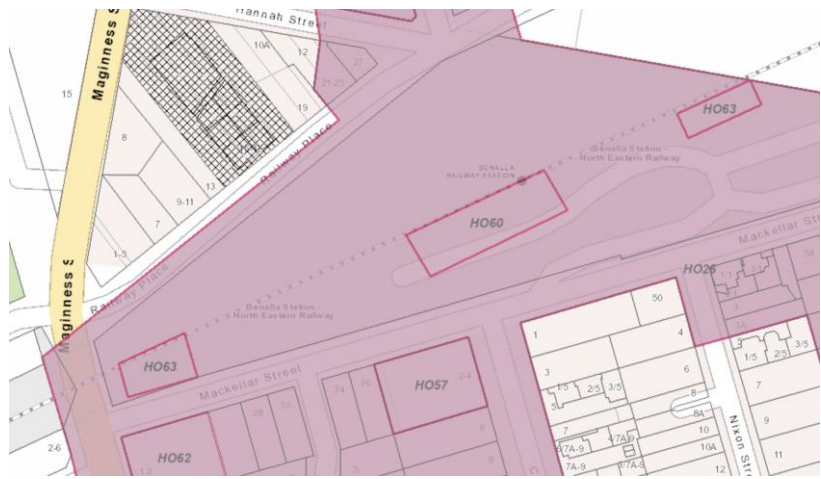


Place Citation HO60
Benalla Railway Station Mackellar Street Benalla

Address	Mackellar Street, BENALLA		
Heritage Overlay	HO60		
Heritage Overlay Map			
Designer/s	PWD Thomas Higginbotham Engineer in Chief Victorian Railways	Dates	1874 – original station building was constructed 1889 - additions
Significance	Local	Builder/s	T. Julian and Co.
Heritage Overlay Map	Heritage Overlay will require a review as mapping to include station and goods shed.	Survey Date	March 2024

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Aerial view of the station building and the approached



View to the platform



View to the station building from the car park area



View to the station building from the car park area



Side view of the station (west)

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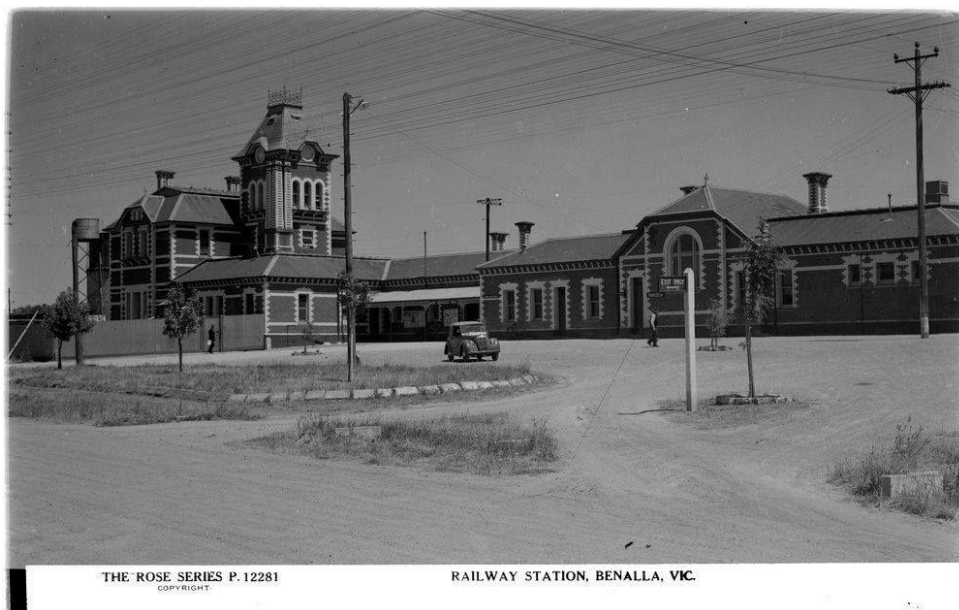
View to the side elevation (east)



Detail of the platform area



View to the Goods Shed (not included in any statement of significance)



Railway station before the demolition of the later additions.

