City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name:	**Quat Quatta**	**Citation No:**	
Other names:	**House**	**368**	

Address:	**17 Quat Quatta Avenue, Ripponlea**	**Heritage Precinct:**	**Ripponlea Residential**
Category:	**Residential: Mansion**	**Heritage Overlay:**	**HO7**
Style:	**Victorian: Boom-style**	**Graded as:**	**Significant**
Constructed:	**1890-91, 1935**	**Victorian Heritage Register:**	**No**
Designer:	**W.H. Cooper**		
Amendment:	**TBA**		
Comment:	**Revised citation**		

Significance

What is significant?

Quat Quatta, designed by W.H. Cooper, and built in 1890-91, for Betsy Keogh at 17 Quat Quatta Avenue, Ripponlea, is significant. Quat Quatta is a single-storey, rendered-brick, Boom-style, mansion.

Alterations, additions and outbuildings are not significant.

How is it significant?

Quat Quatta is of local historic, rarity, and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Quat Quatta is historically significant as a Land Boom mansion erected for Betsy Keogh in 1890-91, upon part of the estate of Erindale, settled by her father, Thomas Monahan, c.1854. The construction of Quat Quatta was commissioned by Betsy's brother-in-law John A. Wallace and he lived at Quat Quatta from c.1893 until his death in 1901. Wallace was a prominent mining entrepreneur and politician who played an important role in the development of north-eastern Victoria.   (Criteria A & H)

Quat Quatta is of rarity value to the City of Port Phillip, as an unusual example of interior planning of a mansion with a central ballroom with a gallery, from where individual rooms radiate. (Criterion B)

Quat Quatta is of aesthetic significance as a fine and well-detailed Boom-style mansion. It is notable for the unusual and fine quality materials and detailing of the elegant return verandah, which includes the slate roof

tiles along the east and west elevations, the hexagonal marble floor tiles and the cast iron columns with cast iron friezes extending between each. Also, of note is the elaborate stucco detailing, which includes the finely moulded rendered architraves, quoining, balustrade with pressed cement balusters and urns above the arched, corbel table moulding, and cornice, several ornate chimneys and the arched entrance porch on the north elevation. The ballroom of the mansion is on axis with the entrance porch, and the two spaces linked by a vestibule. The central ballroom is a large space, well-detailed with original features including the arched and balustraded opening to the gallery, ornate cornices, architraves, the arched opening to the vestibule, which is framed by Corinthian columns, and the high level Diocletian windows with leadlight glass that allow natural light to enter this central space. (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 (5.3.1 Mansions and grand villas)

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 (TEH).

Mansion estates – large detached homes on generous allotments – defined early, permanent housing in Elwood and St Kilda, in the mid-nineteenth century. Although the oldest surviving houses in Elwood – such as Vautier House, built in the mid-1850s – are terrace houses, it was mansions on large allotments that came to characterise the neighbourhood in its early years. The estates were located in four distinct clusters: St Kilda Hill; the semi-rural estates occupying the high ground on the south side of Dandenong Road from the Nepean Road (now St Kilda Road) to Orrong Road; those surrounding the St Kilda Botanical Gardens and along Brighton Road; and the remote 'sea-side' estates along Ormond Esplanade. Kearney's 1855 map of the area shows the contrast between dense residential development in St Kilda, and the large mansion estates to the east of the Nepean Road including Charnwood and Marlton, south of Carlisle Street (then known as Beach Road), and on both sides of Brighton Road, including Erindale and Chiverton, and Bramshaw, Osborne House and Wiltonia further south (TEH).

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 (TEH).

Quat Quatta

Thomas Monaghan purchased Crown portions 255, 257 and 258 in the Parish of Prahran, which together totalled about 20 acres and were situated on the south side of Glen Eira Road between Brighton Road and Hotham Street (Figure 1). Monahan purchased portion 257 in November 1853, and the other two probably around the same time. By 1856, Monahan had also acquired portion 238, on the north side of Glen Eira Road, another almost 5 acres.

