

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Adass Israel Synagogue
Other names: -

Citation No:
2435

INSERT MAP



Address: 12-24 Glen Eira Avenue,
Ripponlea
Category: Religion: Synagogue
Style: Postwar: Modernist
Constructed: 1965, 1996
Designer: Dr Ernest Fooks,
Forward Viney Woollan
Amendment: TBC
Comment: New citation

Heritage Precinct: Not applicable
Heritage Overlay: TBC
Graded as: Significant
Victorian Heritage Register: No

Significance

What is significant?

The Adass Israel Synagogue, designed by Dr Ernest Fooks in 1961 and constructed in 1965, at 12-24 Glen Eira Avenue is significant.

The following buildings and features contribute to the significance of the place:

- The 1965 two-storey brown brick synagogue including the broad asymmetric gable roof with wide stained timber soffit, cantilevered masonry entrance canopy, fanned brick detailing, pilaster-like elements with triangular cross sections and central recesses housing structural steel columns, the full-height vertical timber-framed window units incorporating spandrel panels and upper highlights divided by angled glazing bars, the rectangular oriel bay with a prow-like gable roof and detailed perforated brickwork divided by framing members which is supported by a pair of fin-like brick piers, tall timber framed glazed doors on west side, and the low brick retaining wall and metal palisade fence to the boundary. The copper sheeted doors (added in 1996) also contribute to its significance.
- The 1996 addition, also two storey brown brick, including the corner oriel bay, mosaic tile detailing, copper sheeted door, and narrow rectangular windows some with tapering metal hoods. The copper sheeted doors to the earlier 1965 section, which were introduced in 1996, are also contributory.

Alterations and additions (post-1996) are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Adass Israel Synagogue is of local historical, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

It is of historical significance as a synagogue built in the 1960s following a period of massive growth for Melbourne's Jewish community during and following WWII. It is demonstrative of the large Jewish community that was established in the broader St Kilda area and the formation of various congregations. It is specifically associated with the Adass Israel Congregation which was formed in 1939-40 following a split in the Elwood Talmud Torah Congregation and whose membership predominantly comprised recent Jewish immigrants from Germany and Austria. Like many Post-war congregations they initially met in adapted buildings, including a Federation period house at the subject site which they purchased in 1950, before building a dedicated synagogue in 1965. Additions made to the synagogue in 1996 indicate the continuing growth of the congregation into the late 20th century. (Criterion A)

It is of aesthetic significance as a largely intact and distinctive example of Post-war religious architecture in the Modernist idiom designed by preeminent Jewish émigré architect Dr Ernest Fooks. While Fook's European education and experience is the dominant influence on the design, the broad gable roof with wide eaves is suggestive of the local Post-war Melbourne Regional Style. Key aspects of the design include the intricate perforated brickwork of the oriel bay (reminiscent of a Middle Eastern Mashrabiya), the fanned brick detailing above the door, the repetitive vertical emphases, and the use of triangular forms including the projecting prow-like gable and the pilaster-like elements. Although the design was largely developed in 1961, the use of brown bricks speaks of its later construction date. The 1996 addition and alterations are sympathetically integrated with the original synagogue and incorporate distinctive detailing such as the mosaic tiling and copper sheeted doors. (Criterion E)

It is of social significance for its strong continuum of use by the Adass Israel Congregation since 1965. It is a key reference point in the cultural landscape of the congregation whose members are concentrated in Ripponlea. (Criterion G)

Thematic context

Victoria's framework of historical themes

2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes: 2.4 Arriving in a new land, 2.5 Migrating and making a home, 2.6 Maintaining distinctive cultures; 8. Building community life: 8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

Port Phillip thematic environmental history

3. People: 3.5 Expressing identity and culture; 8. Community life: 8.1 Spiritual life

History

Thematic history

There are many different places in the municipality that relate to the spiritual life of the community. These include sacred sites for Indigenous people that reflect traditional ceremonies, as well as churches, synagogues, and other places of worship, including places used by alternative spiritual groups. These places have played a changing role over time, as the needs of the community have changed.

The strong Jewish community in St Kilda and Elwood today is largely a result of post-World War II migration. However, there has been a Jewish congregation in the area since the late 1800s. In 1921 the Jewish population of Melbourne was 7,600 people, this grew to approximately 30,000 by 1961 (Lipmann, 1973, as cited in Townsend, 2018).

The St Kilda Hebrew Congregation was established in 1871 and built its first synagogue on part of the former Charnwood estate the following year. The congregation grew and by the early 1920s, it needed a bigger synagogue. The new St Kilda Hebrew Congregation Synagogue was built almost directly opposite the

original building and was consecrated in 1927. Designed by Joseph Plottel, the synagogue is built in Byzantine Revival style.

The first Australian Temple Beth Israel was founded in Melbourne in 1930 by Ada Phillips. It promoted a progressive form of Judaism that was more relevant and appealing to younger Jews. Services were held at Wickliffe House on the St Kilda Esplanade, the St Kilda Town Hall and the Christ Church hall. A synagogue was purpose-built at 76-82 Alma Road, St Kilda in 1937. But by the end of World War II, with 1,600 people attending on High Holidays, some services had to be held at the St Kilda Town Hall. By the late 1950s, the congregation had grown to become the largest single Jewish congregation in Australia.

The Elwood Talmud Torah congregation was founded in the 1930s to serve the increasing number of Jewish migrants escaping growing anti-Semitism and persecution in Europe. The congregation, like so many others in the study area, began meeting in private homes before raising enough funds to purchase land and build a synagogue. Kurt Popper, a Viennese modernist architect, designed the Elwood Talmud Torah. It opened its doors in 1957. Part of the community broke away in 1939-1940 to form the Adass Israel Congregation, which established a synagogue at 24 Glen Eira Road, Ripponlea in 1950. In December 1950, the foundation stone for a mikvah – a ritual bathhouse – was laid behind the main building. The community continued to expand its synagogue to surrounding sites from the 1960s, to accommodate its growth.

