchased to create a link between Yarran Dheran and Antonio Park.

Related heritage places

VHR H0904/HO4 – Wattle Park, 1012 Riversdale Road, Burwood

HO252 – South African and China War Memorial, Whitehorse Road Median Strip, Box Hill



7 GOVERNING WHITEHORSE

7.1 Municipal origins

7.1.1 Road Districts

The Nunawading District Road Board was proclaimed on 6 August 1857. Its function was to construct and maintain roads surveyed by the Government in the area. The boundaries of the Board's jurisdiction coincided with those of the Parish of Nunawading.²⁵⁵

7.1.2 The Shire of Nunawading

Nunawading was one of the last District Road Boards to be proclaimed a Shire. In 1863, the Government had provided for the formation of Shires, allowing municipalities far greater self-reliance and responsibilities than merely those related to roads. The Nunawading Road Board had initially favoured a merger with its western neighbour, Boroondara, but by May 1871 the Boroondara Road Board had voted against this.²⁵⁶ The *Shires Amendment Act 1870* had allowed any Road District less than 100 square miles and with a total net annual value in rates of more than £12,000, to become a Shire.²⁵⁷ In May 1872, with very little fanfare or civic celebration, Nunawading Shire was proclaimed.²⁵⁸

When the *Local Government Act 1874* abolished Road Districts completely, Nunawading Shire was expanded to encompass the Templestowe Road District, to the north. This arrangement lasted only until the proclamation of the Shire of Bulleen in May 1875, but the temporary expansion did prompt the building of the Shire's first permanent meeting place.

Since its inception in 1857, the Road Board had occupied a number of meeting places, most notably Delaney's Royal Hotel in Canterbury Road, but such a meeting place was not deemed appropriate for a Shire. Thus, the Shire Hall, a modest brick building with a corrugated iron roof, was built further east in Canterbury Road, near Gardiner's Creek. The location of the offices centrally in the Shire, rather than at Box Hill, reflected the lack of representation of Box Hill landholders on the Council at the time. It was completed in late 1875 at a cost of £187/10/-.²⁵⁹ In 1889, the Council moved into new premises on the corner of Station and Cambridge streets, designed by Arthur E Clark, and in 1922 an extra storey was added to it.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 22.

²⁵⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 61.

²⁵⁷ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 44.

²⁵⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 44-45.

²⁵⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 63-65.

²⁶⁰ Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Box Hill Heritage and Conservation Study*, Volume 1, p 49; Eleanor Findlay & Marjorie Morgan, *The Days before Yesterday: a picture book of early Box Hill*, Box Hill, 1993, pp 22-23.



Figure 70. Nunawading Shire Hall, c1890 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2817)

7.1.3 Severance

It was almost universally accepted that the Shire of Nunawading was too diverse in character to be administered as a single entity.²⁶¹ After all, much of the eastern part of the municipality was still largely rural. Progress Associations and local business groups supported residents and Councillors in pushing for separation.

In 1925, pressure from ratepayers led to the Shire of Nunawading Councillors voting unanimously in favour of severing the Shire into two new municipalities: thus the Borough of Box Hill, and the Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham were created on 27 May 1925. Box Hill was proclaimed a City two years later in 1927.²⁶²

7.1.4 The Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham

The Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham was temporarily housed in the Blackburn Recreation Hall, but by early November 1925 it found its first home in a modest timber Californian Bungalow style house on Lot 2, Keoghs Estate in Whitehorse Road, near the site of the present Civic Centre. By December 1926, the Councillors had begun negotiating new purpose-built Council Chambers; in the following October, the bungalow burnt down.²⁶³ In late 1928 the Council moved from temporary premises above a shop to its new brick building in Whitehorse Road, near Springvale Road.

²⁶¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 155; Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 67.

²⁶² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 66-67.

²⁶³ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 69.



Figure 71. Former Mitcham and Blackburn Shire Offices, 1973 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP0010)

7.1.5 The City of Box Hill

The City of Box Hill was officially proclaimed on 28 April 1927, after a short time as a Borough. Box Hill's meteoric growth during the 1920s meant its City status was inevitable, and the festivities which accompanied the designation have been well documented. From the time of inauguration of the new City Council, there had been ideas for a new Town Hall and, in 1928, land in Whitehorse Road was compulsorily acquired for such a building in the future. The Depression halted any immediate plans, but by January 1934, the design and costing of the monumental new building was complete. The design was a collaboration between H J R Cole, the Town Clerk, F W Kerr, the Shire Engineer, Councillor and architect John Gawler, and Council Architect, Mr Aisbett. The Depression had lowered the cost of materials and labour, bringing the construction costs to £40,424, well below the estimate. The foundation stones were laid in August 1934, and the building was officially opened on 15 April 1935.²⁶⁴

7.1.6 The City of Nunawading

In 1937, there was considerable pressure from local lobby groups to sever Blackburn from the Shire.²⁶⁵ By that time, internal ructions of Council had moved to the issue of whether the Shire should become a City. Despite questions as to whether City status would genuinely improve Council services, the City of Nunawading was proclaimed on 30 May 1945, prompting the suburb of Tunstall to change its name to Nunawading accordingly.²⁶⁶ By the mid-1960s, the Council had outgrown its 1928 offices, and in 1964, a limited architectural competition was held to select a design for the new complex, on a large site which encompassed the area formerly occupied by the Council's original bungalow premises. The winning design, by Gerd and

²⁶⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 169-170, 172.

²⁶⁵ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 74-77.

²⁶⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 77, 79.

Renate Block, was opened in 1968.²⁶⁷ The large library was added in 1972, to the design of the original architects, and the Arts Centre in 1985.²⁶⁸



Figure 72. Box Hill Town Hall, c 1935 (Box Hill Historical Society, no 1025)



Figure 73. Nunawading Civic Centre, c1970 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3099)

7.1.7 Amalgamation

The City of Whitehorse was created in 1994 by the merger of the Cities of Box Hill and Nunawading as part of the State Government's Council amalgamation program. The first Council elections of the new municipality were held in March 1997.

It was originally envisaged that the Box Hill Town Hall would become the administrative centre for the new City of Whitehorse and that the Council offices in

²⁶⁷ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 190-92.

²⁶⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 171-72, 186.

Nunawading would be adapted for another use or even sold.²⁶⁹ However, the decision was reversed due to several factors, including the lack of space for carparking and future expansion at Box Hill (two problems not evident at Nunawading) and the fact that the Nunawading building had then only recently been extended and refurbished.

No longer required for everyday Council purposes, the former Box Hill Town Hall was 'revitalised for community and artistic activity'.²⁷⁰ The main hall was restored in 2006 for use for public and private functions, the administrative offices gutted to create an enlarged exhibition area for the municipal art collection, and the rear annexe refurbished to accommodate a Council Service Centre and space for the Box Hill Historical Society and other community groups.

Related heritage places

HO7 – Former Mitcham and Blackburn Shire Offices, 360-362 Whitehorse Road, Nunawading

HO94 – Box Hill Town Hall, 1022 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

7.2 Maintaining law and order

A police presence in the City of Whitehorse was established as early as 1864 in Box Hill²⁷¹ and 1889 in Mitcham.²⁷² By the start of the twentieth century, the municipality was served by four police stations located at Box Hill, Burwood, Mitcham and Surrey Hills. Upgraded facilities were subsequently provided at Burwood (1904) and Box Hill (1914). The latter, the first purpose-built police station in the municipality, stood alongside the new court house, which had been built at the corner of Whitehorse and Kangerong Roads three years earlier. The Box Hill police station was enlarged just before World War II, with two new front rooms and a lobby (in the fashionable Moderne style) completed in 1938.

A new police station was constructed at Surrey Hills in 1947 and another in Blackburn in 1951 (since demolished). Mitcham's original police station, located on the south side of Whitehorse Road adjacent to St John's Church, was acquired by the church in 1956 as the site for its new presbytery.²⁷³ A replacement was erected on the opposite side of the church reserve.

²⁶⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 258.

²⁷⁰ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 263.

²⁷¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 33-34.

²⁷² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 63.

²⁷³ Joan Adamson and Nance Cotter, *Our Parish, Our Story: the story of St John's, Mitcham 1952-2002*, Mitcham, 2002, p 6.



Figure 74. Photograph of Mitcham in c1910 showing original Mitcham Police Station to the right of the image (Courtesy of Whitehorse Historical Society, no NP1331)

This period also saw new police stations erected at both Burwood and Box Hill. The Box Hill court house had become so overcrowded by the late 1960s that witnesses in some court houses were obliged to wait outside the building.²⁷⁴ Extensive alterations were proposed and, in early 1968, tenders were called for works that provided two new courtrooms, magistrate's rooms and greatly improved public facilities. The new court house opened in 1969.

In 1973, a new regional police complex was erected on Whitehorse Road at Nunawading. In the late 1980s, the station at Mitcham was closed and its counterpart at Burwood reduced to a one-man 'shopfront' facility, with its remaining staff transferred to Box Hill. In 2008, the judicial precinct at the corner of Whitehorse and Kangerong Roads (comprising two former police stations and the court house) was entirely razed for the construction of a new regional police complex. A similar centre was constructed at the same time at Forest Hill, on the former site of Wobbie's World theme park.

7.3 Providing essential services

7.3.1 Gas

The first gas to be supplied to the municipality was from the Colonial Gas Company, which established its works at the corner of Whitehorse and Elgar roads in 1889. Gas street lighting in Box Hill first appeared in 1890. The cost of laying gas mains restricted the supply to small parts of Box Hill and Surrey Hills, and in the ensuing decades the financial success of the company relied upon its supply of gas for street lighting.²⁷⁵ Although it was one of the last gasworks to be established in Victoria, the Box Hill works was extended several times to keep up with demand for gas during

²⁷⁴ *The Age*, 5 January 1968.

²⁷⁵ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, pp 92-93.

the 1940s.²⁷⁶ Natural gas was introduced to most of the municipality in 1969 and the Box Hill gasworks finally ceased production of coal gas in November of that year.²⁷⁷ The Colonial Gas Association opened a modern showroom, designed by Maurice King, in Whitehorse Road in 1936.²⁷⁸

The Colonial Gas Association was absorbed by the Gas & Fuel Corporation in 1974. The gasworks site on Elgar Road was decommissioned and, a few years later, redeveloped as the new home of the Box Hill TAFE College. A gas holder in Vermont, on the north-west corner of Canterbury Road and Rooks Road, stood until as late as 1978, when it was razed and the site redeveloped as new administrative offices for the Gas & Fuel Corporation. By the mid-1990s, it was also a regional headquarters for Skiltech, a subcontracting company responsible for reading gas meters. Following the privatisation of the Gas & Fuel Corporation in 1997, the building was adapted as the core of a new commercial/industrial precinct known as the Vermont Centre.



Figure 75. The Colonial Gas Association showroom in Whitehorse Road, c 1940-50s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2081)



Figure 76. Colonial Gas Association gasworks, Box Hill, c 1945 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1642127)

²⁷⁶ Ray Proudly, *Circle of Influence: a history of the gas industry in Victoria*, Melbourne, 1987, p 356.

²⁷⁷ Ray Proudly, *Circle of Influence: a history of the gas industry in Victoria*, Melbourne, 1987, pp 269, 355-356.

²⁷⁸ Eleanor Findlay & Marjorie Morgan, *Those were the days: Box Hill in pictures*, Box Hill, 1994, p 17.