Monahan was an Irish immigrant who made his fortune in Melbourne as a property owner and in 1854 and his wife Mary commissioned the building of Erindale, a substantial basalt residence designed by architect Joseph R. Burns, which was built on CA 257 facing Brighton Road (*Argus*, 18 October 1854, p.1). Glen Eira Road was formed in 1860 and in 1869 the Melbourne to Brighton Railway Line cut the estate into two portions.

Figure 1: Extract from plan of At Elwood Parish of Prahran showing Crown allotments (detail)

Following the death of Monahan in May 1889, his son-in-law John Alston Wallace commissioned the building of Quat Quatta as a residence for Monahan's daughter, Betsy Keogh. Wallace was a trustee of Monahan's estate and used funds from the estate to finance the building of the mansion, which was built on part of the Erindale holding that Monahan had 'gifted' to Wallace in about 1874.

The mansion is most likely named after Wallace's pastoral property Quat Quatta Station, which was near Corowa in New South Wales (*The Australasian*, 17 September 1898, p.37). W.H. Cooper was likely the architect, as in September 1889 he accepted a tender for a residence in Glen Eira Road, St Kilda and a year later sought tenders for a brick residence at the Corowa property (*Australian Builders and Contractors' News*, Melbourne, 21 September, 1889, p. 292; *The Argus*, 22 October 1890, p.3). Figure 2 shows the layout of the Quat Quatta estate in 1901 when it faced toward and was accessed by dual carriage entries to Glen Eira Road and had a tennis court and gardens at the rear, while Figure 3 shows the mansion in the early 1900s.

In about 1893-94 Wallace moved into Quat Quatta and remained living here until his death in 1901.

John Alston Wallace (1824-1901), mining entrepreneur and politician, was born in Scotland and emigrated to Australia, arriving in Melbourne in 1852. Wallace with his brother Peter went to the Ovens goldfield and with the proceeds of a find at Spring Creek opened a store and first of a chain of hotels. He also backed small mining concerns, encouraged prospecting and promoted a bold though abortive project of water conservation for sluicing. In 1860 Rutherglen was named after his hometown in Scotland (ADB)
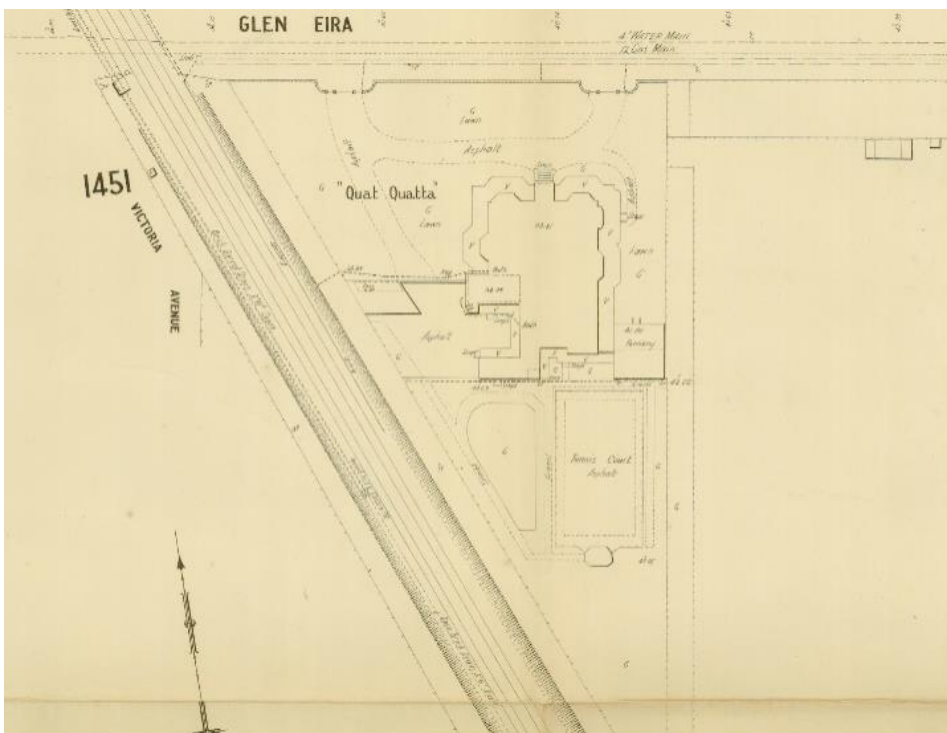
Figure 2: Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan No.1452 (detail)

