

SOUTH MELBOURNE PROPERTY - "W" Car Running Shed and Civil Branch Yard

This property covers the whole block bounded by Kingsway (formerly Hanna Street), Dorcas, Wells and Bank Streets, and is on a 99 year lease. Its most prominent feature is the large, nine track running shed and adjoining red-brick offices and amenities block. The running shed has individual pits to each track; a few years ago the rails on some tracks were raised to provide greater pit depth for shed-men working underneath trams. The Depot was completed in 1926. Accommodation was provided from inception for a breakdown wagon, and a wheel grinder was later added at the rear of the Shed (probably in the early 1930's). South Melbourne Depot ran a full shed of trams for many years, but modifications to rosters some years ago reduced the allocation. Some of the "spare" space is used to accommodate trams from other Depots between the peaks on week-days, and to house works trams and stored trams.

The south western section of the property contains buildings which house some tower wagons and a new electrical sub-station built last year to replace a nearby unit. The remainder of the property is devoted to the Civil Branch - a new amenities building, the store and offices, vehicle parking area, rail stacks and construction area and associated buildings. All the Boards track construction and maintenance staff work from this yard, as well as their emergency vehicle. Turnouts, crossings and curves of all shapes and sizes are manufactured in the works area almost continuously to keep pace with the replacement programme. Manganese castings were formerly used for points and crossings, but recent years has seen a change to fabrication of these items, the most recent of which are two "three-way" crossings for the northern side of Balaclava Junction (Melbourne's only "Grand Union"). Curve rail in recent years has featured a "bolt-on" check rail.

HAWTHORN DEPOT

Hawthorn Depot was built by the Hawthorn Tramways Trust to serve its tramway from Batman Avenue, City, to Burwood. It is situated at the western end of Riversdale Road, at the junction of Power Street and Wallen Road, Hawthorn. Opened in April 1916 as a five-road shed sited behind an impressive multi-storey red-brick office, an amenities building, a second four track shed was soon added, and provision made for yet a third shed (which was never built). The Depot served the Burwood, Wattle Park and Hawthorn Bridge routes initially and, subsequently, the Hawthorn, Prahran-City and North Richmond routes with some peak runs to North Balwyn. As a rationalisation move, and to remove shunting trams from Wallen Road in peak periods, the Depot was closed on Saturday 13th February, 1965. The sub-station and the portion previously converted for use by the Clothing Department continued to be used, together with the original tram driving school. The latter was replaced by a new and enlarged area which much more equipment, which has been subsequently supplemented. The remainder of the up-stairs rooms were converted into a training centre with offices and lecture rooms in 1974. Large wire-mesh gates were fitted to the southern shed in 1965 and it was used to store buses for about three years, when W2 class trams began to be stored there. The gates were clad with galvanised corrugated iron in 1972, but the north shed did not receive its gates until 1979. The south shed has housed the trams and buses that are allocated to the Training School in recent years plus several stored W2 class trams.

Camberwell Depot

This running shed and its adjacent office and amenities block was built during 1929-30. It featured a 115 feet clear-span roof over nine roads in the car shed. It was claimed that this saved space and gave greater safety by eliminating intermediate columns. The pits consisted of a sunken floor from which rose steel cross frames to support heavy rails instead of the conventional arrangement of individual pits to each track. This arrangement allowed greater freedom of movement for the shed staff and better lighting.

Camberwell Depot has housed many types of trams down the years, including C and CW5 cars, W3 and T. During the early 1940's it shared almost the whole of the sliding door cars with Hawthorn Depot. It would probably still be a typical Melbourne "green tram" running shed but for the decision to build the East Burwood extension. It was decided to operate this new trackage with the modern Z class trams, and the first two cars appeared on Saturday 4th July 1977 to enable training of crews to commence. The first passenger operation began on 1st August to the old Burwood terminus, and the route was fully serviced with the opening of the extension on 20th July, 1978. It was decided to make Camberwell a fully Z-car Depot and the first change on the Wattle Park route took place on Monday 13th November. The week-end of 4th/5th August 1979 marked the removal of the last W cars and Camberwell became an all Z-car Shed. The "Camberwell - Route 72" services were transferred to Malvern Depot as they were to remain W car operated.