Related heritage places

HO91 – Former Colonial Gas Association Building, 942-946 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

7.3.2 Electricity

Under the *Electric Light and Power Act 1896*, Councils were permitted control over distribution within their boundaries.²⁷⁹ The Melbourne Electricity Supply Company (MES Co.) began supplying the eastern suburbs in the early 1910s, and by 1912 the Shire of Nunawading had joined the Councils of Brunswick, Northcote, Port Melbourne and Preston in obtaining an order to re-sell the MES Co.'s electricity to its residents.²⁸⁰ By 1919, Nunawading Shire supplied electricity to 1,424 properties; the service had quickly extended from Surrey Hills and Box Hill in 1914 to Mitcham and Vermont soon after. In 1924, the Shire began obtaining electricity from the newly-established State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV). When the Shire split in 1925, the Borough of Box Hill continued to supply electricity to both new municipalities. With the governmental abolition of local electricity companies in the early 1990s, the sharing of the Box Hill Electricity Company's profits between the municipalities was a hotly-debated issue.²⁸¹

Founded in 1914, the Box Hill Electricity Company was one of eleven electricity companies in Melbourne that were wholly owned and operated by the local authorities in which they were located. The SECV remained responsible for the provision of larger infrastructure such as terminal stations, and two of these were established in developing parts of the municipality during the post-war period. One, off Eram Road in Blackburn North, dates from the late 1960s and the other, on the south-west corner of Morack Road and Burwood Highway in Vermont South, appeared about a decade later. In 1984, Box Hill Electricity relocated its service centre from Station Street to the recently-closed drive-in cinema in Burwood.²⁸² A new building was erected there, and several of the original structures associated with the drive-in were retained and adapted, including the former walk-in shelter (converted into a maintenance shed) and the former dining room known as the Maori Hut (which became the employee's lunchroom).²⁸³

When the SECV was dismantled and privatised in the mid-1990s, so too were Melbourne's eleven municipal electricity companies, including Box Hill Electricity. The latter's premises in Burwood was taken over by a new company, United Energy, which, in turn, was absorbed by another company, Alinta Energy in 2003. Since the privatisation of the SECV, the former terminal station at Vermont South has been decommissioned and its site redeveloped, initially as a golf driving range and more subsequently with a branch of the Bunnings hardware chain.

²⁷⁹ Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Box Hill Heritage and Conservation Study*, Volume 1, p 78.

²⁸⁰ Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Box Hill Heritage and Conservation Study*, Volume 1, p 78.

²⁸¹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 60-65.

²⁸² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 250.

²⁸³ 'Burwood Skyline (Hoyts)', *Drive-ins Downunder*, https://drive-insdownunder.com.au/australian/vic_burwood.htm, accessed 20 December 2022.





Figure 77. Nunawading Shire Electric Supply Van and workmen in the 1920s (Courtesy of Whitehorse Historical Society, no NP920)

7.3.3 Water and Sewerage

The newly established Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) built its first water reservoir in 1891 in Surrey Hills (Canterbury Road) providing a water supply to Box Hill and surrounding suburbs.²⁸⁴ A second reservoir was built nearby, in Elgar Road, in 1912.²⁸⁵ Mains water was available in Box Hill from 1894, but by the mid-1920s, the area was felt to have been neglected by the MMBW at the expense of the inner suburbs.²⁸⁶ By 1926 the Mitcham reservoir and water tower added to the municipality's growing water infrastructure,²⁸⁷ and 1928 saw the beginning of MMBW connecting suburbs to the sewerage system.²⁸⁸

Although night-carts were gradually replaced by septic tanks, there were still more than 2,000 unsewered properties in Box Hill North in the mid-1950s. Expansion of the sewerage infrastructure continued in earnest over the next decade and virtually all of the City of Box Hill had been seweraged by 1966.²⁸⁹ The situation was slightly different in the City of Nunawading, which was only connected to the MMBW sewerage system as late as 1934.²⁹⁰ Septic tanks remained in use in certain parts of the municipality, such as Vermont South, well into the 1970s, and some still exist there today.

²⁸⁴ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 112.

²⁸⁵ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 113.

²⁸⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 113-115.

²⁸⁷ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, p 17.

²⁸⁸ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Nunawading Historical Geography Project*, 1994, pp 92-93.

²⁸⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 206.

²⁹⁰ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 223.

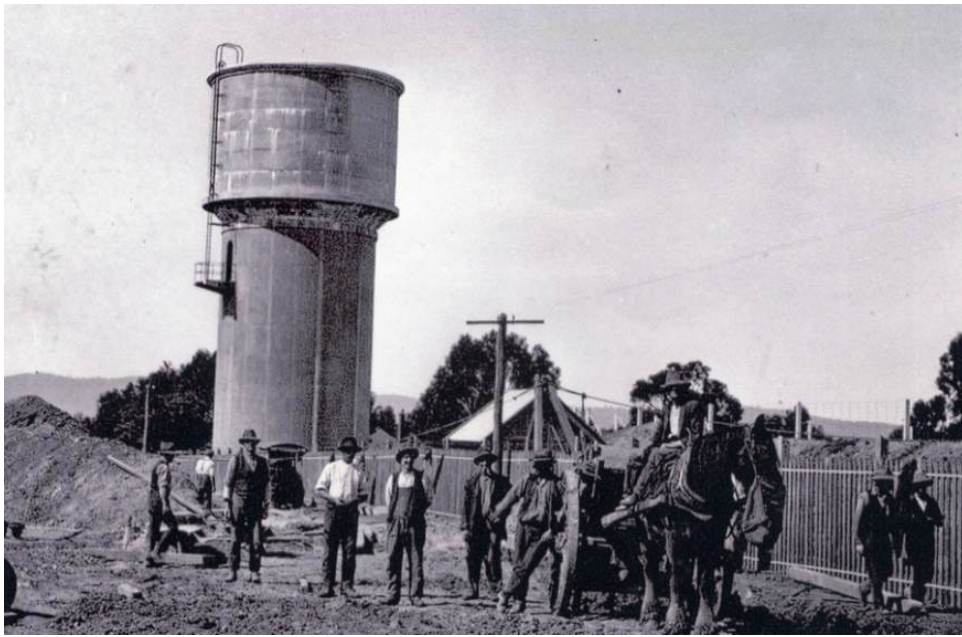


Figure 78. Water tower at Mitcham, 1922 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3517)



Figure 79. Water tower at Surrey Hills in 1928 (Argus, 19 December 1928, p 17)

From the 1960s until its demise in the 1990s, the MMBW maintained a strong presence in the municipality. In the mid-1960s, four new regional MMBW depots were established on the north, south, east and west fringes of the metropolitan area. The first of these, which opened in 1970, was located in Mitcham on a site in Lucknow Street adjacent to the existing MMBW reservoir. The complex, which provided administrative offices, a customer service centre and maintenance workshops, was designed by architects A K Lines, McFarlane & Marshall.

During this period, the MMBW also constructed a number of retarding basins to provide protection from massive influxes of stormwater. One was provided at Sparks Reserve on Middleborough Road, Box Hill South, when the parkland was reconstructed with playing fields in 1965.²⁹¹ Another basin existed on the south side of Eley Road in Burwood East, and still another in Vermont South, formed in the early 1970s, on the site of what subsequently became Billabong Park. For much of the post-war period, the MMBW also maintained a reserve in Forest Hill, on the north side of Burwood Highway between Springvale and Mahoneys Roads. The western half of this large property became the site of the new Eastern Geriatric Centre in 1985, and the remainder has since been redeveloped as a commercial precinct.

Related heritage places

HO34 – MMBW Water Tower, 313 Elgar Road, Surrey Hills

HO119 – Melbourne Water Tower, 37 Lucknow Street, Mitcham

7.3.4 Rubbish disposal

In 1944, the Shire Engineer to the Shire of Mitcham & Blackburn (soon to become the City of Nunawading) proposed a re-organisation of domestic refuse collection, including a new rubbish tip to be established at the corner of Junction and Springvale Roads.²⁹² Despite protests from those who lived nearby, the tip was established, but soon became inadequate for the municipality's burgeoning residential areas. By the late 1960s, the City of Nunawading had established a considerably larger rubbish tip in a remote location off Morack Road, Vermont South, overlooking the Dandenong Creek in the extreme south-eastern corner of the municipality. In the early 1980s, the site was redeveloped as a recycling centre and waste transfer station, where the municipality's rubbish was stored prior to relocation to a regional landfill in the City of Berwick.

7.3.5 Fire services

A bushfire had been recorded in Box Hill in 1858²⁹³, but a Fire Brigade did not exist until 1893, when stations were opened in Surrey Hills and Box Hill.²⁹⁴ East of Middleborough Road, the first station opened adjacent to the Shire Offices in 1951.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 213.

²⁹² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 119.

²⁹³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 26-27.

²⁹⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 108.

²⁹⁵ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 207.

Related heritage places

HO229 – Box Hill Fire Station, 1050-1054 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill



8 BUILDING COMMUNITY LIFE

8.1 Religion and worship

8.1.1 Establishing churches in Whitehorse

In 1854, two acres (0.8ha) on the north-east corner of Warrigal and Riversdale roads was granted jointly to the Church of England and the Catholic Church. By 1857, the latter had erected St Bridget's on the land, a brick building for use as a chapel and a school. The Church of England did not build on the same reserve, and it was not until 1861 that they erected their first building, a school house (also used as a church) on the corner of Canterbury Road and Bedford Street.²⁹⁶

Another church reserve, on the south side of Burwood Road, had been granted in 1855 to the Methodists, who were by far the most represented denomination amongst Nunawading's early settlers. A timber building, used as a school and church, was erected in 1856.²⁹⁷ Other Methodist churches were established by devout settlers who built them on their own land. In 1856 alone, John Ellingworth erected a school and chapel on his land in Station Street, and Joseph Aspinall built a sandstone church on his land in Woodhouse Grove.²⁹⁸ Primitive Methodist (1862) and United Methodist (1872) churches were built in Whitehorse Road, and a timber Wesleyan chapel was erected at Mount Pleasant (Forest Hill) in 1865. The Wesleyans took over the old Primitive Methodist church in 1883, and built new churches in Station Street, Box Hill in 1885, Surrey Hills in 1888 and Blackburn in 1891.²⁹⁹



Figure 80. Wesleyan Church, Box Hill in 1980 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP676)

²⁹⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 30.

²⁹⁷ Alyssa Clarkson, *Ballyshanassy: A history of the Burwood District*, Burwood, 1991, p 24.

²⁹⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 20.

²⁹⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 83; Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 230.

An Independent church, built in Springfield Road in 1869, was the first in the area to have a resident clergyman.³⁰⁰ Another Catholic church and school was established in Mitcham in 1872. The Church of England built their first church in Box Hill proper in 1883, moving to a site on Whitehorse Road six years later. By 1890, Churches of England had also been established in Surrey Hills, Mitcham and Blackburn. The first Presbyterian church in Box Hill, a timber chapel in Court Street, did not appear until 1889.³⁰¹

There were few entirely new congregations established in the early twentieth century, with most new churches being built by the already well-established congregations, who had outgrown their earlier buildings. The St Bridget's Catholic church closed, and was replaced by a new building on Mont Albert Road. New and larger premises were also built in Box Hill for the Methodists (1902), the Church of England (1908), the Presbyterians (1911) and the Catholics (1912).³⁰² The Methodists also built new churches on their old sites at Surrey Hills (1915) and Mount Pleasant (1916). This pattern of replacing existing churches continued; in 1926 alone, the old churches of the Baptists (Station Street), Catholics (Whitehorse Road) and Methodists (Oxford Street) were all replaced with new buildings. In 1935, the Presbyterian congregation in Box Hill replaced their timber chapel with a 'new' building, in the form of the old West Melbourne Presbyterian church, which was dismantled and re-erected in Whitehorse Road.³⁰³

8.1.2 Churches in the post-war period

The post-war period saw more new congregations being established, as denominations expanded into areas where there had previously been no churches. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were new Presbyterian churches at Wattle Park and Vermont, a new Church of England in Forest Hill, Baptist churches in North and South Blackburn, and a Catholic church in Box Hill North.³⁰⁴ From the mid-1950s, new congregations spread even further outwards into previously underdeveloped parts of the municipality – invariably as offshoots of existing churches and parishes. St Mark's Church of England in Forest Hill, for example, was established as a branch of St Luke's at Vermont.³⁰⁵ In 1955, the Parish of St Phillip acquired two acres on Junction Road in North Blackburn, although another decade passed before a church (and associated parish school) was erected there in 1965.³⁰⁶ A new Anglican congregation, St Alfred's, also emerged in Blackburn North during the 1950s. From the late 1960s, the establishment of new parishes and congregations largely remained focused on the south-eastern fringe of the municipality, where residential development was still booming. These included St Timothy's Roman Catholic Church in Vermont (1968) and the Holy Name Anglican Church in Vermont South (1978).