Wallace sold his stores and hotels in the 1860s and turned more to mining. His enterprise gave employment to hundreds of miners and appreciative banquets were held for him in several Victorian towns in the 1880s. He also had mining interests in New South Wales and Queensland (ADB).

In 1873 Wallace was returned unopposed to the Victorian Legislative Council for the Eastern province and moved to Melbourne, and from 1882 to 1901 represented the North-Eastern province. Described as conservative in his political views, he exerted much influence over mining legislation. He was a liberal benefactor of Ovens district hospitals, and donated regularly to the Melbourne poor and the Salvation Army. In 1865 he married Theresa, daughter of Thomas Monahan, who later gave him several properties including Quat Quatta station, and the London Hotel in Port Melbourne, as well as part of the Erindale estate in Elsternwick. He died at Quat Quatta on 17 October 1901 and was buried in the St Kilda Cemetery. His estate was valued at £121,350 (ADB).

Figure 3: Quat Quatta, c.1900s (Source: National Trust of Australia [Victoria] collection)

In 1911 the confirmation of the opening of Ripponlea railway station created a demand for building sites and this prompted the trustees of the Quat Quatta and Erindale estates to subdivide the land into 62 suburban allotments, which were offered for sale in October of that year (Figure 4). Quat Quatta originally retained all land between the railway, Glen Eira Road and Quat Quatta Avenue, but further subdivision in the 1920s reduced the grounds to the present size. In the process, the frontage of the mansion to Glen Eira Road was lost behind a series of commercial allotments.
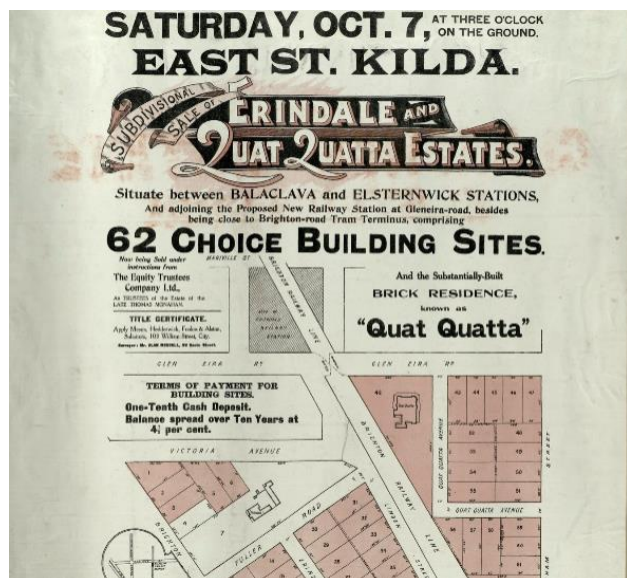

Figure 4: Erindale and Quat Quatta Estates subdivision flyer (detail) (Source: State Library of Victoria collection)

In the early 1930s Quat Quatta was still a single residence, occupied by Andrew Plummer (SM). Following a change of ownership in about 1935 additions were made to the building (BP) and it began to be used as a function and reception venue, taking advantage of the large ballroom and formal rooms. From the mid-1930s onwards there are numerous newspaper articles about charity balls, 'coming-of-age' parties, and wedding receptions held at Quat Quatta. One of the first was a dance held in March 1935 in aid of the 'Odds and Ends' branch of the 'Circle of Happiness Yooralla Hospital Auxiliary' to augment the funds of the hospital (*The Herald*, 26 March 1935, p.16 'Dance at 'Quat Quatta''). Part of the building was converted to flats and by 1940 it was listed in directories as 'Quat Quatta Flats' and remained so until 1960. During this time Quat Quatta was owned and managed by the Fidler family, first by Mrs. Ailsa M. Fidler and, following her death in 1953, by her son, Bernard (*The Argus*, 31 October 1953, p.21 Family notices; SM).

