

# City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

**Place name:** Masefield Court  
**Other names:** Flats

**Citation No:**  
**440**



**Address:** 115 Brighton Road, Elwood

**Heritage Precinct:** St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs

**Category:** Residential: Flats

**Heritage Overlay:** **HO7**

**Style:** Interwar: Mediterranean

**Graded as:** Significant

**Constructed:** 1934

**Victorian Heritage Register:** No

**Designer:** Archibald Ikin

**Amendment:** TBA

**Comment:** Revised citation

## Significance

### *What is significant?*

Masefield Court, the inter-war, rendered brick, Mediterranean-style, residential flats designed by Archibald Ikin, and built in 1934 at 115 Brighton Road, Elwood is significant. The low rendered brick front fence, lych gate and privet hedge also contribute to the significance of the place.

Non-original alterations and additions are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

Masefield Court at 115 Brighton Road, Elwood is of local representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### *Why is it significant?*

Masefield Court is representative of the work of the architect Archibald Ikin, who designed a number of flats within the City of Port Phillip during the inter-war years. Masefield Court, designed in a distinct and competent interpretation of the Mediterranean-style, and demonstrates (with Ikin's other flats) his ability to design in an array of popular inter-war styles. Masefield Court contains raised parapets of a bold scale, an element often found on his flats. (Criterion D)

Masefield Court is of aesthetic significance as a fine example of a two-storey block of inter-war flats, which incorporate on the site a deep north-facing garden. The front fence, lych gate, from which the site is entered from Brighton Road, and mature privet hedge contribute to this formal garden setting. Massing and detailing on the flats is demonstrative of the Mediterranean-style aesthetic, which includes roughcast render

walls, hip roofs clad in unglazed terracotta tiles; recessed and projecting balconies, and walls and wall openings embellished with Classically-inspired pressed cement columns, piers and balusters. (Criterion E)

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## 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)

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## 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 (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).

### Masefield Court

The first flats in Brighton Road were constructed at the end of World War I. One of the first was Yurunga, designed by local architect Harry R. Johnson, which was constructed in 1920 at the south corner of

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Brunning Street directly opposite the cable tram terminus. The electrification of the cable tram in Brighton Road and its extension, by 1926, from the terminus in Brunning Street, Balaclava to Glen Huntly Road in Elsternwick encouraged the building of flats along the route. Between 1926 and 1941 no fewer than 21 blocks were constructed in Brighton Road between Carlisle Street and Glen Huntly Road with many more in the adjoining streets.

Masefield Court was constructed in 1934 by H.M. Brett for the owner and replaced a Victorian era house. Archibald Ikin was the architect. A newspaper article provided the following description:

*The building is planned on the L-shape to give all flats a front outlook, and a maximum of sunlight. Broad expanses of window accentuate the sunshine nature of the house. The exterior colour scheme is being carried out in orange and cream, which will contrast nicely with the green lawns and garden.*

Each flat had a separate entrance and rooms were designed to facilitate entertaining by the use of double doors (*The Herald*, 4 July 1934, p.20 'Flats designed to capture sunshine').



Artist impression of the flats. (*The Herald*, 4 July 1934, p.20)

## Archibald Ikin, architect

Archibald Ikin was active during the interwar period and his career in Port Phillip is represented by several houses and flats. Like many of his peers, in the 1920s and early 1930s his designs were influenced by the popular historical revival styles – his preferred style being Mediterranean, sometimes with Arts & Crafts details. In 1933 he designed *The Royal*, which is one of the earliest examples in Port Phillip of the Moderne style, and thereafter his flats were either in this style or Mediterranean with the notable exception of *Venezia Court* (see below).

