

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Grosvenor Hotel
Other names: Grosvenor Arms

Citation No:
301



Citation map TBA

Address: 10 Brighton Road, Balaclava
Category: Commercial: Hotel
Style: Interwar: Spanish Mission
Constructed: c.1861, 1928
Designer: Harry A. Norris
Amendment: TBA
Comment: Revised citation

Heritage Precinct: None
Heritage Overlay: **HO7**
Graded as: Significant
Victorian Heritage Register: No

Significance

What is significant?

The Grosvenor Hotel at 10 Brighton Road, Balaclava is significant. A hotel known as the Grosvenor Arms was first established on this site c.1861, it was extended c.1890 and in 1928 it was significantly remodeled to a design by Harry A. Norris. The fabric associated with the nineteenth century development including the small brick gabled outbuilding/stables and the 1928 remodeling contributes to the significance of the place.

Alterations and additions made after 1945 are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Grosvenor Hotel is of local historical, aesthetic, and social significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

The Grosvenor Hotel is historically significant as one of the oldest hotels in St Kilda and forms part of a small group of very early hotels that served as coach stops along the first track to the Mornington Peninsula, and is one of only three that continue to operate as hotels today. The small gabled brick outbuilding is significant as a remnant of the original c.1860s hotel complex. (Criterion A)

The Grosvenor Hotel is significant as a rare and early example of a hotel in the Spanish Mission style. It is only Spanish Mission style hotel in Port Phillip and one of only a few known examples in Victoria. (Criterion B)

The Grosvenor Hotel is of aesthetic significance for the distinctive Spanish Mission style materials and details, which include the roughcast render, Cordoba tiles and wrought ironwork, and distinctive features

such as the Dovecote chimney, and the balcony with the associated windows separated by barley twist columns, and the scalloped frieze to the corner splay. (Criterion E)

The Grosvenor Hotel is of social significance for its use as a hotel and community meeting place for over 150 years. (Criterion G)

Thematic context

Victoria's framework of historical themes

5. Building Victoria's Industries and Workforces: 5.6 Entertaining and socialising

Port Phillip thematic environmental history

3. People: 3.5 Expressing identity and culture

History

Contextual history

Providing food, refreshments, entertainment and accommodation, hotels – or pubs – have been popular places to eat, socialise and stay in the City of Port Phillip since the arrival of European settlers. Wilbraham Liardet was the first to open a hotel in the area, the Brighton Pier Hotel, in October 1840. During the gold rush period from 1851 to 1876, 51 new hotels were opened in Port Melbourne alone.

Before the creation of civic buildings, hotels were often used as meeting places for early councils, social groups and committees, as well as general socialising. Some of the oldest buildings in the City of Port Phillip are hotels that have stood the test of time, such as the Golden Gate Hotel (1853), Prince of Wales Hotel (1863), the George (which began as the Terminus in 1857), the Esplanade (which began as the New Bath Hotel in 1856), the Golden Fleece Hotel (1872) and the Balaclava Hotel (formerly Carlisle Hotel 1869). Some, like the Hotel Victoria built in 1888 on Beaconsfield Parade, Albert Park, remain but no longer used as hotels. Others, like the Greyhound Hotel (1853) have been demolished. Hotels have been particularly associated with working-class people as centres of Australian drinking culture and continue to provide vital social venues for the community today.

Grosvenor Hotel

Henry Wills built the Grosvenor Hotel, originally the Grosvenor Arms, c.1861 and it was one of several very early (c.1850s or 1860s) hotels established along the first track to Brighton and the Mornington Peninsula, which served as coaching stops along the route. Others included the Greyhound (established c.1853), Elsternwick (c.1854), Corner (c.1864), Queen's Arms (c.1866) and the Duke of Edinburgh (c.1867).

In the first listing of the hotel in the St Kilda rate book for 1861-62 it is described as containing 20 rooms and being constructed of 'brick and slate', with a substantial Net Annual Value of £400. A similar description is provided in the rate book for the following year, but in 1863-64 the number of rooms reduces to nine and remains the same until the early 1870s, when it increases to 10 (RB).

Wills or his executors owned the hotel until 1881, though he ceased to be publican 1862. Later owners included Malcolm Muir (1880s) and Edward Webb (or his executors (1890s to 1927/28). Licensees included David Lyon (1862), Daniel Litton Reed (1863), Thomas Bellaire (1866), William Pitt (1869), Catherine Smith (1870s), William Garfold (1881), Malcolm Muir (late 1880s), Edward Webb (1892/93 - 93/94), Gustav Beck (1898/99), Anna Murray (1903/04), Albert Ernest Goodman (1908), John L. Park (1917 to 1920s).