In 1960 'brick alterations' were carried out (BP) and by September of that year it was being promoted as '*The newly renovated, elegant reception and dance hall Monash Court …*' which was available for:

> *… all social functions: Weddings, Barmitzvahs, Engagements, Parties etc. We guarantee satisfaction with our excellent and varied catering. Strictly Kosher.* (*The Australian Jewish News*, 2 September 1960, p.6).

By 1965 Quat Quatta had become the Kingsville Reception Rooms (proprietor, Mrs. R.O. King), which were listed at no.17, while the Quat Quatta Flats were listed at no.17a. It had become the 'Quat Quatta Reception Rooms caterers' by 1974. At that time, the Quat Quatta Flats were still listed at no.17a with three occupants (SM).

Quat Quatta continues to be used as a reception and function venue.

References

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J.E.S. Vardy, surveyor, 'Plan of the Borough of Kilda' complied under the direction of the Borough Council Hamel and Ferguson, Melbourne, 1873, map number 9 South Ward

Land Victoria (LV), LP 11491

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan no.1452, dated 1901

Mellor, Suzanne G., 'Thomas Monahan (1812-1889)' in Pike, Douglas (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, M.U.P., Melbourne, 1974, Vol. 5, pp. 266-267

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) <mark>Version 1, July 2020</mark>

St. Kilda Council building permit (BP) no. 8877, 2 May 1935; 57/1240, 4 April 1960

St. Kilda Council subdivision plan, draw. 18 nos. 48 & 49, 1911, draw 18 no. 98 1920

Smith, James Smith (ed), 'The Cyclopedia of Victoria', F.W. Niven, Melbourne, 1903, Vol. 1, p.151

Woods, Carole, 'John Alston Wallace (1824-1901)' in Nairn, Bede (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, M.U.P., Melbourne, 1976, Vol. 6, pp. 345-346

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 1920-1974

Description

Quat Quatta is a large, sprawling, single-storey, Boom-style, rendered-brick mansion, situated on the west side of Quat Quatta Avenue. The house originally faced Glen Eira Road, and the façade is now concealed from view from the public realm by the inter-war shops along the south side of Glen Eira Road. This original front elevation is symmetrically composed, with a central entrance porch with an arched opening framed by engaged columns with Tuscan capitals. The entry porch is flanked by an elegant verandah that returns along the east and west elevations of the house. This wraps around the canted bay windows on either side of the entry porch and to the side elevations and terminates at the projecting bays on each side. The main entrance within the porch has arched sidelights and fanlight. The windows are arched double-hung timber frame sashes, that are framed with rendered architraves in the projecting bays and adjoining windows. A former wall opening on the east elevation now forms a niche. Projecting bays at the corners, with a slightly curved form at its sides, have rendered quoining.

The verandah has a skillion roof with a timber board ceiling that is supported by cast iron posts. Cast iron lace friezes, with a dentilated moulding above, extend between the posts. Two canted-bays project on the east elevation and the verandah projects also at these points. The verandah floor is finished in marble tiles in a hexagonal pattern. The original slate tile roof has been retained on the east and west sides but has been replaced with corrugated steel along the north elevation.

Above the roof of the verandah is a rendered, arched, corbel table moulding, and above this a rendered cornice. A rendered cement balustrade, with pressed cement balusters and urns, extends around the house obscuring the roof. The original slate tile roofing of the house has been mostly replaced with corrugated steel sheeting. Some slate tiling remains on portions of the roof at the rear. Beyond the parapet on the east elevation can be seen some of the lantern above the central ballroom of the house, and several ornate rendered chimneys with bracketed cornices, panels and stepped bases.