Statement of Significance (1992)

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Source: City of Benalla Conservation Study (1992), T Budge & associates

The Benalla station building contributes to the architectural character of the North-Eastern railway and survives as an early and distinctive public building in the City continuing in the important economic role assigned to it in 1874. This building recalls the role of the railway in Benalla since its inception and remains as the most tangible evidence of its status within the community, offering comfortable waiting and refreshment services for passengers travelling on the intercolonial railway and branch line services to Yarrowonga and later Oaklands and Tatong.

The following Statement of Significance has been prepared according to the provisions of the Planning Practice Note 01: Applying the Heritage Overlay, (2018)

Assessment against criteria

The following analysis is based on Victorian Government Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay (August 2018).

Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

Criterion C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to understanding our cultural or natural history (research potential).

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

Criterion G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Benalla Railway Station complex at Mackellar Street Benalla is significant.

The context provided by the setting which includes the tracks and landscaped areas surrounding the station building contributes to its significance.

The palm trees *Phoenix canariensis* are significant to this complex.

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- Significant fabric includes, but is not confined to the: the form, fabric and features of the: railway station building; platform and platform awning; cast iron verandah posts; timber framed windows and doors and the decorative polychromatic brickwork.
- Significant fabric includes, but is not confined to the: form, fabric and features of the goods shed; the corrugated iron cladding; the corrugated iron roofing; timber doors; platform and the regularity of the openings that face onto the railway line.

The context as provided by the setting which includes the railway track lines on both the north and south sides.

Alterations from the mid twentieth century are not significant.

How is it Significant?

The Benalla Railway Station and goods shed are of local historical, representative and social cultural heritage significance to the Benalla Rural City.

Why is it Significant?

The Benalla Railway station building and the goods shed are of historical significance as they provide evidence of an important transport link that contributed to the economy and the development of Benalla during much of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century. The railway station and goods shed were important as they facilitated links between the markets in Melbourne and the farms and associated agricultural industries in the Benalla district and surrounding regional areas. The rural economy rapidly developed as a consequence of the access to markets and resources. (Criterion A)

The Benalla Railway Station and the goods shed are of representative significance for their typical station building architecture as designed under the direction of Thomas Higinbotham, Engineer in Chief of the Victorian Railways during this period. Under Higinbotham the Victorian Railways developed prototypes for many of its buildings on North East Rail line and this included station buildings and goods sheds with Benalla and Seymour station buildings being identical when they were constructed. (Criterion D)

Additional Controls

External paint controls apply	Yes
Internal alteration controls apply	No
Tree controls apply <i>Phoenix Canariensis</i> (2)	Yes
Outbuildings or fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-4	No
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 2017	No
Prohibited uses permitted	No
Aboriginal heritage place	No
Solar energy system controls apply	Yes

Description and Integrity

A single storeyed bi-chromatic brick station building conforming originally to a standard design erected elsewhere on the north-eastern railway and significantly enhanced by additions now mostly demolished. The whole building has been overpainted. The original red face brick with contrasting cream brick detailing is now painted red with the contrasting brickwork picked out in cream paint. This decorative feature applies to the openings and corners of the building. The platform canopy retains its cast iron posts. Surviving elements of note include the formerly detached toilets block at the north-west end, the jerkin head roof and the cast iron verandahs to rail and roadside elevations.

Despite the circa 1889 dining room facilities, administrative offices and tower being demolished in 1974, the extant station buildings and structures provide evidence of the original design and demonstrate much of the architectural intent of the original design (1873).

The Benalla Railway Station Complex comprises a narrow single-sided platform (number '1' on the upside) along the north boundary. Another platform is located on the south-east side, on the other side of the car parking, which is a later addition that serves the XPT line service Sydney to Melbourne.

The goods shed demonstrates typical features associated with goods sheds designed post 1873. It has a rectangular form with a pitched gable roof. There are a number of large sliding doors facing onto the railway lines and these were used as the receiving doors for freight. It has a timber frame with metal trusses and its cladding is corrugated galvanised metal (roof and walling).

