

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Moruya
Other names: Surgery & residence

Citation No:
2432

INSERT MAP



Address: 70 & 70A Chapel Street, St Kilda

Heritage Precinct: Not applicable

Category: Commercial: Surgery and residence

Heritage Overlay: TBC

Style: Interwar

Graded as: Significant

Constructed: 1923

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Designer: Reginald V Courtney

Amendment: TBC

Comment: New citation

Significance

What is significant?

Moruya, at 70 & 70A Chapel Street, St Kilda, constructed in 1923 for dentist Sydney Harber and designed by architect Reginald V Courtney, is significant.

The building is comprised of a two-storey residence and attached single storey dental surgery. Contributory features include the rendered façades (contrasting roughcast and smooth, although now overpainted), the recessed porches, façade formats (asymmetrical to the residence and symmetrical to the surgery), roof forms (partly expressed/partly parapeted tile clad hipped roof to the residence and parapeted flat roof to the surgery), chimneys, timber-framed sash windows and doors, raised lettering spelling 'Moruya', and detailing such as dentilation, recessed panels, exposed rafter ends, timber brackets and metal gates (to surgery).

Alterations and additions, including the fence in front of the residential component, are not significant. The current paint colour scheme is not significant.

How is it significant?

Moruya at 70 & 70A Chapel Street, St Kilda is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Moruya is historically significant as a purpose-built residence with attached dental surgery of the early Interwar period which is indicative of the transitional phase from the often home-based medical and dental practices of the 19th century to the more formal and hygienic settings of the 20th century. It was occupied by the original owner dentist Sydney Harber and his family until the late 1940s and continued to be used as a dental surgery until at least 1970. It is also representative of the intensive redevelopment and consolidation of sites that occurred in this part of St Kilda during the Interwar period in the context of local population expansion and increasing affluence. (Criterion A)

Moruya is aesthetically significant as a highly intact and distinctive example of an uncommon building typology in the municipality, that of a combined residence and surgery. It is distinguished from other examples of the type by the distinction of the surgery as a separate entity from the residence, achieved by its more commercial expression. Stylistically it reflects early Interwar period design, incorporating aspects of the Arts and Crafts style and a restrained classicising influence. (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)

History

Contextual history

The development of St Kilda began following the first land sales in 1842 and by 1854 there were over two hundred houses. The plans compiled in 1855 by James Kearney shows that most of these were situated to the west of Brighton Road (later High Street and now St Kilda Road). The St Kilda East and Balaclava areas by comparison, were largely undeveloped, particularly east of Chapel Street. Improvements to public transport including the opening of the railway station at Carlisle Street, and the establishment in the late 1880s of cable tram routes along High Street (St Kilda Road) and Chapel Street encouraged development during the land boom, however, this remained sporadic and ground to halt during the economic depression of the 1890s.

There was almost no increase in St Kilda's population in the decade from 1891 to 1901. However, as development recovered in the early twentieth century the number of residents in St Kilda almost doubled between 1901 and 1921 rising from 20,500 to 38,500. Whole new streets of neat brick cottages and villas appeared, however, in St Kilda and Balaclava this largely remained a period of consolidation and infill on vacant land within the established residential areas, rather than expansion into the still largely undeveloped areas east of Hotham Street. Along Chapel Street the electrification of the cable tram route in 1926 encouraged the building of flats and redevelopment of older buildings and resulted in the need for new shops and services to serve the growing population.

Moruya, 70 & 70A Chapel Street

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

By 1888, the subject parcel of land was owned by John Damyon, a local coachsmith (CT). The 1897 MMBW plan (Figure 1) shows the site had been developed with two buildings fronting Chapel Street, including a

larger likely commercial building (probably with residence) on the northern boundary and a separate smaller building at the Edward Street corner, as well as some outbuildings to the rear including stables. The street directories between 1898 and 1922 record a succession of occupants including bootmakers and a dressmaker in the larger building, and a dairy and a woodyard in the smaller building (SM).

