# Village Belle Commercial Precinct

Places of individual significance within the precinct that have a separate citation in the Port Phillip Heritage Review with additional descriptive and historical information are indicated in **bold**.

### 1.0 Thematic Context

#### Victoria's framework of historical themes

- 5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce: 5.3 Marketing and retailing
- 6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs

# Port Phillip thematic environmental history

- 5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.2 Shaping the suburbs
- 6. Commerce, trade and work: 6.2 Markets, shops and retail

# 2.0 History

In 1842, the Village of St Kilda – bounded by the bay, Fitzroy and Barkly streets - was established and land on the Esplanade, and nearby streets, sold. Over the next decade, land in the other parts of the original village area was sold in phases.

Land within the precinct was offered for sale from the early 1850s onwards. In 1851, land on the north side of Acland Street was sold, consisting of three large allotments in the order of 3 acres as well as a four-acre municipal reserve at the corner of Acland and Barkly streets (Figure 1). Allotment 35 was acquired by J C Riddell, no. 36 by N Gutheridge, and no. 37 by C B Peed. The land on the south side of Acland and adjacent part of Barkly Street (west side) was part of the foreshore reserve, and Carlisle Street was not yet defined.

Land on the east side of Barkly Street was sold in 1853, being parts of three allotments – no. 76 acquired by T Earle and C Palmer, no. 77 by J Smith, and no. 86 by J Sutherland (P2).

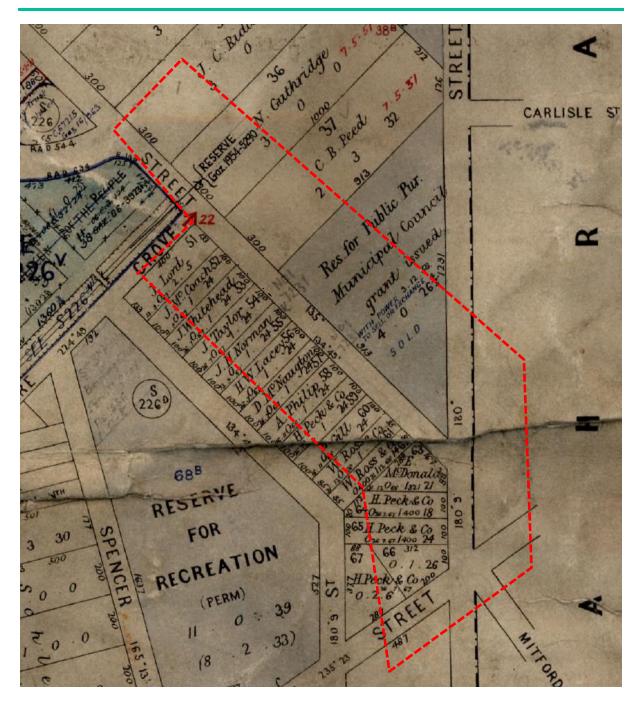


Figure I - Parish Plan, M333(25) at Elwood (+ St Kilda) Parish of Melbourne South (Source: Landata) showing the approximate boundaries of the precinct area in relation to the Crown portions

The first building in the area was the Village Belle Hotel. In 1854, an application for a hotel license was rejected, though one was issued in the following year (BA). On the contemporary Kearney plan (Figure 2), the Village Belle was the only building depicted in the precinct area.

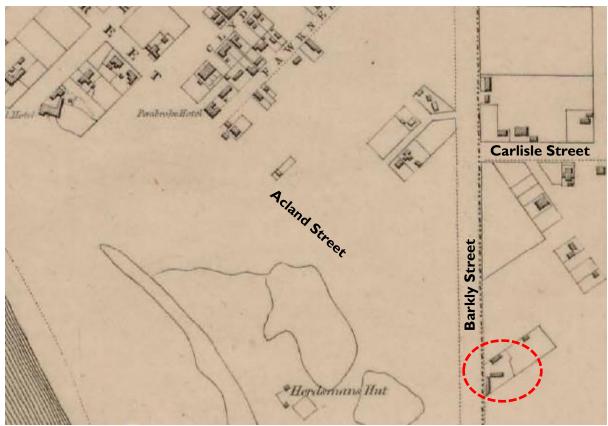


Figure 2 - 1855 Kearney Plan, Village Belle Hotel highlighted (Source: SLV)

One of the early features in the precinct area was the main drain (now enclosed under Albert Street and Shakespeare Grove) which was being constructed by 1858 (refer to 1864 Cox plan, Figure 4, for route) requiring a widening of the existing bridge over Acland Street (JCB1, p139). 'In 1861, the bridge at Acland Street had been widened from 25 feet to 66 feet, and stone piers placed to same' (JCB1, p151).

The municipal reserve, north corner of Acland and Barkly streets was able to be sold in 1858 (P1) and a subdivision plan dating to the following year survives. Bedford Street was created at that time and a house, Merryvale, had already been constructed on what is now 110 Acland Street (west corner of Bedford Street, outside the precinct area). Whilst 14 allotments were offered at the triangular block bound by Bedford Street, they were later combined into 3 holdings (Figure 7). This 1859 plan also shows the westward extension of Carlisle Street from Barkly Street to the link with the Esplanade.

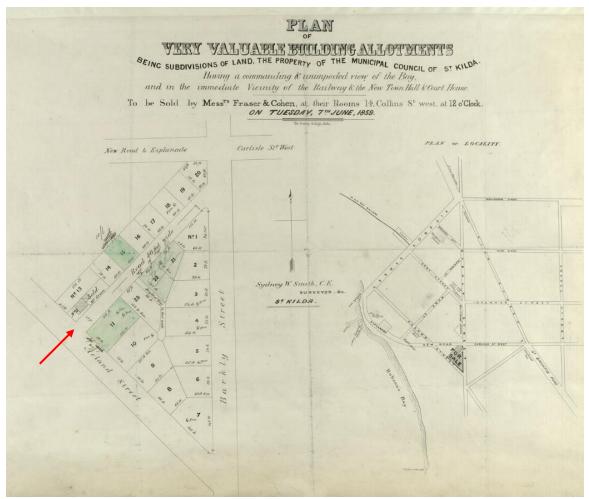


Figure 3 - 1859 subdivision of land at the corner of Acland and Barkly streets, Bedford Street highlighted (Source: SLV, va001270)

The Cox Plan of 1864 (Figure 4) shows that Irwell Street had been established as had Smith Street, off Barkly Street (next to the Village Belle). The two houses in the triangular block had been constructed with the one facing Acland Street being occupied by Benjamin Cowderoy, a leading figure in the early days of the municipality including being Chairman of the St Kilda Council (SM 1864 and Age, 28 May 1864, p.1).



Figure 4 – 1864 Cox Plan, route of main drain highlighted

Soon after, in December 1865, the earliest surviving building in the precinct was erected at 188 Barkly Street (**PPHR 293**). The basalt school building was designed by the noted architects Crouch & Wilson (MMDB, 911 and 7123) for James Bothwick – the noted teacher, author, historian and archivist (ADB). Bothwick opened his Hofwyl School (Figures 5 & 6) with a limited number of boarders and day pupils (Argus 22 Dec 1865 p3). Bothwick advertised that 'the system pursued is founded on that of Pestalozzi, as developed at Hofwyl, in Switzerland, regarding the moral training and practical education of youth' (GG 4 June 1868 p.2). Bothwick retained the site into the early 1880s when it became Queens College (Age 16 August 1881 p.4) and operated until the early 1920s and by 1925 was converted into flats (SM).