By the late 1950s, many of the long-established congregations had once again outgrown their buildings, and rebuilding took place. New churches, most designed by noted contemporary architects, replaced the older ones at Christ Church, Mitcham (1958) and St James' Presbyterian, Wattle Park (1964). Denominations

³⁰⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 33.

³⁰¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 102.

³⁰² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 117, 130, 131.

³⁰³ Eleanor Findlay & Marjorie Morgan, *Those were the days: Box Hill in pictures*, Box Hill, 1994, p 66.

³⁰⁴ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 231.

³⁰⁵ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 230.

³⁰⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 231.



such as the Seventh Day Adventists (Centre Road, Blackburn) and the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Whitehorse Road, Blackburn) built completely new churches in this period.

Amongst other congregations to replace earlier buildings during this period were St Luke's Church of England in Vermont, St Benedict's Roman Catholic Church in Warrigal Road, Burwood (1957), The Avenue Presbyterian Church in Blackburn (1959), St Augustine's Church of England in Mont Albert North (1960), the Church of Christ in Surrey Road, Blackburn (1961) and the East Burwood Methodist Church at the corner of Blackburn Road and Burwood Highway (1961). One especially notable example, towards the end of that decade, was the new building at 561-63 Whitehorse Road, Mitcham, built in 1967 for the joint use of the local Methodist and Presbyterian congregations. This was reportedly the first time that a church had been specifically designed to be shared by Presbyterians and Methodists, predating the creation of the Uniting Church by 10 years.³⁰⁷



Figure 81. Wattle Park Presbyterian Church, Box Hill, 1964 (State Library of Victoria, Peter Wille collection, ID 1696103)



Figure 82. St Benedict's Roman Catholic Church, Burwood, 1957-58 (State Library of Victoria, Peter Wille collection, ID 1708759)

³⁰⁷ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 231.

The post-war influx of migrants also saw the establishment of churches for previously unrepresented denominations, including the Dutch Reformed and Greek Orthodox churches in Box Hill. A Buddhist Temple (Wat Dhammarangsee) – the first Buddhist temple in Melbourne – was established in Forest Hill in 1984 and a Sikh temple (Gurdwara Sahib) was established in a former postal warehouse in Blackburn in 1993.³⁰⁸ A congregation called the Melbourne Eastern Suburbs Chinese Christian Fellowship (MESCCF) held its first service in August 1978 in the hall at St Andrew’s Uniting Church, Box Hill. That same year, the Salvation Army formed a Chinese Corps at Box Hill, which was followed five years later by a South East Asian corps.³⁰⁹ In 1982, the MESCCF formalised itself as the Evangelical Chinese Church, and now maintains discrete congregations in Box Hill and Blackburn South. Other Chinese-language Christian congregations include the True Jesus Church, which commenced in Box Hill North in 1987, and St Thomas’s Anglican Church in Burwood, which holds weekly services in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. These congregations typically occupy existing church buildings rather than purpose-built ones.

Related heritage places

HO6 – Former St George’s Church, 370 Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert

HO25 – Mount Pleasant Uniting Church, 333A Canterbury Road, Forest Hill

HO61 – St Luke’s Anglican Church Complex, 551 Mitcham Road, Vermont

HO67- St John’s Anglican Church, 9-15 Queen Street, Blackburn

HO69 – Wattle Park Uniting Church, 1201-1205 Riversdale Road, Box Hill South

HO77 – Former Wesleyan Methodist Church, 515 Station Street, Box Hill

HO96 – All Saints (Former Christ Church) Anglican Church Complex

HO99 – Former Wesleyan Chapel, 147 Woodhouse Grove, Box Hill

HO106 – Burwood Heights Uniting Church, 347 Blackburn Road, Burwood East

HO132 – St Stephen’s Presbyterian Church, 650 Canterbury Road, Surrey Hills

HO162 – Methodist Church, 559-563 Whitehorse Road, Mitcham

HO214 – St Paschal’s Friary, 90-100 Albion Road, Box Hill

HO260 – The Avenue Uniting Church, 38-44 Blackburn Road, Blackburn

HO262 – St Benedict’s Roman Catholic Church, 299 Warrigal Road, Burwood

HO263 – Former Chapel of St Joseph, 27-29 Strabane Avenue, Mont Albert North

³⁰⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 229.

³⁰⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 231, 233.

8.2 Education

8.2.1 Pre-school education

The Boroondara Free Kindergarten, which opened in North Richmond in 1914, provided for residents living in the suburbs of Camberwell, Canterbury, Surrey Hills, Mont Albert, Box Hill and Burwood.³¹⁰ A decade later, in 1926, a Holiday Home for Children, intended to accommodate children from city kindergartens considered to be ‘poorly nourished and underweight’, was established in Blackburn by the Free Kindergarten Union.³¹¹ The following year, the Graduates Associate of the Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers College acquired a property at Forest Hill to establish a country holiday home for young inner-urban children. The Forest Hill Residential Kindergarten began offering emergency short-term residential care from 1960 for pre-school children whose families were unable to care for them at home. In 1988, Forest Hill Kindergarten discontinued its residential program and offered day care kindergarten only. From 1990, Forest Hill gradually closed all its programs and the following year sold the property, using the proceeds to establish the Forest Hill Early Childhood Foundation.³¹²

In 1947, the City of Box Hill provided funding for the erection of a non-denominational kindergarten at the rear of St Peter’s Church on Whitehorse Road, and three others in Surrey Hills.³¹³ This was exceptional at that time, given the wartime shortages of finance, labour and materials that persisted in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The City of Nunawading was not able to fund similar projects, and when the new Blackburn North Baptist Church proposed to erect a small timber hall on Middleborough Road in 1951, Council approval was granted only on the condition that the facility was also made available as a pre-school.³¹⁴

During this period, kindergartens would only otherwise be erected through the efforts of the local community, who formed committees and raised funds. Established in 1948, the Blackburn Preschool Centre Committee managed to raise sufficient funds to erect two kindergartens by 1952.³¹⁵ In much the same way, Mitcham physician Dr Stanley Cochrane was the driving force behind the provision of a kindergarten in the area in the early 1950s. Plans were prepared by honorary architect Robert Rolfe in 1953, who also happened to be the Mayor of Nunawading at the time. Opened in 1955, it was (and remains) known as the Dr Stanley Cochrane Memorial Kindergarten. The Blackburn Progress Association launched a fundraising campaign for a new pre-school in 1954, though this was not completed until 1962.³¹⁶ Located on land in Larch Street provided by the Council, the City of Nunawading Kindergarten (as it was named) was designed by Croydon architect Hank Romyn.

³¹⁰ *Weekly Times*, 26 September 1914, p 9/

³¹¹ *The Age*, 1927 p 14.

³¹² ‘Forest Hill (Residential) Kindergarten (1927-88)’, *Department of Health and Human Services*, www.findingrecords.dhhs.vic.gov.au, accessed 21 December 2022.

³¹³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 196.

³¹⁴ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 174.

³¹⁵ *Argus*, 11 June 1952, p 6.

³¹⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 221.





Figure 83. Forest Hill Residential Kindergarten, 124 Lake Road, Forest Hill in c1938 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP676)

During the later 1960s and 1970s, new kindergartens proliferated. One significant development was the Sir Edgar and Lady Coles Kindergarten in Neil Court, Blackburn, which was established by the Victorian Society for Cripple Children & Adults. Opened in April 1966, the building was specially designed to accommodate disabled pupils, 'with a minimum of architectural obstacles for the children... there are no steps and the entrance is covered to permit cars and other vehicles to drive to the door'.³¹⁷

8.2.2 Primary and secondary education

The earliest schools in what is now the City of Whitehorse were denominational. By the early 1860s, secular schools had opened in Nunawading and Forest Hill.³¹⁸ The Denominational School Board was superseded in 1862 by the new Board of Education, and all schools thereafter became numbered common schools.

In 1872, the new *Education Act* began a system of free and compulsory education in Victoria. No new public schools appeared in the Shire however, until the establishment of Nunawading North State School in 1880. New schools were also built at Box Hill, Mitcham, Vermont, Blackburn and Surrey Hills during this time. In the 1890s, two of the oldest schools in the Shire had their allowances withdrawn by the Department of Education. One of these, the former Church of England school in Canterbury Road closed in 1894, and the other, St Bridget's Catholic school, survived for a few more years as a private school.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ *The Age*, 15 April 1966, p 14.

³¹⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 221.

³¹⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 59-60, 117.



Figure 84. Vermont State School, c1888 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2099)



Figure 85. Blackburn State School, 185 Surrey Road Blackburn, c1910-20 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1850)

Private schools, which generally ran in private houses, had flourished since the 1880s land boom. In Box Hill, these included Banff Ladies' College, New College (later Box Hill Grammar) and Surrey College.³²⁰ The first private school in Mitcham opened in 1883, and within a decade, there were nine in the entire Shire of Nunawading.³²¹ A private girls' school, Ormiston House, was established in Mont Albert in 1900, and this later became the junior school campus of Camberwell Girls' Grammar.

³²⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 94-96.

³²¹ Niall Brennan, *A history of Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, p 61; Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 222.

The establishment of conventional public schools picked up in the 1920s, and new schools appeared at Blackburn South, Tunstall, Box Hill South and Wattle Park. In 1929, Box Hill Grammar relocated to new and larger premises, and work began on the first high school, also in Box Hill. The first technical school had appeared five years earlier, although it only accepted female students. The establishment of this school, which was the first girls' technical school in Victoria, had been spurred by the prominent educationalist Frank Tate, who was a Box Hill resident.³²² A technical school for boys did not appear in Box Hill until 1943.



Figure 86. Girls Technical School (undated) (State Library of Victoria ID 1683796)



Figure 87. Boys Technical School (1949), Box Hill (State Library of Victoria H2004.101/293)

³²² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 150, 159-161; William Orange, Box Hill Historical Society, pers com.

The high post-war birth rate caused extensive overcrowding in schools, especially state-run schools, in the late 1940s and into the 1950s. This issue was finally addressed in 1954, when three new public schools – at Box Hill North, Koonung Heights and Bennettswood – simultaneously opened in October. Earlier that year, another began operation in the City of Nunawading at Blackburn North.³²³

Because land was plentiful, the municipality was also attractive to private schools from other municipalities who were outgrowing their premises. Presbyterian Ladies' College (PLC) had relocated from East Melbourne to Burwood in 1938; this was followed by Mt Scopus College, the first Jewish day school in Australia, which moved to Burwood from St Kilda in 1951.³²⁴ Leading Jewish architects Anatol Kagan and Ernest Fooks worked in association on the design of Mount Scopus College, while Presbyterian architect John Scarborough (best known for his work at Scotch College in Hawthorn) worked on PLC. Development of the PLC site commenced in 1954 and the campus was officially opened by the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, in February 1958.

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw a record boom in the establishment of state schools across the municipality. In the decade that followed, no less than 15 new public schools were built, comprising six high schools (including Blackburn, Mitcham, Wattle Park and Vermont), three technical schools (Burwood, Blackburn and Mitcham), and six state primary schools (including Blackburn North, Nunawading South, Antonio Park and Laburnum).³²⁵

This boom had abated by the late 1960s, when provision of state schools focused on developing suburbs to the southern and south-eastern fringes of the City of Whitehorse. New schools were established at Burwood East in 1968 and Mitcham in 1969. This pattern continued into the 1970s and beyond, with the opening of Livingstone Primary School in 1977 and Weedon Heights Primary School in 1980, both in Vermont South.

The later 1980s and 1990s were characterised by a period of closure and consolidation. The first state primary school to cease operation was the pre-war Forest Hill Primary School, which closed in 1987 as it marked its 60th anniversary.³²⁶ In 1991, three post-war primary schools in the Blackburn area (Mirrabooka, Killoura and Warrawong) merged with Blackburn South Primary School to create the multi-campus Orchard Grove Primary School – the first amalgamated primary school in Victoria.³²⁷ The three campuses later merged into one, which remains in operation on the Mirrabooka State School site. Several other local primary schools closed during the 1990s, including Middlefield in Box Hill North and Narmara in Burwood East.

