

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Primary School No 1604, 2B Spring Road, Malvern (H097)



Figure 1. Primary School No 1604 – 2B Spring Road, Malvern (GJM Heritage, July 2020).

DATE: June 2021

Place type: School	Architect: Not known
Construction Date: 1875-1924	Builder: C Campbell (1889-90), John Burs (1907-08), S R Bolger (1923-24)

Historical Context Summary

The City of Stonnington stands on the Traditional Lands of the Woi wurrung and Boon Wurrung Peoples of the East Kulin Nations. Archaeologists believe that Aboriginal People have been in Victoria for more than 30,000 years. Throughout this long history their relationship with the landscape (where and how they live) has changed according to factors such as climate change, resource availability, and cultural change (Context 2006:10).

The first European settler in the Malvern district was John Gardiner in 1835, a pastoralist from New South Wales who was one of the first overlanders to Port Phillip. He pastured his stock near the junction of Gardiner’s Creek and the Yarra River and is the namesake of Gardiner’s Creek, Gardiner’s Creek Road (now Toorak Road) and both the locality and the Shire of Gardiner (before they were re-named Malvern). The first recorded use of the name Malvern was in January 1854, when barrister Charles B. G. Skinner named his hotel on the corner of Malvern and Glenferrie roads the ‘Malvern Hill’ after a district in England. The name for the Shire of Malvern was derived from Malvern Hill Estate, a private subdivision in the area dating to 1856 (City of Stonnington [CoS]; Context 2006:34).

The first land sales in the area were held in 1854 and most original Crown grantees subdivided their allotments for resale (Context 2006:41; 2009:4). Gardiner’s Road District was proclaimed in 1856 before Gardiner Shire was formed in 1871, which was renamed Malvern Shire in 1878 (CoS). The municipal boundary comprised the current localities of Malvern (previously Gardiner), Malvern East, Glen Iris (south of Gardiners Creek), Kooyong, Armadale (east of Kooyong Road), Toorak (east of Kooyong Road) and Chadstone (west of Warrigal Road). Early directories listed Malvern and Malvern East as the one locality, until 1910.

The former Malvern Shire saw slow population growth to 1881, by which time it totalled just under 2,000 people (Victorian Places). In 1879, the Oakleigh Railway Line was opened along the southern extent of the municipality, through Malvern, Armadale, Toorak and Hawksburn to join the existing line at South Yarra. The arrival of the Oakleigh railway coincided with the start of the land boom, which resulted in considerable urban growth. In the 1880s the district comprised substantial residences on large allotments, as well as pastoral and agricultural holdings (including market gardens and orchards) and commercial development (Context 2006:41, 65-6). During the 1880s boom period, the municipality saw a dramatic increase in population, quadrupling to approximately 8,000 by 1891, and steadily increasing to 10,000 by 1901 (Victorian Places). In the 1890s a number of timber houses were built in Malvern as an economy measure, but some residents complained that wooden houses would degenerate into slums. Concern about this development led to a slum abolition movement and subsequently, c1912, Malvern Council began to declare brick areas, where timber houses were not permitted. By 1916 the Council had also fixed a minimum area for individual housing allotments at 6000 square feet, with minimum frontages of fifty feet (Context 2006:128).

The railway line along the northern extent of the municipality was established in 1890 through the Glen Iris Valley from Burnley. Stations were established at Heyington, Kooyong, Tooronga, Gardiner, Glen Iris and Darling, however, expected residential development in their vicinity stalled during the 1890s following the economic collapse (Context 2006:66). The 1893 *Australian Handbook* (as cited in Victorian Places) described Malvern as ‘an elevated residential suburb’, served by a line of omnibuses from Prahran, with many leading merchants and professional men living in the area in pleasantly situated ‘dwellings of a superior class’. The entry noted that a number of notable mansions had been erected by this date, and that the market gardens

and orchards were 'steadily being reduced, and cut up into building allotments, on which [were] being erected many handsome villas and business establishments' (Victorian Places). The municipality saw rapid development and urbanisation from 1900 and it was declared a Borough and then a Town in 1901. In 1911 the municipality was declared a City, with a residential population of 16,000 (Context 2006:86; Victorian Places).

The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust was established in 1908, with electric tramlines opening along High Street in 1910-14, Glenferrie Road in 1910-13, to the south along Wattletree Road in 1910-12, and Malvern Road in 1915. The arrival of the tramlines further drove the development of commercial centres in the immediate vicinity and residential development beyond. New train stations were built at Armadale, Hawksburn, Malvern and Toorak between 1908 and 1918, and at Malvern East in 1929 (Context 2006:70-2, 113; Victorian Places).