Figures 5 & 6-1865 perspective of the Gothic style, Hofwyl School (Source: nla.obj-135234922-1) and  $19^{th}$  century image (PPCC, sk0692.1-2)

During 1866-67, the parkland on the south side of Acland Street between Shakespeare Grove and Blessington Street (and extending through to Chaucer Street) was subdivided into 17 allotments (nos. 51-67) mostly 100 feet wide (P1). H Peck & Co, a freehold home company with holdings

across Melbourne and the state, purchased five allotments at the east end (Age 27 December 1867 p.1).

The 1873 Vardy plans (Figure 7) show that over the previous decade a few villas had been erected on the south side of Acland Street, however surprisingly the original crown allotments had not been further subdivided. In Barkly Street, the Hofwyl School (no. 188) and two other villas between it and the Village Belle are evident (V).

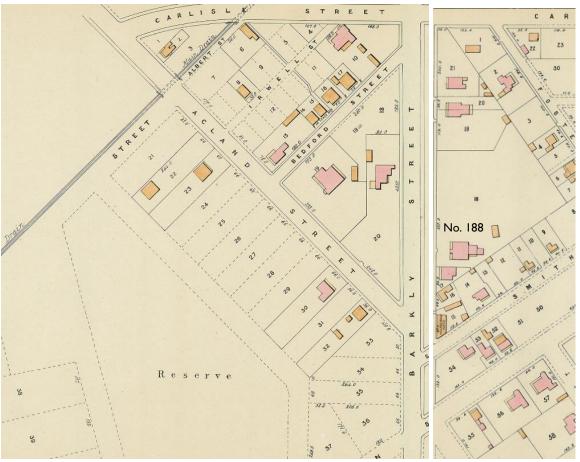


Figure 7 - 1873 Vardy plans, WW9 (left) and SW5 (right) (Source: SKHS)

Soon after a mansion, Victoria House (now demolished but indicative of the type in the area), was constructed on Acland Street at the east corner of Irwell Street (now nos. 96-104), which in 1876 was described as follows in a sale notice.

The house, which is quite new. having only been built about 16 months, is substantially built of brick, stuccoed, on bluestone foundations, with slate roof, and contains 10 large and lofty rooms (two  $20 \times 16$  and two  $17 \times 16$ , with 13ft collings), commodious outhouses, stable with slate roof, &c. A double verandah and balcony surrounds the house on two sides, facing Acland and Irwell Streets. The land has the fine frontage of 80ft to Acland-street by a good depth along Irwell-street (Argus, 24 August 1876, p2).

At this time, the architect John Vardy added a new verandah to the Village Belle Hotel (Figure 8), which initially was a timber building with two dormers (BA). In 1891, it was replaced by the extant masonry version designed by William Pitt (**PPHR 294**).



Figure 8 - Village Belle, circa 1881 (Source: JCB, v1, opp. p256)

Expansion of the cable tram network into the precinct was undertaken by the Melbourne Tramways Trust during 1885-91 (VHI), with the service from the city along Chapel Street to Carlisle Street completed in late 1888 and the route from South Yarra Station along Chapel and Wellington streets, thence along the Esplanade and terminating at Acland and Barkly commenced during 1889 (*TG*, 29 December 1888 p4).

The MMBW plans of 1897-98 (Figures 9 & 10) provide a snapshot of the development that had occurred in the precinct area by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Acland Street, the development was more intensive at the north end as there were six premises (one shop and five residences) between Carlisle and Albert streets, three of which survive at nos 74-78. The shop at no. 74 was built in 1885 and the terraces during the 1890s (SM). There were however only another five houses between Albert and Barkly streets, all mansions or on large holdings and all since demolished (MMBW 1375). From north to south, they were respectively (though not necessarily known as such at that time) – Tallageira (nos. 88-94), Victoria House (nos. 96-104), Merryvale House (no 106-110), Taroona (nos. 112-144), and Oakrood (nos. 144-166).

On the east side of Barkly Street, there were three buildings north of the Village Belle including the school then known as Queens College (now no. 188, then no. 192). Between Smith and Blessington streets, there was garden area of a house (then no. 208) which was well set back from the street (MMBW 1374). Similarly, there was paddock at the corner of Blessington and Mitford streets (MMBW 1380).

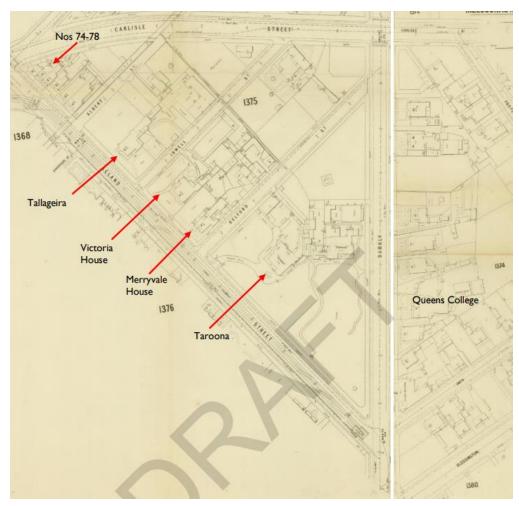


Figure 9 - 1897 MMBW detail plans 1374 (right) 1375 (left), north side of Acland Street and nearby part of Barkly Street (Source: SLV)

On the south side of Acland Street, twelve houses had been erected as well as the tramway shed at the west end (opposite between Irwell and Bedford streets). None of these buildings survive today, except for the house, which has been retained at the rear of/behind the shop at no. 137 (then no. 97). There were two smaller houses at the corner of Blessington Street and a large paddock at the corner of Barkly Street (MMBW 1376).

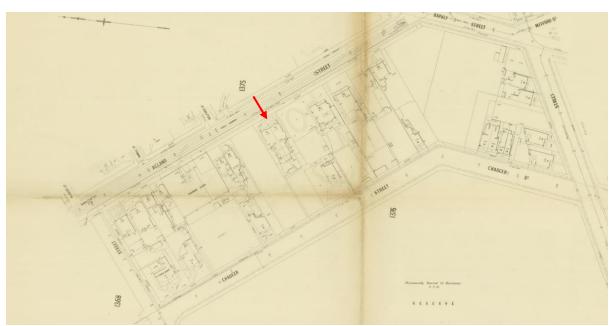


Figure 10 – 1897 MMBW detail plan no. 1376, south side of Acland Street (Source: SLV), part of the house remaining at 137 Acland Street is highlighted (then no. 97).

In 1900, the site at the south-west corner of Barkly and Blessington streets came into being as part of the subdivision of the Baker Estate and two storey shops and residences were constructed on this corner by c.1905 (Figures 11 & 12). The sale notice identifies the names of houses on south side of Acland Street (a common practice at this time for even modest-scaled dwellings), east of the tram terminus – which were Wairona, Mawhera, Heretanga, Deyn, and Mordon Villa. Queens College on Barkly Street (no. 188) was also identified.

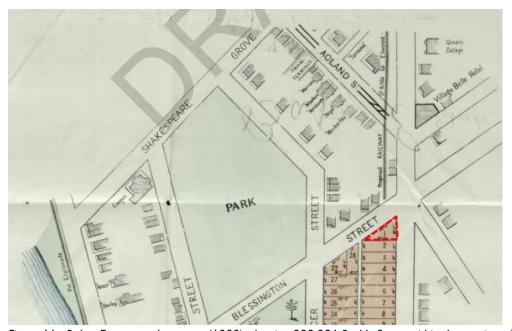


Figure 11 - Baker Estate, northern part (1900), showing 229-231 Barkly Street within the precinct. (Source: SLV Batten & Percy collection)

# Commercial development during the early 20th century – Barkly Street

With the improving economic conditions after the turn of the century, commercial development commenced at the south end of the precinct opposite the Village Belle (west side of Barkly Street, between Acland and Blessington streets). By 1905, two shops had been established and this had

increased to six by 1910 (SM). A contemporary photograph (Figure 12) of this section of Barkly Street shows the early phase of commercial development and the original appearance of 229-231 Barkly Street built on the Baker Estate and the recent tram service (1906) along Mitford Street (ME).

