

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Feldhagen Flats Group Listing I
(1961-1968)

Other names: -

Citation No:
2445

INSERT MAP



Address: 99 Westbury Street, Balaclava;
169 Hotham Street, Balaclava;
247 Inkerman Street, Balaclava.

Heritage Precinct: Not applicable

Heritage Overlay: TBC

Category: Residential: Flats

Graded as: Significant

Style: Postwar - Modernist

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Constructed: 1961-1968

Designer: Michael R E Feldhagen

Amendment: TBC

Comment: New citation

Significance

What is significant?

The Feldhagen Flats Group Listing I (1961-1968) comprising three separate blocks of flats, designed by the émigré architect Michael R E Feldhagen and constructed primarily in the early 1960s, at 169 Hotham Street, 247 Inkerman Street and 99 Westbury Street, Balaclava is significant.

All three buildings are intact and are similar in that they all have upper storeys that partly cantilever over the ground floor, have flat roofs and make use of a similar materials palette including textured concrete roman bricks and breeze blocks. All retain at least parts of their original fences.

169 Hotham Street, comprised of 7 flats, was designed in 1961/1962, and likely constructed by Peter Bros. and later extended in 1967/68. The three-storey building has a rectangular footprint. The upper levels of the façade are articulated with decorative brickwork and a central panel of breeze blocks. Fenestration is mostly contained in the long elevations.

247 Inkerman Street was designed in 1962 and constructed by Camillo Bros. It is two-storey and has a rectangular footprint. The balconies to the long east elevation are partly recessed and partly projecting with flange screen/privacy walls. The short north and south elevations feature shadow concrete blocks, configured in a hexagonal pattern to the upper levels.

99 Westbury Street, comprised of 9 flats, was designed in 1963 and constructed in 1963-64 by Abraham Wolf Schachter of Perfection Constructions P/L, but incorporates the partly completed ground floor from an earlier (1961) abandoned scheme for the site. The two-storey building has an L-shaped footprint with two discrete wings to the front and rear. The ground floor and the upper level of the rear wing is in cream brick. The symmetrical façade has central recessed balconies/porches to both levels, flanked by mirrored bays with large windows with spandrels.

Alterations and additions are not significant. The current paint colour schemes are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Feldhagen Flats Group Listing I (1961-1968) at 99 Westbury Street, 169 Hotham Street and 247 Inkerman Street, are of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

The Feldhagen Flats Group Listing I (1961-1968) is historically significant as part of the extensive flat building activity that has characterised much of the 20th century history of the municipality but especially this part of St Kilda East/St Kilda and which gained pace after WWII. Although the Own-Your-Own (OYO) model of development was popular at the time, these three buildings were investments. As was common, the flats either replaced earlier Victorian period houses or were built in excised sections of their grounds. The flat typology evolved with the work of several émigré architects, who were responsible for a high proportion of the architect-designed examples and who often worked with Jewish developers. These imbued the area with a more progressive, International character, and which was supported by the local, often Jewish, community. The group also have associations with the architect Michael R E Feldhagen, one of the leading exponents of flat design. (Criterion A)

The Feldhagen Flats Group Listing I (1961-1968) is of aesthetic significance as a distinctive group of Modernist flats by the Polish-born, German trained émigré architect Michael R E Feldhagen. They are fine examples of the approach that evolved during the late 1950s and early 1960s, when there was a shift from the post-war era to what is often defined as the late 20th century period. The blocks are relatively small, limiting the need for common circulation areas. Feldhagen's output during the early 1960s, which was likely to have been influenced by his training and contemporary architecture in Berlin during the 1950s, has no ready comparison in contemporary flat or residential architecture in the municipality as it is more expressive than the output of his contemporaries with a varied material palette (especially the range of concrete/Besser blocks), greater use of expressed concrete, and varied geometric articulation with shadow blocks and breeze blocks, and partly indicative of a Featurist mode. Even amongst Feldhagen's own work, these three buildings have a distinct aesthetic with limited comparison, for soon after the expression he employed shifted. Their overall high level of intactness are complemented by the retention of parts of front fences. (Criterion E)

Thematic context

Victoria's framework of historical themes

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

Port Phillip thematic environmental history

5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.2 Shaping the suburbs (5.2.2 Private development), 5.3 Diverse Housing (5.3.5 Higher-density housing)

History

Contextual history

The early twentieth century saw a marked decline in the viability of large mansions across Melbourne's suburbs in general, but it was particularly felt in the more affluent inner southern suburbs such as St Kilda and Brighton, where land was highly sought-after by a new generation of homebuilders seeking smaller detached dwellings, duplexes or flats. The trend toward higher-density living in St Kilda began with the conversion of mansions and terrace houses into boarding houses in the early 1900s and continued with the first purpose-built flats that appeared at the beginning of World War I. A 1919 newspaper article noted:

It was held to be no longer necessary to labour with a house and all the domestic drudgery that entailed when by borrowing Continental ideas, people who could afford it could live in flats... Land has become so valuable the villa of the Victorian days, in a crowded thoroughfare, no longer shows anything like an adequate return of interest on the land's present capital value. It is more profitable to pull the house erected thereon down, and to erect flats. When the flat became popular in England the experiment was made in St Kilda, and it did not take long to discover there was a genuine demand for flats (Prahman Telegraph, 18 October 1919, p.4)

Higher-density housing in the form of boarding houses paved the way to flat development. Flats first appeared in Melbourne around 1906 and slowly spread to the suburbs. They followed a strong pattern of development, appearing close to transport routes, particularly along or within walking distance of tram routes, to allow easy travel to the city. With their proximity to the beach and parklands, good public transport networks and seaside character, the suburbs of St Kilda and Elwood were especially popular locations for flats. Flats became a dominant characteristic of St Kilda and Elwood, and still make up a high percentage of dwellings in those areas. They include some of the earliest surviving flats in Melbourne, some of the best examples of architectural styles and types of flats, and as a group demonstrate the increasing popularity of the lifestyle of flat living from the early twentieth century (TEH).

There was huge growth in flat development in St Kilda and Elwood in the 1920 and 1930s, attracting migrants, single people, and people of diverse sexuality. In 1920 there were 527 purpose-built flats in 92 blocks in St Kilda municipality. By 1925 this had increased to 884 flats in 164 blocks, including large complexes such as the Ardoch flats in Dandenong Road. By 1935, despite a slowing of development due to the Great Depression, there were more than 2,800 flats in over 500 blocks. A further 2,000 flats were added by 1940; however, the onset of World War II slowed development. Nonetheless, by 1947 St Kilda contained 5,500 purpose-built flats, a quarter of all flats in Melbourne (TEH).

Another boom in flat-building began in the mid-1950s. This was fuelled by population growth and a housing shortage after World War II, changes to building codes and the introduction of company title (and later stratum and strata-title) that enabled flats to be sold individually as 'own your own' units (TEH).

