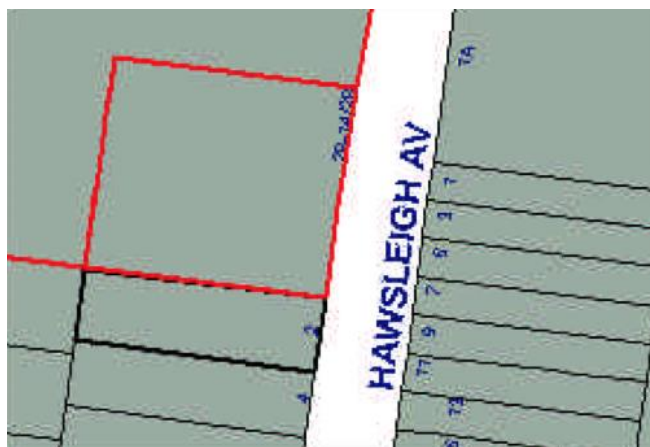


City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Hawsleigh Court
Other names: Flats

Citation No:
2010



Address: 2B Hawsleigh Avenue,
Balaclava

Heritage Precinct: Carlisle Street
Residential

Category: Residential: Flats

Heritage Overlay: HO375

Style: Interwar: Mediterranean

Graded as: Significant

Constructed: 1928

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Designer: Hugh Philp

Amendment: TBA

Comment: Revised citation

Significance

What is significant?

Hawsleigh Court, designed by Hugh Philp and built in 1928, at 2B Hawsleigh Avenue, Balaclava is significant. Hawsleigh Court is a U-shaped block of rendered brick, two-storey flats in the Mediterranean-style, sited around a central landscaped courtyard. The mature courtyard landscaping including two mature liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), a silver birch (*Betula pendula* 'alba'), a bed of camellias and an original concrete pathway around the perimeter, and the rendered fence with a clinker brick plinth along the street boundary also contribute to the significance of the place.

Non-original alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

Hawsleigh Court at 2B Hawsleigh Avenue, Balaclava is of local representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Hawsleigh Court is of representative significance as an example of the courtyard type of flats, where the U-shape of the block forms a landscaped central courtyard that enhances the setting of the flats and their amenity. Hawsleigh Court is believed to be one of the earliest blocks of flats to adopt this design approach and is a fine and intact example of this typology. (Criterion D)

Hawsleigh Court is of aesthetic significance as a fine and highly intact example of the Mediterranean-style applied to a block of flats. The materiality is synonymous with this style, with its hip roofs of terracotta tiles

that form deep eaves, and its rendered brick walls. Detailing is also finely executed in the Mediterranean-style and include balconies and porches, and pressed cement Tuscan and Ionic columns that form loggias. The U-shaped plan, strong in its symmetry, is centred around a landscaped setting that includes a mature silver birch and two liquidambars, and a well-detailed fence referencing the materiality of the flats, creating a formal and refined architectural composition when the building is viewed from Hawsleigh Avenue. (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

Private development in the City of Port Phillip began from the time of the first sales of Crown land in the 1840s and 1850s. The gradual development of infrastructure, including roads, public transport networks and utilities, paved the way for increasing development of private land. Private subdivision within the broad framework set out by Hoddle's survey saw neighbourhoods in the City of Port Phillip grow into populated, thriving communities.

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.

As demand for housing grew, mansion estate subdivisions commenced as early as the 1870s when part of the Charnwood Estate in St Kilda was subdivided to create Charnwood Crescent and Charnwood Grove, where detached villas were erected. The original mansion often survived the first two rounds of subdivision, only to be demolished by the interwar or post-war periods. Those that were retained on much smaller blocks of land were rarely used as single dwellings. Instead, many were converted into boarding houses or flats, and this often ensured their survival. Examples include Eildon and Marlton in St Kilda and Rotherfield, Tiuna and Thalassa in Elwood. Others that were demolished are remembered in street names such as Charnwood Avenue, Cintra Avenue, and St Leonards Avenue.

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 (Pahran 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).

Hawsleigh Court

Carlisle Street was one of the first named streets in St Kilda, having been officially proclaimed in July 1857, and by the end of the late nineteenth century the section east of the Balaclava Railway Station was lined with large villas and mansions in large grounds. Two of these were Shawmut and Hawsleigh (MMBW). The opening in 1913 of the electric tramway from Kew to St Kilda Beach via Balaclava Road and Carlisle Street encouraged more intensive residential subdivision and development including the building of flats. In the early twentieth century the grounds of Shawmut and Hawsleigh were subdivided to create Hawsleigh Avenue and the first houses were constructed along the east side in 1913 (BP). The mansions were retained at first on reduced allotments, but by the end of the 1920s had been demolished.