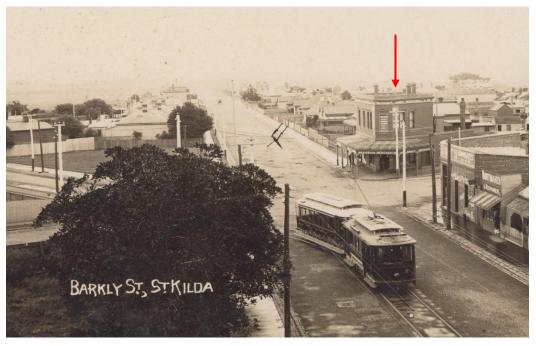


Figure 12 – c.1909, corner of Barkly and Blessington streets, showing original facade of 229-231 Barkly Street (highlighted) and new tram service (Source: SLV, H84.233/195).

The pair of shops at 221-223 Barkly Street whose construction date of 1912 is shown on the parapet were designed by architect T G Rankin (BP 1661). These shops replaced a house whose verandah is partially visible in the extreme right of a c.1909 photograph (Figure 12).

In keeping with the expanding range of entertainment venues that were established during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the St Kilda area, a roller-skating rink – the Elite Skating Rink - was constructed at the north corner of Acland and Barkly streets (BP 1170), preceding Luna Park which opened in 1912. A circa 1910 photograph of the Elite Skating Rink (Figure 13) under construction indicated that the single storey pair at 205-207 Barkly Street had been erected, as well as the adjacent two-storey buildings at nos. 209-211. By1914, films were being shown at Luna Park at the Palais Cinema, but this venue was relocated to the skating rink site in 1915 (*PT* 27 June 1914 p.5, 20 March 1915 p.6).

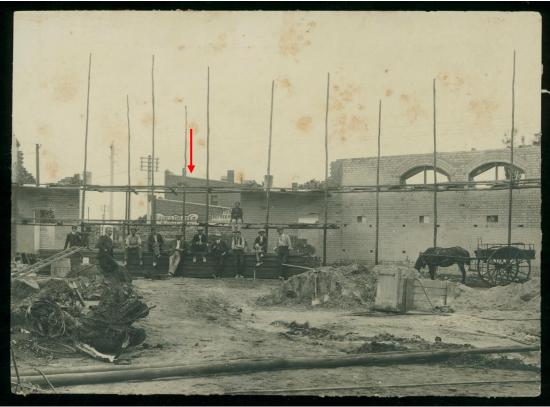


Figure 13 – circa 1910s, Barkly Street, possibly Elite Skating Rink under construction, rear of 205-211 Barkly Street highlighted (Source: SLV, H84.233/30)

By 1915, the pace of commercial development was increasing. The west side of Barkly Street was fully developed by that time with 14 commercial premises and a few shops nearby on Acland Street - at the east end on the south side (SM). In the following year, the group of eight single storey, brick shops at 35-49 Blessington Street were constructed by the builder A E Watson (BP 3074).

By mid-1917, the precinct was being referred to as 'the Village' after the hotel and was 'steadily growing to an important business centre' (PT 21 July 1917 p.4). At this time, the Palais Cinema was renamed the Barkly Theatre, so as not to be confused with another nearby venue, the Palais de Danse on the Esplanade (PT 15 December 1917 p.7).

A 1920 image (Figure 14) shows the original Federation period buildings in Barkly Street (west side) including the original pair at the corner - 193 Acland and 203 Barkly streets, and the adjoining surviving buildings between nos. 205 and 213. The original verandahs, likely cast iron, are also evident.



Figure 14 - 1920, corner of Acland and Barkly streets. Original building at 193 Acland and 203 Barkly streets highlighted (Source: SLV, H21880)

During the interwar period, the two buildings on the west side at the corners of Blessington Street were altered. In 1928, the architect H V Gillespie designed the shopfront of 227 and 227A Barkly Street, which suggests he may have designed the extant two storey building (previously it had been single storey). In 1934, Hughes and Orme remodelled and enlarged the building at 229-231 Barkly Street (Figure 15), converting it from three shops and an upper-level dwelling to seven shops and large flat (Herald 17 January 1934 p18).



Figure 15 - Remodelling of 229-231 Barkly Street in 1934 (Source: Herald 17 January 1934 p.18)

On the east side of Barkly Street, in 1939, the new branch of the Commonwealth Bank was established in the existing building at no. 204 at the corner of Smith Street. 'The site was previously occupied by two shops, which have been converted and modernised into the new building' (Age 28 July 1939 p.11).

## Commercial Development during the early 20th century – Acland Street

Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century shops began to replace the villas and mansions constructed in the late nineteenth century. For example, building permits for four shops built by or for E Naylor (the mayor of Prahran) were issued in 1906, 1909, 1910 and 1912 (BP 462, 833, 1067, 1571).

Probably the largest holding on the north side of Acland Street, relating to *Taroona*, was sold in 1911 facilitating more intensive development in its place. *Taroona* was described as 'a brick stuccoed villa, of imposing appearance. It has a slate roof, and about 9 main rooms, together with motor shed and all conveniences' (*Punch* 2 November 1911 p.18, includes a poor-quality image). In 1913, a scheme for flats by A H Fisher in Belford Street or Acland Street was depicted. indicating the scale of development that was then being contemplated, either within or adjacent to the precinct. In the article, it was stated that 'it has been long recognised by realty investors that St Kilda presents about the best opportunity in Australia for the development of the residential flat.' The large brick rink at corner of Acland and Barkly streets was planned to be converted 'into a large shop and motor garage' (*Herald* 24 July 1913 p4).

Following the sale of *Taroona*, permits were issued from the end of World War I - for six shops at 134-144 Acland Street (since demolished) in 1918 (BP 3539), the row of six shops at nos. 146-154 in 1919 which were constructed by builder J Brown for owners Davis & Yisbord (BP 3830), and five brick shops and dwellings at nos 112-122 (since demolished) in 1922 (BP 4949). Other permits issued in Acland Street at this time for multiple premises included a block of eight brick shops in 1919 (BP 4041), a group of four brick shops in 1920 (BP 4322), five brick shops in 1922 (BP 4958), and six brick shops – nos. 96-104 - in 1923 (BP 5392).

By 1922, there was demand for a local market, which the contemporary owners of the Barkly Theatre sought to take advantage of. At that time, both the Barkly Theatre and the Victory Theatre (now the National Theatre) were owned by the same group and the Barkly Theatre was possibly not profitable (*PT* 15 December 1922 p6). It was not until 1928 however that one was established on the cable tram shed site (*PT* 22 June 1928 p3).

Another mansion - *Tallageira* (Figure 16) at 88- 94 Acland Street - was offered for sale in April 1923. According to the sale notice, the grand, late 19<sup>th</sup> century edifice on the west corner of Irwell Street, was described as such:

Comprising 17 rooms, including 3 magnificent rooms 28 x 18, and balcony rooms 15 x 15, With stately portico, hall, stairway, and a wide tiled balcony and a massive tower.