During the early 1950s, a crisis was developing as the number of permits being issued was woefully inadequate however – in 1952, the St Kilda municipality issued 6 permits (of 42 across the city) for 49 units and (Argus, 1 March 1954, p10)

The erection of more blocks of flats is one of the most urgent housing needs of Melbourne.

Agents find it impossible to meet the big inquiry for this type of home.

In an article entitled, 'St Kilda Grows as Flat Centre' the zeitgeist was captured (Argus, 27 April 1956, p17)

In recent years the major portion of new building work in St. Kilda has been in flats, and this will continue.

The district can still do with many more flats to meet the demand of the big floating population associated with a quickly growing city like Melbourne.

St. Kilda has all the advantages for flat life of a big city. It is well-served by transport from and to the city – less than four miles distant.

Shops have developed to meet the needs of "flatites;" and there are now numerous cafes serving meals at all hours.

Real estate agents have- waiting lists of tenants for flats and apartments of all kinds.

... A feature of real estate activity in St. Kilda at present is the sale, of "own-your-own" flats. Since it has become possible for each flat owner to have a certificate of title, sales have been made more freely.

The buildings which are being subdivided in this manner must be of modern construction with concrete floors, and comply with certain regulations.

... New Australians are reported to be showing, interest in this form of home ownership.

... Investors are showing a renewed interest in blocks of flats, and are reported to be buying where the net return is below bank interest rate. They regard the present return as a minimum.

Between 1961 and 1971, flats increased from 38% to 62% of all dwellings in St Kilda. The boom in flat building saw St Kilda's population increased by 10,000 people at a time when the populations of other inner-city suburbs were declining (TEH).

99 Westbury Street, Balaclava

The site formed part of Crown portion 152A Parish of Prahran, County of Bourke. The four-acre allotment was purchased by S Cannon in September 1857 (PP).

The 1898 MMBW plan shows that the site had been developed with an attached pair of 5-roomed brick houses, then numbered 121 and 123 (RB 1893 nos 3042 and 3043).

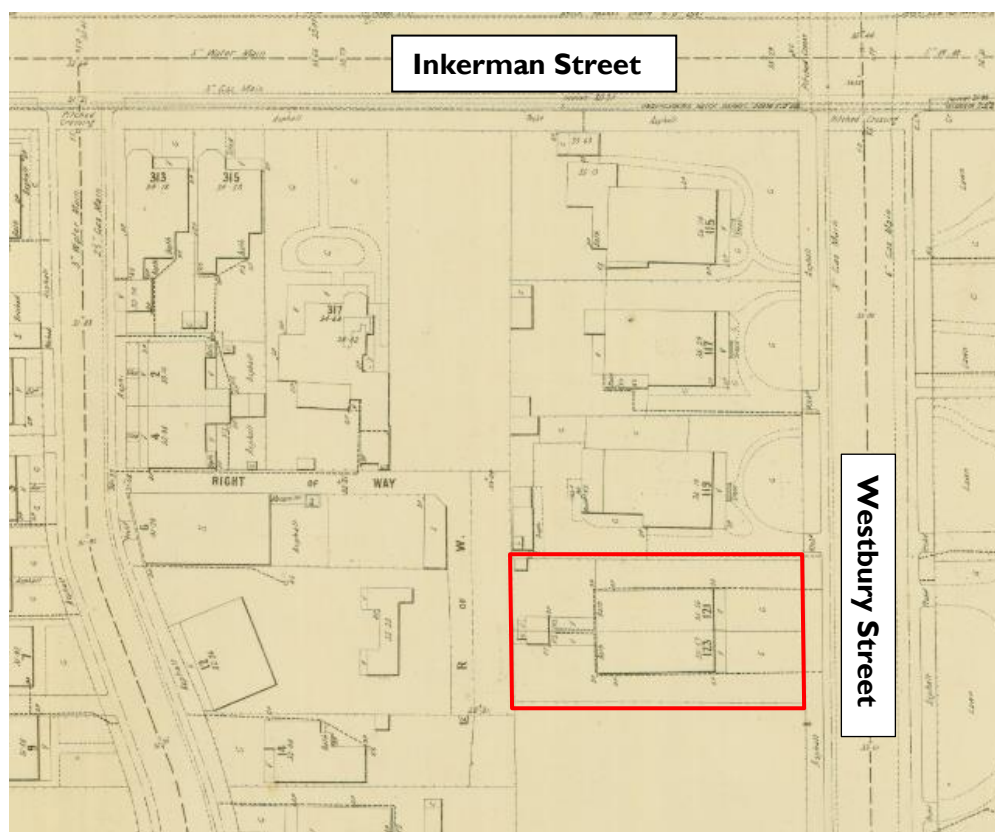


Figure 1 - MMBW Detail Plan no. 1425, dated 1898. (Source: State Library of Victoria)

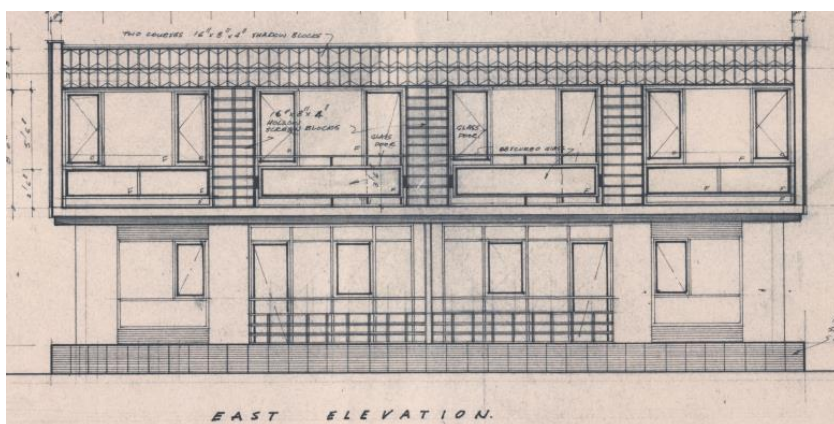
In June 1961, the site was purchased by Multiplex P/L of 1546 Chapel Street Windsor (CT v.8310 f.736). Shortly after, the property was mortgaged to Reid Murray Properties P/L of 138 Bourke Street Melbourne. Prior, in July 1960 Multiplex had acquired a permit from Council for the construction of a building on the site containing 15 flats (BP no. 57/1419). The builder was Gussmar Construction P/L of Elwood and the estimated cost was £41,000. The plans related to this permit are not available and the architect/designer is not known.

Reid Murray Holdings Ltd were one of the largest retailers in the country in the early 1960s, whose interests also included land development. However, in 1963 Reid Murray went into liquidation and consequently, the Westbury Street site, which included the apartment building only partially completed (i.e. the ground floor), was placed for auction in July 1963 under instruction from subsidiary Paynes Properties P/L (Age 16 Jul 1963 p2).