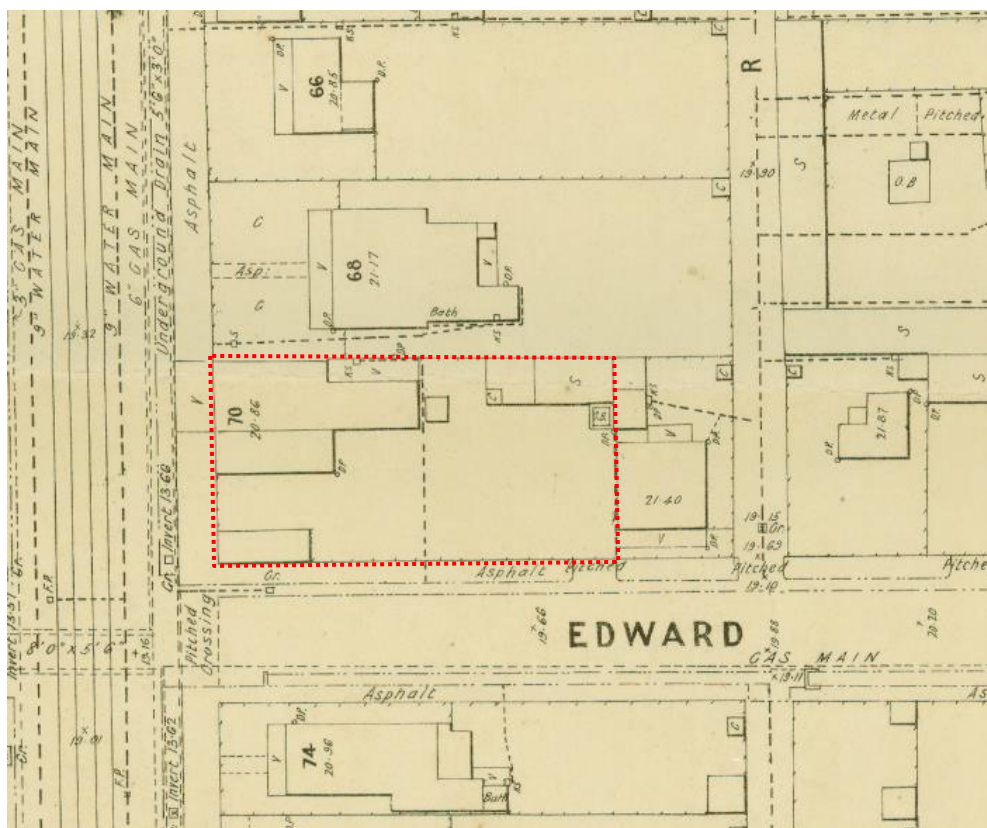


Figure 1 - MMBW detail plan no. 1424 (dated 1897), showing the previous buildings on the subject site.

In September 1921, the property was purchased by Sydney Harber, dentist, who occupied the neighbouring property (no. 68) with his wife Elsie and their children (CT) (Figure 2). Harber was well established as a dentist in St Kilda by this time, following in the footsteps of his older brothers Walter (d. 1907) and Horace (d. 1915) who had also practised as dentists in the nearby St Kilda/Prahran area (SM).