Other flats or houses by Ikin in Port Phillip include:

- Biarritz Court, constructed 1927, 360 Beaconsfield Parade, St Kilda West (Citation 196). Mediterranean with Arts & Crafts details.
- Tintern (1928-29) 2 Redan Street, St Kilda (Citation 784). Mediterranean style flats.
- Baynton (1929) 3 Robe Street, St Kilda (no citation). Mediterranean style flats
- Granada (1930) 34 Tennyson Street, Elwood (Citation 934). Mediterranean style duplex.
- *The Royal* (1933) 1 Robe Street, St Kilda (Citation 788). Unusual Moderne/Art Deco style flats.
- Strand Court (1933) 8A Dickens Street, Elwood (no citation). Mediterranean flats.
- *Venezia Court* (1934) 355 Beaconsfield Parade, St Kilda West (Citation 421). Flats with unusual Venetian Gothic influence.
- House (1935) 8 Dickens Street, Elwood (no citation). Mediterranean style, very similar to Strand Court.
- Mount Tabor (1936) 23 Dickens Street, Elwood (Citation 2081). Mediterranean style flats.

- Twenty One (1937) 21 Southey Street, Elwood (no citation). Moderne flats.
- Flats (1939) 43 & 45 Westbury Street, St Kilda East (no citation). Moderne flats.

## References

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. 8485, 21 February 1934

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 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

Masefield Court is two-storey, block of brick inter-war flats, designed in a Mediterranean-style. The block has an L-shaped plan and has a hip roof clad with unglazed terracotta tiles. An original, low, rendered-brick fence extends along the Brighton Road boundary, and a high privet hedge is behind this that conceals a higher rendered brick fence. At the north end of the Brighton Road boundary is a recessed gateway, which is entered through a lych gate that is supported by Tuscan columns. The gate provides access to the garden that extends along part of the north side.

The walls of the flats are finished in roughcast render above a red, face-brick base. Most windows are double-hung timber frame sashes, with multi-paned upper sashes, and many are arranged in groups of three. There are small, arched, six-paned windows on either side of the rendered chimneys. Notable elements on the flats are the entrances which are situated on distinct breakfront elements. These are composed with a formal entrance with Tuscan columns and entablature; a semi-circular wall opening on the upper level (now enclosed with glazing); and an unusually high parapet, with a panel of pressed cement balusters that pierces the roof. Other notable elements in the composition are recessed verandahs on each level, their openings supported by Tuscan piers; and a small projecting balcony facing Brighton Road, which has a plain wrought iron balustrade, that is accessed by a pair of doors with a series of stepped vertical glazed panels.

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

## Comparative analysis

The inter-war Mediterranean style is related to the Spanish Mission style, but is intentionally designed with subtler features, in a simple yet elegant form. 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 more playful than that of the Georgian style. Typical details include pergolas, balconies, arcaded loggia and a formal entrance, with sidelights and highlights, while Tuscan columns appear in verandahs and porches. The exterior is lightly bagged or cement-rendered. Large double-hung sashes often have small panes with narrow wooden glazing bars, sometimes with louvered shutters.

This is one of several flats or houses in the Mediterranean style designed by Ikin, which incorporate typical characteristics of the style as described above including deep shaded balconies, Tuscan columns to openings and the entrances, and multi-pane windows that show the influence of the related Georgian Revival style. A distinctive and unique feature (also found on other Ikin buildings including Mount Tabor, Strand Court and



the house at 8 Dickens Street) is the shaped parapet with an inset balustrade detail, which pierces the roof, above the front projecting bay and the stairwells.

Ikin's Mediterranean flats compares with the Mediterranean style flats built (and presumably designed by) E. Jennings & Co, which include Colombo Court, 52A Acland Street, St Kilda (1927, Citation 389), Harley Court, 52 Acland Street, St Kilda (1927, Citation 390), Corinthian, 5 Robe Street, St Kilda (1933, Citation 789), and Maison Parisienne, 122 Brighton Road, Elwood (1932, Citation 2424).

Other Mediterranean style flats in Port Phillip include 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), and Hawsleigh Court, 2B Hawsleigh Avenue, Balaclava (1928, Hugh Philp architect, Citation 2010).

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## 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.

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## Recommendations

2021: Retain in the Heritage Overlay with paint controls.

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## 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 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

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## Other images