Figure 2 - Forced Realisation Auction notice, July 1963. Note the address is sometimes alternatively referred to as 101 or 99-101. (Source: Age 16 July 1963 p2)

In October 1963, ownership was transferred to Perfection Constructions P/L of 23 The Avenue, East St Kilda. The company was headed by builder Abraham Wolf Schachter (ER 1968). Abraham engaged architect Michael R E Feldhagen of Springvale Road Waverly to design an alternative first floor for the unfinished building comprised of four flats (bringing the total number flats in the building to nine). A larger three-bedroomed flat (no. 6) at the front of the first floor was designed specifically for Abraham and his wife Bina. In October 1963, a permit was issued for the revised building containing a reduced total of nine flats (BP no. 57/2966). The estimated cost was £22,500.



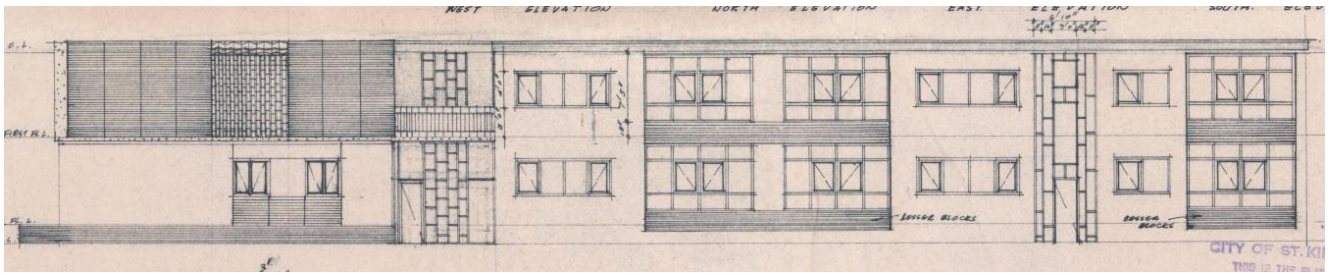


Figure 3 & 4 - East and north elevations, from drawings related to permit no. 57/2966 (M Feldhagen, 1963) (Source: Council Building File)

By mid-1964 the building was apparently nearing completion, as a painter was sought (Age 30 Jun 1964 p20). In August 1964, a preliminary announcement was made for the sale of 'luxury flats'. The one, two and three bedroomed flats, priced from £5250, were sold on an 'own your own' basis (Age 7 Nov 1964 p51). By February 1965 all but one of the flats had been sold (Age 27 Feb 1965 p51).

In April 1964 a permit was issued for a brick laundry and toilet in the south-west part of the site (BP no.205). In 1969, a permit was issued for a twin car garage in the north-west part of the site (BP no.2913).

Abraham and his wife Bina retained and resided in flat no. 6. The Schachters were involved with the Yeshivah Shule in East St Kilda (*Australian Jewish News* 20 Nov 1987 p46). By the late 1980s, following Bina's death, Abraham was living at another address (AJN 20 Nov 1987 p46). Abraham passed away in 1997 (AJN 14 Nov 1997 p23).

169 Hotham Street, Balaclava

The site formed part of Crown portion 237 Parish of Prahran, County of Bourke. The 9¾ acre allotment was purchased by T Hale in or after 1857.

The 1901 MMBW plan shows the site developed with a seven-roomed brick house named *Torresmuir*, then numbered 231. By this time, it was owned and occupied by William St Leger Burton, his wife Isabella and their children (RB 1899 no. 3799). Several permits for additions were issued in 1918 (BP no. 3513), 1922 (BP no. 4821), and 1927 (BP no. 7028).

In the early 1930s, following the death of William in 1931, ownership of the site passed to his two children Stewart St. Leger Burton and Eileen St. Leger Burton (CT v.5723 f.411) and *Torresmuir* was converted to flats. The Burtons also owned the Federation period timber house at 1 Elm Grove at this time. The 1945 aerial photograph shows *Torresmuir* with additional sections to the rear.

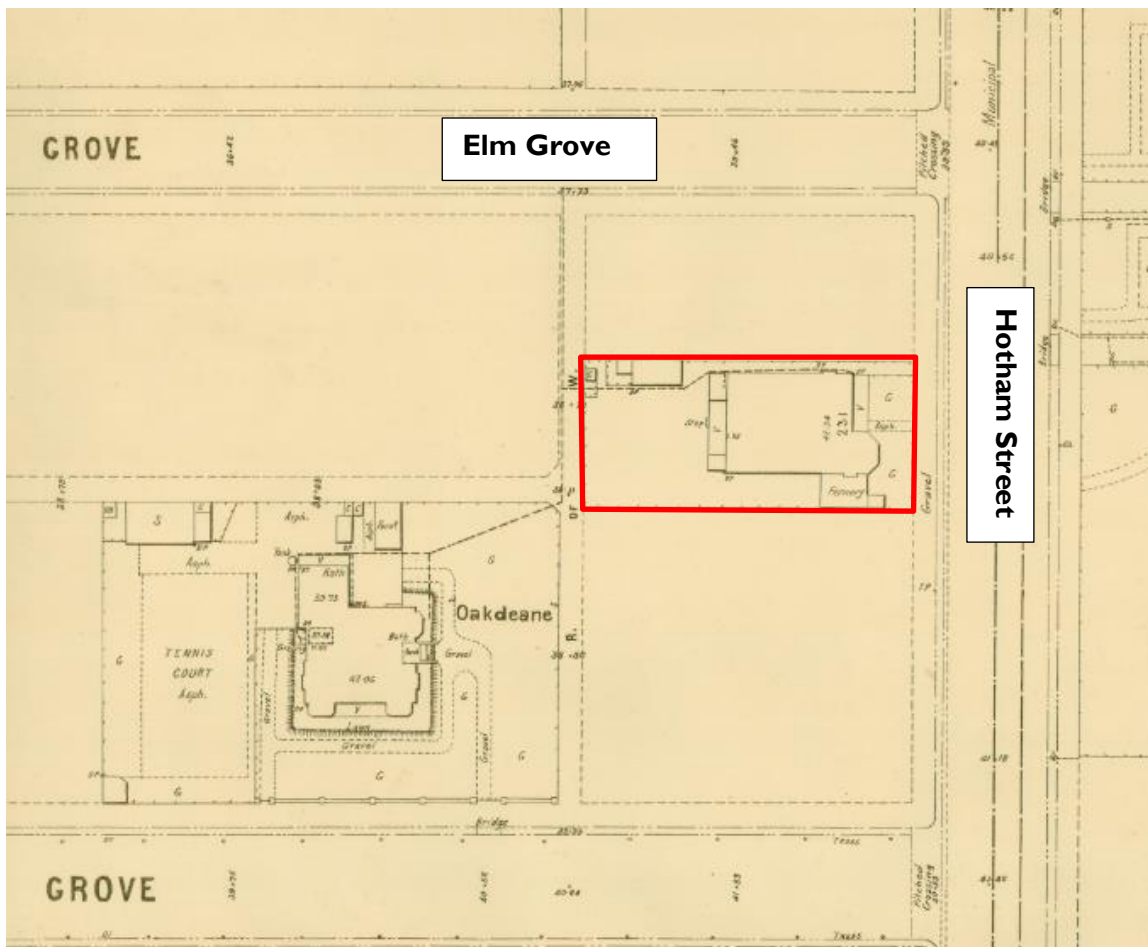


Figure 5 - MMBW Detail Plan no. 1449, dated 1901. (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 6 - Aerial photograph, dated 1945. The subject site is outlined. The timber house at 1 Elm Grove is also indicated (arrow). (Source: Landata, Proj No 5, Run 16, Frame 57847)

In 1951, an unsuccessful auction was held to sell 'Torresmuir, a block of three flats and a weatherboard villa', the latter presumably 1 Elm Grove (Age 31 Aug 1951 p6).