Residential development during the early twentieth century generally occurred on newly subdivided estates or on nineteenth century subdivisions that had remained partly or wholly undeveloped during the 1890s depression (Context 2009:5). In 1912 it was reported that 800 houses a year were being built in the (by then) City of Malvern, which boasted 'a progress unprecedented by any other suburb' (Context 2009:128). In the decade between 1911 and 1921 the population in the City of Malvern doubled, from 16,000 to 32,000 residents, and then increased steadily to 43,000 by 1933 (Victorian Places). This population growth saw development spread to the Glen Iris Valley and the outer reaches of the City, in Malvern East. The housing stock in this eastern part of the municipality was more characteristically uniform and unadorned in comparison to housing in Malvern. Kooyong's development was substantially completed by the end of the 1920s (Context 2006:128, 131).

By 1946 the Australian Blue Book (as cited in Victorian Places) stated that Malvern was one of the 'leading residential suburbs of the Metropolis'. It comprised the substantial homes of many of Melbourne's leading citizens, in what was termed 'The Garden City' due to the number of parks and public gardens. Development in the City of Malvern steadied from the 1930s, with the population averaging 45,000 until the 1990s (Victorian Places). The City of Malvern amalgamated with the City of Prahran in 1994, to form the City of Stonnington.

Place History Summary

Two acres of land reserved in Spring Road, north of High Street, were excised for State school purposes in 1873 (Cooper 1935:180) and the first State school to be built in Malvern – Primary School No 1604 – was opened in July 1875. The two-roomed brick building, with slate-clad roof, was built to accommodate 300 pupils with provision for additional classrooms to cater for the rapidly increasing population in the area (*Age*, 2 July 1875:3).

A distinctive two-classroom wing, with prominent spired tower, was added to the north side of the building in 1889-90 (Figures 4-5) (Wiencke 1975:10; SHC) at a similar time to the opening of the Malvern Public Gardens on the surrounding reserved land (*Argus*, 13 Dec 1890:11). An additional three classrooms and cloakroom were added further to the north in 1907-08 (Wiencke 1975:15) and seven rooms and a teachers' room were added around the existing buildings in 1923-24 (*Herald*, 12 Dec 1924:3). Two classrooms were added to the south-west corner of the school building in 1969 (Wiencke 1975:28) and additional buildings have been constructed at the site since this time.

In 2020 the school is called Malvern Central School, Spring Road Campus.



Description Summary

Primary School No 1604 is situated on the east side of Spring Road, north of High Street, with the Malvern Public Gardens forming boundaries to the south and east. The main school building is located close to the western frontage of the property, towards the southern end of the site.

Whole site

Key Features:

- Complex asymmetrical massing due to staged construction phases
- Gabled and hipped roofs
- Multi-paned windows.

1875-1908 buildings

Key Features:

- Polychromatic brick walls
- Bluestone base
- Arch-headed windows including segmental arches and semicircular arches with pointed arch voussoirs
- Jettied timber framing to gable ends
- Prominent buttressed tower with Gothic detailing, school name plate and steep slate-clad spire.

1923-1924 buildings

Key Features:

- Red brick walls on brick base
- Rectangular windows
- Half-timbered gable ends.



Figure 2. 1875-1908 buildings fronting Spring Road



Figure 3. 1875-1908 buildings (detail)

Intactness/Integrity

The fabric and detail of the 1875, 1889-90, 1907-08 and 1923-24 buildings is highly intact, although the original slate roofs have been re-clad in tiles. Each phase of development has partially obscured earlier building forms however these appear to remain largely intact.

The school building retains a high level of integrity.

References

Context Pty Ltd, Stonnington Thematic Environmental History, 2006 & 2009 addendum.

J B Cooper, *The History of Malvern, From its First Settlement to a City*, Melbourne, 1935.

Landata Victoria, historical aerial photograph, 1963.

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plan No 59, Malvern, 1902 (SLV).

Stonnington History Centre (SHC) Image Collection, as cited.

The Age.

The Argus.

The Herald.

Wiencke, S A, *Malvern and the Spring Road School, a short history*, 1975.

Victorian Places, 'Malvern' & 'Malvern East', <http://www.victorianplaces.com.au>.