On the west side of Hawsleigh Avenue the site of Shawmut was in 1928 carved up into six allotments, two facing Carlisle Street and a further four facing Hawsleigh Avenue (LV). The three lots around the corner of the two streets were larger, evidently created for the building of flats and in 1928 the Hawsleigh Court flats were built on Lot 3 facing Hawsleigh Avenue. Six years later, Astolat was built on Lot 2 at the west corner of Carlisle Street (see Citation 317).

Hawsleigh Court comprising 14 two-bedroom flats over two levels was built by A. Sherlock of Caulfield for Mr. H. Gibson. Hugh Philp was the architect. A newspaper article noted the 'novel design' of the flats, which were designed around an open central courtyard, with all flats facing this courtyard or to the street. This design ensured there were no 'back flats' and eliminated common entrances for the flats with a private enclosed set of stairs for each upstairs flat and a similarly enclosed set of stairs for tradespeople. The aim of the architect was to obtain maximum natural lighting and ample ventilation for each flat. Another feature was the 'special and heavily reinforced concrete core of unique design' incorporated between the floors to minimize noise between the flats (*The Herald*, 5 December 1928, p.13 'Novel design of East St Kilda Block of Flats').

The architect of Hawsleigh Court would later claim that this was one of the first examples of courtyard flat planning in Melbourne (*The Herald*, 27 January 1933, p.8 'Central court for flats'):

Relative to the contention of Mr. R.B. Hamilton, architect, that his design of a central court to proposed block of flats in Murphy Street, South Yarra is somewhat new to Melbourne, may I state that I introduced this aspect and made it a special feature when I designed the 'Hawsleigh Court' flats in Balaclava in 1928, and of which your paper published my design and favourably commented thereon on December 5, 1928.

Hugh Philp, architect

Little is known about the architect, Hugh Philp who was active during the interwar period. In the City of Port Phillip, this is one of four buildings known to have been designed by Philp. The others are:



- Taj Mahal, constructed 1920, 22 Wellington Street, St Kilda (Citation 955). Arts & Crafts flats.
- Harrops corner (1921) 186-90 Carlisle Street & 153-59 Chapel, St Kilda (No citation). Interwar single storey shops.
- St Huberts (c.1925) 7 Crimea Street, St Kilda (Citation 882). Minor alterations and additions to existing flats.



Artist impression (Source: *The Herald*, 5 December 1928, p.13)

References

Land Victoria (LV) LP 12544, Certificate of Title Vol. 5902 Fol. 374

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan no.1385, dated 1905

O'Hanlon, Seamus, 'Home together, Home apart: Boarding house, hostel and flat life in Melbourne c.1900-1940', PhD Thesis, History Department, Monash University

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) **Version 1, July 2020**

St Kilda Council building permit (BP) no. 7221, 4 July 1928

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 1930, 1935, 1940

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

Hawsleigh Court is one of three, early twentieth century, blocks of flats in the environs of the intersection of Balaclava Road and Hawsleigh Avenue. It is U-shaped in plan, and its two projecting bays have shallow setbacks from the Hawsleigh Avenue street boundary. On the north (side) elevation is *Hawsleigh Court* in rendered signage.

The flats have a hip roof clad with unglazed terracotta tiles, and the roof projects beyond walls to form deep eaves. The walls of the flats are rendered above a clinker brick base (rear portions of the flats have face brick). The front of the projecting bays has a central loggia, with arches supported by Tuscan columns on the ground floor, and a plainer loggia on the upper level supported by Ionic columns. Flanking these loggias are canted bays that have multi-paned timber frame double-hung sash windows.

The detailing of the flats facing the courtyard shares some of the detailing of the front projecting bays, added with boxed timber frame double-hung sash windows supported by corbels and capped with shallow hoods. The luminaires and their metal fixtures on the courtyard walls are of early origin. Closing the vista through the courtyard, is a two-storey projecting bay with a hip roof, and on its elevation a pair of two-storey canted-bay windows.

A rendered fence, with a clinker brick plinth, extends along the street boundary, and it references the materiality of the wall finishes of the flats. The central garden contains two mature liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), a silver birch (*Betula pendula 'alba'*), a bed of camellias and an original concrete pathway around the perimeter. Vehicle access to the rear of the site is provided by drives at the sides of the projecting bays.

The building is in good condition and has a relatively high degree of external intactness.