In September 1953, the subject site was purchased by Bruce Etherington of 29 Alfred Road Burwood, accountant (CT v.8104 f.857). 1 Elm Grove was sold separately.

In November 1959, ownership of the subject site was transferred to Jindrich Selzer and Ilse Selzer of 125a Acland Street St Kilda, manufacturers. The Selzers engaged architect Michael R E Feldhagen of 15 Leaburn Avenue North Caulfield. Drawings prepared by Feldhagen, dated November 1961 and March 1962, show a three-storey building containing five new flats to be constructed in front of a retained existing flat at the rear of the site. Council issued a permit for construction of the flats in July 1962 (BP 57/2336) and in August 1962 issued a permit to Peter Bros (builder) for the demolition of *Torresmuir* (BP 57/2376). It is likely that Peter Bros also built the flats.

Following completion of the building, the Selzers resided in flat no. 1.

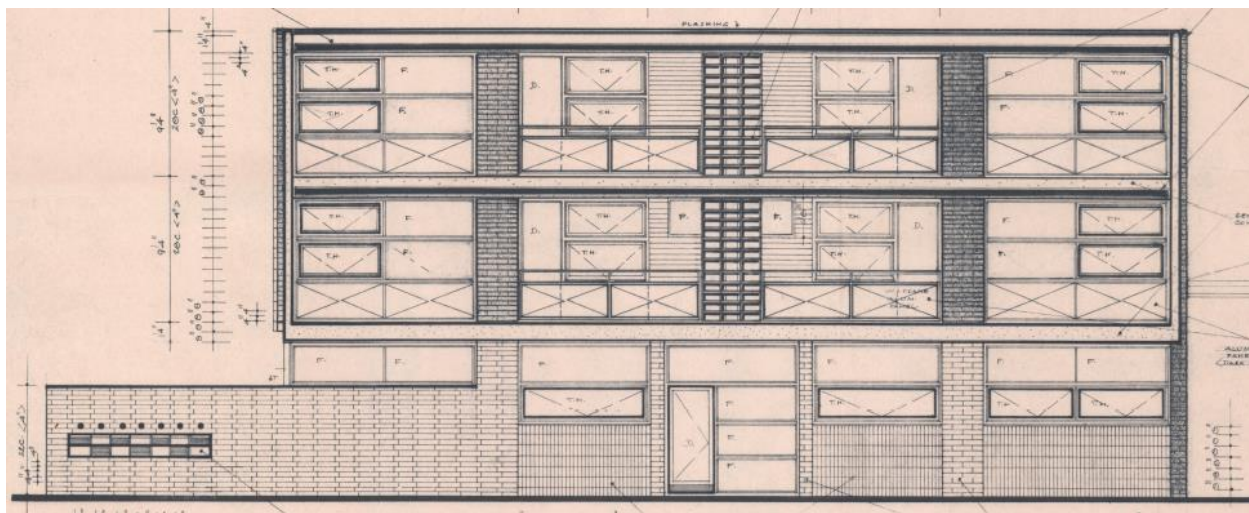
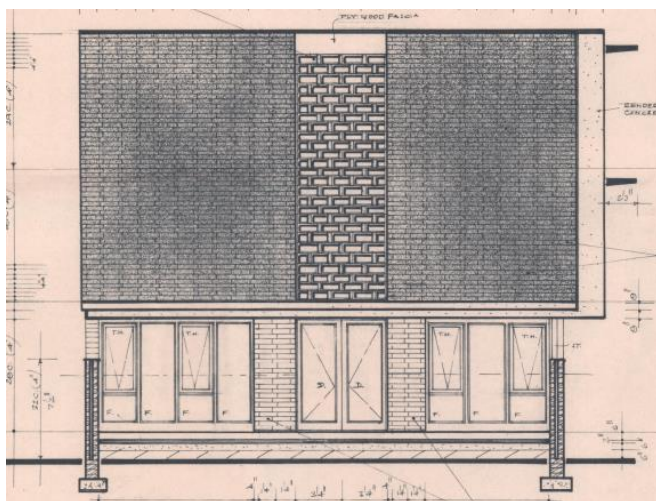


Figure 7 & 8 - East and north elevations, from drawings related to permit no. 57/2336 (M Feldhagen, 1961/62) (Source: Council Building File)

In December 1967, Council issued a permit for the construction of an extension to the rear, replacing the earlier retained flat in this location (BP no. 1972). Again, Michael R E Feldhagen was engaged to design the three-storey extension containing two flats and partial garage at ground floor (an alternative scheme designed by architect Miles Jakl in 1964 did not proceed). The estimated cost was \$16,000.