Like many early hotels the Grosvenor was used for public meetings to discuss matters of local importance. For example, in April 1869 there was a 'meeting of men connected with the south ward of the borough of



St Kilda' for the purpose of 'considering the scheme proposed by the council for the enlargement of the Town Hall with borrowed money':

The decided expression of the meeting was that the street work and drainage was of the greatest importance; the health and comfort of the inhabitants should be considered before the town-hall enlargement. (The Herald, 9 April 1869, p.2)

In 1870 members of the Church of England and others attended a public meeting to discuss establishing what would become Holy Trinity Church to serve the community surrounding the hotel and Elwood (*The Telegraph, St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian*, 22 January 1870, p.9). The hotel is shown on the Vardy plan, prepared in 1873 (Figure 1).

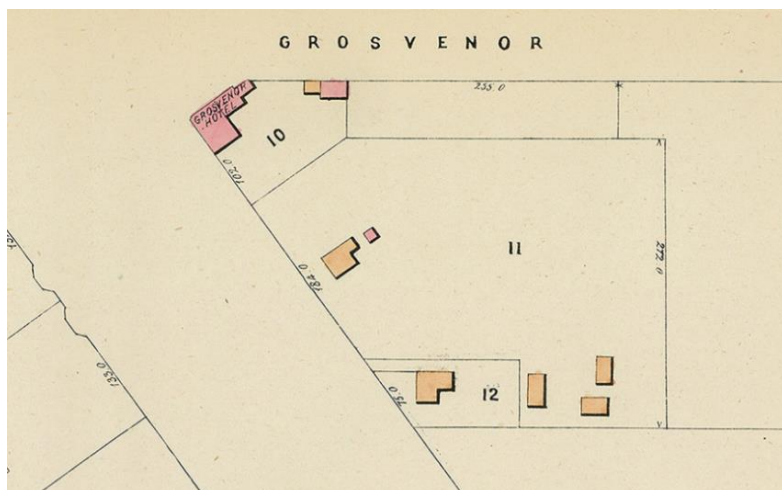


Figure 1 – Extract of Plan of the Borough of St Kilda, South Ward No. 10 (J.E.S. Vardy, 1873) showing the original Grosvenor Hotel at the corner of Grosvenor Street. Note the brick outbuilding in the top right corner. (Pink colour denotes brick construction)

In the 1890s a billiard saloon was added at the southern end of the Brighton Road frontage, and the extended building is shown on the 1898 MMBW plan (Figure 2). By this time, the cable tramway sheds had been built on the adjoining land. The outbuilding in the northeast corner is identified as a stables on this plan.

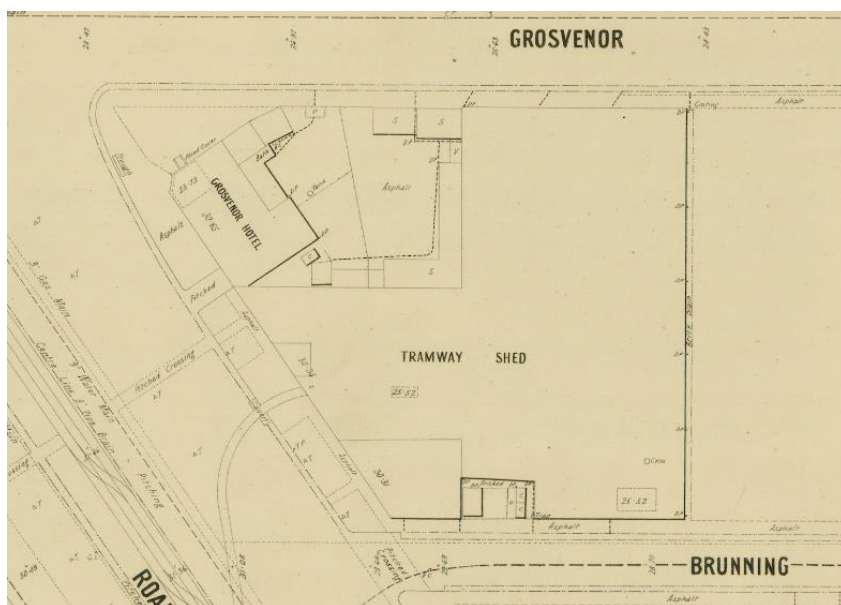


Figure 2 - MMBW detail plan no. 1440, dated 1898 showing the extended hotel and the tramway office and sheds on the adjoining land.