The City of Whitehorse purchased the former Nunawading Primary School in 1025 and the main school building has been retained as part of the Nunawading Community Hub.

³²³ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 223.

³²⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 201.

³²⁵ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 223-24.

³²⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 225.

³²⁷ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 228.



Figure 88. Aerial view of Box Hill High School looking south, 1951 (State Library of Victoria, ID H2010.91/276)

Secondary schools were also subject to closure and consolidation from the late 1980s. In 1988, Nunawading High School amalgamated with Blackburn South High School, Burwood Heights High, and Burwood Technical School to create a single entity known as Forest Hill College.³²⁸ Three of these campuses later closed, and school was consolidated at the former Burwood Heights site. Mullauna College Mitcham was formed in 1989 as an amalgamation of Mitcham High School, Mitcham Technical School and Donvale High School. Since the 1990s, several other high schools in the municipality have ceased operation, including Wattle Park High School, Blackburn Technical School and Mitcham Technical School.

8.2.3 Tertiary education

The first tertiary institute in Whitehorse was St Paschal's College, a theological training college and monastery which opened in Box Hill South in 1936.³²⁹ The Christian Brothers established a similar institution – St Leo's College – nearby in 1952. Burwood Teachers' College, later the State College of Victoria, opened in 1954. It is now a campus of Deakin University, and has expanded to take over the adjacent Bennettswood Primary and Burwood High school sites. A technical college, now Box Hill TAFE, was built in 1977 on the old gasworks site in Elgar Road. Completed at a

³²⁸ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 227.

³²⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 172.

cost of \$25 million, the complex opened in April 1981. This institute, which grew out of the two technical schools in Box Hill, has since established several other campuses elsewhere in the municipality.

At the same time, the Whitehorse Technical College (formerly the Box Hill Girls' Technical School) similarly became Whitehorse TAFE. After new legislation required that State Colleges merge with Colleges of Advanced Educations (CAE), the Burwood State College joined forces with counterparts at Toorak and Rusden and, together with the Prahran CAE, created a new entity, Victoria College. In 1984, the Whitehorse TAFE was similarly absorbed by the larger Box Hill College of TAFE. Further expansion took place, with a third campus established at Doncaster (1991) and then another in Box Hill (1994) in the former Holeproof factory on Whitehorse Road.³³⁰ In the early 1990s, Victoria College at Burwood became a campus of Deakin University and was significantly redeveloped by the addition of new buildings by architects Wood Marsh (1997), later joined by the Activity Centre (H2O Architects, 2001) and Science & Technology Building T (DesignInc, 2002). Since the 1990s, Box Hill Institute (as it is now known) has also expanded its presence with the enlargement of the Nelson Campus and a new building for the automotive school (both by Lyons Architects, 2000), Building 8 (Spowers Architects, 2005) and a new trades facility (Paul Morgan, 2007).

Related heritage places

HO1 – Primary School No. 461 – Former Burwood School (Former Wesleyan Day School), 172-174 Burwood Highway, Burwood

HO16 – Surrey Hills Primary School, 2 Beatrice Avenue, Surrey Hills

HO32 – Former Box Hill Technical School, 19 Dunloe Avenue, Mont Albert North

HO48 – East Burwood Primary School, 401 Blackburn Road, East Burwood

HO66 – Vermont Primary School, 4-10 Nurlendi Road, Vermont

HO117 – Former Box Hill Girls' Technical School, 1000 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

HO238 – Nunawading Primary School, 96-106 Springvale Road, Nunawading

HO247 – Mont Albert Primary School, 21-23 Inglisby Road, Mont Albert

HO248 – Box Hill High School, 1180 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

³³⁰ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 229-30.



8.3 Health and welfare

8.3.1 Hospitals and doctor's surgeries

The first medical practice in Box Hill was established in 1886.³³¹ By the turn of the century, there were only three doctors in the area – two in Box Hill, and one in Windsor Crescent, Surrey Hills.³³² In 1922, the Dunstaffage Private Hospital was set up in the former mansion of Mrs Henry Scott, on the corner of Highbury Road and Warrigal Road, Burwood. From the 1920s onwards, other similar hospitals were established in Box Hill, Blackburn and Surrey Hills and Mitcham, many in private residences.

By the mid-1950s, the first local medical clinics had begun to appear. In 1954, leading architect Raymond Berg designed a flat-roofed medical clinic at the corner of Mitcham Road and Harrison Street for a group of local physicians headed by Dr Verner Threlkeld. Five years later, another opened at the opposite end of Mitcham Road, near the corner of Grove Street in Vermont.

The foundation stone of the new Box Hill and District Hospital was laid in 1950. The new hospital, designed by noted hospital architects Stephenson & Turner was officially opened six years later.³³³ It was the only public hospital in the municipality until the Dunstaffage Private Hospital became the Burwood and District Community Hospital. With only 18 beds, it was the smallest public hospital in Melbourne until its closure in 1996.³³⁴ The building was demolished in 2000 and the site redeveloped.

Since the 1990s, the Box Hill & District Hospital – now known simply as the Box Hill Hospital – remains in operation as the only public hospital in the City of Whitehorse. It now forms part of the Eastern Health network, which includes other hospitals at Ferntree Gully, Healesville and East Ringwood, as well as the Peter James Geriatric Centre at Burwood East.

A private hospital has since been established at Blackburn South (1970), and the Mitcham Hospital (c1964) has been rebuilt on a new site. The Surrey Private Hospital (formerly the Mont Albert and Surrey Hills Hospital) in Broughton Road, was built adjacent to the old Kinross Private Hospital, which has been remodelled as a nursing home; both have now closed.

³³¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 83.

³³² *Sands and McDougall Victorian Directory*, 1901.

³³³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 201.

³³⁴ Dugald Jellie, 'Too Small to Live: the death of Burwood Hospital', *The Age*, 29 November 1996, p B3.



Figure 89. Box Hill Hospital, c.1956 (State Library of Victoria, H32492/8685)

8.3.2 Maternal and child health

The health of babies and the nation's falling birth rate during World War I precipitated a widespread infant welfare movement across Australia. The Victorian Baby Health Centres' Association, which was established as a voluntary organisation in 1918, began to establish baby health centres, particularly in working class suburbs where infant mortality rates were highest.³³⁵

The first infant welfare centre in Box Hill was established in temporary quarters in 1923 in conjunction with Fern Tree Gully Shire. An article in the *Reporter* in January 1923 encouraged:

*All the young mothers of the district are invited to bring their babies to the centre, where they will be given sound practical advice on general hygienic and infant feeding...*³³⁶

The *Reporter* also reiterated that:

*...the Baby Health Organisational is not a charity but a national movement, supported by the local council, with Government help, its aim being to educate the young mothers of Australia to intelligently look after their babies and so decrease infant mortality.*³³⁷

Two years later, Box Hill's infant welfare centre relocated to a purpose-built premises on the council reserve in the middle of Whitehorse Road. In 1929, a similar centre was opened in Mitcham in the Memorial Hall.³³⁸

8.3.3 Children's homes

One of the first major welfare institutions to open in Whitehorse was the Burwood Boys' Home, established in 1896 on land donated by a Melbourne philanthropist.³³⁹

³³⁵ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 97.

³³⁶ *Reporter*, 5 January 1923, p 6.

³³⁷ *Reporter*, 5 January 1923, p 6.

³³⁸ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 97.

³³⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 110.

A few years later, the Methodists, who had always been a strong presence in Box Hill, sought to establish a similar institution for disadvantaged boys. They purchased land in 1903 in a district of Burwood known as Tally-Ho, from which the home took its name. Tally Ho was developed as a training farm, allowing boys to 'develop discipline and good character through hard work and healthy living'.³⁴⁰ The architectural firm of Bates, Smart & McCutcheon prepared a masterplan for the expansion of Tally Ho in 1949 and new buildings were still being added in the early 1960s, when Earle & Partners designed a modern gymnasium block.

In 1913, the Salvation Army set up a new boys' home on the corner of Elgar and Canterbury Roads, after a fire had destroyed their property at Bayswater. Later, they established a men's hostel, the Inala Village, now an extensive village complex, in Blackburn South.

In 1937, the Presbyterian Church established Kildonan Children's Home as a residential care home for neglected children. Located in Elgar Road, Burwood, the site originally comprised two dormitories, a school and an administration block, designed by architects Kemp, Sherrard and Forster. A kindergarden was added in 1941, followed by a sick bay in 1944-45 and a cottage for teenage girls in 1946. A recreation hall opened the following year. Kildonan Children's Home developed into one of the premier children's homes in Victoria.³⁴¹



Figure 90. Illustration of the new Kildonan Children's Home, 1936 (*Argus*, 6 June 1936, p 32)

8.3.4 Other welfare services

The Victorian Deaf Society was established in 1884, at which time it was known as 'The Adult Deaf and Dumb Mission of Victoria'. The Mission built its first home and church in Flinders Street, Melbourne in 1903. The Mission became incorporated as 'The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society' in 1908. That same year, the opportunity for farming led the Society to purchase 75 acres of land near Blackburn Lake. The home, known as 'Lake Park', opened in 1909.³⁴² In addition to a flower farm, accommodation was provided for 'aged, infirm, mentally defective and blind deaf-mutes'.³⁴³ The property was sold to the Regis Group in 2002.

The establishment of welfare institutions continued in the post-war period. The Orana Methodist Peace Memorial Home, located on Elgar Road, was established in

³⁴⁰ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 90.

³⁴¹ Coleman Architects, *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review 2012, amended 2016, Appendix A: Citations for Individual Places*, p A-29.

³⁴² 'Victorian Deaf history', *Expression Australia*, www.expression.com.au, accessed 21 December 2022.

³⁴³ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 87.

Burwood by the Methodist Church to house and care for destitute children. Largely constructed in the 1950s, it was innovatively designed on a cottage system, with designs prepared by the office of Bates, Smarts & McCutcheon.³⁴⁴ At its peak, the home included six cottages, a preschool centre, clinic, craft and play centre, chapel, hall and administration centre. Children were housed in family groups and attended local schools.

In 1986 the site was sold to the State Government for the development of public housing. The following year a mixture of detached houses, town houses and flats designed for families and the elderly were constructed on the site. The Orana chapel, kindergarten and clinic, administration building and hall were retained and formed part of this redevelopment.³⁴⁵



Figure 91. The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2508)

³⁴⁴ Renate Howe & Shurlee Swain, *All God's Children: a centenary history of the Methodist Homes for Children and the Orana Peace Memorial Homes*, Kambah, 1989, p 118.

³⁴⁵ Coleman Architects, *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review*, 2012, Appendix A: Citations for Individual Places, 'Former Orana Methodist Peace Memorial Homes', pp A-176-177.



Figure 92. Cottages at the Orana Peace Memorial Home in 1958 (State Library of Victoria, ID 1791355)

The Nunawading (later Eastbridge) Migrant Hostel and the Winlaton Girls' Training Centre – a facility conceived by the Social Welfare Department to accommodate young females on remand or under sentence for criminal offence – were built in Nunawading in 1950 and 1954 respectively. The Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind – which established a residential school for children on land at the corner of Station Street and Burwood Highway in 1959 – and the Princess Elizabeth Kindergarten for Deaf Children, Burwood (1950) – the first residential and daily pre-school centre for deaf children in Australia – also became important regional facilities. Additional facilities for disabled children also began to appear, including several special schools as well as the Alkira Day Training Centre in Box Hill (1955) and the NADRASCA Centre in Nunawading (1967).³⁴⁶ The Alkira Day Centre relocated elsewhere before moving out to Vermont South in the early 1970s, where it was re-badged as Burwood East Special School (and where it continues to operate as Vermont South Special School).³⁴⁷ NADRASCA, which now has a much broader remit of caring for disabled people in the community, maintains its head office in Rooks Road, other premises in Nunawading and Mitcham, and a community farm in Morack Road, Vermont. The former school on Springvale Road, latterly known as the Nunawading Adult Training Service, now accommodates one of the NADRASCA community options programmes.