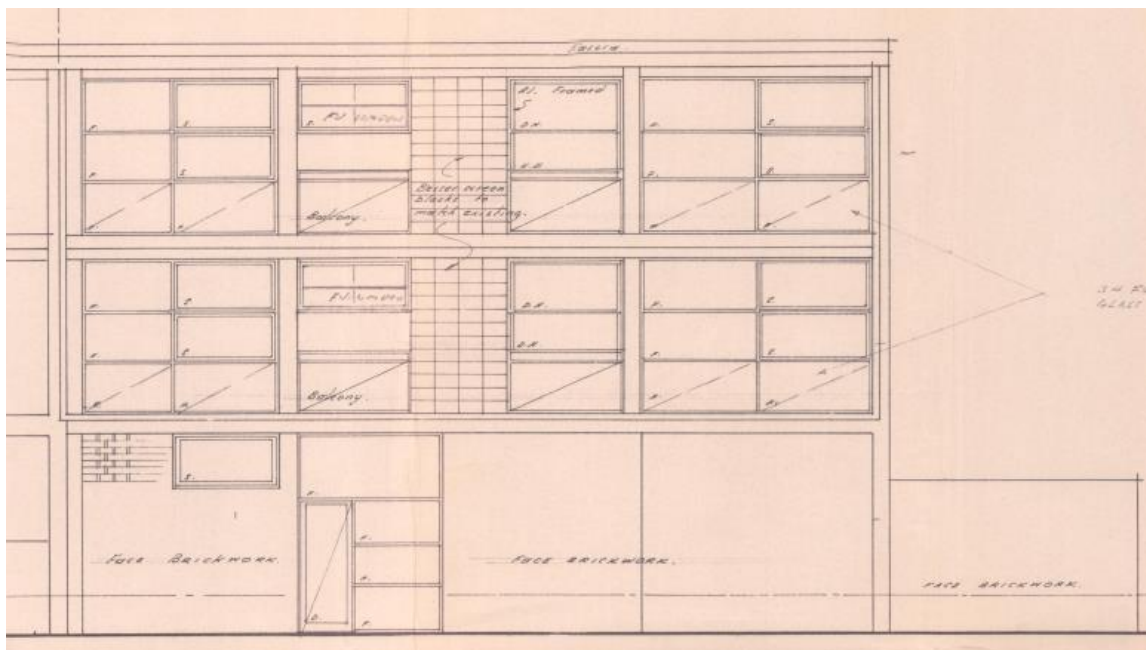


Figure 9 - North elevation of rear extension, from drawings related to permit no. 1972 (M Feldhagen, 1967) (Source: Council Building File)

247 Inkerman Street, Balaclava

The site formed part of Crown portion 137A Parish of Prahran, County of Bourke. The four-acre allotment was purchased by E Duckett in November 1853 (PP).

The 1897 MMBW plan shows the site developed with a pair of attached timber houses which at that time were owned by Elizabeth Torrance (RB 1898 nos 2750, 2751).

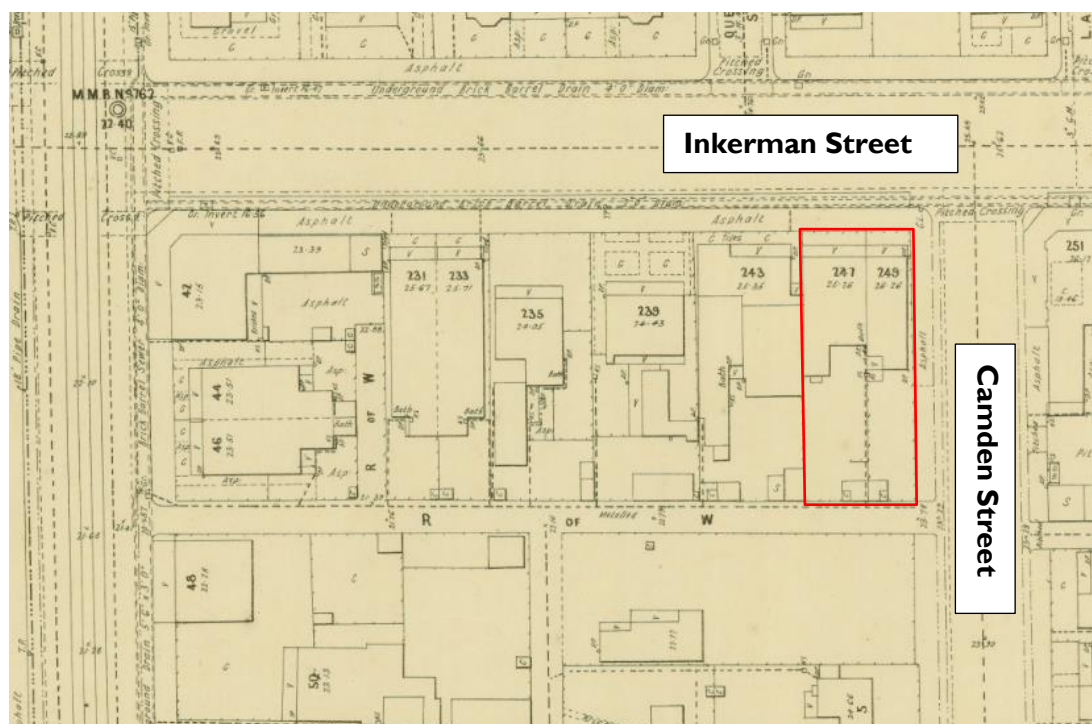


Figure 10 - MMBW Detail Plan no. 1424, dated 1897. (Source: State Library of Victoria)

Following the death of owner Harry Edgar Cobb in 1944, probate was granted to the Trustees Executors and Agency Company Ltd of 401 Collins Street Melbourne, and Walter Frederick Payne of Elwood.

In November 1958 a trustees' realising auction was held, apparently unsuccessfully, with the following description in an advertisement aimed at attracting the attention of developers:

Pair compact weatherboard villas... Good corner position adjacent Chapel Street, Balaclava shops, train, tram, schools. Splendid chance for speculator or investor. Suit future development. (Age 19 Nov 1958 p28)

In late 1961, the site was sold for £3700 (Age 13 Nov 1961 p10), with the transfer to Joyce Olive Reed of 27 Studley Road East Brighton registered in January 1962 (CT v.5808 f.444). However, ownership was soon passed (registered in November 1962) to cousins Tarcisio Camillo of 86 Martin Street Gardenvale and Gilberto Crema of 63 Perth Street Prahran, partners in construction company Camillo Bros.

The Camillo Bros engaged architect Michael R E Feldhagen of 15 Leaburn Avenue Caulfield to design a block of six flats (note the original plans are not available). The consulting engineer was Peter Stojanoff & Assoc. of Glen Iris. In July 1962, a permit was issued for the demolition of the two weatherboard houses (BP 57/2337). Also in July, a permit was issued for construction of the block of flats (BP 57/2326) estimated to cost £10,000.

In November 1963, the property was sold to investors Jacob and Jane Zolovich (CT v.8453 f.353). On completion of the building, the flats were leased.

Camillo Bros

In the early 1950s, Camillo Bros was begun by Italian migrant brothers Tarcisio and Dino Camillo as a small terrazzo business in St Kilda and expanded into construction and development in the 1960s. Camillo Bros evolved into the Crema Group, now one of the largest construction/development companies in Melbourne.

Michael R E Feldhagen

Michael Richard Ernest Feldhagen was born 23 December 1932 in the Prussian city of Breslau (now Wrocław in western Poland). In the early 1950s, Feldhagen studied architecture at the renowned Universität der Künste Berlin (Berlin University of Arts, formerly in West Berlin), the largest art school in Europe, and after graduation he worked in an architect's office in Berlin. Disturbed by the political instability of the time, Feldhagen and his wife Helga migrated to Australia with their young daughter, arriving in Melbourne on 13 September 1958. (BH)

On the strength of prior experience with the design of high-rise apartment blocks in Berlin, Feldhagen secured a position with the Housing Commission of Victoria, which, at that time, was starting its own regime of multi-storey public housing. By 1960 he had taken a position in the office of fellow European émigré architect Ernest Fooks (1906-1985) who was well established as one of the leading architects to Melbourne's thriving post-war Jewish migrant community. Feldhagen did not attempt to become a registered architect, opting instead to style himself as an 'architectural designer', possibly due to difficulties in having overseas qualifications recognised by the Architects' Registration Board of Victoria. (BH)