In 1906, the Victorian government established a Licensing Reduction Board with set ratios, different for rural and urban Victoria, for the closing of hotels. The Board investigated one licensing district after another and recommended closure of hotels, principally those older and smaller establishments typical of the inner suburbs and the older mining towns. Those older hotels that did survive often did so purely through extending the building or adding second or third storeys of accommodation (McConville).

Consequently, the Grosvenor was one of several hotels in St Kilda that were substantially upgraded or rebuilt during the interwar period. In 1928 architect Harry A. Norris designed alterations and additions, carried out by J.W. Pinnock, including an extra floor over the billiard saloon, for the new owner Mrs. Kelso. Figure 3 shows an elevation of the original two storey hotel, with the single storey billiard room beside and an extract of the original building plans prepared by Norris.

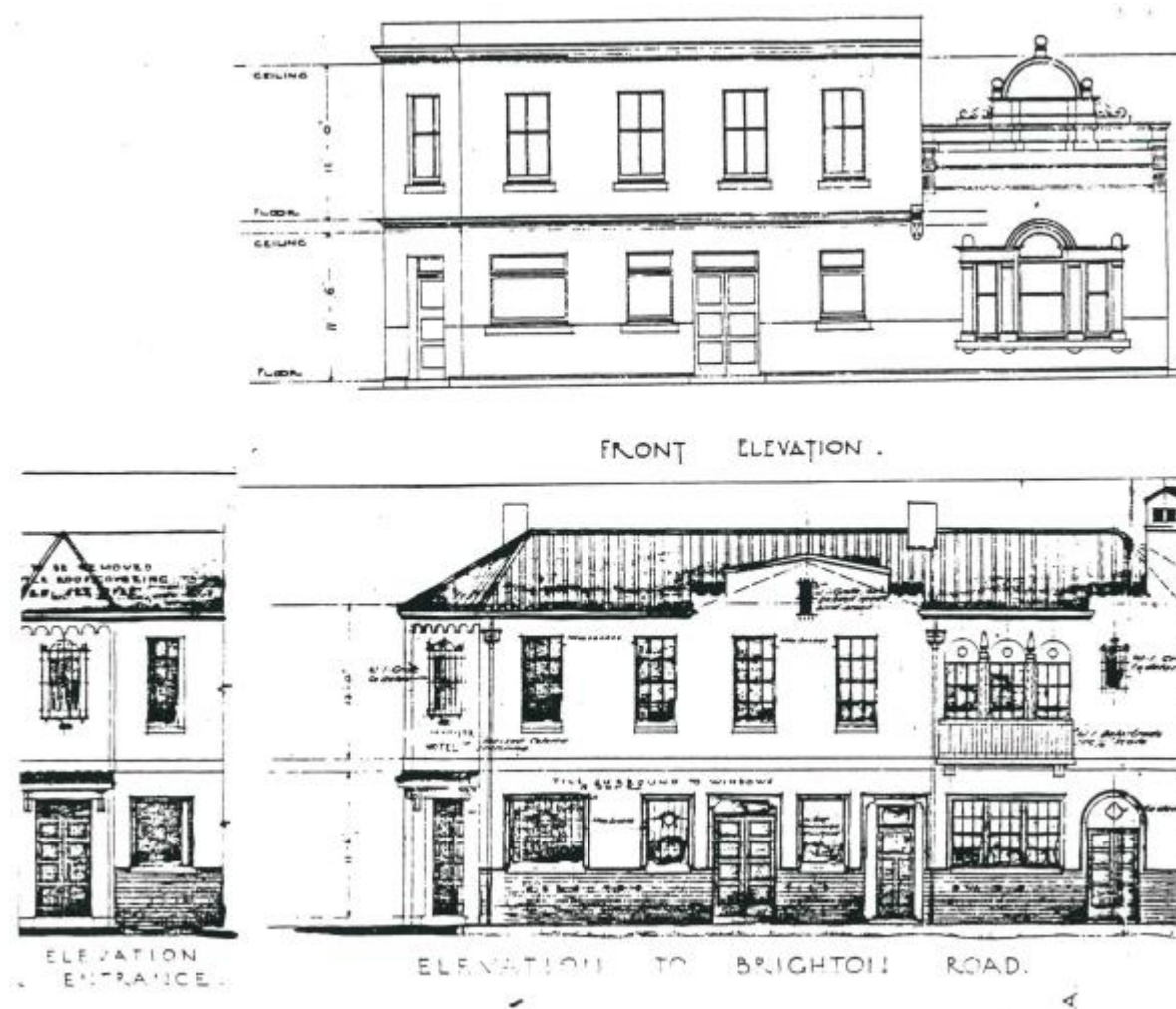


Figure 3 – Plans reproduced in Bick (1985) including (above) an artist impression of the original hotel and (below) an extract of the original building plans prepared by Norris showing the 1928 alterations and additions.