As a shop and residential proposition, to construct seven shops on Acland Street frontage and with additions convert into a similar construction to "Summerland Mansions" would spell "Big RETURNS." (Argus 14 April 1923 p2)

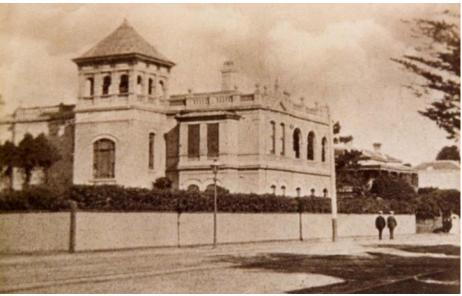


Figure 16 – Tallageira, west corner Irwell Street c1900. Victoria House is visible in the background (Source: SKHS)

The sale of *Tallageira* allowed for the further commercial development in the precinct beginning with the construction of the St Kilda Memorial Hall (**PPHR 113**) by R L Phillips at 88-90A Acland Street), which commenced later that year to the design of Hudson and Wardrop, and included shops along the Acland Street frontage. The foundation stone of the hall was laid in November 1923 by the Governor-General. Subsequently two blocks of shops (nos. 92 and 94) were erected, with the first being nos. 94-94A during 1928 by the noted architect Harry Norris (BP 7306).

An aerial (Figure 17) dating to about the start of 1924 shows how far the commercial precinct had developed by that time showing the mixture of commercial buildings and residential buildings on the north side of Acland Street. The ground floor of the St Kilda Memorial Hall (no. 88) was under construction, to which the tower of *Tallageira* (nos. 92-94) was then in close proximity. On the opposite corner of Irwell Street, Victoria House still stood but the single storey block at nos. 96-104 had been constructed in front. Further east on Acland Street, the single storey block at nos. 134-44 and the two-storey block at nos 146-152 Acland Street had been erected and others, since replaced including the lower scale, former skating rink (later market buildings) at the corner of Barkly Street. Other two or three storey residential buildings are evident between Irwell and Bedford streets.

Similarly, the buildings on the east side of Barkly Street are captured. The façade of the two-storey mansion/school at no. 188 with a non-original, masonry two level verandah with arched openings, added as part of the conversion to flats; the two Victorian period villas at nos. 192 + 196 (the former survives behind shops); two x two storey shops at no. 198 (demolished), the Village Belle (no. 202), the earlier group of shops that extended between Smith and Blessington streets (nos. 204-214), and the extant single storey block at 35-49 Blessington Street are visible.

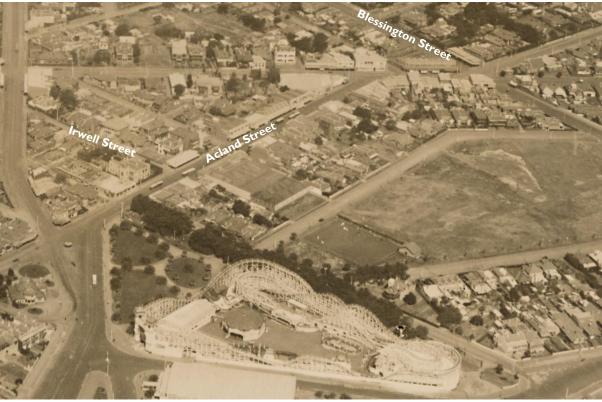


Figure 17 - 1924 aerial photograph (1926 in record) 'Just above St Kilda ...' (Source: SLV, E Ebell, H91.365/3)

The transition to retail continued on the south side of Acland Street from the mid-1920s onwards. The architect Lewis Levy designed two pairs of shops and dwellings in Acland Street at nos 171-73 in 1925 (BP 6212) and nos 87-89 in 1926 (BP 6441). In the latter year, the longest group of shops in the precinct consisting of 10 premises, were constructed for the Latrobe Investment company at 95-

103 and 107-115 Acland Street (Figure 18), on the old cable tram site (BP 6438). The construction of this block likely cemented the commercial evolution of the precinct. Designed by Leslie Perrot, 'each of the new shops will have a five-roomed dwelling for the use of the occupants. This shows recognition of the fact that the day of lock-up shop building is ended. A return to the time-honoured practice of suburban shopkeeper living on their business promises will be welcomed by many who have felt the burden of paying two rents — one for a shop and another for a suburban residence' (Herald 21 July 1926 p12). In that year a new market was established on site of the cable tram sheds at the rear of 95-115 Acland Street (PT 15 June 1928 p3).

Also, in 1927 the local traders formed the Village Belle Trader's Progress Association and in October of that year held its first 'shopping week' to promote the centre (Age 29 October 1927 p.13), which was emerging as a rival to the historic shopping strip along High Street (now St Kilda Road). Cooper in his history of St Kilda noted: 'Even today the place of the Village Belle has official recognition. Almost unnoticed it appears as if a place name for a municipal district is in the course of evolution, or that the place name is already evolved' (Cooper, vol. 1 p.266)

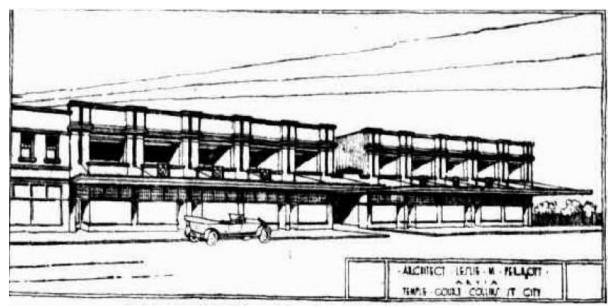


Figure 18 - 1926 perspective of the 10 shops at 95-115 Acland Street (Source: Herald 21 July 1926 p12)

A c.1930 aerial photograph (Figure 19), from a similar perspective to the 1924 aerial. The St Kilda Memorial Hall (no. 88) had been completed as had the shops nearby at 94-94A Acland Street (1928) on the corner of Irwell Street with the *Tallageira* mansion visible in between. 23-33 Blessington Street had not yet been altered (1934).



Figure 19 — circa 1930 aerial 'St Kilda showing ... c1948' 94+ 94A Acland Street had been constructed (arrow) but 23-33 Blessington Street (circled) had not been altered (Source: SLV, C D Pratt, H91.160/361)

In 1933, a new attraction opened in the precinct at 130 Acland Street, which was modelled on American precedents, being Ye Kynge's Galleone Coffee Lounge (later the Galleon). Within three years, this music venue had expanded into adjacent premises to include nos. 126-132 (AL, p55).

During the mid to late 1930s, several of the finest buildings in the precinct were erected in styles such as the Spanish Mission and the progressive Moderne style, both of which had a particular resonance in the bayside location. These buildings filled in the few remaining gaps in the retail streetscape. In 1935, Acland Court at 91-93 Acland Street (PPHR 112) by Leslie J.W. Reed, who was responsible for multiple buildings in the municipality, was erected with the most elaborate surviving shopfront in the precinct by the leading company Duff (BP 8833). In the following year, Leslie Perrott (already responsible for nos. 95-103, 107-115), designed the group of four premises at 92A-92D Acland Street (BP 9391, Age 23 June 1936 p17) (Figure 20) and is thought to also be responsible for a group of three opposite at 81-85 Acland Street, also for the Posner family (BP 9430).