The Sephardi Jewish community also arrived in the area during the huge wave of post-war migration in the 1950s. They worked hard to establish a place of worship of their own, and in 1994 former Australian Governor Sir Zelman Cohen opened the Sassoon Yehuda Sephardi Synagogue on Hotham Street, East St Kilda.

These synagogues are still in regular use. The range of congregations demonstrates the diversity and strength of the Jewish community in the City of Port Phillip (TEH).

Adass Israel Synagogue

The subject site formed part of Crown portion 238, southeast of St Kilda, parish of Prahran. The 4¾ acre allotment on the north side of Glen Eira Road was purchased in the 1850s (pre-1857) jointly by wealthy speculator Hugh Glass and auctioneer Brabazon Purcell (PP). Within a couple of years, the allotment was acquired by Thomas Monahan, an Irish immigrant who made his fortune in Melbourne as a property owner and who also owned land on the south side of Glen Eira Road where he lived with his wife Mary in the substantial basalt residence *Erindale*.

In October 1888, about 100 sites, including the subject site, were auctioned in the 'East St Kilda Estate' subdivisional sale of Crown portions 238, 237 and 232 between Glen Eira Road and Grosvenor Street (CM). The subject site, Lot 12 in Block E measuring 54 feet (16.5m) to Glen Eira Avenue and 130 feet (39.6m) to Oak Grove, passed through several hands over the ensuing two decades.

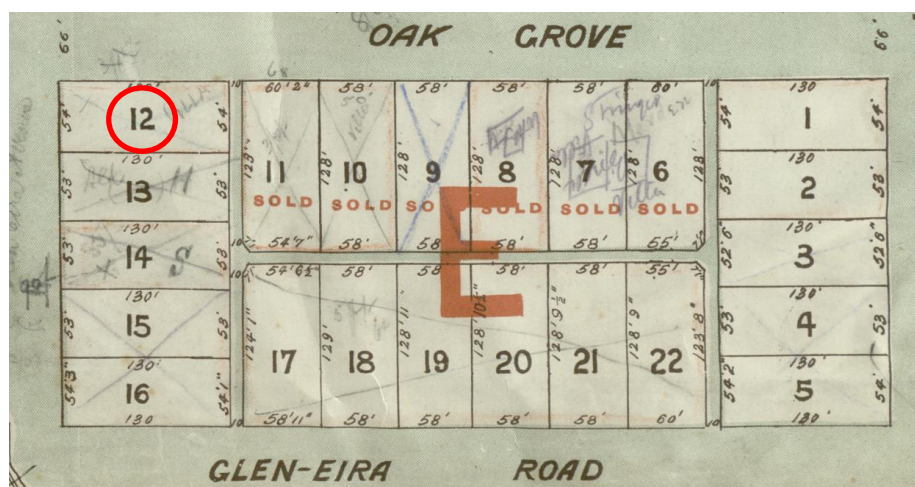


Figure 1 - Extract from a plan of the East St Kilda Estate, c.1880s, showing Block E. The subject site (lot 12) is indicated. (Source: State Library of Victoria)

The 1901 MMBW plan (Figure 2) shows that the subject site remained vacant, and that minimal development had occurred within the block bounded by Oak Grove, Hotham Street, Glen Eira Road and Glen Eira Avenue (then known as Murcott Street). In August 1909, the subject site was purchased by widow Jane Charlotte Powell (CT). In the same month, a building permit was issued to Powell for a 'weatherboard villa' which was evidently constructed soon after. The 1911 Sands and McDougall's directory lists Mrs Jane C Powell in Glen Eira Avenue.

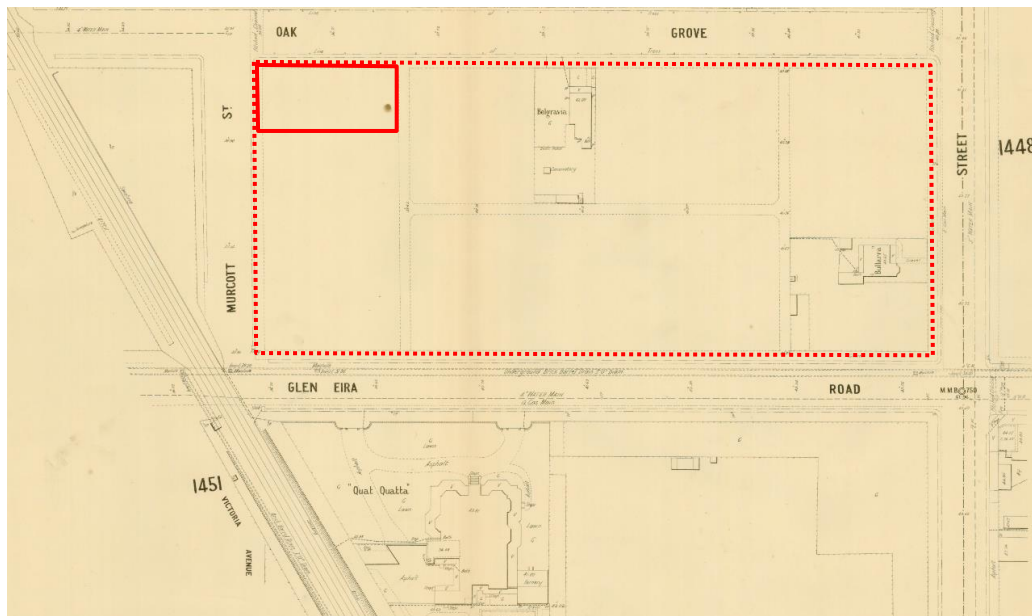


Figure 2 - MMBW detail plan no. 1452, dated 1901. Approximate boundaries of the subject precinct are indicated (solid line). Approximate boundaries of 'Block E' are also indicated (dotted line). (Source: State Library of Victoria)

In May 1912, the Ripponlea railway station was opened (although the station buildings were not completed until the following year) opposite the subject site on the west side of Glen Eira Avenue, prompting a strong surge in commercial and residential development in the vicinity.