8.3.5 Changing attitudes and closure

From the 1960s, shifting attitudes towards institutionalisation resulted in significant changes, and ultimately the closure, of many of these welfare facilities. As early as 1960, the Kildonan Children's Home in Burwood was taken over by the State Government and re-named the Allambie Reception Centre. It temporarily

³⁴⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 223-24.

³⁴⁷ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 196.

accommodated displaced children until they could be placed with families. In the early 1970s, the Burwood Boys' Home on Warrigal Road broadened its remit to include females, and was renamed the Burwood Children's Home. Around the same time, a portion of the vast acreage of the Tally Ho Boys' Farm was sold off for private development, and the farm itself ceased operation in 1976.³⁴⁸ This was followed by the successive closures of the Burwood Children's Home (1986), the Orana Peace Methodist Home (1988), the Allambie Reception Centre (1990) and the Winlaton Girls' Training Centre in Nunawading (1993). The sites of these institutions have all since been redeveloped. The Tally Ho Boys' Farm, which closed in 1976, is now the Tally Ho Business Park. A retirement village occupies the site of the Burwood Boys' Home. The Eastbridge Migrant Hostel was demolished in 1988, and the new Eastern Mail Centre was erected on part of the site. Many others, including Winlaton in Nunawading and the Orana Peace Methodist Home in Burwood, have been redeveloped as residential subdivisions.

Related heritage places

HO249 – Former Kildonan Children's Home, 70 Elgar Road, Burwood

8.4 Community organisations and services

8.4.1 Progress associations

Progress associations in the Box Hill and Nunawading area were established following the Boer War.³⁴⁹ In 1900, the British Army victory at Mafeking saw celebrations throughout the British Empire. The citizens of Surrey Hills held processions with bunting and fireworks. Box Hill residents formed a progress association to organise their own celebrations, and the Nunawading Shire Council formed a special committee. When the celebrations were over, the new Box Hill Progress Association moved on to other municipal improvements. It was superseded in 1915 by the Nunawading Citizens' Association.³⁵⁰

By the 1930s, progress associations had been formed under the names of Blackburn, Middleborough, Burwood and District, Mont Albert, Mitcham and Vermont, and even Irishtown, after the former name for the area around Surrey Park. The number of progress associations in the Nunawading area increased dramatically from the 1950s, when 'new people moved into the area, determined to develop it into a modern, thriving community with all the amenities Australians were coming to expect after the lean years of the war.'³⁵¹ Citizens' groups formed in the post-war period included the Blackburn North, Box Hill South, and Heatherdale District Progress Associations, as well as the Malcolm Street (Blackburn) Citizens' Group, and the Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society.³⁵²

The various associations lobbied for improvements including tree planting, street lighting, road surfacing and public transport. Many buildings in present-day Whitehorse, including kindergartens, libraries, halls and elderly citizens' clubs, owe

³⁴⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 91, 224.

³⁴⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 114.

³⁵⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 135.

³⁵¹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 225.

³⁵² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 225-228.

their existence to the lobbying, and often fundraising, of the progress associations. Most of these associations disbanded in the 1960s and 1970s as the various improvements they fought for had been implemented; the Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society is one that remains in existence today.

8.4.2 Public libraries

In July 1890, a public meeting was held in the Nunawading Shire Hall to discuss the formation of a Mechanics Institute and Free Library for Box Hill. Such institutions were established in towns and suburbs throughout Victoria in the nineteenth century in the hope of improving the minds of working people. While a Mechanics Institute was established in Box Hill by the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1892, a lack of community interest led to its abandonment just three years later in 1895.³⁵³ It would be over 50 years before a public library was established in the City of Whitehorse.

The provision of municipal libraries was streamlined in the early post-war period with the establishment of the Free Library Services Board in 1947. As historian Lesley Alves notes, the City of Box Hill was one of the first local authorities in Melbourne to take advantage of this opportunity.³⁵⁴ Opened in October 1950, the Box Hill Library was initially accommodated in a temporary structure on Bank Street, to the rear of the Town Hall, before relocating the following year to the building formerly occupied by the RSL Club.³⁵⁵



Figure 93. Box Hill Library in the old RSL building opposite the Town Hall, c 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B5137)

In 1953 the Nunawading Progress Association began to campaign for a local library in their district, though this would not come to fruition for over a decade.³⁵⁶ A mobile library service was initiated in 1963 and, the following year, Council appointed its first municipal librarian, Constance Pavey. With plans for a new civic centre that would eventually include a library, it was decided to proceed with the erection of a branch library at Blackburn, which would serve the entire community until the civic

³⁵³ *The Reporter*, 28 October 1892, p 1; *The Reporter*, 25 January 1895, p 2.

³⁵⁴ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 129.

³⁵⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 196.

³⁵⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 227.

centre was completed.³⁵⁷ Located on the edge of Morton Park – a site formerly occupied by a pre-war public hall – the new library opened on 21 November 1966. It was designed by architects Drayton & Colman.³⁵⁸

The new library at Blackburn proved an enormous success.³⁵⁹ Having been conceived only as a branch library, it quickly became too crowded to service the whole community. The new Nunawading Library, forming part of the Nunawading Civic Centre designed by architects Gerd & Renate Block, opened in 1972. By that time, there were also plans for a new library building at Box Hill. The Box Hill Library, located on Whitehorse Road, was officially opened by the Governor of Victoria in May 1973.³⁶⁰

Following Council amalgamation in the mid-1990s, public libraries in the City of Whitehorse have been united under the umbrella of the Whitehorse Manningham Library Service – a continuation of the association that has been maintained with the former City of Doncaster & Templestowe since the early 1960s.

8.4.3 Masonic lodges

Although Freemasons had met in Box Hill's Barkly Hall since the 1860s, it was not until 1889 that the first purpose-built Masonic temple was erected in the area.³⁶¹ A new temple was built in Station Street in 1923 and was later remodelled with a new facade.³⁶² A Masonic temple was built in Clarke Street, Blackburn, in 1928.³⁶³

8.4.4 Scouts and Guides

The 1st Box Hill Boy Scouts was established by 1916. Club rooms were initially based in Whitehorse Road until a Scout Hall was erected on the railway side of Box Hill's Main Street in 1925. The building was opened by the Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce.³⁶⁴ According to the *Box Hill Reporter* on the opening of the hall, the 'Box Hill troop was one of the oldest in the State'.³⁶⁵ The 2nd Box Hill Scouts had formed by 1929.³⁶⁶ Further east, a troop was established in Blackburn in c1917.³⁶⁷

A large number of new troops were established in the post-war years.³⁶⁸ Many of these emerged in the developing northern fringes of the municipality, erecting halls following their establishment.

The first troop of local girl guides was organised by Mrs Webber at Surrey Hills in 1926.³⁶⁹ A year later, a company of girl guides was also formed in Mitcham. By 1929,

³⁵⁷ *The Age*, 23 October 1965, p 12; *The Age*, 17 June 1967, p 39.

³⁵⁸ 'Drayton & Colman', *Dictionary of Unsung Architects*, Built Heritage, www.builtheritage.com.au, accessed 21 December 2022.

³⁵⁹ Robin da Costa, *Blackburn: a picturesque history*, Lilydale, 1978, p 128.

³⁶⁰ *The Age*, 13 September 1974, p 22.

³⁶¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 101.

³⁶² Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 154.

³⁶³ Information from Foundation Stone.

³⁶⁴ *The Reporter*, 10 Nov 1916, p 4; Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 154.

³⁶⁵ *Box Hill Reporter*, 11 September 1925, p 3.

³⁶⁶ *Box Hill Reporter*, 5 July 1929, p 2.

³⁶⁷ *The Reporter*, 16 February 1917, p 4.

³⁶⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 220, 222.

³⁶⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 153.

the 1st Mitcham Girl Guide Company, numbering 17 members, was using the 1st Mitcham Scout Hall for their activities.³⁷⁰

As with the Scouts, the popularity of the Girl Guides grew in the post-war years and Girl Guide halls were erected in Clarke Street, Blackburn (c 1958), Garie Street, Blackburn (c 1962), Luckie Street, Nunawading (c 1961), Welfare Court, Box Hill South (c 1964), Brunswick Street, Mitcham (c 1966), off Nunkeri Street in Vermont (c 1966) and at Eley Park in Blackburn South (1974).



Figure 94. Opening of Blackburn Scout Hall in 1919 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP798)



Figure 95. Mitcham Guides (right) (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1798)

Related heritage places

HO230 – Masonic Centre, 1 Clarke Street, Blackburn

³⁷⁰ *Box Hill Reporter*, 12 August 1927, p 4; *Box Hill Reporter*, 1 November 1929, p 2.

8.5 Community halls and centres

The first public hall appeared on the north side of Whitehorse Road in 1864. Named Barkly Hall in honour of the then governor of Victoria, it was used as a meeting place by freemasons, political and religious groups, charities, and even the Nunawading Road Board.³⁷¹ The new and larger Box Hill Recreation Hall was built on the south side of Whitehorse Road in 1885, and the obsolete Barkly Hall was demolished soon after. Other nineteenth-century recreation halls included Mill's Recreation Hall in Albany Crescent, Surrey Hills (1885), Gordon Hall in Elgar Road, Box Hill (1889), and the Blackburn Recreation Hall, on the corner of Blackburn and Central Roads (1889). The latter was built by developer T R B Morton for his proposed housing estate beside Blackburn Lake. It was demolished in 1964 to make way for the construction of the new Blackburn library.

The Recreation Hall in Box Hill was used for many purposes until the late 1920s, when it was remodelled as a cinema. By that time, public halls had also been established at Box Hill South, East Burwood and Forest Hill. The Mitcham Memorial Hall was opened in 1925 after several years of planning and fundraising.³⁷² It was managed by the RSL until 1955, when it was taken over by the Nunawading Council (since demolished).

Figure 96. East Burwood Hall, 1971 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP1338)



The Nunawading North Neighbourhood Centre commenced in 1974 in a house on Mountain View Road rented from the Presbyterian Church.³⁷³ The first of its type in the municipality, it was soon joined by others including the Mitcham Community House (1975), Koonung Cottage Community House in Blackburn North (1978), the

³⁷¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 83.

³⁷² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 162-166.

³⁷³ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 180-81.

Avenue Neighbourhood House in Blackburn (1982) and the Vermont South Community House (1987). During this period, a few larger purpose-built community centres also appeared, notably the Box Hill Community Centre on Whitehorse Road (1977) and the Eley Park Community Centre in Burwood (1979).

In 2015 Whitehorse Council bought the former Nunawading Primary School site on Springvale Road from the State Government to create the Nunawading Community Hub. Completed in 2020, the hub includes the remaining school building as well as an indoor stadium, dance/activity spaces, art rooms and meeting rooms for a variety of community groups including the University of the Third Age and Whitehorse Arts Association.

Related heritage places

HO234 – East Burwood Hall, 310 Burwood Highway, East Burwood

HO238 – Nunawading Primary School, 96-106 Springvale Road, Nunawading

8.6 Commemorating

8.6.1 Cemeteries

In 1858, five acres of land in Ballyshanassy (Burwood) was gazetted as a cemetery at the request of local residents who were tired of travelling to Melbourne for funerals.³⁷⁴ This was the only official cemetery in present-day Whitehorse for 15 years, although burials also took place in the grounds of the Methodist church in Station Street, Box Hill and the Catholic church at Mitcham. The former relocated to a new site in 1872, which may have been the impetus for a public meeting held that year to form a Cemetery Trust. The Trust asked the Government to gazette part of a reserve in Box Hill for the purposes of a cemetery.³⁷⁵ The proposed site for the Box Hill Cemetery was a large reserve on the corner of Whitehorse and Middleborough roads, then partly occupied by the police paddock and a state school. On 29 August 1873, 10 acres (4ha) were gazetted for a cemetery, and the first interment, of a three-week-old infant, took place the following day.³⁷⁶ A further two acres (0.8ha) of the reserve was acquired in 1877, and another three acres (1.2ha) in 1886.