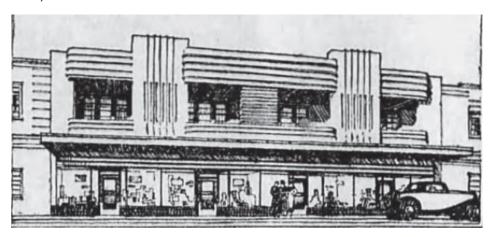


Figure 20 – 92A-D Acland Street, 1936 perspective (Source: Age 23 Jun 1936, p17)

In 1938, the architect Harry Norris designed the Coles store at 160 Acland Street (Figure 21) (**PPHR 97**), on the former Barkly Picture Theatre (formerly Elite skating rink) site (BP 9712). The Coles store was one part of the redevelopment of this large corner site with the buildings either side of it being designed by A G Hedley (*Herald* 6 August 1937 p14).



Figure 21 – Shows two buildings under construction in 1938, the Coles store at 156-160 Acland Street, as well as the building to left, part of the St Kilda Market site (now 181-89 Barkly Street). (Source: Colesanco 1938, vol.10, issue 47)

The Plaza Coffee Lounge, another music venue was established on the upper level (AL, p119). Whilst most of the construction in the precinct area had occurred, it was said that 'by 1938, shops were opening almost weekly' and it had become 'one of the busiest shopping centres in Melbourne' (AL, p61). About this time, Jewish proprietors began to transform the precinct into a food destination, for instance the Monarch Cakes (103 Acland Street) was established in 1938 as a branch of their Lygon Street operation (JB, p80).

During the early part of WWII in 1941, G. J. (Gordon) & Bruce Sutherland designed the three-storey block comprised of shops and flats at 188 Barkly Street in front of the 1865 school by then converted to flats (**PPHR 293**).

On the following aerial photograph from 1945 (Figure 22), buildings constructed at the end the 1930s are evident including: 92(A-D) and 160-164 (Coles) Acland Street and the adjoining new buildings on the former Barkly Theatre site. In Barkly Street, the block at the front of no. 188 and the former Commonwealth Bank at no. 204 can be discerned. Also note this aerial shows that some shops on the south side were constructed in front of the original residences, one of which survives at 137 Acland Street.



Figure 22 - 1945 aerial Project No. 5, Run 17E, Frame 58011 (Source: Landata)

The following aerial photograph (Figure 23) was taken about the same time as the latter, when nearly all of the extant buildings in the precinct had been constructed. The Barkly Street frontage of Coles is captured as is the remodelled group at 23-33 Blessington Street, on the corner of Barkly Street.

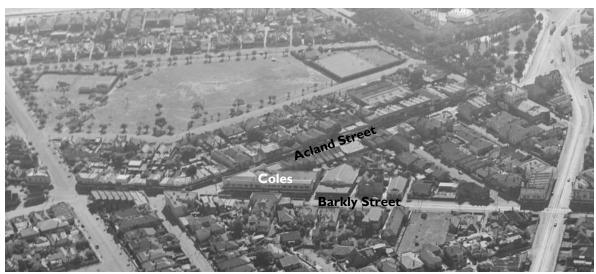


Figure 23 - January 1946 aerial (Source: SLV, C D Pratt, H91.160/464)

After World War II, the character of the precinct as a food and entertainment destination was consolidated, for instance in 1951, there were 83 shops in Acland Street, 34 of which were food related (JB, p100). At this time, many Jewish immigrants established businesses in the precinct area, creating a cosmopolitan milieu. Among these were cafes offering a range of alternative fare deriving from their European origins, such as Scheherazade, which opened in 1958 at 99 Acland Street. Issues arose however with the restrictive, permitted shopping hours, especially the limited weekend trading hours (closure at 12pm on Saturday) for a community observing the Sabbath (AL, p174-5). The local music venues - the Plaza and Melba coffee Lounges - became incubators to bop in post-WWII Melbourne (AL, p119). By 1947, the Commonwealth Bank also had a branch at 189 Acland Street and alterations and/or additions were taken out at that time and in 1952 (BP U301, U1457). Remodelling/changes were also undertaken to 175 Acland Street in 1956 by Dickson & Yorston (BP U2964).

The last notable building to be constructed in the precinct was the (former) State Savings Bank of Victoria (SSBV) at 133-135 Acland Street, designed by Best Overend in 1969 (**PPHR 95**). After the collapse of the SSBV in 1990, this became the Commonwealth Bank and that bank's nearby branch in Barkly Street was closed.

In October 1977, after persistent lobbying by local traders and the Council, the State government approved Sunday trading in the precinct as it was a designated tourist area, further increasing its popularity (AL, p286).

During the mid-1990s Acland Street was repaved and landscaped by Port Phillip Council, which included the planting of mature Canary Island palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) at either end of the street, as well as juvenile specimens of Washingtonia palms (*Washingtonia filifera*). The new paving and street furniture featured ceramic tiles created by local artist, Maggie Fookes, which were inspired by the shop tenants at the time. For example, the Eatmore Poultry store featured a tile with chicken, while there was a piggy bank in front of the ANZ bank, and a sheaf of wheat in front of a bakery.

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Newspapers: Age, Argus, Gippsland Guardian (GG), Herald, Prahran Telegraph (PT), Telegraph, Punch, St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian (TG)

Parish Plan I (PI) - Parish Plan, M333(25) at Elwood (and St Kilda) Parish of Melbourne South

Parish Plan 2 (P2) - P81(13) At Elwood Parish of Prahran

Port Phillip Collection: images sk0692.1-2, sk0042

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH), February 2021

St Kilda Council Rate books (RB)

St Kilda Council building permit records (various) – (BP)

Sands and McDougall Directory (SM)

Vale Collection, SLV

Vardy, John (1873) 'Plan of the Borough of St Kilda' [maps], SW5, WW9

VHI - H7822-2229 and H7822-2262

## 3.0 Description

This precinct is comprised of commercial buildings mainly in Acland and Barkly streets, and in Blessington Street on either side of the intersection with Barkly Street.

In Acland Street, the following are included:

- north side between Carlisle and Barkly streets, 74-104, 128-162
- south side, Shakespeare Grove to Barkly Street, 77-193

In Barkly Street (north of Acland Street to Blessington Street):

- west side, 203-231A
- east side, 188-206

Blessington Street, south side (either side of intersection with Barkly Street): 27-33A (west) and 35a & 35-49 (east).

The carriageway of Acland Street unusually has been raised to the level of the footpath, such that the original channelling has been covered over (or removed). Basalt kerbing however remains in situ, though was likely relocated to create wide footpaths. The carriageway is relatively narrow, being not much wider than the tram tracks. Concrete bollards with a square cross-section separate the carriageway from the pedestrian zone in the western part, with no vehicular access west of Bedford

Street. The pedestrian zones are surfaced with alternating dark and light concrete with diamond or circular patterning, dating to the 1990s. Street planting was also introduced at that time incorporating palm trees, including mature Canary Island palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) at both the east and west ends with Washingtonia palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) in between.

The public domain in Barkly Street section of the precinct differs in that there is both a basalt kerb and channel with an asphalted carriageway and footpaths. With the narrower footpaths, there is no street plantings in this section.

Most buildings date to the Federation and Interwar periods, with a small number of Victorian buildings, and some post-World War II replacement and infill.

As typical in historic suburban shopping zones, the buildings extend to their street and side boundaries at the front of their respective sites. The building stock is mostly two storey, with a few single storey and one four storey.

Roofs are predominantly concealed by a parapet and clad in sheet metal, though a few are clad in terracotta tiles, two instances of which are visible.

The following provides an overview of the architectural styles found in the precinct area. Refer to the tables for specific descriptions of each Contributory building.