In 1920, the subject site was sold to Henry Hollister Jackson, medical practitioner, who owned it for the next thirty years until his death (CT). The house can be seen in the 1945 aerial photograph (Figure 3).



Figure 3 - Aerial photograph dated 1945, showing the earlier house on the subject site. (Source: Landata, Proj No 5, Run 16, Frame 57847)

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In 1961, Fooks was again commissioned by the congregation, this time to design a new synagogue in place of the former house. Working drawings were prepared in July 1961 (Figures 5 & 6) showing a two-storey building incorporating the pre-existing mikvah at the rear. The drawing of the north elevation indicated the intention for a sculpture/artwork or a name panel to be installed above the doors.

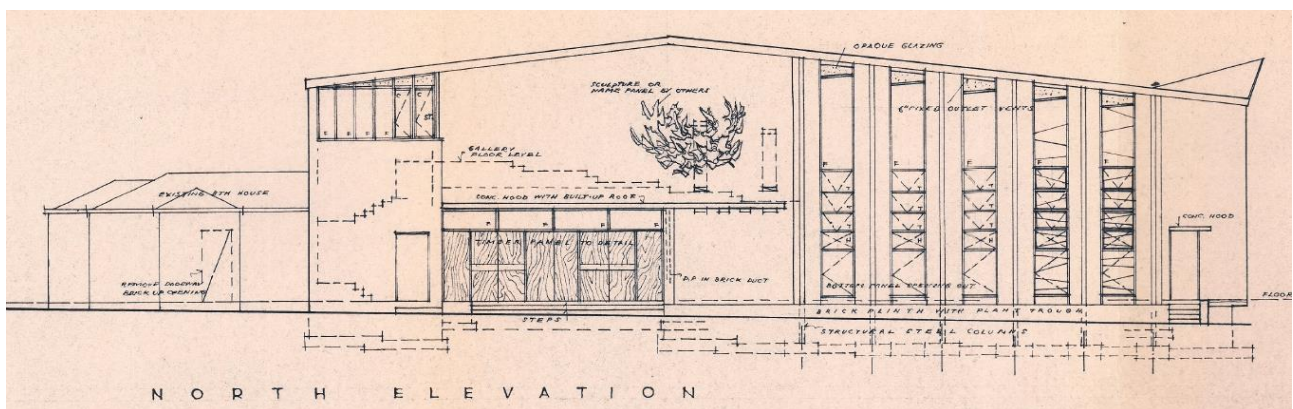


Figure 5 - Drawing dated July 1961 (Dr. Ernest Fooks), showing north elevation. (Source: Council Building File)

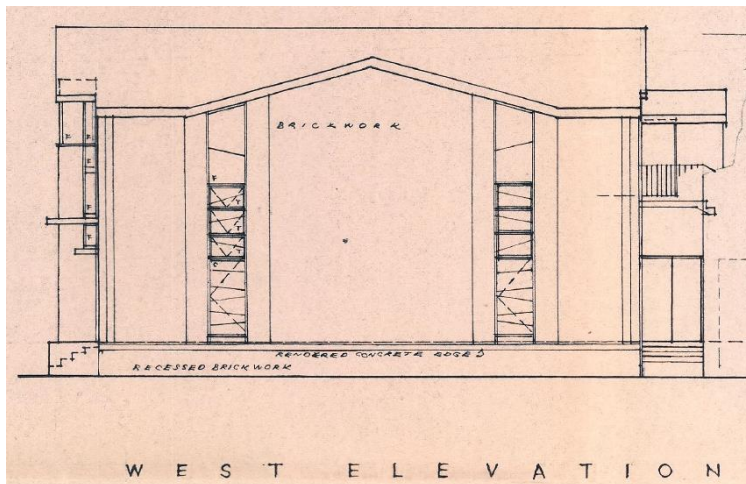


Figure 6 - Drawing dated July 1961 (Dr. Ernest Fooks), showing west elevation. (Source: Council Building File)

In October 1961, the Adass Israel Synagogue Building Committee applied to Council for examination of the preliminary plans, and in December Council responded that a permit could be issued. Following an extended interval, a permit (BP no. 57/2523) was issued in December 1962. It was hoped that work would begin on the new synagogue during 1963, however other commitments, including the completion of a school in Caulfield, delayed the start of the project and it was not begun during the 12-month validity of the permit (*Australian Jewish News* 14 Jun 1963 p2). On 2 December 1963 the builder Phillip Ernst, on behalf of the building committee, requested an extension of the permit and accordingly another permit (BP no. 20) was issued the following day. The cost of the proposed building was estimated to be £20,000 and it was referred to in correspondence as the 'Adass Israel War Memorial Synagogue'.

In 1964, between August and November, revised drawings (Figures 7 & 8) were prepared by the Office of Dr Ernest Fooks. The drawings show a scheme that was generally similar to that prepared in 1961, with minor changes to the exterior and some changes to the interior layout, particularly the gallery level. A third permit was sought and granted on 3 December 1964 (BP no. 602). By this time, the estimated cost of the work had risen to £33,000.