By 1963, Feldhagen had established his own practice, initially based in Acland Street, St Kilda, but later moved to Darling Street, South Yarra and later still to Shakespeare Grove, St Kilda. In 1967, he re-configured his business as a public company, M Feldhagen & Associates Pty Ltd. His early output included a number of small factories, but he soon established a reputation as a designer of large houses. Feldhagen frequently collaborated with fellow European émigré professionals. (BH)

From the late 1960s, when changes to strata title legislation prompted a boom in apartment construction, Feldhagen became one of the leading exponents of the type. In 1970 Feldhagen expanded into building works and formed a second company, M Feldhagen Constructions Pty Ltd. Feldhagen declared bankruptcy in 1975, and his two public companies were subsequently de-listed. Nevertheless, he resumed practice as an architectural designer, with his teenage son as his draftsman and sole employee. The practice continued into the 1980s under the name of Michol Designs. Feldhagen retired to Queensland in the 1990s and died on 21 January 2013, aged 80 years. (BH)

References

Built Heritage website (BH), Dictionary of Unsung Architects – entry for Michael E R Feldhagen
Certificates of Title (CT), various
Council Building permit files (BP)
Newspapers, various
O'Hanlon, Seamus, 'Home together, Home apart: Boarding house, hostel and flat life in Melbourne c.1900-1940', PhD Thesis, History Department, Monash University
Parish Plans, P81(13) (PP)
Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH), February 2021
Rate books (RB)
Sands & McDougall Directories (SM)
Sawyer, Terry, (1982) 'Residential flats in Melbourne: the development of a building type to 1950', Honours thesis, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne

Description

The individual blocks of flats have some similarities in that they all have upper storeys that partly cantilever over the ground floor, have flat roofs and make use of a similar materials palette including textured concrete roman bricks and breeze blocks.

The three buildings are all in good condition and have a high level of external intactness.

99 Westbury Street, Balaclava

The two-storey block of flats are located on the west side of Westbury Street. The T-shaped site has an area of 1,025m². Along the front boundary is an original low fence comprised of piers and lower courses of textured concrete roman bricks with square, concrete breeze blocks above, behind which are courtyard gardens for the front ground floor flats. This wall returns as a letterbox bay.

Vehicular access is via a concrete driveway on the north side to open parking bays at the side of the building. At the rear north-west corner is a late 1960s brick garage, which is accessed by a laneway from Blenheim Street.

The main building is broadly L-shaped, though with two discrete wings – front and rear. There is also difference between the two levels resulting from the two designers (unknown for the ground floor, and Feldhagen for the first floor).

The whole of ground floor is cream brick in stretcher bond, as well the upper level of the rear wing, designed by Feldhagen largely continuing the pre-existing format. A colour change is however evident in the cream bricks of the rear wing between the two phases of construction/levels. The front first floor is the part of the building most consistent with the other two blocks in the group, and where the authorship of Feldhagen is most apparent.

The façade of the front wing is symmetrical with central recessed balconies/porches to both levels, flanked by mirrored bays with large windows.



Figure 11 - Aerial showing extent of 99 Westbury Street, Balacava. (Source: Nearmap, Oct 2021)

The first floor cantilevers over the ground floor on a wide concrete floor plate. The design is a modern interpretation of classicism reflecting a typical differentiation associated with the later – comprised of a frieze of shadow blocks (concrete blocks with a geometric pattern, in this a continuous hexagonal motif) and wide columns/piers comprised of square, hollow concrete blocks. The upper part of the shadow blocks is partly concealed by the current roof flashing. The metal balustrade features oblongs with fine connections (though was noted as obscured glass on the original drawings). The wall at each end has spandrel panels below a tripartite window configuration – fixed central and flanking casements. The glazed sections to the recessed balcony are similar though include a door at both ends.



Figure 12 - Front and north side

The north/side elevation at ground floor has a section of projecting bricks to every fourth course (an intervention of the split rock roman bricks was proposed for part of this wall, along with a flower box of same). The upper level has concrete Roman, split/rock face bricks in a stacked bond either side of a central bay of hollow/breeze blocks (vertically orientated below a band of shadow blocks).

The rear wing has limited visibility from the public realm. There is a difference in the window proportions between the two levels however brown sills have been employed to both levels. The entry bay includes a bank of multi-paned glazing. The living room windows face north on this wing however some are protected by the wide soffit to part of this elevation.

169 Hotham Street, Balaclava

The three-storey block of flats are located on the west side of Hotham Street. The rectangular site has an area of about 701m². On the front boundary there is a section of original tall fence comprised of textured concrete Roman bricks for the base and small rectangular breeze blocks for the upper courses interspersed with larger solid bricks, behind which is a courtyard garden for the ground floor flat.

At the south end is a private pedestrian entrance and a section of concrete brick and breeze block fence on the side boundary. At the north end of the front boundary there is a more recent entrance alcove with tall, rendered walls and a slatted sliding gate across the concrete driveway which provides vehicular access and car parking along the north side of the building.

The upper two levels have been treated in a consistent manner and contrast with the ground floor. As for the 99 Westbury Street site, the concrete floor plate for the upper two levels projects over the ground floor/base.

This building is more overtly indicative of the International style in its format of largely blank side walls with fenestration mostly contained in the long elevations. Given the orientation of the building, the façade/east elevation is the side wall is largely blank (upper part) however the ground floor has windows but is screened from the public realm by the front fence.



Figure 13 - Aerial showing extent of 169 Hotham Street, Balaclava. (Source: Nearmap, Oct 2021)

The main visible part of the façade/short elevation has a central screen of hollow concrete (Besser) blocks flanked by long bricks, now painted. These are laid in stretcher bond however on the drawings were shown in quarter bond or raked stretcher bond (the overlapping by a quarter rather than a half) and defined also as manufactured by Besser. The distinctive articulation provided by the vertically paired, narrow projecting bricks (half queen closers) was not shown on the original drawings.

The long elevations – north and south – are in two sections relating to the two phases of construction (1962 and 1967), though with consistent materials and much of the detailing.



Figures 14 & 15 - Front elevation (left), front and north side elevations (right)

The original east section has a symmetrical format to the main, visible north elevation similar to that of 99 Westbury Street site with central recessed balconies flanked by fully glazed bays. In this case, there is an axial breeze block screen in front of a wall separating two balconies at each level, which have three white panels (probably glass) to the metal-framed balustrade (though only two are noted on the drawings, and were to be faceted red aluminium). A panel of sandstone-coloured textured (split face), roman concrete bricks separate the balconies from the glazed bays, which included six large, timber-framed horizontally-orientated panes - five fixed and one awning (however the lower two were shown as a dark, faceted aluminium panel on the original drawings). The rear/south elevation is partly concealed but has more solid wall comprised of contrasting sandstone and charcoal split face, roman concrete bricks with bands of similar windows to those on the north elevation, though in four pane groups.