## Victorian period

The earliest building in the precinct survives to the rear of 188 Barkly Street. Contemporary real estate photographs reveal that the basalt Gothic style mansion is considerably intact though the original front porch and verandah have been removed (during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). It is not clear how much of the adjoining villa to the rear of 190-192 survives. The nearby Village Belle Hotel (no. 202) is intact to its late 19<sup>th</sup> century iteration.

In Acland Street, there is a shop at no. 74, on the corner of Carlisle Street, and two adjoining terraces at nos. 76-78 which have been altered to the front although to the rear (Carlisle Street) they remain largely intact. Part of the original house to the rear of 137A Acland Street also survives.

### **Federation Period**

The Federation period buildings are generally red brick, with a rendered frieze/parapet and/or bands, and timber-framed windows.

Many reflect the 'Free' style, albeit at an unpretentious or modest level. The Free style was an eclectic urban design approach that incorporated, to varying degrees, elements from several contemporary architectural currents - namely an often impure, or sometimes exaggerated, adaptation of the classical tradition, the Art Nouveau, Romanesque (Richardsonian), Queen Anne revival, and the Arts and Crafts style. Characteristic elements evident in the precinct are curvilinear parapets, piers (often faceted) projecting above the parapet, some short and corbelled (that is projecting from the upper part of the wall).



Figures 24 & 25 – 211-209 (left) and 207-205 (right) Barkly Street



Figures 26 & 27 - 177-179 (left) and 146-152 (right) Acland Street

#### **Interwar Period**

Buildings dating to the early 1920s are often a continuation of the earlier Free style in red brick with some elements indicative of an overlapping Arts and Crafts such as an area of roughcast render. The windows are timber-framed double hung sashes but might be boxed-frame with multi-paned upper sashes and supported on brick corbels.



Figure 28 - 139-145 Acland Street, early 1920s with some Arts and Crafts elements

Much of the building stock in the precinct dates to the 1920s, many of which are designed in a Free Classical mode. Typically, the facades are symmetrical and rendered and display a variety of

traditional classical elements and motifs often in simplified and/or exaggerated manner. There is a prevailing use of parapets, sometimes stepped, with flanking projecting piers, cornices and panels. A simplified projection on the piers or pilasters is suggestive of a vestigial, capital-like element.



Figure 29 - 107-115 Acland Street, Free Classical style



Figure 30 - 94-94A Acland Street, distinctive example of the Free Classical style

There is one example of the Spanish Mission style identifiable in a commercial context by characteristics such as barley twist columns and arched windows.



Figure 31 - 91-93 Acland Street, Spanish Mission style (PPHR citation 114)

The Moderne style is well-represented in the precinct. Streamlined Moderne buildings generally have a horizontal emphasis, sometimes with a contrasting vertical component. The horizontal emphasis is typically provided by banding and horizontal glazing bars (or muntins) to the windows. Whilst curved corners are a typical feature of this style, there is usually limited opportunity to incorporate in a shop building but this is achieved at 92 Acland Street with a central projecting bay. Wall finishes are either smooth render and/or bricks (clinker, tapestry or Roman). Ornamentation is otherwise limited but sometimes an Art Deco influenced panel/s may be incorporated. Windows are either timber or steel-framed.



Figure 32 – 81-85 Acland Street, Moderne style





Figures 33 & 34 – Sections of the Barkly Street elevations, north of Acland Street, both Moderne style. Coles site (PPHR citation 97) on left, note recess in parapet where the original signage was located.

#### **Shopfronts**

The earliest surviving shopfront (mostly intact) in the precinct is probably that at 74 Acland Street, which may date to the late Federation period.

Several largely intact shopfronts dating to the Interwar period survive in the precinct. They usually retain a tiled recessed entry, a tiled stallboard, original metal framing (various finishes including copper, brass, silver, etc.) with toplights, a few with decorative glass (lead lighting and stained glass). Some also retain their original timber-framed door and pressed metal to the soffit/ceiling in front. The Acland Court shopfront (Figure 35) designed by Duff is the most outstanding example in the precinct.





Figure 35 - Acland Court, 91-93 Acland Street (PPHR citation 112)

In a several instances the badge of the manufacturer survives. Of the remaining identified shopfitters, the most can be ascribed to Brooks Robinson, which were one of the largest companies. Other companies represented are N & N Shopfitters, Federal and Duff.

Several original cantilevered canopies also survive with pressed metal ceilings/soffits in Acland Street (nos 111) and Barkly Street (nos 188, 213).





Figures 36 & 37 – 23-33 Blessington Street, 1930s shopfronts

A few shopfronts with chrome frames and/or tiling survive dating to the post-WWII period. The shop at 103 Acland Street (Monarch Cake Shop, Figure 38) is a fine example with a canted window.



Figure 38 - Monarch Cake Shop, 103 Acland Street. 1950s shopfront

A few shopfronts are partially intact, in that they retain their original format with a stallboard and recessed entry and some original fabric.

## Acland Street – north side

No.	Period/date	Details
74	Victorian	Two storey, corner building, Italianate style, rendered with parapet embellished with panels of vermiculation, etc.
		Shopfront – tiled stallboard (overpainted) and entry, timber-framed.
76-78	Victorian	Pair of two storey terrace houses, converted to shops. Altered to the front, intact to the rear with chimney.
80	Interwar 1923	St Kilda Memorial Hall, Commercial Palazzo style. Four storey, rendered, tall order pilasters to extended piano nobile, frieze with Greek key pattern, temple pediments (bays and entry canopy), attic, windows with margin lights.
		(PPHR citation 113)
92 A-D	Interwar 1935	Four two-storey, Moderne style. Rendered and Roman bricks, horizontal and vertical banding, central pair project with curved corner, steel-framed windows (middle two altered).
94+ 94A	Interwar 1928	Two two-storey, distinctive Free Classical style, roof with terracotta tiles, part expressed; classical detailing (guilloche-like to bands), pilasters, multi-paned windows, and tiled spandrels.
		Original metal-framed shopfront to no. 94 with tiled stallboards (overpainted), door and leadlight to toplights. The maker's badge is illegible.
96-104	Interwar 1923	Six (two cojoined) single storey, Free Classical style, rendered, stepped parapet with piers.
134-144	Interwar By 1924	Six single-storey, Free style, parapet with wide arch pediment across between flanking piers across 2 premises.  Originally had gable roof with transverse ridge.
146-156	Late Federation/early Interwar 1919	Five two-storey, Free style, red brick (3 overpainted), roughcast render to frieze, fine engaged columns pilasters to projecting piers of nos 146-148, stilted Romanesque arch windows with varying timber tripartite frames, slotted panels below windows and to parapet of no. 146.

No.	Period/date	Details
(part of 181- 189 Barkly Street)	Interwar	Moderne style, two storey rendered building with band of steel-framed windows framed by wide reed/fluted pilasters and narrow hood with horizontal banding and scalloped motif below projecting coping.
160 (also extends through to Barkly Street)	Interwar	Moderne style, two storey rendered building with panelling to parapet, narrow concrete hood over bank of steel-framed windows, flagpole.  Original Coles shopfront - black tiles to stallboards with curved corners, metal-framed, granolithic thresholds. Some original internal elements also survive.  (PPHR citation 2448)
162-170 (and 193-197 Barkly Street)	Interwar	Moderne style, two storey rendered building with band of steel-framed windows framed by wide reed/fluted pilasters and narrow hood with horizontal banding and scalloped motif below projecting coping.