In the post-World War Two period a single storey addition containing a bottle shop was built to the north of the original hotel. Later, in the early 1990s this was converted into an extension of the public bar, and the bottle shop was relocated to part of the former tram depot building to the south (see Citation 2451). Further single storey additions have been made at the rear (east) side of the hotel building.

Harry A. Norris, architect

Harry A. Norris (1888-1966) commenced his architectural career at the office of Ward & Carleton in 1902. By 1914 Norris had parted with Ward & Carleton to practice independently. One of his earliest commissions was for the design of the Preston Masonic Temple, in 1914, although it wasn't constructed

until 1919, by which time he had established his own practice. Initially, he practiced from his own home in Wallace Street, Preston; a professional letterhead promoting his expertise, as '*architect, designer, reinforced concrete expert, and building surveyor*'. Like many architects during this era, Norris drew heavily on international styles and technologies and undertook professional overseas sojourns annually between 1928 and 1941 also working for a time in America. For Norris, America was at the forefront of applying innovative commercial building techniques with concrete and steel construction that enabled heights to be pushed to new limits. Many American commercial buildings were also featuring a Renaissance Commercial Palazzo form and along with Art Deco, Spanish Colonial Revival and Streamlined Moderne styles, that were also influencing Australian architecture. Norris would contemporise his designs with these new forms and technologies. Essential to Norris's commercial success was his enduring professional relationships with several wealthy, high profile clients, notably, the Nicholas family, and G.J. Coles. Their commissions gave Norris the opportunities to apply his overseas influences on a range of diverse projects, as his 1924 design for Alfred Nicholas, the *Nicholas Building*, demonstrates.

References

- Aizen, Becky, *Pots, Punks and Punters: a history of the hotels of St. Kilda and South Melbourne*, 2004
- Bick, David, Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan no. 1440, dated 1898
- Chris McConville & Associates, 'Hotels in Victoria thematic typology', prepared for Historic Building Council, n.d.
- J.E.S. Vardy, 'Plan of the Borough of St Kilda. Surveyed and compiled under direction of the Borough Council', Hamel & Ferguson, Melbourne 1873 (Vardy plan)
- Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH)*, February 2021
- Raworth, Bryce & Allom Lovell & Associates Pty Ltd, 'Inner Metropolitan Hotels. Preliminary assessment and comparative analysis of significant hotels in Collingwood, Fitzroy, Port Melbourne, Richmond, South Melbourne and Williamstown', prepared for the Historic Buildings Council, January 1992
- St Kilda rate books, accessed via ancestry.com (RB): 1861-62 (no. in rate 1853); 1862-63 (1018); 1865 (1784); 1867 (1845); 1872 (1814)
- St Kilda Council building and planning permits (BP): 7361, 28 November 1928; 105/010/PI0, 3 May 1991; 105/010/PI1, 19 June 1992

Description

The Grosvenor Hotel complex incorporates parts of the former cable tram offices and car shed, which are situated at 16 Brighton Road (see Citation 2451). This description relates only to the original hotel building, as remodeled and extended in 1928, and early outbuilding at 10 Brighton Road (see Figure 3).

The hotel as remodeled in 1928 is a two-storey building in the Spanish Mission style with characteristic roughcast walls and hipped roof clad in Cordoba tiles. Other distinctive Spanish Mission details include:

- The splayed corner, which features a scalloped frieze above a window with a wrought iron screen above the hotel name in raised Serif lettering.
- The group of three tall narrow six pane sash windows with arched tiled panels above and twisted rendered columns between. These sit behind a cantilevered balcony with wrought iron balustrade. Another window with a wrought iron screen is to the right.
- The dove-cote-style chimney with flanking parapets (both with Cordoba tiles), positioned within another splayed corner at the south end (there is at least one other plain rendered chimney, which appears to have been one of the original Victorian chimneys, cut down as part of the 1928 remodelling).
- Small smooth rendered pattern screens set into the wall.

The rainwater head and downpipe at the north end next to the corner splay also appears date from the 1928 remodelling. The other first floor windows are tall four pane casements – original plans show six pane sash windows, and so these may not be original or were substituted.