In 1899, the burial ground behind the Catholic church in Mitcham was closed and the tombstones removed. It is now the site of the parish school.³⁷⁷ Thus, by the early twentieth century, the only cemeteries in Whitehorse were at Box Hill and Burwood. Both sites were extended in 1935.³⁷⁸ At Burwood, the north-east boundary was extended so that the cemetery effectively occupied the entire block. At Box Hill, an additional 14 acres (5.7ha) of land were gazetted so that the cemetery extended to Middleborough Road. The recreation reserve which formerly occupied this land was moved north, where it became the present-day Whitehorse Reserve. In 1979, the

³⁷⁴ Niall Brennan, *A history of Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, pp 28-29.

³⁷⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 56.

³⁷⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 56.

³⁷⁷ Niall Brennan, *A history of Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, pp 28-29.

³⁷⁸ National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 'Classification Report: Box Hill Cemetery', unpublished typescript; Alyssa Clarkson, *Ballyshanassy: a history of the Burwood District*, Burwood, 1991, p 31.



main entrance on Whitehorse Road was closed in favour of a new entry off Middleborough Road, although the ceremonial gates were retained in situ.

8.6.2 Memorials

A number of memorials dedicated to the memory of those who served in various wars have been erected throughout the City of Whitehorse. These include World War I memorials in Moreton Park, Blackburn (date unknown), Halliday Park in Mitcham (1922, relocated to its present site in 1988), and Wattle Park, Burwood (1948). The Wattle Park stone cairn was dedicated to the memory of Royden Louis Charles Bennett, who served in France with the 7th Battalion of the AIF and was killed at Pozieres on 18 August 1916.

In 1952 the municipality obtained its first dedicated World War II memorial in a public area, located on Nelson Road, Box Hill. This comprised a large inscribed granite wall and a life-size bronze statue by Wallace Anderson entitled *Kokoda Trail*, depicting a soldier carrying a wounded comrade. World War II is otherwise commemorated by a few local churches. St Peter's Anglican Church in Box Hill has a plaque that was unveiled on 9 March 1952, while the Orana Peace Memorial Home in Burwood erected a chapel in 1958 that was conceived as a war memorial. The original World War I memorials at Box Hill and Blackburn have been amended to record the contributions of those who fought in Korea (1950-53), Malaya (1955-65), South East Asia (1964-66), Vietnam (1962-72) and peacekeeping operations since 1947.

In 1995, a small stone cairn was erected in the East Burwood Reserve to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, and to mark the location of the Field Survey Training Depot that operated there during the early 1940s. The Mitcham RSL installed memorial plaques to fallen World War II servicemen after whom local streets were named: Brian Street, Ross Street, Ronald Street, Owen Street and Alwyn Street. The Salvation Army Memorial Rose Garden at the Inala Village in Blackburn South commemorates members of that church who fought in various twentieth century conflicts, from the Second Boer War (1899-1902) through to East Timor (1999).

Other memorials include the South African and China War Memorial, originally located on the Whitehorse Road median strip in Box Hill, which commemorates those who served in the Boer War in South Africa in 1899 and in China in 1902. The memorial was unveiled by Premier A J Peacock in 1902.³⁷⁹ It was relocated to its current position in the central reserve of Whitehorse Road between 1914 and 1920.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ South Africa (Boer) War & China War Memorial, <https://monumentaustralia.org.au>, accessed 23 November 2022.

³⁸⁰ Eleanor Findlay and Marjorie Morgan, *The Days Before Yesterday: a picture book of early Box Hill*, Box Hill, 1993, p 2 [shows photograph of memorial in original position near Railway Hotel, built 1914; but relocated by the time it was de-licensed in 1920].





Figure 97. Halliday Park World War I Memorial (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP2326)



Figure 98. South Africa and China War Memorial in original location at intersection of Whitehorse Road and Station Street, Box Hill, 1902-10 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0835)

Related heritage places

HO58 – Box Hill Cemetery Columbarium and Myer Memorial, 395 Middleborough Road, Box Hill

HO219 – Box Hill Cemetery, 395 Middleborough Road, Box Hill and 1158-1160 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

HO233 – Burwood Cemetery, 74-108 Burwood Highway, Burwood

HO252 – South African (Boer) War and China War Memorial, Whitehorse Road Median Strip, Box Hill

HO253 – World War 1 Memorial Blackburn, Moreton Park, Central Road, Blackburn

HO254 – World War 1 and 2 Memorials Box Hill, Box Hill Gardens, Nelson Street, Box Hill

HO255 – World War 1 Memorial Mitcham, Halliday Park, Mitcham Road, Mitcham



9 SHAPING WHITEHORSE'S CULTURAL AND CREATIVE LIFE

9.1 Sport and recreation

Organised sport has existed in the City of Whitehorse since the 1860s, when hotelier Dennis Delaney hosted athletics and horse racing adjacent to the White Horse Hotel.

The Mitcham Football Club, founded in 1888, is one of the oldest sporting clubs in the municipality. Many of its players were employees at the Australian Tessellated Tile Company.³⁸¹ Football clubs were also established at Box Hill (1892), Nunawading (1893) and Burwood (1897), and sporting facilities including a cricket oval and tennis courts were integral to the Freehold Investment and Banking Company's speculative Blackburn Lake subdivision.³⁸² The late 1800s also saw the emergence of golf, played on Harston's paddock in Mont Albert, cricket and fox hunting. The municipality's first playing field, lobbied for by the Box Hill Cricket and Football Clubs, on a site south of the railway line in Box Hill, was cleared in 1893, although most sports matches were still held on private land.³⁸³

The early twentieth century saw the expansion of sports facilities. In 1903-05 the Nunawading Shire Council purchased several recreational facilities, including Surrey Park in Box Hill, Morton Park in Blackburn, and 10-acre (4ha) sites in Mitcham and East Burwood.³⁸⁴ Box Hill Cricket Club was formed in 1902, and a bowling green was established in Whitehorse Road, Box Hill.³⁸⁵ Walker Park in Mitcham was acquired from E E Walker in 1910, and by the 1920s was the area's local sports ground.³⁸⁶ By the late 1920s, sports catered for locally had been extended to include greyhound racing, athletics, cycling, soccer and lacrosse, and tennis clubs in Mitcham and Vermont boomed.³⁸⁷ Wattle Park Golf Course was laid out in the 1930s, and was later joined by golf courses on Gardiners Creek in Box Hill South and Dandenong Creek in Vermont South. In the early 1970s, the City of Nunawading acquired a large tract of land in Vermont South, between Morack Road and the Dandenong Creek, which became the site of a public golf course. It opened in 1975 as a nine-hole course with space for further expansion, and the remaining nine holes were completed in the early 1980s.

Many new sporting facilities were established in newly-subdivided areas in the post-war period. Wembley Park in Box Hill was established as a major soccer venue, and in 1951 Box Hill Football Club joined the Victorian Football Association; this prestige was a selling-point for local real estate.³⁸⁸

From the 1950s onwards, several other new outdoor sporting venues were provided across Box Hill and Nunawading. In 1964, an eight-acre site on Middleborough Road

³⁸¹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 104, 178.

³⁸² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 81-82.

³⁸³ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 100; Information received from Nunawading Historical Society.

³⁸⁴ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 122.

³⁸⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 117.

³⁸⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 178; Information received from Nunawading Historical Society.

³⁸⁷ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 159.

³⁸⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 194.

was reconstructed to create playing fields, which were named after Councillor R H L Sparks.³⁸⁹ This is now the home ground of the Box Hill Rugby Union League, which was founded in 1958. In the late 1960s, Koonung Park was created in Springfield Road in Blackburn North, which included premises for the local tennis and lawn bowling clubs.

At a similar time, the existing Hagenauer Reserve in Box Hill North was upgraded to provide 'a top-grade athletics track with clubrooms', and a new rubberised bitumen running track was added three years later.³⁹⁰ The Burwood East Reserve was also improved during this time and, by the mid-1970s, the existing football oval was supplemented by tennis courts, cycling track and an indoor basketball stadium. It was redeveloped further in the early 1980s when, following the increasing popularity of the Little Athletics movement (with branches formed at Box Hill in 1968 and several others in Nunawading), a committee was formed to lobby for improved facilities.³⁹¹ The result was a major refurbishment of East Burwood Reserve, including a new all-weather Olympic-standard running track that opened in November 1983.

The first swimming facilities were dams and claypits. In Nunawading, clay holes such as that near the Tunstall tile works doubled as swimming holes, as did the East Mileham dam and Morton's dam.³⁹² The old claypit at the corner of Elgar and Canterbury roads in Box Hill was already in use as a de facto swimming hole, and when the Council purchased it in 1905, it fenced the hole, and built a bathing shed and diving platforms. The Surrey Dive, as it was known, became a major recreational focus for the area, and was the site of many swimming carnivals. In 1939, a purpose-built outdoor pool was constructed adjacent to the old clay pit to accommodate children and non-swimmers. The Surrey Dive continued to be used for swimming until severe drought resulted in its closure in 1968. It was later filled in and an ornamental lake created.³⁹³ By the late 1970s, the remaining outdoor pool and its associated facilities were badly in need of upgrading and Box Hill's new indoor pool and recreation centre opened in 1981.³⁹⁴ It was redeveloped in 2013.

A swimming pool in the Nunawading area was a key priority for local Councillors in the post-war period and in 1960, the Nunawading Memorial Pool opened in Forest Hill.³⁹⁵ It was constructed in recognition of those who served in World War I and World War II. Originally comprising a 50m outdoor pool, the pool was covered and heated in 1976 to maximise its use year-round.³⁹⁶

The Nunawading Memorial Pool and Box Hill Swimming Complex today comprise modern leisure centres, owned and operated by Aqualink.

³⁸⁹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 213.

³⁹⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 217.

³⁹¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 239.

³⁹² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 178-79.

³⁹³ Eleanor Findlay & Marjorie Morgan, *The Days before Yesterday: a picture book of early Box Hill*, Box Hill, 1993, p 79.

³⁹⁴ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 178-79; Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 240.

³⁹⁵ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 122, 167, 218.

³⁹⁶ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 178-79.



Figure 99. Surrey Dive, Box Hill in c1920-54 (State Library of Victoria, H32492/8850)



Figure 100. The outdoor swimming pool at Box Hill soon after opening in 1939 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0642 and B9300)



Figure 101. Aerial view showing the Standard Brickworks with the drained Surrey Dive and foundations for the Box Hill Swimming Pool and Recreation Centre to the rear, 1981 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0210)



Figure 102. The ornamental lake at Surrey Dive, with the old brickworks behind, 1988 (Box Hill Historical Society, no B9132)



Figure 103. Nunawading Pool, 1973 prior to its enclosure (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3604)

Lawn bowling clubs have also maintained a presence in the City of Whitehorse. A few clubs, such as those in Box Hill and Blackburn, were formed prior to World War II, with upgrades to their facilities occurring later. In 1953, the Box Hill Bowling Club relocated from its original green in Watts Street to new premises on Whitehorse Road.³⁹⁷ The Mitcham Bowling Club was founded in 1958 and a site for a green and clubhouse in Halliday Park, off Mitcham Road, was provided by the City of Nunawading. It occupied a makeshift shed until a purpose-built clubroom was completed in the 1960s. The RSL clubs in Box Hill and Blackburn established associated bowling clubs in the post-war era, each with its own green.

³⁹⁷ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 202.

Related heritage places

HO217 – Surrey Dive and surrounds, 354 Elgar Road, Box Hill

HO257 – Box Hill Swimming Pool Precinct

9.2 Drive-ins and cinemas

Moving pictures were shown as part of a Cinematographic exhibition at the Box Hill Annual Show in 1907, but it was not until 1911 that regular screenings began.³⁹⁸ Throughout Australia at that time, films were screened in any large open space which could accommodate seating and a projector, including church halls, town halls, public halls, or even parks. In the Box Hill area, the main venue was the Recreation Hall on Whitehorse Road, although films were also shown in the recreation halls at Blackburn and Surrey Hills.