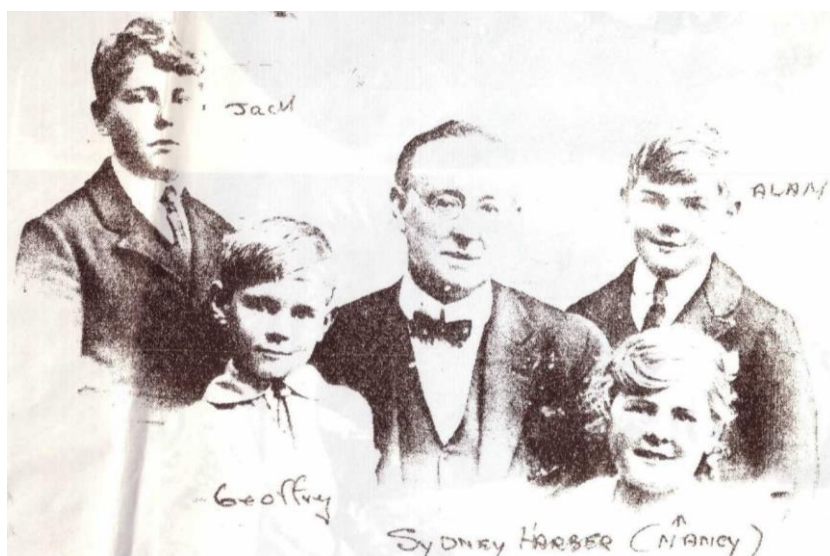


Figure 2 - Photograph of Sydney Harber (centre) with his children Jack, Alan, Nancy and Geoffrey, c.1920. (Source: ancestry.com)

Harber engaged architect Reginald V Courtney to design a two-storey brick residence with an attached surgery, and a separate laundry and garage at the rear. Courtney sought tenders for construction in November 1922 (*Argus* 11 Nov 1922 p22) and Council issued a building permit in March 1923 (BP no. 5188). The original drawing indicates terracotta roof cladding and similarly coloured painted timberwork to the openings with a likely grey rendered wall finish. The drawings also indicate 'Permasite', a lightweight and fire-resistant product made from coke breeze, was used for the verandah decks, bathroom and walls of the rear first floor rooms. The building was completed by September 1923, as indicated by a newspaper advertisement informing patients of the new address (*Prahran Telegraph* 14 Sept 1923 p2).

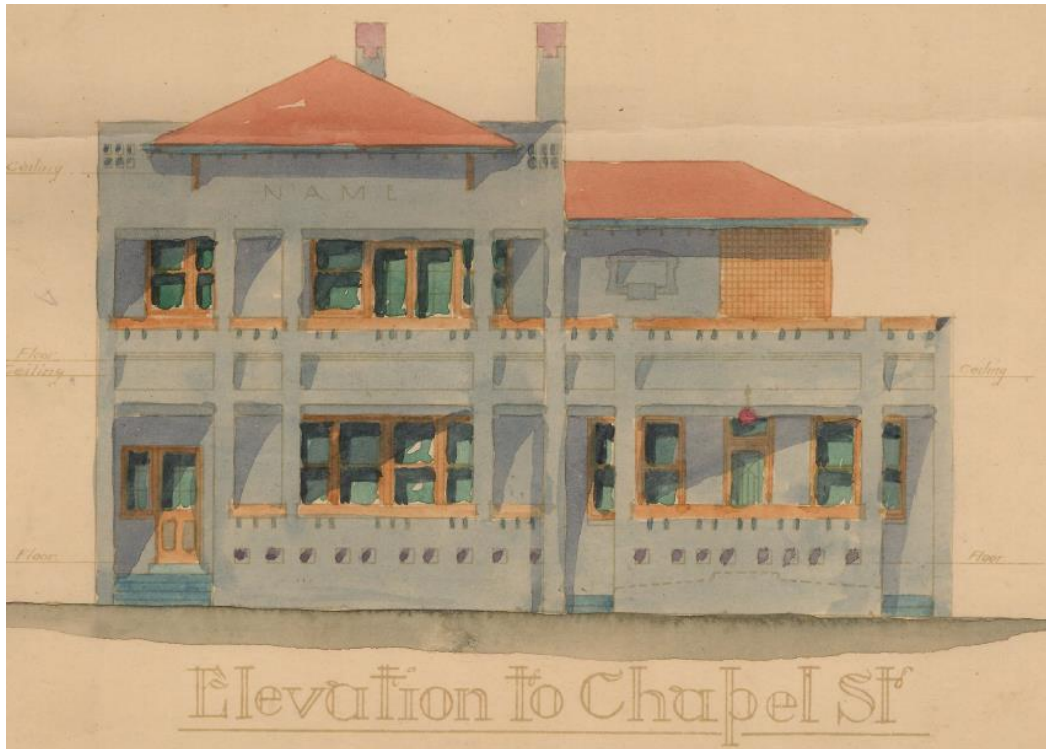


Figure 3 - From the original drawings by Reginald V Courtney, front/west elevation (Source: Council Building File)