# Acland Street – south side

No.	Period/date	Details
81-85	Interwar	Moderne style, three two-storey, banded face brick (overpainted), fins on rendered panel above faceted oriel bays with steel-framed windows.
87-89	Interwar 1926	Two single-storey, Free Classical style, rendered parapet (no. 87 truncated) with dentillated cornice
91-93	Interwar 1935	Acland Court - two storey, mirrored pair, Spanish Mission style, rendered with brick highlights (clinker to arches, Roman to parapet panels), balconies with barley twist columns and tiled roof, arched steel-framed windows.  Shopfront by Duff – metal framing, granolithic entry, timber door, curved corner, tiled stallboard, stained glass to toplights.  (PPHR citation 114)
95-115	Interwar 1926	Ten two storey in two groups of five, Free Classical style, red brick (several overpainted) and rendered coping and bands, simplified classical detailing, cornice and pilasters

No.	Period/date	Details
		with keystone-like capital, originally had recessed balconies though all but one infilled.
		Shopfronts:
		97 – largely intact, tiled stallboard etc, (overpainted), metal-framed, toplingts.
		103 – post-WWII, canted window, tiled entry and stallboard, chrome finish, toplights.
		III by Federal – tiled stallboard and entry, metal-framed.
133-135	Late 20th	International style
	1969	Former SSVBV, single storey however with tall parapet. At ground level the facade is setback slightly from the front boundary beneath the paired wide, segmental arched concrete canopies. The façade is completely clad in off-white marble panels except for glazed entry. The terrazzo floor tiling at the entry are possibly not original (meant to be concrete tiles)
		(PPHR citation 95)
137	Post-WWII	Two two-storey, overpainted brick, large timber window. Victorian period house to rear.
139-145	Interwar	Four two-storey, Free style, red brick, mirrored group, tile clad roof concealed, roughcast render to curved parapet, piers, concrete lintels. No. 145 with original boxed-frame, sash windows (upper sash multi-paned), though others replaced.
159-163	Interwar 1923	Three two-storey, Free Classical style, rendered, moulded brickwork to parapet coping and projecting piers, boxed-frame window with sashes.
165	Interwar	Single storey, Free Classical style, asymmetrical curve to rendered parapet, simplified classical detailing including rusticated piers.
167	Interwar	Two storey, Free Classical style, tiled roof extending forward to canopy between piers, rendered, geometric leadlight to sash windows.
		Shopfront by N & N $-$ partly intact, stallboard tiles and granolithic entry.

No.	Period/date	Details
169-173	Interwar 1925	Pair with gabled façade, Free Classical style, rendered, altered, windows mostly concealed by blinds  173 shopfront – frame with copper finish, stained glass to highlights with vines, tiled stallbaord.
175	Interwar + Post- WWII 1927 + 1956 (facade)	Two storey. Interwar building with Post-WWII facade, consisting panelled parapet, band of windows, flagpoles to side piers, tile clad roof.
177-179	Federation	Pair of single-storey with different central parapet profiles, Free style, overpainted tuck-pointed brick
183-187	Interwar	Three single-storey, Free Classical style, rendered, parapet with panels and piers
189	Post-WWII 1947 + 1952	Single storey with tall parapet, panelled with umber Roman brick edge
191	Post-WWII	Tall parapet clad with metal sheeting

# Barkly Street – west side

No.	Period/date	Details
181-189 and 193-197 (and 162-170 + Acland Street)	Interwar	Moderne style, two storey rendered building with band of steel-framed windows framed by wide reed/fluted pilasters and narrow hood with horizontal banding and scalloped motif below projecting coping.  Nos 193-197 - Original shopfronts by Duff + N & N shopfitters with black tiles, metal-framed, granolithic thresholds.
205-207	Federation By 1911	Single storey, pair, rendered parapet with faceted corbelled piers/tourelles, Art Nouveau drop motifs  Shopfront no. 207 by Federal – tiled stallboard and entry, metal-framed,.
209	Federation	Two storey, face brick (overpainted) and rendered, faceted brick piers with conical caps, four Art Nouveau

No.	Period/date	Details
	By 1911	drop motifs, tripartite window with decorative glass to toplights
		Shopfront mostly intact – Brooks Robinson, metal-framed, tiled stallboard and threshold, altered doorway.
211	Federation	Similar to no. 209, two storey, brick with render frieze and bands, squared piers, three Art Nouveau drop motifs, concrete lintel to a wider window.
		Shopfront – intact, tiled threshold and stallboard, metal-framed, timber door.
213	Federation	Single storey, rendered, scalloped/curved parapet.
221-223	Federation	Single storey, Free style, brick (overpainted) rendered parapet with dated pediment (1912) and some classicising detailing.
		Shopfront no. 221 – mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century, tiled entry, sliding timber door, chrome frame, toplights.
227-227A	Federation/Interwar	Two storey, rendered, curved parapet, projecting corbelled piers, diamond motifs an fluted niche to chamfered corner
		Shopfront no. 227A – largely intact, Brooks Robinson, tiled stallboard and entry, metal-framed, toplights.
229-231A + 23-33A Blessington	Interwar 1919 + 1934	Extended and remodelled, lightly rendered with an entablature (cornice and frieze) and panels below windows. Art deco panels to lintels to western extension.
		Shopfronts - intact, Brooks Robinson, metal framed, tiled thresholds and stallboards/walls, timber doors.

# Barkly Street – east side

No.	Period/date	Details
188	Victorian 1865	Two storey, (Rustic) Gothic style mansion to rear with basalt walls and cream brick quoining, slate-clad, gable roof, original verandah removed. Other sections in garden setting, separated and linked to front.
	Late Interwar 1941	Moderne/Functionalist style, three storey, cream brick, tile clad roof concealed by stepped parapet with dogtooth

No.	Period/date	Details
		band. Central bay with rendered bands and timber-framed windows with horizontal glazing bars and rusticated edges.
		Shopfronts - marble thresholds and tiled, ribbed glass to toplights, canopy with pressed metal to soffit.
		(PPHR citation 293)
190-192	Victorian	Villa to rear, U-shaped roof clad in sheet metal, façade presumably removed.
	incerwar	Single storey, façade with rendered parapet featuring simplified classical including pilasters and central panel, the detailing of which has been removed to no. 192.
194-196	Interwar	Single storey, parapet consistent with no. 190 however with central pediment. The original parapet of no. 196 likely survives but is concealed by metal sheeting.
202A	Victorian	Village Belle Hotel
		Ornate two storey rendered building, rusticated to the lower level, with fluted keystones and recessed arcaded balcony to the upper level, and parapet with bottled balustrade and open segmental pediment.
204-206	Interwar 1939	Former Commonwealth Bank, two storey Moderne style, rendered, curved corner entry bay, contrasting horizontal and vertical recessed banding, narrow sash windows with horizontal glazing bars.

No.	Period/date	Details
35-49 Blessington Street	Interwar 1916	Seven single-storey, Free Classical style, rendered, parapet featuring simplified classical detailing.  Shopfronts – Duff, black tiles, metal-framed, textured glass to highlights,

# 4.0 Comparative Analysis

The Village Belle Commercial Precinct is one of three main commercial precincts in the municipality which primarily date to the Federation and Interwar periods. The subject precinct is larger than the other two and further distinguished by having several buildings dating to the 1930s, with a

preponderance of those designed in the Moderne style, whereas the buildings in the other two precincts mainly date to the 1910s and 1920s.

