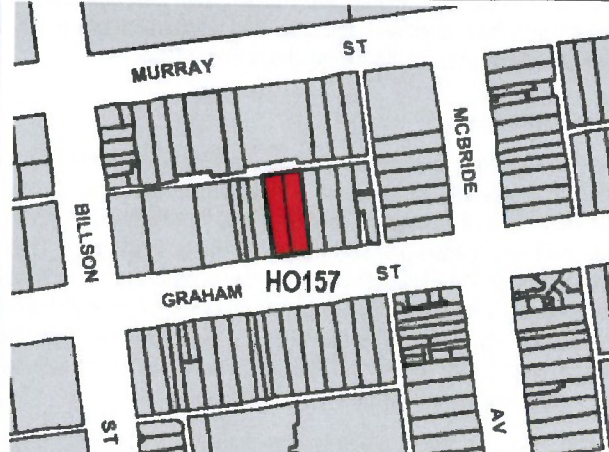


<b>PLACE</b>	PLAZA ARCADE		<b>Other name/s</b> Wonthaggi Theatre; Plaza Theatre (and others)				
<b>Address</b>	134-142 Graham Street WONTHAGGI						
<b>Study No</b>	531	<b>HO No</b>	HO157	<b>HPD No</b>	202	<b>Allotment No</b>	-
<b>LGA</b>	Bass Coast	<b>Ward</b>	Hovell	<b>Parish</b>	Wonthaggi	<b>County</b>	Mornington



<b>Image Date</b>	3 July 2009	<b>Extent of listing</b>	Whole of allotment (with significant fabric as identified overleaf)				
<b>Designer/architect</b>	Robert Kerr	<b>Architectural style</b>	Federation/Edwardian Period (1901-1918) Arts & Crafts				
<b>Builder/maker</b>	G S Matthews	<b>Commenced</b>	1911	<b>Completed</b>	1912		
<b>Her Act Category</b>	Heritage place	<b>Historic Theme/s</b>	13.1 Larger Centres				
<b>Her Item Group</b>	Recreation and Entertainment	<b>Assessed by</b>	F Woodhouse	<b>Date</b>	13/08/04		
<b>Her Item Category</b>	Cinema	<b>Reviewed by</b>	S Reeves	<b>Date</b>	29/06/09		
<b>Usage (2009)</b>	Shops and offices	<b>Condition</b>	Good	<b>Intactness</b>	Fair (gutted)		
<b>Significance</b>	Local	<b>Recommendation</b>	Include in VHR <input type="checkbox"/>	Include in RNE <input type="checkbox"/>	Include in HO <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

### Statement of Significance

#### What is Significant?

The former Plaza Theatre at 134-142 Graham Street, Wonthaggi, was erected a group of Melbourne businessmen who saw an opportunity to provide a means of entertainment for local residents in the new model township. Designed by Melbourne architect Robert Kerr and erected by a local contractor, the theatre opened in July 1912 and was highly successful until the opening of the rival Union Theatre in 1924. Renamed the Plaza Theatre in 1938, the cinema operated for only a few more years before it was converted into a factory in 1943. The building was eventually gutted in 1989 to create a retail centre, the Plaza Arcade.

#### How is it Significant?

The building is of historic and aesthetic significance to the Shire of Bass Coast

#### Why is it Significant?

Historically, the former theatre is significant for its associations with the expansion of community facilities in the earliest years of Wonthaggi's settlement (*AHC Criterion A4*). Opened in 1912, it is one of the oldest public buildings in the central township and, since the destruction of the rival Union Theatre in 1980, now remains as Wonthaggi's only pre-war cinema building (*Criterion B.2*). The building can still be interpreted as such, notwithstanding the replacement of the original auditorium with a new shopping arcade.

Aesthetically, the former cinema is significant as a distinctive, if somewhat altered Edwardian public building in central Wonthaggi. With a broad and prominent double-storey facade, spread over three block frontage and enlivened by unusual segmental arched Serlian windows flanked by smaller circular windows (*AHC Criterion F1*), the building remains as a particularly prominent element in the Graham Street commercial streetscape (*AHC Criterion E1*).

### Physical Description

*The Plaza Arcade is a double-storey Edwardian former theatre building with overpainted brick walls. It has a parapet facade embellishment with moulded string-courses and pilasters with vermiculated caps. The first floor contains segmental arched timber-framed windows surmounted by circular windows with coloured glazing. The verandah and shops are non-original.*

The former theatre auditorium space has had a new roof constructed and, internally, has otherwise been entirely gutted at both levels and a new shopping arcade inserted, with new professional offices above. The front portion, containing the two ground floor shops, entry hall, enclosed staircase and upstairs clubroom, is substantially intact (save for the shopfronts themselves) and is considered to represent the extent of significant fabric.

### Historical Notes

The first rate book for the new Borough of Wonthaggi, dated 12 June 1911, records that this site (designated as Lots 15 and 16 of Section 2) was still vacant, with a Net Annual Value (NAV) of £102, and was owned by Arthur A Farthing of Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. Local newspaper reports reveal that Farthing was one of the directors of a new company, the Wonthaggi Picture Theatre Ltd, which was made up of several Melbourne businessmen. The new picture theatre was designed by a minor Melbourne architect, Robert Kerr (of 114 Elizabeth Street) and was erected by a local building contractor, G S Matthews. The new Wonthaggi Theatre, as it was originally known, officially opened in July 1912, when it was described in the local press as "one of the most distinctive edifices in Southern Gippsland". The rate book for 1912-13 (dated October 1912) recorded the new building with three separate listings: the theatre proper, with a NAV of £200, and two shops, each with a NAV of £42. The occupants of the latter were listed as Samuel Ridgeway, dentist, and Myrtle Webb, confectioner.

During 1920, the entire property was acquired by the Returned Sailors & Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), and subsequently became known as the Soldiers' Memorial Theatre. The cinema evidently became to lose business following the opening of a rival premises, the Union Theatre, in 1924. A change of management in late 1938 saw the name change again, this time to the Plaza Theatre. It closed in 1943, when it was acquired by a clothing manufacturer, the White Manufacturing Company, which converted the building into a factory. In the early 1960s, the premises was briefly used for indoors sports before it reverted to industrial use, this time as a factory for the Exacto Knitwear Company.

In 1989, the former theatre was converted into a shopping centre, to be known as the Plaza Arcade in homage to its pre-war heyday. Documented by a local design and drafting firm, the conversion retained the original two shops, enclosed staircase and clubroom on Graham Street. The auditorium balcony was removed and a new intermediate floor inserted, providing room for a shopping arcade with professional suites (opening from a mezzanine gallery) upstairs. In 1993, the upper level of the building was severely damaged in a storm, necessitating the replacement of the former auditorium roof, which was rebuilt at a lower pitch than the original.

### Recommended Management

*Remove paint from originally unpainted brickwork and otherwise investigate original paint colours when due for repairs.*

*Replace verandah with a more appropriate design.*

### References

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>
Borough of Wonthaggi	Rate Books (held by Public Record Office)	
Department of Health	Public Building File No. 1147, VPRS 7882/P1 (held by Public Record Office)	
<i>Powlett Express</i>	25 Jun 1912, 3 Sep 1943, 24 Sep 1943.	
South Gippland Building Design	'Plaza Arcade, 140-142 Graham St, Wonthaggi', drawings dated 1989 (held by Building Department, Bass Coast Shire).	

### Special Note

On this page, italicised text is quoted directly from Allom Lovell & Associates, *Bass Coast Shire Heritage Study Stage 2 (2004)*, with minor revisions indicated in **bold** text and any new information, contributed by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, indicated in plain text.