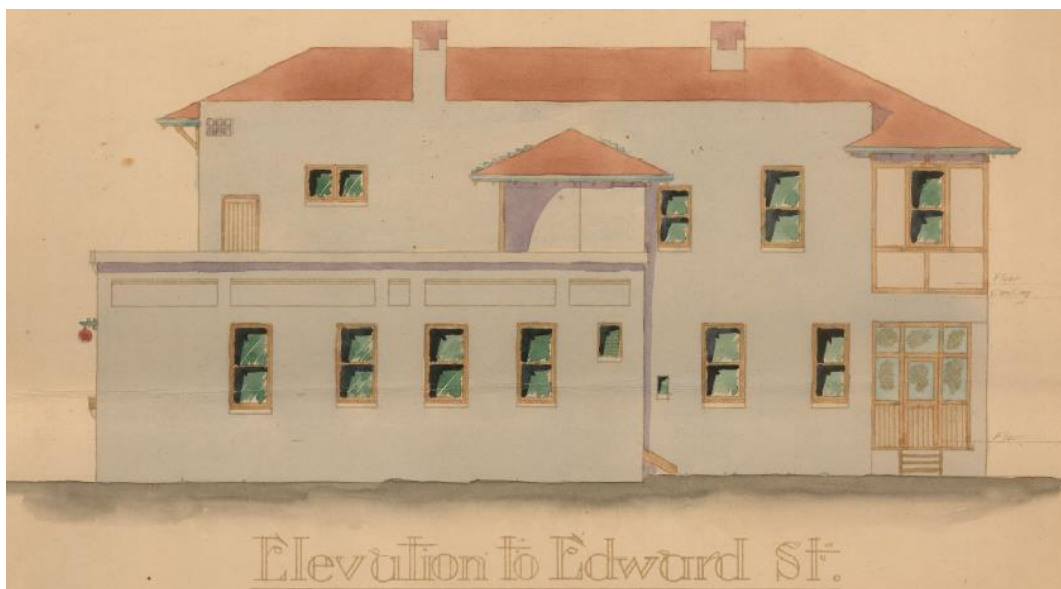


Figure 4 - From the original drawings by Reginald V Courtney, side/south elevation (Source: Council Building File)

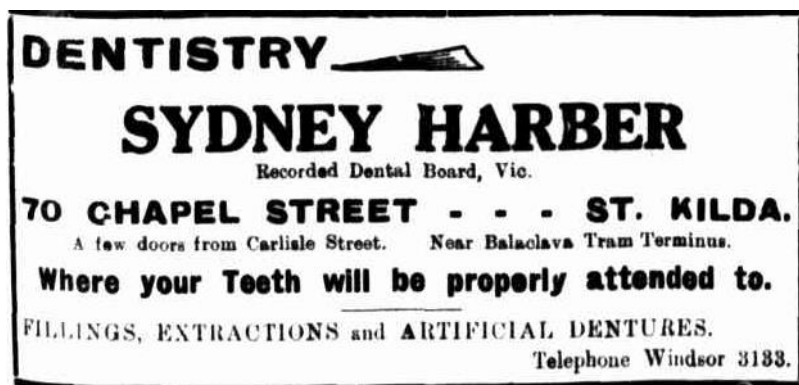


Figure 5 - Advertisement from 1924. (Source: *The Prahran Telegraph*, 27 June 1924, p3)



Figure 6 - Aerial Photograph c.1925 (W R Garrett) showing Moruya about two years after completion. (Source: State Library of Victoria, H98.129/21)

The Harbers remained at the subject site until the late 1940s, when Sydney and Elsie retired to Healesville. Sydney died in 1951 and Elsie in 1957, after which ownership of the subject site was transferred. The surgery part of the building continued to be occupied by dentists until at least 1970.