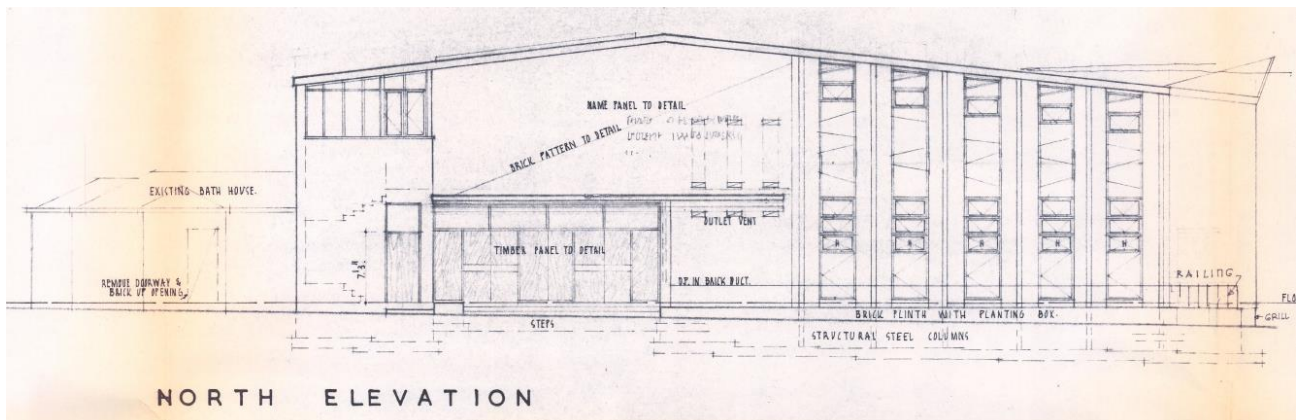


Figure 7 - Drawing dated November 1964, (Dr. Ernest Fooks), showing north elevation. Stamped 13 December 1964 in relation to permit no. 602. (Source: Council Building File)

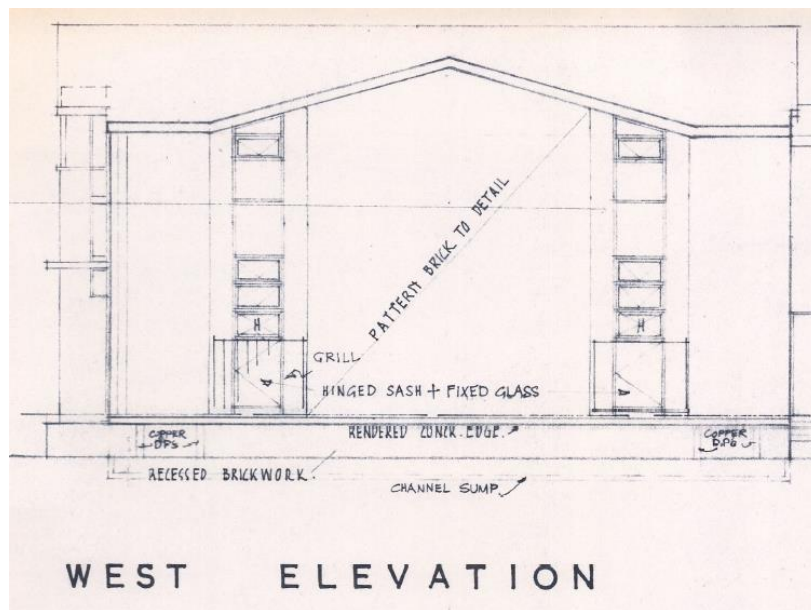
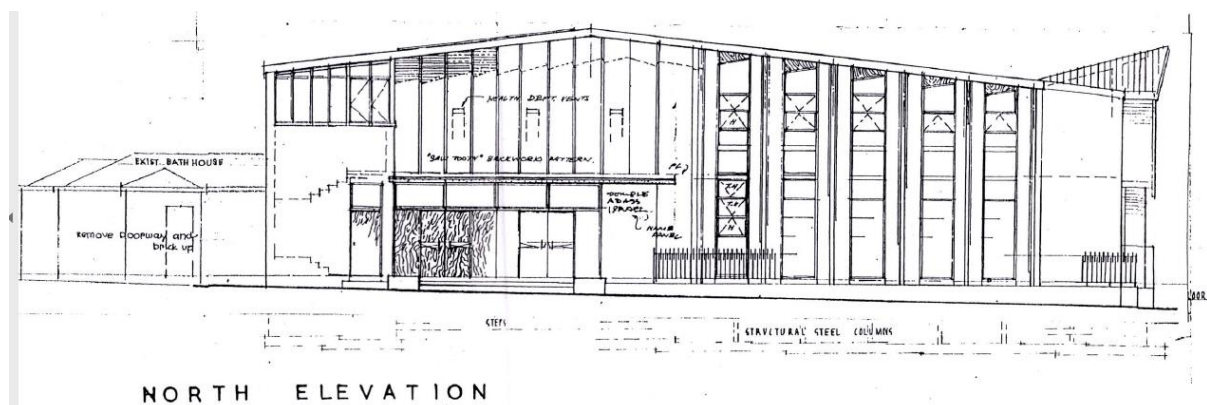
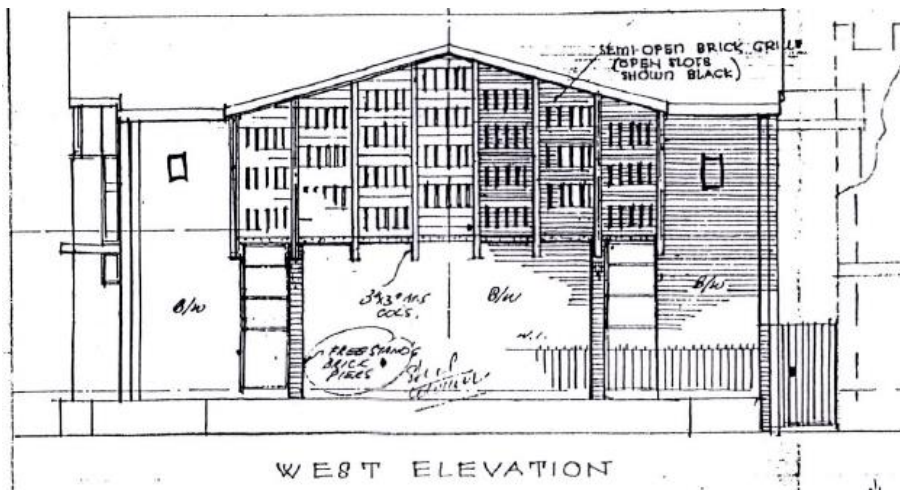