The first purpose-built cinema, or 'picture palace,' in Australia was built in Sydney in 1910, and many others soon appeared in various cities and suburbs.³⁹⁹ It was in 1920 that the first one appeared in the municipality, when the 1,200-seat New Theatre was erected on the corner of Whitehorse Road and Watts Street.⁴⁰⁰ The old Recreation Hall on the other side of the road could not cope with the competition, and promptly reverted to being a dance hall. Nine years later, however, it was remodelled, emerging triumphantly as the Rialto Theatre. Not to be outdone, the competing New Theatre immediately changed its name to the Lyric Theatre; in 1937, it was remodelled and changed its name again, this time to the Regent.⁴⁰¹ The introduction of television in 1956 saw the gradual closure of many Australian cinemas, and the Rialto in Box Hill closed three years later. It was subsequently remodelled as a shopping arcade. Its long-time competitor, the Regent, survived until 1970.⁴⁰²

The first drive-in cinema in Australia was opened in Burwood in 1954.⁴⁰³ A venture of a company known as Auto Theatres Australia Ltd, the facility was designed by the architectural firm, A C Leith & Bartlett, whose principal, Arthur Leith, was a director of the development company. The complex, with parking for 652 cars and a children's playground in front of the screen, originally comprised a main building (with diner, projection room and toilets), a ticket booth, substation and storeroom. It subsequently expanded to include a Polynesian-themed communal dining room known as the Maori Hut (1955), a walk-in shelter (1959), a western-themed BBQ area (1960s) and a new ticket booth (1975). Although the drive-in closed in the early 1980s, a number of its structures currently remain including the former Maori Hut, walk-in shelter, BBQ area and replacement ticket booth. Like most of the drive-ins in metropolitan Melbourne, the one at Burwood closed in the 1980s.

³⁹⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 130.

³⁹⁹ Ross Thorne, *Picture Palace Architecture in Australia*, pp 7-8.

⁴⁰⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 145.

⁴⁰¹ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 158, 173.

⁴⁰² Daniel Catrice, 'Cinemas in Melbourne, 1896-1942', M Arts thesis, Monash University, 1991, p 193.

⁴⁰³ Eleanor Findlay & Marjorie Morgan, *Those were the days: Box Hill in pictures*, Box Hill, 1994, pp 34-35.



Figure 104. The Hoyts Skyline drive in cinema site at Burwood, c 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0928)



Figure 105. The Hoyts Skyline drive in cinema site at Burwood, c 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B0069)

Figure 106. The Hoyts Skyline drive in cinema site at Burwood, c 1950s (Box Hill Historical Society, no B2623)

No cinemas were erected in the former City of Nunawading in the 'picture palace' era. Instead, films were shown in the various local halls. The Mitcham Memorial Hall, completed in 1925, showed films for many years. Indeed, the vacant site had been used for open-air film screenings in the early 1920s to raise funds for the erection of the building itself.⁴⁰⁴ The Blackburn Recreation Hall, near the railway in Blackburn Road, was still being used as a cinema in the 1960s. The first purpose-built theatre in the Nunawading area was erected in Mahoneys Road, Forest Hill in the 1960s.⁴⁰⁵ Opened in 1968, the Forest Hill Cinema had a capacity of 362. Originally independently run, it was later taken over by Dendy (1970) and then Village (1978) before reverting to independent. It finally closed in 1989, following the completion of the new Hoyts multi-screen complex at Forest Hill Chase shopping centre, on the opposite side of Mahoneys Road.⁴⁰⁶

Related heritage places

HO281 – Burwood Skyline Drive-In Cinema, Burwood Highway, Burwood

⁴⁰⁴ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 162.

⁴⁰⁵ Valda Arrowsmith, Nunawading Historical Society, pers comm.

⁴⁰⁶ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 214.

9.3 Music and drama

A dramatic club had been formed in Box Hill as early as 1888.⁴⁰⁷ Bands became popular in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and many were formed including the Box Hill Military Band, the Box Hill Temperance Brass Band, and the Nunawading District Brass Band. In the 1930s, former child star Iris Roderick was a central figure in Box Hill's theatrical community. She produced plays for the Box Hill Operatic Society, as well as forming her own School of Dancing.⁴⁰⁸ In the early 1930s, many amateur groups were formed; in Mitcham alone, these included the Mitcham Choral and Orchestral Society, the Mitcham and District Musical and Dramatic Society, and the Mitcham Musical Society.⁴⁰⁹ In the 1940s, similar groups were inaugurated in Box Hill, and the band and the operatic society were both revived.⁴¹⁰

A special committee formed by the City of Box Hill in 1945 – which had prompted the establishment of the Box Hill City Art Group (1952) – similarly resulted in the establishment of the Box Hill City Ballet Group (1951) and the Box Hill City Drama Group (c1955).⁴¹¹ Other groups, such as the Box Hill South Square Dance Club (1953) and the Box Hill Musical Comedy Society (1958), emerged independently.

The Mitcham Repertory Group, formed in 1952, held its meetings in the Warnes Road residence of Cecil and Daphne Powell.⁴¹² With a complete absence of suitable performance spaces in the City of Nunawading, the company staged its first play in the city in a church hall in Latrobe Street. It was later brought under the umbrella of the new Nunawading Arts Council, together with the Mitcham Arts Association, Blackburn Film Society, and the Blackburn branch of the Musical Society of Victoria.⁴¹³ The Utassy Ballet Company, founded in 1961 by Hungarian migrant Eugene Utassy, was also included within the Nunawading Arts Council.

Performance or dramatic groups that have emerged since the mid-1960s include The Avenue Church Players, which was founded in 1965 by the Blackburn Presbyterian Church and later re-named the Blackburn Players. In the early 1970s, the existing Box Hill Musical Comedy Society and the Box Hill Light Opera Company were similarly updated and re-named, respectively, as Whitehorse Musical Theatre and NOVA Music Theatre.

Until the opening of the Nunawading Arts Centre in 1985, performances, whether musical or dramatic, mostly took place in local recreation halls. An arts centre had been part of the original brief for the Nunawading Civic Centre in 1964, but it was eliminated from the masterplan when residents balked at rising costs.⁴¹⁴ The Whitehorse Centre, which included a 400-seat auditorium, was built as the Nunawading Arts Centre in 1985 to the design of local architect David Gawler (former Nunawading Councillor and mayor), son of John Gawler (architect and former Box Hill Councillor). It was constructed to the rear of the existing civic offices. The venue subsequently became the performance base for local performance

⁴⁰⁷ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 88-89.

⁴⁰⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 171-72.

⁴⁰⁹ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 166.

⁴¹⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 196.

⁴¹¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 130.

⁴¹² Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 168.

⁴¹³ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 135.

⁴¹⁴ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, pp 171-72.

groups including the Whitehorse Musical Theatre, NOVA Music Theatre and Babirra Musical Theatre. A major redevelopment of the arts centre is due to be completed in 2023. The new facilities known as The Round were designed by BKK Architects in collaboration with Kerstin Thompson Architects and include a 626-seat auditorium, 200 seat studio theatre, rehearsal studios, function centre and an improved soundshell for outdoor events.

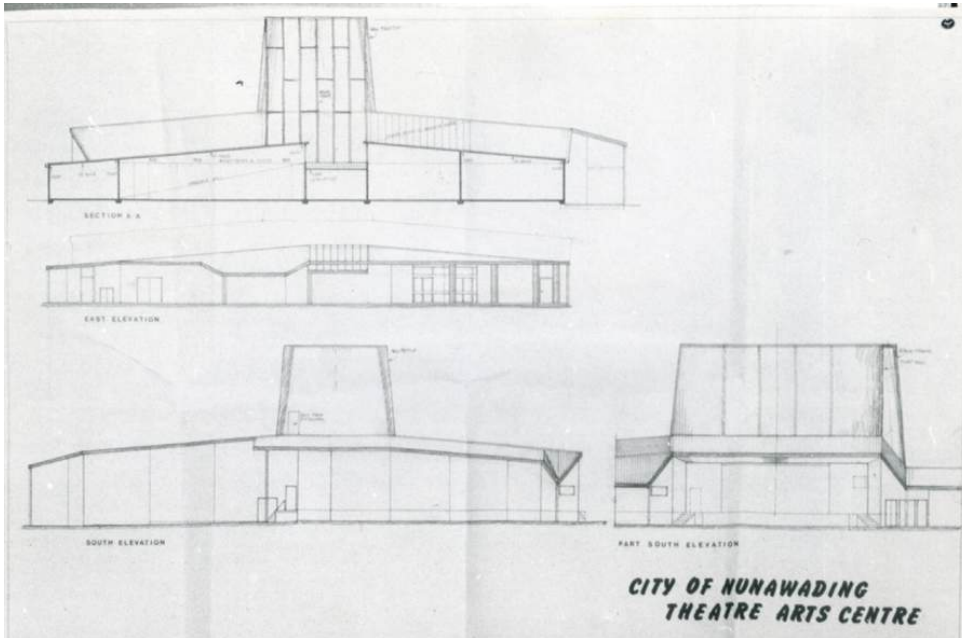


Figure 107. Architectural drawing for Nunawading Theatre Arts Centre, 1985 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP3206)



Figure 108. Photograph of the Arts Centre in 1986 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NHP4274)

9.4 Visual arts

In 1885, a group of painters, eager to implement the techniques of plein-air painting which they had seen while travelling through Europe, set up a camp on the banks of Gardiner's Creek in Box Hill South. This group included then-unknown painters Tom Roberts, Louis Abrahams and Frederick McCubbin, later joined by other artists including Arthur Streeton and Jane Sutherland. Many of their now-famous paintings used the local landscape as a backdrop. Roberts's *The Artist's Camp* depicts the site at Gardiner's Creek, and McCubbin's *The Bush Burial* was painted while being 'carefully posed at Blackburn with a specially dug grave'.⁴¹⁵ After three years, the artists relocated their studio to Eaglemont, becoming well-known as the Heidelberg School of painters. The important historical link between the Heidelberg School and the Box Hill area has not been forgotten. A large exhibition of their paintings was held in the Town Hall to celebrate the centenary of Box Hill in 1957.⁴¹⁶

Since then, artists have thrived in Whitehorse. In the City of Box Hill, a special committee was formed in 1945 to consolidate interest in the establishment of local cultural organisations. The Box Hill Art Group, founded in 1952, was one of the groups to emerge from this initiative. In 1962 an art exhibition held to raise funds for the construction of a local kindergarten prompted the establishment of the Mitcham Arts Association.⁴¹⁷ In 1966, this became one of several local groups to be united under the umbrella of the newly-formed Nunawading Arts Council. Five years later, the Mitcham Arts Association obtained a permanent home of its own when it acquired the lease to a Council-owned house in Humphreys Avenue.⁴¹⁸ A similar group, the Eastern Suburbs Art & Craft Group, was formed in the late 1960s by a group of 'housewives' in Forest Hill.⁴¹⁹ By the early 1970s, the group was holding classes not only in Forest Hill but also North Balwyn, Bentleigh and Frankston, and staging an annual exhibition at the Mount Pleasant Hall on Canterbury Road.⁴²⁰

By the late 1980s, local art and craft groups had flourished to the point that the City of Box Hill appointed a Community Arts Officer and provided the former electricity depot in Station Street as a place where these groups could meet and work. The building was not ideal for this purpose however and architect Greg Burgess, who had been engaged to design the refurbishment, suggested that an entirely new purpose-built facility could be erected elsewhere for the same amount of money. The result was the Box Hill Community Centre (1991), located in Station Street, which was designed by Burgess with the participation of local artists and the community. The building remains a foci for the local arts community.

⁴¹⁵ Niall Brennan, *A history of Nunawading*, Melbourne, 1972, p 104.

⁴¹⁶ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 200.

