

ADAPTIVE RE-USE AND CONSERVATION WORKS
BEECHWORTH GOODS SHED

deborah kemp
HERITAGE ADVISOR

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The Beechworth Goods Shed is an important railway building and it has the capacity to support a number of uses, and these include: community, commercial and cultural activities. Its particular design features and projected potential uses means that its adaptation and conservation is relatively complex. Decisions were based on achieving a balance between an appropriate and economically viable use and the preservation of significant fabric - all within a limited budget.

The creation of an environmentally sustainable building created the biggest challenge and this was required because of its proposed commercial use. It meant that a second skin of corrugated metal and insulation materials had to be inserted into the original fabric. The original cladding is in poor condition and to preserve its integrity it became the internal skin with a new corrugated galvanised metal skin to the exterior. While this new skin has a very contemporary look because of its shiny finish, it will soon become the dull finish we all associate with galvanised metal. This historic finish is also supported by the use of traditional short sheets of corrugated metal. As the building ages this patina of finishes and joins will become more prominent and provide a traditional view of galvanised shedding.

The simple dignity of this railway shed relies on the subtlety of details and a considerable proportion of the budget was allocated to the preservation of these features. For instance, the addition of an extra layer of corrugated metal meant that the architectural utility of the downpipes (which are also integrated into the structural members) was potentially compromised. The downpipes had to be cut and reconnected back into the building in order to retain their appearance and integrity. While this might seem a simple procedure, due to the age of the fixtures, it became a complex engineering feat but one that has successfully recreated one of the more important architectural and engineering features of this shed. Other architectural details such as the timber framing to the doors have been restored in-situ and are retained. Some features were not restored and these include the oculus (round) timber vents and all of the original timber doors, but all of these items have been retained within the Goods Shed and are waiting for conservation when a budget becomes available.

The result of this process is an exterior and interior that largely demonstrates the original character of a Goods (and engine) Shed. The cladding on the Goods Shed (when constructed in the 19th century) had a similar shiny exterior as it does today, while the interior has retained all of the evidence of the wear and tear that has occurred over more than 100 years. All of the marks associated with its use, the smoke-stained metal, the patchings and the typical timber framing are preserved without any change. The roof framing has been strengthened but the method adopted shares similar principles to those used in the 19th century.

The original flooring was earth overlaid with timber planks and the platform understorey was an earth bank with a timber post retaining wall. The lower area had a gravel finish and train track. To meet all of the regulations the flooring was concreted and a representative section of the original platform was retained. Evidence of the track has been retained at both entrances with a ghosting of the tracks retained internally.

The design of the entrance doors using contemporary materials has been seen as a double standard but this is not an accurate reflection of statutory requirements or heritage practices. The change of use of an industrial building of this scale to a commercial/public building has forced a number of changes in order to satisfy all of the regulatory provisions. Many of these changes dealt with features that had no historic precedent for this building type, such as the new automatic doors. The original spaces that were dedicated to the original doors are of such a scale that it had to be divided into framed modules and this included a module for the doors. The metal framing material was required for structural reasons and its finish was chosen to blend into the galvanised finish. There is little choice with regard to how this opening can be managed if the general public is to have access to the shed and Council is to satisfy regulatory requirements.

The roller door is an industrial type door and this reflects the industrial character of this building. It was installed as it was the best fit for the immediate needs of this building – i.e. it provides vehicular access. This is not a 'permanent' feature as it can be removed and replaced with a different door as per any future

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requirements. However, it was seen to provide the greatest flexibility in terms of vehicular access and will support a variety of uses.

Conservation and adaptive re-use is characterised by this balance between meeting regulatory requirements, budget constraints and how best to preserve the cultural values of any place. Changes of use of any building trigger many regulatory requirements. This can be compared to residential development where the use is the same as it was 100 or more years ago and new works tend to cause few of these regulatory compliance issues. The same principles apply to much of the commercial development that occurs within the Shire. The use and development of shops, hotels and minor public buildings do not trigger the same compliance issues that often are in direct conflict with the heritage values of a place.

The conversion of an industrial building that was designed to house engines and goods into a place that can provide a sound and safe environment for the general public whilst maintaining the cultural values is one of the more difficult heritage projects. The changes have been designed to be as sympathetic as possible within a regulatory framework. A large proportion of significant fabric has been retained and this includes respectfully altering structural systems. Where possible new materials have been like for like, or if this was not possible materials were selected on their ability to blend with the original features. The changes that have occurred have been considered in terms of use, because as noted in the *Burra Charter* (2013) use is the best conservation outcome for most buildings and places.