Figure 8 - Drawing dated November 1964, (Dr. Ernest Fooks), showing west elevation. Stamped 13 December 1964 in relation to permit no. 602). (Source: Council Building File)

The drawings show the main entrance on the north side as recessed, whereas it is now in line with the façade (it is unclear when this was changed). Also, the doors are shown as timber with highlight windows.

It appears that Fooks resolved some details of the design post-permit which had been left blank on the stamped permit drawings. A presumed post-permit drawing (Figure 9 & 10) shows the oriel bay with patterned and perforated brickwork on the west side (which had not previously been shown as a projecting element although the stamped permit plans indicated some decorative brickwork was envisaged) as well as the fanned brickwork above the entrance on the north side.





Figures 9 & 10 - North and west elevations (Dr Ernest Fooks) presumably prepared post-permit. Showing oriel bay to west side and fanned brick detailing above entrance to north side. (Source: Council Building File B0347/1995/B/O)

Construction was undertaken in 1965 by Phillip Ernst, master builder, of 1 Downshire Road Elsternwick. The adjacent two-storey Federation period shop was apparently employed as a temporary hall while the new building was being constructed. In September 1965, ownership of the subject site was transferred to the trustees for the Congregation Adass Israel Trust.

Between the late 1960s and early 1980s, the adjoining six shop sites to the south on Glen Eira Avenue were progressively acquired by the congregation (CT). In 1984, a multipurpose hall was built on the former shop sites. In December 1984, approval was granted to consolidate all the land to create an approximately 1932m² parcel with a frontage of 48.7m to Glen Eira Avenue.

On New Year's Day in 1995, the synagogue was the target of an arson attack. The damage was estimated at more than \$200,000 and described by police as 'severe but localised'. The Ark (Aron Hakodesh) was destroyed in the fire, but the Torah scrolls were able to be saved (*Australian Jewish News* 6 Jan 1995 p3).

Following the fire, a building permit was issued on 2 May 1995 for reinstatement works. The works, which were estimated to cost \$100,000, were overseen by architect Erwin L Kaldor and included the replacement of glazing and doors amongst other repairs.

The following year, a planning permit was issued by City of Port Phillip on 15 March 1996 for an addition to the synagogue. A building permit was subsequently issued 31 May 1996. The works were estimated to cost \$1.26 million. Architectural practice Forward Viney Woollan, who had offices in Hobart and Melbourne, prepared the drawings in February 1996 (Figure 11). The new two storey addition was built on the eastern part of the site. As part of the works, the 1950 mikvah and a short section of the 1960s building to the east of the entrance were demolished. Also, the main entrance doors to the 1965 building were replaced with copper sheeted doors surrounded by square framed glazing.