Place History

A rail link for the north east district was critical for settlement and selection. This particularly applied to the rich agricultural lands between Avenel, Wangaratta and Shepparton as without access to markets these areas *'could be turned to little account (when) all these places were so isolated from the centres of population'*¹. Railways were expensive to construct and a cheaper construction method was promoted.

The economics of the rail line and the construction methods of a 'light line' were much debated. Many were concerned a light line would not perform as well as the more substantive main trunk lines. There was some concern that the light line would not be as reliable and that trains could not travel at high speeds. The speed of the railway was important as the railway was to provide a mail route for Europe via Suez and it would be the means of communication between Melbourne and Sydney.² The economics were debated with the light line railway spruiked as having the capacity to transport one hundred tons of goods per day on the opening of the railway line with large increases in volume to be expected on the opening of this important colonial transport route.³ The construction of the North East Rail line was also a race to the border at Albury as both NSW and Victoria wanted to secure the trade of the Riverina. Much of this trade was going through the port at Echuca.

Victoria had the lead and the construction of a light line would be cheaper and relatively quicker to get to the border. This can be compared to the rail construction as proposed by proposed by John Whitton the

¹ *The Argus*, 20 November 1873 p4

² *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June 1870, p 3

³ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June 1870, p 3

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New South Wales chief engineer as part of the push south to Albury which was substantive and expensive. The North-Eastern railway line was promoted as potentially providing a *net revenue sufficient to pay the whole of the interest of the money spent in building it*⁴. The Victorian approval through the Railway Loan Act 1868 saw Victoria complete the line to Wodonga and the Riverina markets by 1873 and it was not until June 14 1883 that the junction was made with New South Wales System at Albury.⁵

Light Line Rail - planning and construction

The planning for the North-Eastern railway started in the late 1860s with funding finally provided by the Railway Loan Act 1868. The Engineer-in-Chief Thomas Higinbotham realised that the engineering standards that were applied to the main trunk lines (Echuca and Ballarat) were unsustainable and an alternative was found with light line construction.⁶ The principles of light rail line construction had been utilised in Britain and were not unknown in the colonies. The variations in design for light lines are largely found in changes of materials and specifications. For example, the North-Eastern railway was constructed from steel and not iron and to a different design; ballast was reduced and sidings and the rolling stock were modified to reduce costs.⁷ Cost savings were also found in the construction of iron cylinder bridges over the major river crossings instead of masonry bridges.⁸ The station buildings were constructed to a type with the style and scale adapted to the size of the town that they serviced. The smaller stations were prioritised with the construction of the goods shed first with a section set aside within the goods shed for the station master and the station building was later. These new standards were applied to the North-Eastern rail as well as the later light line constructions such as lines to north west and branch lines.

Contractors for the first stage were appointed to construct the North-Eastern Rail in 1870, with the second and third stage contracts let later in the following year.⁹ The relatively rapid construction of the North-Eastern rail is a testimony to the ingenuity of Thomas Higinbotham Engineer-in-Chief. In addition to the design of the light lines and associated infrastructure, the design of the station buildings also varies in terms of design, scale and construction when compared to the earlier main trunk lines. Station buildings were not bespoke but followed model designs. Benalla followed Seymour and replicated its station design.

Three types of goods sheds were designed for the North East railway corridor. Of these, two of the shed designs were for light weight construction with the third type designed in a more typical manner from masonry as per earlier goods sheds. The lightweight sheds were a *'dramatic departure from the permanent structures erected for the same purpose on the Trunk Lines. Instead of bluestone or brick they were timber framed using red gum and kauri pine. The wall linings were corrugated iron clad beneath iron trusses supporting a riveted corrugated iron clad roof'*.¹⁰ The interior was adapted function as the station master's office with a doorway leading to the outside loading platform.¹¹

⁴ *The Argus*, 20 November 1873, p 4

⁵ L. J. Harrigan, *Victorian Railways to '62*, Victorian Railways, 1962, p88

⁶ Andrew Ward and Associates, *Study of Historic Railway Buildings and Structures for V/Line*, Volume 1, 1988, p26