Internally, a large central ballroom is on axis with the front door, the two linked by a vestibule. Rooms of the house are accessed from this ballroom. There is a balcony with arched openings and a balustrade that overlooks the ballroom, and natural light enters the space through Diocletian windows with leadlight glass in the lantern above. Original features such as ornate cornices, architraves, panelled doors, skirting boards and marble fireplaces survive within the ballroom and some other rooms. Between the vestibule and the ballroom is an arched opening with Corinthian columns.

At the south end of the east elevation is a 1930s addition with a hipped tile roof, which was built in place of a section of the mansion identified as a 'fernery' on the 1901 MMBW plan. This addition has paired and triple timber sash windows with Art Deco pattern leadlight glass and porch with an arched opening. Similar windows have been inserted in the front elevation of the Victorian era section immediately behind it.

The rear elevations of the house have undergone alterations and additions including the partial enclosure of the western courtyard. However, the original nineteenth century form and layout of the building remains relatively intact and retains original details such as arched timber sash windows, and a convex verandah to

the south facing courtyard. Other changes to the original mansion include the insertion of some new openings in the side elevations.

The mansion, now used as a reception centre, is set back from Quat Quatta Avenue behind a manicured garden, which is partially paved with paths and a semi-circular drive. None of the plantings in the setback from Quat Quatta Avenue is early and/or significant, but they do provide a landscape setting to the house when viewed from the public realm.

Comparative analysis

By the Land Boom of the 1880s, many mansions were built in the Italianate style. These are usually asymmetrical in plan, often with projecting bayed windows and, some, with towers. They feature elaborate cement decoration and two-storey cast iron and/or cement rendered arched verandahs. Surviving examples in the South Melbourne area include Airlie and Ulimaroa in St Kilda Road and Lanark and Netherby House in Queens Road, while in St Kilda and Elwood there are Halcyon, Rotherfield, Tiuna and Thalassa. A variation in the mansion typology of the Land Boom is Bendigonia in Queens Road, which is an unusual example designed in the Picturesque Gothic style.

The mansions were often set within spacious grounds with landscaped formal gardens and were accessed by a carriage driveway. Most included a complex of outbuildings, including stables. Later re-subdivisions resulted in the loss of most original gardens, although sometimes remnant buildings or trees remain on the same or sometimes different lots. For example, while the Hammerdale mansion was demolished, two trees from its once extensive gardens – a palm and a stone pine – survive in the rear yards of houses on the west side of Hammerdale Avenue, St Kilda (TEH).

Quat Quatta is a fine example of a Boom-style mansion. Boom-style buildings were constructed c.1891-92 at the height of the Land Boom and are distinguished by their size and opulence of detailing, which reflect the excesses of Melbourne's Land Boom. Although they may share similarities with the Italianate, the strong sense of symmetry, both in planning and composition, of Boom-style buildings is not consistent with Italianate, which should be asymmetrical.

The exterior of the mansion is well detailed, with this including rendered architraves around windows, quoining, cornices, ornate chimneys and a rendered parapet of pressed cement balusters and urns. A notable element is its verandah that extends around the east, west and north elevations and is well-detailed, with cast iron posts supporting a slate tile roof, a cast-iron frieze extending between the posts, and hexagonal marble tiles to the floor.

It is also notable for the unusual internal planning with rooms radiating from a central ballroom that is on axis with the front entrance of the house. Only one other example of this type of planning is known in Port Phillip, which is the former Holmwood, 61 Alexandra Street, St Kilda East (Citation 288). Holmwood was constructed in 1884 for Edward Fanning. Like Quat Quatta it is a single storey Boom-style mansion in rendered brick with elaborate stucco decoration. Internally, the main reception rooms are arranged around a central hallway with one side an arcade on paired columns giving access to a large central room lit from above by a raised skylight.

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 paint controls. Apply interior controls specifically to the ballroom.

Primary source

Other studies

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

David Bick and Wilson Sayer Core Pty Ltd, *St Kilda Conservation Study Area 2*, 1985

Other images

The 1935 addition at the south end of the east elevation

The south projecting wing facing Quat Quatta Avenue – note 1930s window in front elevation.