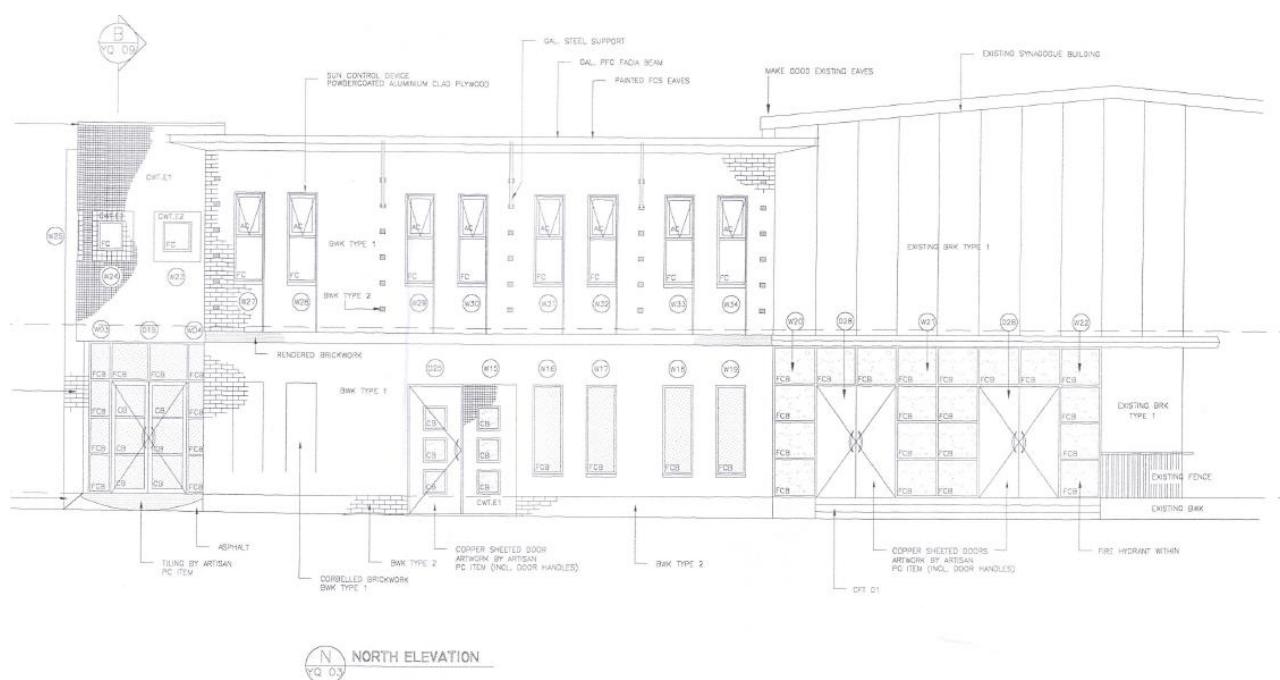


Figure 11 - Drawing of northern elevation dated February 1996, Forward Viney Woollan (Source: Council Building File, B0364/1996/P/0-01)

Adass Israel Congregation

The following history of the Adass Israel Congregation between 1939 and 1999 is from *The Spirit of St Kilda: Places of Worship in St Kilda*, by Janette Bomford. It also provides some additional information regarding the subject site (underlined):

The history of the Adass Israel Congregation dates to 1939-40 when some members of the Elwood Talmud Torah became dissatisfied with the level of observance and decided to established their own congregation. Known as Kehilla Kedosha Beis Haknesses Ahawah Zion, it was established at 391 High Street, St Kilda, in a small shuttered shopfront. This building was later demolished when the road was widened. In 1943, Leo and Michael Newman and their father Peretz, who was originally from Vienna, left Elwood Talmud Torah over dissatisfaction with procedures they believed contravened Orthodox Jewish lore. Soon after joining the new group, they took over its management and the group moved to 15a Brighton Road. Ephraim Pollak, one of the founders, died in 1943 and the minyan was renamed Beth Ephraim in his honour.

The Newman brothers brought a Viennese influence to the congregation. This attracted Orthodox Jews arriving from Germany and Austria during and after the war. Some of these were the boys and men who were sent to Australia by the British aboard the Dunera in 1941. This group of about 3000 Austrian, German and Italian men and boys over the age of sixteen had been interned in Britain as enemy aliens after the outbreak of war. In fact, a majority of them supported the Allies. Many were Jewish, but not all were refugees. Some were interned at Tatura in country Victoria, where Leo Newman visited them and arranged for additional religious requisites to be provided and for some of the younger ones to be released. Erwin Lamm was also released from Tatura in order to become minister of Beth Ephraim after Joseph Weinern left. In 1944 Rabbi Ehrentreu, who had also arrived on the Dunera, presented the first Shabbos Hagadol Droshe at Beth Ephraim. Rabbinical assistance was also given by Rabbi Wyshkowsky, who had escaped with his son from the Nazis via Singapore and Japan.

In 1944 the congregation affiliated with the London Adass Yisroel movement. Congregations were required to include in their constitutions that the congregation would be conducted in the Orthodox way, according to the law of Moses and Israel, and that no-one who desecrates the Sabbath or partakes of forbidden food can be elected to the governing body. The name Adass Israel was adopted at a special meeting on 20 August 1950. Many congregations had adopted this name, modelled on the one in Berlin; it was also the name of the one in Vienna, which many saw as their model.

Post-war immigration laid the foundation for the Adass community. The congregation quickly outgrew the Brighton Road premises. A house at 24 Glen Eira Avenue was bought in 1950 and used as a shule and classrooms. In December 1950 the foundation stone for a mikvah (ritual bath) was laid at the rear of the property, which took two years to complete. In the meantime, many people used a private mikvah at the home of Yechiel Binet in Gardenvale.

The first Rov was Rav Yitzchok Ya'akov Neumann. He arrived from Antwerp on 23 April 1952. He was displeased that the children were attending state schools and a Hebrew school was opened in May 1952. It was a Government-recognised primary school and only the second such Jewish school in Melbourne. He also arranged that Neumann and Schwartz, at 251 Inkerman Street, St Kilda, would provide kosher meat under his supervision. The fees gained from this arrangement made the Adass establishment sounder and enabled expansion, especially in the education area. Rav Neumann stayed only briefly and it was two years before a new Rov, Rabbi Bezalel Stern, arrived in 1955. Rabbi Stern oversaw great developments and expansion of the Adass Israel congregation.

The new school campus opened soon after and Rabbi Stern's daughter Miriam began teaching there, thus enabling the inclusion of girls at the day school. With a new influx of migrants after the Hungarian Revolution, the congregation needed larger premises. In 1959 the adjoining property was bought and an Adass Israel War Memorial Synagogue Building fund established. It was created as a war memorial for the purpose of tax deductibility for donations but was considered an appropriate designation given the background of so many congregants. Priority was given to the school building and it opened on 25 October 1964, the night before the foundation stone for the synagogue was laid. Building began in 1965 and opened on 19 September that year. It was designed to seat 300 men and 250 women. Subsequently adjoining sites were also bought as the membership continued to grow.

Rabbi Stern was succeeded by Rabbi Elimelech Ashkenazi whose leadership saw the congregation continue to expand and more building undertaken. A multipurpose hall built in 1984 was later named the Adass Gutnick Hall after an endowment by Rabbi Joseph and Stera Gutnick in memory of his mother, Reebetzin Raizel Gutnick. Rabbi Ashkenazi's successor was Rabbi Avraham Zvi Beck, who was appointed in 1987. He placed great emphasis on the development of the Yeshiva, where young adults devoted their time to study and teaching. Another initiative was the building of the Caulfield Mikvah on the corner of Furneaux Road and McWhae Street. Named in memory of Mrs Malkah Sarah Jager, it opened in 1993. A new men's mikvah was opened at the synagogue premises in 1997.