The nineteenth century origins of the building are evident in the simple form with a characteristic splayed corner, typical of early corner hotels.

The original building has moderate integrity. The upper floor elevations to Brighton Road appear to be relatively intact (a pediment shown in the original plans was either not built or has been removed). The openings at ground floor level are in the approximate location of the original windows or doors but have all been altered. The addition at the north end has obliterated the original corner entry door and the ground floor and part of the first-floor elevations along the north side. There are extensive single storey additions at the rear.

In the northeast corner of the site adjacent to Grosvenor Street is a small gabled outbuilding built of old bricks on a rubble stone base. This appears to be part of the outbuilding shown on the 1873 Vardy Plan and identified as a stable on the 1898 MMBV plan. (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Aerial, showing contributory buildings outlined in yellow (Source: Nearmap.com).

Comparative analysis

There are many hotels included in the Heritage Overlay, either as an individual place or within a heritage precinct. The hotels predominantly date to the Victorian period; however, many were modernized and remodeled during the Interwar period in response to Liquor Licensing Board recommendations. Only a few were built as new buildings during the twentieth century, though often replacing an earlier hotel on the site. Most are located on corners of main roads.

The Grosvenor is among several surviving early hotels along St Kilda and Brighton roads, and one of only three (the Post Office and the Elsternwick being the others) that continue to operate as hotels today. The Elsternwick Hotel is a rare example that was not remodeled in the twentieth century and, although extensive additions have been made, the nineteenth century sections remain highly intact. The Post Office was remodeled during the interwar period and remains relatively intact to the 1931 scheme. Other surviving examples include the former Duke of Devonshire, 46 St Kilda Road (Delicensed in the early

twentieth century, this retains the nineteenth century form, but is much altered and not included within the HO), the Queens Arms (substantially rebuilt in the interwar classical style, see Citation 927), and the former Duke of Edinburgh, 374 St Kilda (remodeled in the Moderne style, see Citation 2446).

During the 1920s, most hotels were designed in a classicising mode, whether as new buildings or pre-existing hotels that were remodeled. This is the most common architectural style of the Interwar period as applied to hotels. These buildings are usually rendered, have a parapet often with a pediment and a cornice, and individual windows (a remnant of the Victorian period building). A nearby example is the former Queens Arms Hotel, 336-340 St Kilda Road, which was designed by Sydney Smith & Ogg. Another popular style was Moderne style, with the Prince of Wales Hotel at St Kilda, designed in 1937 by specialist hotel architect, Robert McIntyre, is perhaps the best example in Port Phillip.

The Grosvenor Hotel is a rare and early example of the Spanish Mission style applied to a hotel. Spanish Mission is a romantic and evocative style. It emerged in the late nineteenth century in the United States and was popularized in the 1920s, particularly in California and Florida. In Australia, awareness of the style owed much to the influence of Hollywood and the first examples appeared by the mid-1920s. It is characterized by use of light tones and colours, exploitation of sunlight and shadow and concentrations of elaborate ornament contrasted with plain surfaces. Buildings are generally asymmetrical with stuccoed wall surfaces with simulated handcrafted texture. Roofs are medium pitched and often feature half-round (Cordoba) tiles. Distinctive features include arcaded loggias and balconies, often supported by 'barley twist' columns, and use of decorative wrought-iron work, ceramic tiles, or plaster ornament, often invoking classical features.

The Grosvenor Hotel displays many characteristics of the Spanish Mission style including the use of roughcast render, Cordoba tiles and wrought ironwork, and distinctive features such as the dovecote chimney, and the balcony with associated windows separated by barley twist columns. It is the only Spanish Mission style in Port Phillip and one of only a few known examples in Victoria. Others include the Ferntree Gully Hotel, 1130 Burwood Highway, Ferntree Gully designed in 1928 (and constructed the following year) by leading hotel architect Mr. R.H. McIntyre (of Joy & McIntyre, architects) at an estimated cost of £8,000 pounds (*The Argus*, 20 November 1928, p.10). Built around the same time was the Hindmarsh Hotel, 46-50 Roy Street, Jeparit (architect not identified). Both are substantial two storey buildings with arcaded verandahs and were replacements (not remodels) of previous buildings.

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 as an individual place with exterior paint controls.

Primary source

City of Port Phillip, *HO7 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2022

Other studies

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

Bick, David, *St Kilda Conservation Study Area 2*, 1985



Other images



(Left) North-west splayed corner showing scalloped frieze, window with wrought iron screen and name plate (Right) Example of patterned inset wall screens



Balcony with Dovecote style chimney at top right