The later west/rear section is higher as it has four levels as it includes two undercroft garages. There is also another separate garage in the south-west corner of the site with a terrace above. The upper two levels have a similar format of those to the front however the central balcony does not have a central division as it services only one flat at each level.

The north elevation at ground floors/base level is partly visible and has a different articulation to the upper two levels with more sections of wall, similarly split rock roman bricks, and smaller windows.

The west elevation, visible from the rear lane, is largely blank likely with a similar, non-textured brick to the upper two levels however is also overpainted, with windows grouped to the southern end. The use of two different coloured split face bricks – sandstone and charcoal – is readily apparent on this elevation.

247 Inkerman Street, Balaclava

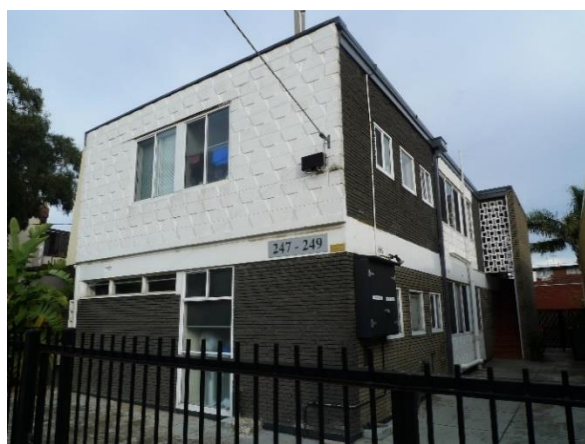
The two-storey block of flats is located on the south-west corner of Inkerman and Camden streets. The rectangular site has an area of about 404m². On the Camden Street side there are original sections of tall, breeze block fencing enclosing private courtyards, in front of which are narrow, edged garden beds. The private pedestrian gates on the east side and the metal palisade fence to the Inkerman Street boundary are not original. The north and west setbacks are concreted and there is vehicular access is on the western side.



Figure 16 - Aerial showing extent of 247 Inkerman Street, Balaclava. (Source: Nearmap, Oct 2021)

The two-storey block features most elements evident in the two other blocks however combined in different ways. The configuration of each elevation is generally symmetrical and the windows are a mixture of likely original timber-framed and altered aluminium-framed types.

In this instance the footprint is consistent to both levels however to the long east elevation there are three balconies, which are partly recessed and projecting with flange screen/privacy walls. These walls are matched with a tapered flange wall at each end. A narrow pergola extends between the balconies, that is over the intervening courtyards.



Figures 17 & 18 - Front/north elevation (left) and east side elevation (right)

The walls of the long east elevation (to Camden Street) are split rock face, roman concrete bricks – charcoal to the upper level and lighter (where visible) to the ground level. The upper level is visible however the lower level is largely concealed. The upper level has blank end bays, with the remaining bays alternating between balconies and wall with a central window. The balconies have square breeze blocks balustrades which alternate with courtyard walls (four at ground level) with the same blocks.

The short north and south elevations feature shadow concrete blocks, configured in a hexagonal pattern (similar to the façade frieze at 99 Westbury Street) and painted, to the upper level. The lower-level walls are charcoal split rock face, roman concrete bricks. The timber-framed fenestration pattern is consistent to both elevations with a central upper window and a combination of full-height and highlights below.

The west elevation, which is partly visible, includes a central projection for a stair that features an upper screen of hollow concrete blocks to its sides. There are sections of wall with shadow blocks either side of the stair with larger windows than to the flanking side bays, which have charcoal split rock face, roman concrete bricks.

Comparative analysis

The southern parts of the municipality – St Kilda (East) and Elwood - have manifold postwar flats. Whilst many are generic, there is a relatively high concentration of architect-designed examples which are more finely detailed or distinguished by their site responsiveness. Michael R E Feldhagen was one of several émigré architects that were active in the area and at the forefront of the evolution of this building type along with Mordecai Benshemesh, Dr Ernest Fooks, and Kurt Popper, often working for Jewish clients and accommodating the influx of Central and Eastern European Jewish refugees who were accustomed to apartment living. In addition, several Australian-born architects were responsible for flats but rarely multiple examples.

The subject group are indicative of the approach that evolved during the late 1950s and early 1960s, when there was a shift from the post-war era to what is often defined as the late 20th century period.

Previously, during the postwar period, the use of cream brick had been favoured. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, a Functionalist mode was adopted with parapets and steel-framed windows. During the mid to late 1950s, roofs were usually expressed with eaves, often deep, openings were typically timber-framed, and some decorative elements crept into the palette such as coloured spandrel panels, ceramic tiles, and balustrading with geometric patterns. Subsequently during the late 1960s, the influence of Brutalism became apparent in the bolder forms and use of darker (tan or brown) bricks, sometimes with expressed concrete.

Feldhagen's output during the early 1960s has no ready comparison in contemporary flat or residential architecture in the municipality is more expressive than the output of his contemporaries with a varied material palette (especially the range of concrete/Besser blocks), greater use of expressed concrete, and varied geometric articulation with shadow blocks and breeze blocks, and partly indicative of a Featurist mode.

The subject buildings are relatively small, with a limited number of flats (including larger flats) by comparison to many others of the period – only one is three storey, with the other two examples being two storey. This reduced scale limited the need for extensive common circulation areas so that the subject buildings have minimal heralding of the entries as some flats in each block have private/direct access.

This particular expression is likely to be influenced by his training and contemporary architecture in Berlin during the 1950s. The German architect Hans Sharoun (1893-1972) was much lauded and one of the city's most renowned projects – the Berlin Philharmonie designed 1956, constructed 1960-63 – was underway. The Philharmonie is noted for its dramatic forms and external metal sheeting with geometric patterns. Also likely of influence was Interbau exhibition held in West Berlin in 1957 and promoting the renewal of the war-damaged Hansaviertel area.

Amongst Feldhagen's own work, the subject buildings have a distinct aesthetic with limited comparison, for soon after the expression he employed began to shift. Several other blocks of flats, and one example of maisonettes, designed by Michael R E Feldhagen are also included within the heritage overlay, though these are all later examples.

- *Surf Side 46 Ormond Esplanade, Elwood (1963-64) (Citation 755).* This three-storey block has a markedly different expression in that whilst it has a flat roof, it projects with a wide soffit which has a raked fascia. The footprint is also stepped maximise views to the rear flats and in this instance, there is less distinction between the upper (third level) and lower (first and second levels) parts. The materiality – cream and brown brick - is partly organised in vertical bays rather than only horizontally. There are

corner (projecting) balconies which are partly breeze block and have steel poles and railing. Windows are aluminium-framed.