⁷ Andrew Ward and Associates, *Study of Historic Railway Buildings and Structures for V/Line*, Volume 1, 1988, p26

⁸ A Ward, *A Story of Stations: The Architecture of Victoria's Railways in the Nineteenth Century*, Australian Railway Historical Society Victorian Division, 2019, p128

⁹ A Ward, *A Story of Stations: The Architecture of Victoria's Railways in the Nineteenth Century*, Australian Railway Historical Society Victorian Division, 2019, p128

¹⁰ A Ward, *A Story of Station. The Architecture of Victoria's Railways in the Nineteenth Century*, Australian Railway Historical Society, Victorian Division, 2019, p 128

¹¹ A Ward, *A Story of Station. The Architecture of Victoria's Railways in the Nineteenth Century*, Australian Railway Historical Society, Victorian Division, 2019, p 128

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The three types of goods sheds as designed specifically for the North-Eastern light line are:

- a corrugated iron clad shed with a semi-circular roof located beside running lines. Examples of these were found at Broadford and Wallan, all since demolished¹².
- a timber framed building clad with corrugated iron on masonry base walls, with gabled roof, an internal platform with a track running through the shed. (The inclusion of an internal platform was based on the traditional English principle adopted on the earlier main trunk lines). Examples of these were found at Wangaratta, Violet Town, Euroa, Longwood, Springhurst. Of these Euroa and Wangaratta are extant with the others either demolished or relocated and Wangaratta has been modified.
- a masonry shed constructed from brick with arched entries and gable roof. Examples of these are found at Chiltern, Barnawatha and Wodonga) and all are extant.¹³

The design of the goods sheds and in particular the prototype developed for Violet Town, Longwood, Euroa and Wangaratta was seen as '*dramatic departure from the permanent structures erected for the same purpose on the Trunk Lines.*'¹⁴ The goods shed was designed to include a separate office with a fireplace, ticket window, counter, copying press and doorway leading to the outside loading platform.¹⁵ The basalt and granite base wall was not a decorative item, it was critical to ensuring that the lightweight nature of the overall structure was not compromised through misadventure.

In essence the goods shed was constructed from pre-fabricated lightweight building materials as compared to earlier masonry goods shed that tend to be resource heavy and labour intensive. The structural system relies on a system that was transportable and did not rely on local industry for materials – which was scarce in all areas except for the gold fields. The structure include timber framing (red gum and kauri pine), corrugated iron cladding (walls and roof); prefabricated metal trusses and masonry materials for the base wall. All of these materials could be 'flat packed' and railed in and constructed on site with relatively low labour requirements.¹⁶

The materials and construction methods were not uncommon but the innovation lies in how they were used, and what they replaced which were masonry goods sheds. In terms of earlier prefabricated systems such as the prefabricated iron buildings from Britain, the scale as well as a use of specific materials and construction methods is significant. This particular design and construction system is represented by the goods sheds that were constructed at Euroa, Violet Town, Longwood and Wangaratta.

The extant Benalla Goods Shed replaces an earlier goods shed but the same principles, as developed as part of the light line construction method apply to its design and construction. It is lightweight in terms of structure, and is clad with light weight corrugated iron (walling and roofing).

The site of the station complex was a controversial decision at the time, guided by the 1870 flood of the Broken River to the south that engulfed the town. The growth of Benalla East was also promoted by

¹² A Ward, *A Story of Station. The Architecture of Victoria's Railways in the Nineteenth Century*, Australian Railway Historical Society, Victorian Division, 2019, p 129

¹³ Andrew Ward and Associates, *Study of Historic Railway Buildings and Structures*, Volume 1, 1988 p6

¹⁴ A Ward, *A Story of Station. The Architecture of Victoria's Railways in the Nineteenth Century*, Australian Railway Historical Society, Victorian Division, 2019, p 128

¹⁵ A Ward, *A Story of Station. The Architecture of Victoria's Railways in the Nineteenth Century*, Australian Railway Historical Society, Victorian Division, 2019, p 128

¹⁶ A Ward, *A Story of Station. The Architecture of Victoria's Railways in the Nineteenth Century*, Australian Railway Historical Society, Victorian Division, 2019, p 128

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developers such as George Sharp as being the critical to the location of the railway and the current location was finally agreed to.

