

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Database No:

Identifier Substation

Formerly



Not within HO Area

Address 52 Balston Street
EAST ST KILDA

Category Residential

Constructed c.1929

Designer Unknown

Significance

What is Significant?

The electrical substation at 52 Balston Street, East St Kilda, is a small brick building of somewhat utilitarian form, enlivened by a jerkinhead roof behind a canted capped brick parapet.

How is it Significant?

The electrical substation is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it Significant?

Historically, the substation is significant for its associations with the expansion of services infrastructure during the inter-War period, when there was much residential settlement in the East St Kilda area. It appears to be unusual building type in the area, and possibly in the entire municipality.

Aesthetically, the substation remains as a prominent and distinctive element in the streetscape, distinguished by its unusual jerkinhead roof and canted parapet.

Primary Source

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Other Studies

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Description

The substation is a small single-storey red brick building with a jerkinhead roof of corrugated galvanized steel, partly concealed by a canted parapet with decorative brick capping. The façade has an off-centre doorway with concrete lintel, containing a pair of ledged-and-braced timber doors.

History

This building first appears in the *Sands & McDougall Directory* in 1930, listed only as an 'electric power station' alongside No 50 Balston Street but with no numerical designation of its own.

Comparative Analysis

No electric substations have been individually identified in previous heritage studies undertaken for the City of Port Phillip or its predecessors, although two examples have been cursorily mentioned in Francine Gilfedder's discussions of landscaping within heritage precincts. Both are located in public reserves and appear to date from the inter-war period. One, prominently sited at the intersection of Princes, Raglan & Nott Streets in Port Melbourne, is a stark rectilinear volume in the Art Deco style, presumably dating from the 1930s. It has a clinker brick base and smooth rendered walls above; the roof is concealed by a stepped parapet, enlivened by a row of projecting Roman bricks. The other example, located in Jacoby Reserve in Cowderoy Street, St Kilda West, is simpler in form and detailing, and appears to date from the 1920s. It is a basic red brick building with a gabled roof of corrugated galvanised steel; the walls (since painted green) are embellished with band of roughcast render along the top. Another inter-War substation exists within HO8 (*Elwood: Glenhuntly and Ormond Road*), located on Byron Street (near Goldsmith Street), overlooking the canal. This is a stark rendered cube with little architectural pretension beyond a slightly stepped coping to the parapet and a low pediment.

While a complete typological study of inter-War electrical substations in the City of Port Phillip has not yet been undertaken, these few documented examples suggest that there is considerable stylistic variety amongst them. The example at Balston Street, with its distinctive jerkinhead roof and canted parapet, is certainly more sophisticated in design than the utilitarian one in Jacoby Reserve, but somewhat less so than the bold Art Deco example in Princes Street. The Balston Street substation also stands out from the three examples cited above in that it is part of a residential streetscape, as opposed to an object in an open parkland setting.

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the City of Port Phillip Planning Scheme

References

Sands & McDougall Directory: 1930.