A brick fence was constructed in front of the residence in 1982 (BP no. 9258, 23 June 1982). There may not have been a front fence prior to this as there does not appear to be one in the c.1925 aerial photograph (although a fence was indicated on the original drawings).

References

Certificates of Title (CT): Vol. 2024 Fol. 634; Vol. 3309 Fol. 701; Vol. 8197 Fol. 634

Council Building File for 70-70A Chapel Street St Kilda (includes original drawings)

Newspapers, various

Parish Plan P81(13) At Elwood Parish of Prahran (PP)

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH), February 2021

St Kilda Council building permits (BP)

Sands & McDougall's street directories (SM)

Description

The subject site is rectangular and located at the corner of Chapel and Edward streets.

Moruya is comprised of a highly intact two-storey residence and attached single storey dental surgery. Typical of the early part of the Interwar period it incorporates aspects of the Arts and Crafts style. It also displays some restrained classicising influences. While the residence and surgery components are distinctly expressed, they are unified by similar detailing including dentilation and recessed panels. The walls have contrasting render finishes (roughcast and smooth) which have now been overpainted.

The residence is set back a couple of metres from the front boundary and there is a small front garden. The tile clad hipped roof with exposed rafter ends and timber brackets is expressed at the front and hidden by parapets at the sides. There are two chimneys with rendered bases and face brick tops. The building's name 'Moruya' is expressed in raised lettering in a central panel at the top of the façade. The full-width porches at ground and first floor are recessed and have piers in locations defined by the window and door openings behind. The openings are asymmetrically placed. At ground floor there is a rectangular bay window with double hung timber sash windows, and the entrance is located at the back of the return porch. At first floor, there are French doors with decorative glazing bars open onto the porch. The front masonry fence is not original.

The surgery component is built to both street boundaries. Its form is unusually cuboid for the early Interwar period, with an accessible flat roof behind a parapet. A small section of the upper floor of the residence (a bathroom) extends onto the roof of the surgery. The symmetrical façade is comprised of a central entrance (panelled timber door and highlight above) with pairs of timber framed double hung sash windows either side. The full-width recessed porch is accessed via stepped entrances at both ends with what appear to be original metal gates. The side is punctuated by window openings.

The rear parts of both components are partly visible from Edward Street, and appear intact. It is not known if the original freestanding laundry and garage survive.

Comparative analysis

Moruya is significant as a highly intact, purpose-built residence with attached dental surgery of the Interwar period. While an overall unified design, the two components are clearly separate entities and their different purposes are distinctly expressed. The combination of the residence and surgery indicates the transition occurring during the Interwar period, from the often home-based medical and dental practices of the 19th century to the more formal and hygienic settings of the 20th century.

Surviving examples of this building typology are relatively uncommon in the municipality. Three known Interwar period examples include:

- 77 Ormond Road, Elwood (Citation 765, HO303). Constructed in 1922-23 and designed by F J Davies as a purpose-built residence and surgery.
- 38 Ormond Road, Elwood (Citation 2076, HO8 precinct). In 1938 a projecting surgery addition designed by R M & M H King was introduced at the front of the existing house, amongst other major alterations and additions at that time.
- 338 Carlisle Street, Balaclava (Contributory within Carlisle Street Commercial precinct). Built in 1941 as a surgery and residence for Dr J B O'Collins, physician.

The surgery components of these examples have a domestic character and could be read as part of the house rather than expressing a distinct purpose. In comparison, the purpose of the surgery component at Moruya is more distinctly suggested by its commercial expression.

Stylistically, Moruya is typical of early Interwar period buildings, albeit unusually cuboid. A review of tender notices in newspapers of the Interwar period indicate that architect Reginald V Courtney commonly undertook residential work (in suburbs such as Brighton and Malvern) but other examples of his work within the municipality have not been identified.

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 an individual place.

Apply external paint controls in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (to ensure complementary colour schemes are employed and/or encourage restoration of the rendered finish).

Primary source

RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct Heritage Review Stage 2*, 2021

Other studies

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

Other images



Residence



Surgery front (Chapel Street) and side (Edward Street)

Area to be included in HO