The shule (synagogue) was severely damaged in an arson attack on 1 January 1995. A rebuilding appeal was launched and there was wide support for it. The architect was Erwin Kaldor and the contractors were the Pomeroy Bros. Interior decoration was undertaken by Dario Zuroff. The new work was consecrated on 17 September 1995. The congregation continued to grow and extensions were carried out in 1997. Rabbi Gutnick also assisted the purchase of the building on the corner of Hotham Street and Glen Eira Road, which was redeveloped in 1999 and now houses the Yeshiva Ketana.

Ernest Fooks - Architect

Born during 1906 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, Ernest Fuchs was educated in Vienna, where he completed a degree in architecture in 1929 and subsequently a doctorate in town planning in 1932. He started his own practice at that time but in 1939 fled the rising anti-Semitism in Europe, marrying Latvian-born Noemi Matusevic in Canada en route to Australia (Edquist, 2012).

In Melbourne, he became assistant town planner for the Housing Commission of Victoria for nearly a decade (until 1948) working on projects across the State. During this time, he wrote extensively, and lectured, on town planning issues leading to his appointment in 1944 as the first lecturer of town planning at the Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT). In 1946, he outlined his ideas and solutions to planning in Melbourne in *X-Ray the City! the Density Diagram, Basis for Urban Planning*.

On becoming an Australian citizen in 1945, he changed his surname to Fooks. From 1948, he established a successful architectural practice, drawing much of his clientele from Melbourne's thriving post-WW2 European émigré community.

Fooks' practice specialised in 'own your own' flats for developers completing over forty blocks of flats in St Kilda, Caulfield, Toorak, South Yarra and Hawthorn. In 1955, he self-developed an office with four bachelor flats attached at 1 Woonsocket Court, St Kilda (extant but much altered). Fooks also designed numerous single-family residences, beginning with modest-scale examples in the austerity driven period of the late 1940s and early 1950s but evolving as prosperity increased to more ambitiously scaled and detailed

examples subsequently. In this sphere, he was influenced by courtyard focused precedents and the use of Japanese-inspired screens, culminating in his own-famed house in Caulfield (1966). Other projects included some commercial (such as shops) and educational buildings (e.g. Mt Scopus Memorial College, Burwood), as well as two notable community facilities – the B'nai B'rith in Hotham Street, Balaclava in 1959 and the National Jewish Memorial Centre and Community Facility in Canberra, completed in 1971. The B'nai B'rith commission is said to stem from Noemi's encouragement to be involved with local community affairs (Edquist, 2012).

Fooks passed in 1985. Despite the coverage in magazines such as *Australian House and Garden* and extensive output of both built work and in publishing, his work has only recently become more widely acknowledged in general architectural circles (Peterson, 2009).

References

Bomford, Janette, *The Spirit of St Kilda: Places of Worship in St Kilda*, 2003

Cartographic material (CM) held by State library of Victoria: 'East St Kilda Estate' (undated, from the Vale Collection); 'East St Kilda Estate' (1888, published by L C Cunningham, from the Haughton Collection).

Certificates of Title (CT) relating to subject site: Vol. 2135 Fol. 891; Vol. 2301 Fol. 103; Vol. 2464 Fol. 603; Vol. 3339 Fol. 727; Vol. 3360 Fol. 807; Vol. 7441 Fol. 107.

Certificates of Title (CT) relating to adjacent land: Vol. 3713 Fol. 546; Vol. 3923 Fol. 435; Vol. 4355 Fol. 819; Vol. 8079 Fol. 932; Vol. 8102 Fol. 275; Vol. 8256 Fol. 007; Vol. 9580 Fol. 355.

Edquist, Harriet (2012), 'Fooks, Ernest', P Goad & J Willis, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Melbourne, pp258-259

Elwood Shule website: http://www.elwoodshule.org/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/1266584/jewish/Our-History.htm (accessed 16 May 2018)

Newspaper articles

Peterson, Richard (2009, 2nd ed. [2005]), 'Edgewater Towers' (chpt. 43) in *A Place of Sensuous Resort: Buildings of St Kilda and their people*.

Parish Plan - at Elwood, Parish of Prahran, P81-13 (PP)

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH), February 2021

Public Building File held by Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 7882, P1, Unit 1511, Item 12839. Containing drawings dated 1950 and 1955 and correspondence with the Department of Health.

Sands and McDougall's street directories (SM)

St Kilda Council building permit files held by Port Phillip City Council. Containing drawings dated 1955, 1961, 1964, 1995 and 1996, permits, applications for permits, and correspondence. (BP)

Townsend, Catherine, 'Making Modern Jewish Melbourne: Schools, Synagogues, Aged Care Facilities and Community Buildings 1938-1979' (paper), 2018

Description

The synagogue is located at the corner of Glen Eira Avenue and Oak Grove. The eastern side is bounded by a basalt paved lane. It occupies the northern part of a larger site occupied by the Adass Israel Congregation. The synagogue is composed of two sections: the 1965 building to the west and the later 1996 addition to the east. Both sections are two-storey and in a similar coloured brown brick.