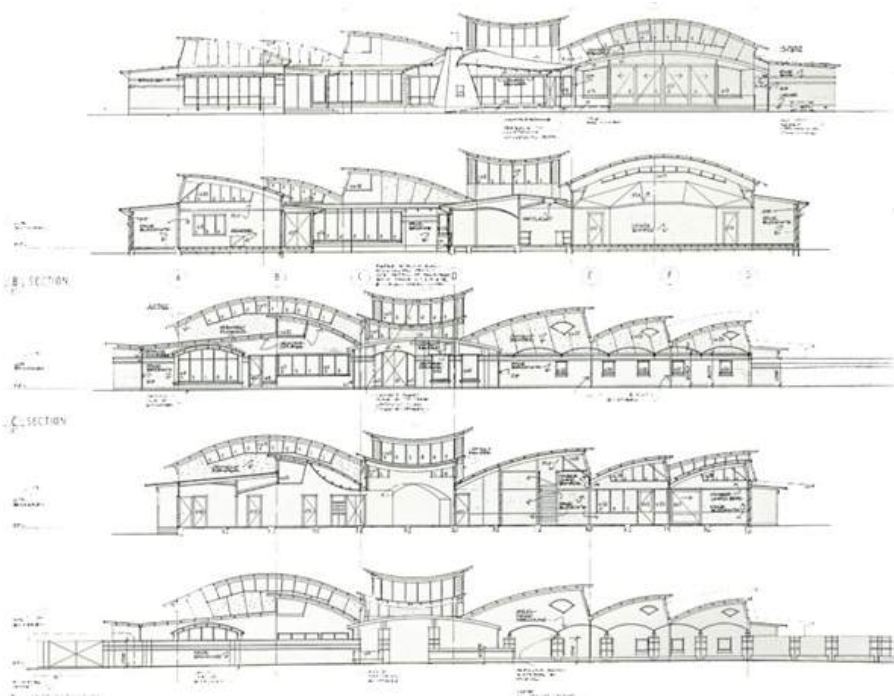
⁴¹⁷ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 182.

⁴¹⁸ Diane Sydenham, *Windows on Nunawading*, North Melbourne, 1990, p 224.

⁴¹⁹ *The Age*, 5 November 1968, p 15.

⁴²⁰ *The Age*, 2 December 1971, p 18.

Figure 109. Architectural drawings for the Box Hill Community Arts Centre, 1991 (www.gbarch.com.au)



A noted aspect of the cultural life of the municipality has been the creation and development of a municipal art collection. Although the City of Box Hill had commissioned a portrait of a retiring Town Clerk back in 1927, it was not until the 1950s that the donation of six more paintings formed the basis of a collection.⁴²¹ This burgeoned during the 1960s under Town Clerk Andrew Walls, who acquired works from dealers as well as local art shows and exhibitions. Curatorship of the collection formalised in 1983 with the establishment of the Box Hill Art Advisory Committee, which not only broadened the collection's scope by acquiring works in many different media, but also began to commission public art. The first of these was a bronze sculpture by Anthony Pryor, entitled *Performers*, which was installed in the Box Hill Mall in 1985.⁴²²

During this same period, the City of Nunawading also commissioned works of public art, notably the stained-glass windows at the new Nunawading Arts Centre (1985) and a bronze sculpture by Inge King, *Dervish*, at the entrance to the Nunawading Civic Centre (1998). Following Council amalgamation in the mid-1990s, the two municipal art collections merged to form the City of Whitehorse Art Collection and a permanent exhibition space was provided at the former Box Hill Town Hall. To mark the creation of the new municipality, two works of public art were commissioned: *Unity* by Stephen Glassborrow (on the Whitehorse Road median at Box Hill) and the *Spirit of Whitehorse* by Graham Radcliffe (at the Council offices in Nunawading).

Related heritage places

HO246 – Box Hill Community Arts Centre, 470 Station Street, Box Hill

⁴²¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 130-31.

⁴²² Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 237.

9.5 Film and television

It has been suggested that the 1906 movie *The Story of the Kelly Gang* – not only the first full-length feature film ever produced in Australia, but in the world – may have been partly filmed in the Mitcham area.⁴²³ However, modern film and television production did not arrive in the municipality for another 60 years, with the 1965 opening of the new Channel O (later Channel 10) Studios in Forest Hill. Designed by architects Hassell & McConnell, the building accommodated what was then Melbourne’s fourth TV network, and only the second with its own entirely purpose-built studio facility.

Over the following decades, innumerable television programmes would be created, rehearsed and filmed at Forest Hill. Filming not only took place in the studios, but also in the extensive grounds that surrounded the building – perhaps most famously when rows of false windows were attached to a blank side wall to represent the fictitious Wentworth Detention Centre in the cult drama series *Prisoner* (1979-81). Some of the sequences in *Prisoner* were also filmed on location in the surrounding suburbs. Amongst the locations identified are the Forest Hill Shopping Centre, the Burvale Hotel-Motel, the Box Hill Hospital and the Laburnum railway station.⁴²⁴ An Edwardian timber villa at 27 Howard Street, Box Hill, was also used to depict the private residence of one of the series’ most popular characters, vindictive prison officer Joan ‘The Freak’ Ferguson (played by Maggie Kirkpatrick).

In 1981, a tropical resort set was erected in the grounds of the Channel 10 studios for the filming of *Holiday Island*, a new drama series created by Crawford Productions. It was possibly this connection, or at least the general proximity of the Forest Hill studios, that prompted Crawford Productions to relocate from its own premises in Abbotsford to a new site in Box Hill South. The company acquired an eight-acre site in the industrial precinct on the west side of Middleborough Road, where a new office and studio complex opened in 1981.⁴²⁵ Aside from the short-lived *Holiday Island*, productions that emerged during Crawford’s time at Box Hill South included *Carson’s Law* (1983-84) and *The Flying Doctors* (1986-93). In 1987, an ailing Hector Crawford sold his entire company including its name, film library and the property in Box Hill South. The latter was subsequently upgraded with new studios that opened in April 1988.⁴²⁶

The year 1988 also marked the start of a new Channel Ten TV series destined for noted longevity: a soap opera simply titled *Neighbours*. It was filmed at the Forest Hill studios, where the old *Holiday Island* set was recycled to represent the fictitious Lasseter’s Hotel complex. Location filming was otherwise focused on a nearby cul-de-sac, Pin Oak Court in Vermont South, which represented the fictitious Ramsay Street for over 30 years. Exterior scenes were filmed at many other places around the City of Whitehorse. Local places filmed to represent counterparts in the fictitious suburb of Erinsborough include the Weedon Heights Primary School (‘Erinsborough Primary School’), the former Killoura Primary School in Burwood East (‘Erinsborough

⁴²³ Eric Reade, *The Australian Screen: a pictorial history of Australian film-making*, Melbourne, 1975, p 28.

⁴²⁴ ‘Prisoner locations’, *Prisoner Cell Block H: on the inside*, <https://www.prisoner-cellblockh.co.uk/reference/locations.html>, accessed 23 November 2022.

⁴²⁵ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 208.

⁴²⁶ *The Age*, 30 March 1988, p 14.



High School'), the Forest Hill Chase Shopping Centre ('Erinsborough Plaza'), the Eley Park Community Centre ('Erinsborough & District Community Hall') and the former Box Hill Town Hall ('Erinsborough Court House').

The early 1990s saw significant changes to television production in the City of Whitehorse. In 1991, the Box Hill South studios were taken over by WIN Television, which had acquired Crawford Productions. The following year, Channel Ten vacated the Forest Hill studios when it relocated its administrative functions to the Como Centre in South Yarra. Both studios, however, remained in use. While ownership of the Forest Hill property passed to a private company, Global Television, in 1995, Channel Ten continued to lease the facilities for the filming of many programmes, including *Neighbours*.

Since the 1990s, several Australian feature films have also been produced using the studio facilities at both Box Hill South and Forest Hill, including the highly successful film *The Dish* (2000), which was partly filmed at the former Crawford studios. The latter facility closed in 2005 and was demolished the following year for the construction of a Bunnings hardware store.



Figure 110. Former Channel O Studios at Forest Hill, 1964 (Courtesy of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc, no NP4490)

Related heritage places

HO272 – Former ATV 0 Television Studios, 104-168 Hawthorn Road, Forest Hill

10 PROTECTING AND PRESERVING WHITEHORSE'S HERITAGE

10.1 The National Trust

The former Wesleyan Chapel in Woodhouse Grove, Box Hill North, dating to 1856, was the first building within the City of Whitehorse to be classified by the National Trust, in November 1961. This was followed by the classification of Schwerkolt's Cottage in Mitcham, which was classified in February 1964 after being narrowly saved from demolition by the action of the City of Nunawading. Though Lydswood, a red brick Victorian mansion at 12 Stanhope Street, Mont Albert, was classified in April 1970, historic sites within the municipality did not otherwise attract much interest from the National Trust until 1980, when St Andrew's Uniting Church on Whitehorse Road, Box Hill – a building relocated there from West Melbourne – was classified.

Blackburn Lake and the nearby Bellbird streets became part of an early significant landscape classification for the National Trust. In 1976 the Trust classified the lake and seven streets in the Bellbird area describing the area as 'an oasis in suburbia...' which 'retain a quiet, almost rural character unique in Melbourne.'⁴²⁷

Since the 1980s, the National Trust has become more active in classifying places in the City of Whitehorse, including the former Standard Brickworks in Federation Street, Box Hill (September 1988), Blood's Cottage in Station Street (August 1993; since demolished), the original portion of the Vermont State School (June 1990), the Box Hill Town Hall (June 1996) and the Wunderlich Terracotta Roof Tile Company's site in Vermont (August 1998). From the 1990s, the Trust also began to classify significant trees, and several examples have been noted in the City of Whitehorse.

Since 2000, the Trust has turned its attention to more recent buildings, including the Chapel of St Joseph in Mont Albert North designed by Edmond & Corrigan in the mid-1970s. These places have variously been deemed to be of cultural significance at the local, regional, state or even (in the case of the Chapel of St Joseph) the national level.

10.2 Designating historic sites

Independent of the work of the National Trust, local interest in the preservation of historic sites emerged in the early 1960s. In both Box Hill and Nunawading, the establishment of historical societies stemmed from the threatened demolition of cherished local landmarks. Upton House in Nelson Road, the former residence of pioneer Arundel Wrighte, was acquired by the Box Hill District Hospital in 1962 and demolished, prompting the formation of Box Hill Historical Society in 1963.⁴²⁸ Two years later, a counterpart in Nunawading was established after Schwerkolt's Cottage in Mitcham was similarly threatened with demolition. In that case, intervention by the local Council prevented the loss of what was then considered to be the oldest

⁴²⁷ 'Blackburn Lake and Bellbird Streets', National Trust Database, http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/search/nattrust_result_detail/70271 accessed on 25 May 2023.

⁴²⁸ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 208.



surviving building in the municipality. In what was then a notable project, the Council engaged architects John & Phyllis Murphy to repair and restore the building. It was officially opened as a public museum by the Governor of Victoria in October 1964.⁴²⁹

From the early 1970s, community interest in the preservation of the historic environment increased at a rapid rate. Around that time, the newly-formed Box Hill Association expressed its concern about the demolition of older houses for higher-density apartment development.⁴³⁰ The application of planning controls to protect significant places in the municipality dates back to 1985, when the City of Nunawading introduced Special Residential (Nunawading) Zone No 5, covering six streets in the Bellbird Area of Blackburn that had previously been deemed by the National Trust to possess 'a quiet almost rural character unique to Melbourne'.⁴³¹ The City of Box Hill was the first of the two Councils to commission a heritage study with the *City of Box Hill Heritage & Conservation Study* completed by Andrew Ward in 1990. Four years later, the City of Nunawading Heritage Survey Project was completed by Context Pty Ltd. Following Council amalgamation in the mid-1990s, the recommendations of both heritage studies were re-visited in the *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review* (1999) by Allom Lovell & Associates. Further studies have been undertaken in the ensuing years, including the 2001 *Whitehorse Heritage Review* by Andrew Ward, the 2012 *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review* by Coleman Architects and the *City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study* (2016) by Built Heritage.

⁴²⁹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, pp 134-35.

⁴³⁰ Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne, 1978, p 221.

⁴³¹ Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, 2010, p 195.

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