Historic Images and Plans



Figure 4. Photo dated 1890, with a view of the school from the north showing the first additions, including the tower, made to the building in 1889-90 in the foreground. Further additions were made to the north end in 1907-08. (Source: SHC Image collection MP2622)

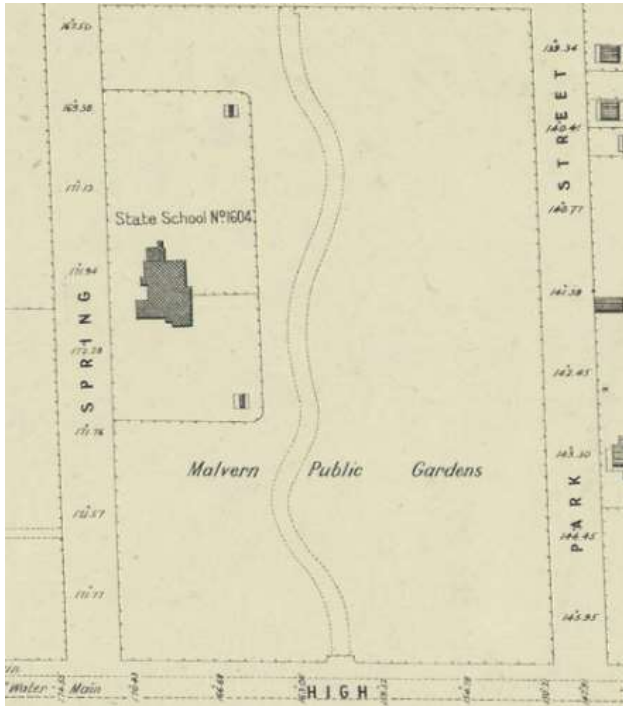


Figure 5. Extent of the school in 1902, as evident on MMBW Plan No 59, Malvern, dated 1902 (Source: SLV)

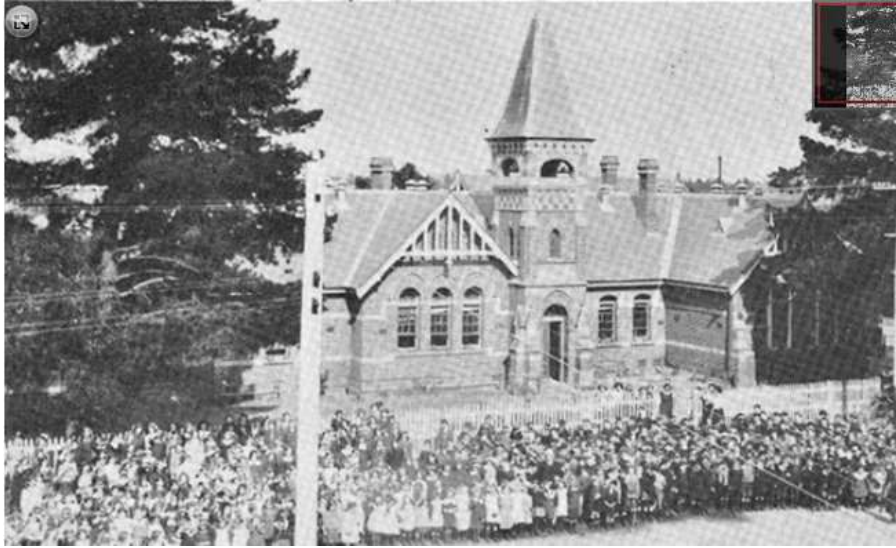


Figure 6. Undated image of the school (Source: SHC Image collection MP61622)

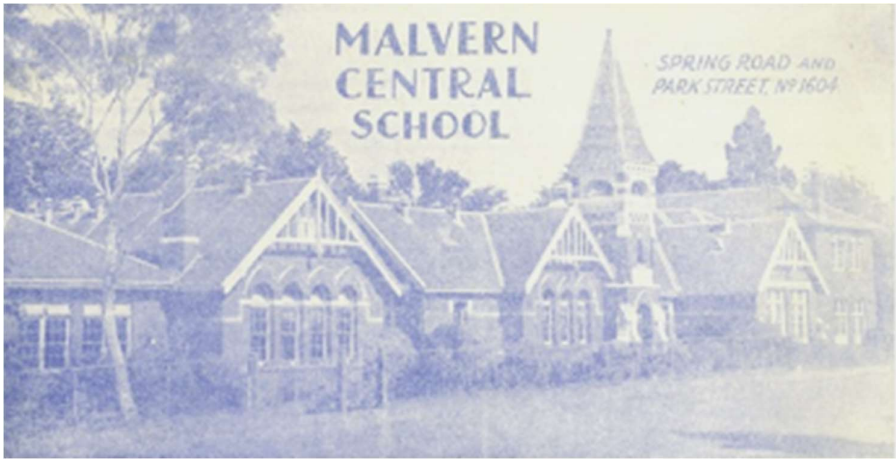


Figure 7. The school buildings, 1952 (Source: SHC Image collection MP61606)



Figure 8. Detail of aerial view of site, 1963 (Source: Landata December 1963)