The 1965 section is in the Modernist idiom. It has a broad asymmetric gable roof with a wide stained timber soffit. The primary façade to the north is highly articulated with strong repetitive vertical emphases. It is broken into an entry bay and fenestrated bay. Steps lead up to the entrance which has two sets of

copper sheeted double doors set in a multipaned glazed bank. There is a cantilevered masonry canopy over the entrance that provides a contrasting horizontal element. Featured at first floor above the entrance is unusual, fanned brick detailing. The fenestrated bay is comprised of pilaster-like elements with triangular cross sections and central recesses housing structural steel columns, which alternate with vertical window units made up of timber-framed windows (awning and fixed parts), spandrel panels and upper highlights divided by angled glazing bars. The southern elevation is articulated in a similar manner to the northern elevation but is obscured by the adjacent 1980s hall. The western elevation has a symmetrical composition dominated by a rectangular oriel bay with a prow-like gable roof. The oriel bay has intricately detailed perforated brickwork (reminiscent of a Middle Eastern Mashrabiya) divided by framing members and is supported by a pair of fin-like brick piers. Centrally positioned beneath the oriel bay is a niche-like element with a concave profile clad in copper coloured mosaic tiles (this is likely to be a later addition, but it is unclear when it was introduced). There are also a pair of tall timber framed glazed doors.

The 1996 addition has a flat roof, with a wide soffit and a girder-like fascia, that tucks beneath the gabled roof of the 1965 section. The design of the addition, while adopting a Postmodern expression, takes cues from its host building such that they form a cohesive whole. The walls are brown brick with a plinth of glazed dark brown bricks. Narrow rectangular windows and two blind niches, which are aligned at ground and first floor, serve to perpetuate the vertical emphasis. At first floor the windows have tapering metal hoods. A horizontal rendered band extends from the line of the entrance canopy to the 1965 building, dividing the façade. At the corner is a prominent circular oriel bay with square recessed windows fully clad in copper coloured mosaic tiles. Beneath the oriel bay there is a recessed entrance with a concave side wall clad in blue mosaic tiles which has a multipaned glazed door and surround. A second entrance on the north side has a copper sheeted door with an accompanying panel to the side clad in copper coloured mosaic tiles. The eastern elevation to the lane is comparatively plain and has staggered sections of glass bricks.

The 1965 section has narrow setbacks and is surrounded by a low brick retaining wall, inverted at the corner, atop which is a metal palisade fence. The 1996 section is built to the boundary. Like the short section of the 1965 building it replaced, the addition is built to the boundary.

Comparative analysis

The Adass Israel synagogue is one of many institutional buildings (schools, community centres, memorials, aged care facilities etc.) constructed in Melbourne during the 1950s, 60s and 70s in response to the massive population growth within the Jewish community following WWII. It is one of about twelve sizable synagogues built in Melbourne between 1950 and 1979. Unlike earlier synagogues in Melbourne which were principally places of worship, the Post-war synagogues were also intended to function as community centres around which social and cultural life revolved like precedents from Eastern Europe and the United States.

The architects commissioned were often Jewish émigrés themselves who brought with them detailed knowledge and experience of European Modernism. While their formative training always remained dominant, their work inevitably absorbed some influence from their new home. Dr Ernest Fooks, who was educated in Vienna before immigrating in 1939, emerged as one of the preeminent Jewish émigré architects practicing in Melbourne during the Post-war period.

The Adass Israel synagogue is in the Modernist idiom. Although built in 1965, the design had been largely settled four years earlier in 1961. While unconfirmed, it is quite possible that building was originally conceived in cream brick, a colour widely associated with the 1950s and early 1960s and which Fooks had recently employed at the B'nai B'rith community facility in Balaclava in 1959. Dark brown bricks became popular in the latter part of the 1960s and 1970s, and as such the decision to use them may have been made around the time of the build date. The broad gable roof with wide eaves is suggestive of the Post-war Melbourne Regional Style. Like at many Jewish community buildings, an artwork/sculpture was originally intended to be mounted above the entrance, however it does not appear to have eventuated.

In her paper 'Making Modern Jewish Melbourne', University of Melbourne scholar Catherine Townsend observes that the design of the Adass Israel synagogue is reminiscent of Percival Goodman's work in the United States. Some relevant examples by Goodman include Temple Emanuel in Colorado (c.1956) and Temple Beth El in Massachusetts (1953) which make bold use of triangular forms, prow-like gable roofs, and fanned effects, characteristics Fooks incorporated at the subject site albeit in a more subtle manner.

The Adass Israel synagogue is one of a few synagogues in the broader St Kilda area. Two developed before WWII include the St Kilda Synagogue at 12 Charnwood Crescent built in 1926 and designed by Joseph Plottel which is included on the Victorian Heritage Register (H1968), and the Temple Beth Israel at 76 Alma Road built in 1937 which is much altered and not included in the Heritage Overlay.

The most readily comparable example is the Elwood Shule at 39 Dickens Street, Elwood which was originally built 1956-57 but extensively remodelled 1971-73. It was designed by émigré architect Kurt Popper who like Fooks trained in Vienna. The remodelled building, built some eight years after the Adass Israel synagogue, has a distinctive monumental character. It has been recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay.

Dr. Ernest Fooks designed at least two other buildings in the municipality for the Jewish community. These include the B'nai B'rith House, a former community facility, at 99 Hotham Street Balaclava built in 1959 (Citation 2018, HO337), and the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha, a Jewish mortuary and funeral home, 115-119 Inkerman Street, St Kilda, built in 1979 (not included in the Heritage Overlay).

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

Transfer from HO7 to a new individual HO (on the basis it does not logically form part of either of the proposed adjacent new precincts Ripponlea Commercial precinct or Ripponlea Residential precinct). Exclude the 1980s multipurpose hall on the south side from the extent of the HO.

Apply fence controls in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (original fence).

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





North Elevation, 1965 section



West Elevation



North Elevation, 1996 addition

Area to be included in HO