- 21 Dickens Street, Elwood (1965-66) (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs precinct) Represents a shift to a less embellished expression. A relatively late cream brick example with minimal eaves overhang as the balconies are recessed. More overtly indicative of the International style in its contained massing and consistent articulation, though it varies between the front and rear blocks. The balustrading includes black, faceted metal panels to the upper levels (probably as had been designated for the 169 Hotham Street block) with metal posts attached in front. Windows are timber-framed.
- 22-24 Eildon Road, St Kilda (1966) (HO5 St Kilda Hill precinct) Three storey flats in cream/tan brick – possibly with an addition to the roof. Breeze blocks are only employed to the roof parapet. Symmetrical façade with recessed balconies with white faceted metal balustrade panels and spandrels to the flanking bays.
- 1 Hartpury Avenue, Elwood (1970). (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs precinct). Three storey flats in tan brick and rendered spandrels with distinctive parabolic arched screen to ground floor façade and canted balconies. Projecting flat roof with raked fascia.
- 2 Crimea Street, St Kilda (1977) (Citation 881, St Kilda East Precinct). Brutalist style maisonettes with a brown brick base with concrete, battered walls to the cantilevered upper level. Bold expression with a blank wall to the front.

In terms of other flats of the late 1950s and early 1960s, the work of other émigré architects is not readily comparative to the contemporary work of Feldhagen. The contemporary Modernist work of Palestinian-born, Australian-educated Mordecai Benshemesh, who generally designed larger buildings, however bares the most comparison as he too employed some decorative elements in the 1960 group, though to a lesser degree than Feldhagen and to buildings with projecting flat roofs.

- *Edgewater Towers*, 12 Marine Parade, St Kilda (Citation 2049). Built 1959. Multi-storey, International style building in white painted concrete with continuous bands of glazing to each elevation.
- 22 Westbury Street (Contributory within St Kilda East precinct). Built 1959. Three-storey, cream brick, balconies with metal balustrades and panels), fully glazed stairwells with louvres, eaves overhang.
- *Wolverton* 8 Westbury Street, East St Kilda (Citation 2429, recommended HO). Built 1960. Three storey with stepped plan, cream brick with eaves overhang, timber-framed windows, faceted balconies and spandrel panels to the front.
- 16 Lansdowne Road, East St Kilda (Citation 2429, recommended HO). Built 1960. Three storey, cream brick with projecting brick and tiled spandrels to the front, timber-framed windows, faceted balconies, and eaves overhang.
- *Leawarra Flats* 306 Dandenong Road, East St Kilda (Citation 2429, recommended HO). Built 1960. Three storey with stepped plan, cream brick, timber-framed windows, canted balustrading, and wide eaves overhang.
- *Questa Heights* 21 The Esplanade, St Kilda (HO5, St Kilda Hill precinct). Built 1965. Multi-storey, of a similar ilk to *Edgewater Towers*, the walls are white painted concrete with continuous bands of glazing. Projecting balconies with a combination of metal balusters and panels.

The work of Theodore Berman, who was Melbourne-born to Polish migrant parents, also bares some comparison, principally the block at 76 Mitford Street.

- *Rocklea Gardens*, 46-40 Hotham Street, St Kilda East, 1960 (Citation 2017, HO293). International style, continuous band of windows/openings with balconies, and spandrel panels at either end of the elongated façade.

- Flats, 2 Southey Grove, Elwood, 1957 (Citation 2017, St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs precinct) single storey, modest, co-joined flats arranged around a communal garden/motor court. Flat/skillion roof with wide soffit, cream and red brick walls (part overpainted), timber-framed windows. Some additions.
- Flats, 76 Mitford Street, Elwood, 1961-62 (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs precinct). Two storey block, cuboid form with flat projecting roof, over galleries, mainly cream brick. The façade treatment is relatively elaborate with concrete brick (two colours and varying bond), 'metal pole screen with '76', and metal balustrades with diamond motifs.

Less work of the Slovakian-born Dr Ernest Fooks (originally Fuchs) has been assessed to date in the municipality however these examples are more restrained than the contemporary, highly articulated work of Feldhagen.

- *Park View*, 5 Herbert Street, St Kilda, 1958-59 (Citation 2427). It has a stepped footprint to maximise views, cream brick walls, projecting flat roof, splayed balconies with geometric railing and glass panels, and timber-framed spandrel panels to the main window units. The circulation is along external galleries to the rear behind a separate stair block with projecting bricks.
- Flats, 21A Dickens Street, Elwood, 1966 (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs precinct). Later brown brick and render, suggesting a burgeoning Brutalist character. Symmetrical façade with central recessed balconies.

The work of the Viennese Kurt Popper is generally indicative of a more restrained version of contemporary Modernism. Although his contemporary work shares a similar material palette, he generally employed more contained footprints and forms.

- Flats, 124-126 Alma Road, 1954 + 47 Westbury Street, St Kilda, 1956 (both Contributory within HO6 St Kilda East precinct). Similar, adjacent blocks in a Functionalist mode. Cream brick (one on red brick plinth), with parapeted roof, steel-framed windows, some with concrete framing to a mixture of small and large windows, and balconies with concrete decks and metal railing.
- Flats, 22A Acland Street, St Kilda, 1957 (Contributory within HO5 St Kilda Hill precinct). Projecting flat roof, cream brick with panels of pale blue tiles to the façade, timber-framed windows, and balconies with metal balustrading with diamond pattern. It has a tile clad, hipped roof.
- Flats, 17 & 17A Burnett Street, St Kilda 1958-59 (Contributory within HO5 St Kilda Hill precinct). More conventional with a hipped roof clad in tile in two mirror-image blocks. Distinguished by the expressed rendered frame to the corner windows.

The contemporary work of Australian-born architects bares limited comparison in particular in terms of the material palette.

- Flats, 21 Redan Street, St Kilda, 1958, John & Phyllis Murphy (Citation 785, HO503). An unusual two-storey red brick building, comprised of two-level flats with separate entries, with a prow-like form and gable roof.
- Flats, 39 Southey Street, Elwood, 1959, L G Grant & Associates (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs precinct). Cream brick but with extensive use of decorative brickwork and screens to the front and a bowed concrete canopy to the entrance supported on steel poles.
- Flats, 63-69 Tennyson Street, Elwood, 1959-60, A V Jennings (Citation 2344, HO436). A series of four mirrored blocks, cream brick, stepped form with undercroft carparking, spandrels and banks of windows.

- Flats, 33 Pine Avenue, Elwood, 1960, Leslie J.W. Reed (Citation 2339, HO429). Cream brick with a projecting stairwell block to the front as well as a bank of windows with spandrels. Balconies to one long side and galleries to the other.

Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

Recommendations

Add to the Heritage Overlay as a group listing with a single HO number.

In the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay apply:

- external paint controls (to ensure complementary colour schemes are employed and/or encourage restoration of original finishes/surfaces).
- fence controls (remnants of original front fences)

Remove 169 Hotham Street and 247 Inkerman Street from HO7 and HO315, respectively, and include within new group HO listing.

Primary source

RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants, *HO7 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2*, 2021

Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Other images

N/A

Area to be included in HO



169 Hotham Street, Balaclava



247 Inkerman Street, Balaclava



99 Westbury Street, Balaclava