The railway line opened on 18 August 1873, but only temporary facilities were provided. Tenders closed for the erection of station buildings at Seymour, Benalla and Wangaratta on 27.2.1874 (*The Age*, 4.2.1874) and T. Julian and Co. commenced work at Benalla soon afterwards. This first permanent building, was of an identical design to that at Seymour.

In 1888, M. Cuttance undertook extensive alterations under contract No. 3501 which included the distinctive three storeyed tower at the up end, and built soon after the opening of the Yarrawonga railway in 1886. These works included the addition of dining and refreshment room facilities and administrative offices, all topped by a large tower.

During 1913-1937 an island platform with cantilevered verandah was in existence serving the branches to Yarrawonga and Tatong. This provided a second and third platform, and were located to the west of the main station building. The platforms were linked by an iron footbridge, which was provided in 1888, and was located across the station yard. The island platform was removed in 1937, leaving the main platform only. Two signal boxes were built in 1888, both being extended in 1914. Only the signal box at the up end remains today, but is unused.

A locomotive shed was provided at Benalla early on, located at the down end of the station yard. Of corrugated iron construction, it could house six engines. In 1899, a roundhouse shed was erected, with the old shed used for wagon repairs. In 1908, a 70-foot (21 m) turntable was provided, replaced in 1953 by an electrically driven unit. Its use declined after the demise of steam locomotives, and several stalls were removed in 1960, to allow the construction of the parallel standard gauge track.

In 1961, boom barriers replaced interlocked gates at the Nunn Street level crossing, located nearby in the up direction of the station. In 1964, a platform was provided on the standard gauge line. By 1969, the turntable was booked out of use.

Late in 1974, the up end two-storey section and tower of the 1889 station building were demolished, on the basis that the whole building was too expensive to maintain, and to provide space for a car park. The demolition was postponed several times, due to the opposition of various local groups. By late 1975, a 3t crane at the station was abolished. In 1979, an underpass was provided at the up end of the station, to replace the footbridge that had been located at the down end of the station.

In 1985, the former Way & Works area was replaced with a new camp site. During that time, the former office and crew rooms of the locomotive depot were also demolished, and the passenger facilities in the main station building were also refurbished. On 27 April 1988, the former BP and Mobil oil sidings were abolished.

By 22 May 1990, the locomotive depot was closed. In May 1991, further alterations occurred, including the removal of a number of sidings, crossovers, disc signals and signal posts, and the sleeving of a number of levers, with further alterations occurring in July of the same year. Also, during 1991, the electric staff sections Benalla - Glenrowan - Wangaratta were abolished, and were replaced with electric staff section Benalla "B" Box - Wangaratta. A new 70-foot (21 m) turntable was also provided in 1991.

The former locomotive depot was hit by a severe storm on 22 November 1994, leaving the shed damaged and destroying two Tait carriages stored inside. The shed was later demolished.

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In 1998, former New South Wales regional passenger operator CountryLink rebuilt the standard gauge platform. The works included replacing the original deck with a steel deck covered with a concrete surface, refurbishing the platform shelters and providing new lighting, fencing, seating and bins.

V Line negatives: H2758, H2759, H2262, 33/4.

Turton, K., *Six and a Half Inches from Destiny*, ARHS, 1973, p.99

Trust Newsletter, December, 1974

ARHS Newsrail, Nov. 73, Feb. 75, May 75, Feb. 76, Oct. 76, Jan/Feb 79, May 82, May 85.

VR Newsletter, Nov. 65

Nu-Color-Vue: Benalla: The Railway Stations, C. 1973.

Australasian, 14.4.06, p.867

Illustrated Australian News, 7.11.93