- Ripponlea Commercial Precinct (also proposed to be separated from HO7) on Glen Eira Road.
  Many of the buildings have face red brick with some contrasting render (smooth or roughcast)
  and clinker brick elements, reflecting a prevailing influence of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic. It
  also contains a group of three elaborate adjoining bank buildings.
- Glenhuntly and Ormond roads, Elwood (part of HO8, Elwood-Glenhuntly Rd, Ormond Rd). The
  commercial zone consists of two, separated sections western and eastern. In the western
  section, many buildings have a combined palette of red brick and render except for the Free
  Classical style former bank, which is fully rendered. The unusual street configuration provides a
  landmark corner building with two oriel bays. In the eastern section (between Docker and Foam
  streets), several buildings are also indicative of the Free Classical style.

Most other commercial precincts have a core of Victorian period buildings in addition to those dating to the  $20^{th}$  century:

- The Carlisle Street Commercial and Public Precinct (also proposed to be separated from HO7) is distinguished from other commercial zones/precincts in the municipality by having an even mix of buildings from the three main periods of development Victorian, Federation and Interwar as well as having key examples from the Post-WWII and Late 20th century periods. There are considerable number of Federation and Interwar period examples as many of the 19th century buildings were timber construction as the area, with its poor drainage, initially attracted a lower socio-economic group. These buildings were replaced during the early 20th century. In addition, the commercial zone expanded into former residential areas at the eastern and western ends at this time.
- Fitzroy Street (part of HO5, St Kilda Hill) mostly larger buildings, often part of larger residential buildings (multi-storey east of Grey Street). Due to the lack of narrow/standard suburban shopping centre allotments, it has a markedly different character. There are a few Victorian period buildings in the vicinity of the Grey Street intersection (including the part of the George Hotel) otherwise most of the graded buildings date to the Interwar period.
- Clarendon and Park streets, South Melbourne (part of HO440, Emerald Hill Residential Precinct) is another large commercial zone along a tram route and near a railway line (now light rail). It consists largely of Victorian, a few Federation and Interwar period examples.
- Bay Street, Port Melbourne (part of HOI, Port Melbourne) is a large commercial zone with many Victorian, some examples from the Federation and Interwar periods, as well as some recent redevelopment, including multi-storey (south end).
- Armstrong Street Commercial Precinct, Middle Park (HO445) is a small precinct with Victorian and Federation period buildings dating from circa 1888 to 1910.

# 5.0 Statement of Significance

#### What is significant?

The Village Belle Commercial Precinct comprising 74-104, 128-162 & 77-193 Acland Street, 203-213A & 188-206 Barkly Street, and 27-33A and 35A & 35-49 Blessington Street (south side, either side of intersection with Barkly Street) in St Kilda is significant.

During the 19th century, this area was residential except for the Village Belle Hotel and the shop at 74 Acland Street (corner of Carlisle Street). There were a few mansions on the north side of Acland Street and nearby on the west side of Barkly Street, only one of which survives – the former Hofwyl School (later Queens College) at the rear of 188 Barkly Street. The south side of Acland Street (and

adjoining part of Barkly Street) developed later, as this land was initially part of the nearby reserve, and generally with villas and the like. The completion of the tram service in 1889 was however an impetus for change.

About the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, individual and paired commercial buildings began to be constructed at the east end of the precinct initially opposite the Village Belle so that by about 1920 the Barkly Street section had become largely commercial. Subsequently commercial development progressed along Acland Street, including several larger multiple premises. By the beginning of World War II, there were only a few of the original houses – with or without a commercial building to the front - surviving in the precinct.

The following features contribute to the significance of the precinct:

- Single and two-storey masonry buildings, mostly commercial, with a broad period of significance: predominantly the Federation and Interwar periods, but with examples from the Victorian, Post-WWII and Late 20th century periods.
- Parapets, with a variety of detailing, and some expressed roof forms (tile clad).
- Wall finishes including render (smooth and/or roughcast) and/or brickwork (often overpainted).
- Decorative rendered/pressed cement elements to cornice, frieze, windows, etc.
- Original timber-framed (double-hung sash [including boxed-frame] or casements), and steel-framed windows.
- Shopfronts dating to the Federation, Interwar and Post-WWII periods, with recessed entries (often retaining a pressed metal ceiling), metal framing, original decorative glass to toplights, tiling to entry floor and/or stallboards, and timber-framed doors.
- Cantilevered canopies with pressed metal soffits and/or brackets/framing.

The Significant places within the precinct are:

- 84-90 Acland Street (St Kilda Memorial Hall)
- 91-93 Acland Street (Acland Court)
- 133 Acland St (former State Savings Bank Victoria)
- 160 Acland Street (former Coles)
- 188 Barkly Street (flats & shops and 19th century basalt building)
- 202A Barkly Street (Village Belle Hotel)

The Non-contributory properties are:

- 73, 117, 131, 147-153, 193 Acland Street.
- 203, 217, 219, 225 Barkly Street.

All other properties not listed above are Contributory places.

#### How is it significant?

The Village Belle Commercial Precinct is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Phillip.

### Why is it significant?

Historically, the precinct illustrates the significant growth of St Kilda during the early twentieth century, especially with the increased density associated with flat development in the vicinity

requiring the need for a local shopping centre in addition to servicing the patrons of the nearby entertainment venues. It also became a tourist destination in itself, initially with a skating rink and cinema and later music venues and eateries. It does however have a partly concealed layer associated with the earlier, mainly residential 19th century phase when the precinct was developed with a few mansions, several villas and the like.

It is a representative example of a typical pattern of land division in the St Kilda area, where large Victorian holdings were subdivided during the Federation and Interwar periods, often with the associated mansion being demolished. The precinct is however notable for the retention of one original mansion, albeit concealed from the public realm, illustrating a key aspect of the 19th century development of this area. The former Hofwyl School, later Queens College, operated as a private school for over half a century, and is a rare surviving example of such a building type, and has further distinction by its material palette of basalt, which is uncommon south of the Yarra. (Criteria A, B & D)

Aesthetically, it is primarily an early twentieth century commercial area, consisting of many fine examples from the Federation and Interwar periods. The Federation period examples, mainly near the south-west corner of Acland and Barkly streets, are often indicative of the Free style and feature distinctive parapet detailing, some revealing the influence of the Art Nouveau. The Interwar period buildings reflect some of the popular, contemporary commercial styles with those from the 1920s invariably in a Free Classical mode, and the St Kilda Memorial Hall in the related Commercial Palazzo style, whereas during the mid to late 1930s, the Moderne style was commonly employed with some distinctive examples (e.g. 81-85, 156-160 Acland Street) though there is also a good example of the Spanish Mission style (91-93 Acland Street), a building which retains a fine shopfront. The consistent use of brick and/or render provides a cohesiveness to the streetscapes as does the largely single and two storey scale, with two taller buildings effectively bookending the precinct. The significance is enhanced by the survival of several intact shopfronts, many original to the period of construction of the building. The Village Belle Hotel from the Victorian period is a local landmark and notable. A few buildings dating to the later part of 20th century also contribute to the aesthetic significance of the precinct, in particular the former SSBV. (Criterion E)

#### 6.0 Recommendations

Excise from HO5 and HO7 to create separate precinct heritage overlay.

Extensions recommended (that is, not currently within the HO as part of HO7 or HO5):

- 96-104, 95-131, 147-181 Acland Street.
- 35A & 35-49 Blessington Street.

Removal from HO and precinct (that is, currently part of HO7): 208-218 Barkly Street.

#### 7.0 Assessment

RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants, HO7 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct Heritage Review Stage 2, 2021