Comparative analysis

Courtyard flats

According to Sawyer (1992:13-4) the shortage of houses and the desire for smaller, more manageable homes had been a factor in the development of flats, but a common criticism of early flat developments was the poor relationship of the building to its external space, a lack of privacy and the unsuitability of flats for families. In many early flat developments the site coverage was very high, and the open space left over was not integrated with the building and of little practical use. In 1922 architect James H. Wardrop, a proponent of flat development argued that aggregation of open spaces in flat developments would provide '... a decent breathing space' when compared with the 'mean yard space' available to the conventional small cottage (Sawyer 1982:83).

This led architects and developers to seek alternatives such as the 'Bungalow Court' concept, which was introduced as early as 1916 when it was described in an article in the *Real Property Annual*. The one and two roomed units were grouped around a U-shaped courtyard in pairs with no fences or hedges between them. However, Sawyer (1992:14) concludes that 'the old concern with lack of privacy once again surfaced and the concept does not appear to have gained a ready acceptance in Australia at this time'. Nonetheless, the 'Bungalow Court' concept did eventually evolve into the courtyard flat types, where flats were grouped around a semi-enclosed garden court.

The 'garden court' or courtyard approach to flat planning began to emerge in some better quality flat developments by the early 1920s. Sawyer (1982:82-83) identifies Joseph Plottel's Garden Court, built c.1918 in Marne Street, South Yarra as an early attempt to integrate flats with garden areas. Garden Court is built in a shallow U-shape with the open side facing Marne Street, however, the area was small and was separated from the flats themselves by accessways or balconies. The concept of a central courtyard was developed further by Arthur Plaisted in his designs for Hampden (1919) in Barkly Street, St Kilda (Citation 405) and Hartpury Court (1923) in Milton Street, Elwood (Citation 381). At the former, a Victorian house was extended with projecting wings to create a central garden area, while at Hartpury Court an L-shaped block was placed at one side of the garden of a Victorian era mansion, which was retained on the opposite side. At Hartpury Court the flats had an unimpeded view over the gardens as the stairs and accessways were placed within the building itself.

Following on from these early precedents Hawsleigh Court appears to be the earliest example of a complete U-plan courtyard type in Port Phillip and demonstrates a conscious and deliberate approach by the architect to improve the amenity of the flats by providing direct access to and views of the outdoor

space for its residents. Later examples include the two blocks of flats directly built directly opposite Hawsleigh Court in the early 1930s, as well as Camberley, 17A Milton Street, Elwood (1934-36, Citation 2063), Tudor Close, 7-9 Eildon Road, St Kilda (1940, Citation 896), and Glen Eagles, Kinross and Kinfauns, 58-60 Queens Road, Melbourne (1940-42, Citation 2226).

Mediterranean style

The Mediterranean style is related to the Interwar Spanish Mission style, but is intentionally designed with subtler features, in a simpler form with more elegant detailing. Derived from the coastal architecture of Spain and Italy it was well-suited to St Kilda and Elwood's seaside location and was a popular style for flat developments. Aesthetically, the massing and restrained character of the style underlines a relationship to the Georgian Revival, but the basic difference is the way in which the buildings are designed to respond to sunlight. Balconies are common, deep porches shade entrance doors and the eaves lines are more prominent, and the classical detailing tends to be playful, and is less formal and restrained than the massing and detailing of Georgian architecture.

Hawsleigh Court is fine and intact example of the Mediterranean-style. The materiality is synonymous with this style, with its hip roofs of terracotta tiles that form deep eaves, and its rendered brick walls. Detailing is also finely executed in the Mediterranean-style and include balconies and porches, and pressed cement Tuscan and Ionic columns that form loggias. The U-shaped plan, strong in its symmetry, is centred around a landscaped setting that includes a mature silver birch and two liquidambar, and a well-detailed fence referencing the materiality of the flats, creating a formal and refined architectural composition when the building is viewed from Hawsleigh Avenue.

Hawsleigh Court compares well with other Mediterranean style flats in Port Phillip including Southey Court, 41 Milton Street, Elwood (1925, B.S.W. Gilbertson architect, Citation 805), Ormond Court, 1 Glen Huntly Road, Elwood (1926, B.S.W. Gilbertson architect, Citation 411), Yvonfuray, 30 Tennyson Street, Elwood (1934, Leslie J.W. Reed architect, Citation 933), Masfield Court, 115 Brighton Road, Elwood (1934, Archibald Ikin architect, Citation 440), and Mt Tabor Flats, 23 Dickens Street, Elwood (1936, Archibald Ikin architect, Citation 2081).

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

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with external painting and tree controls. Add front fence control.

Primary source

Peter Andrew Barrett, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2021

Other studies

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

Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, *St Kilda 20th century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

Other images

TBA

