

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Wimbledon Mansions
Other names: Flats

Citation No:
2299

Citation map TBA



Address: 2 Wimbledon Avenue, Elwood

Category: Residential: Mansion, Flats

Style: Victorian: Italianate

Constructed: 1869, 1920

Designer: Unknown

Amendment: TBA

Comment: Revised citation

Heritage Precinct: St Kilda
Botanical Gardens & Environs

Heritage Overlay: HO7

Graded as: Significant

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Significance

What is significant?

Wimbledon Mansions, constructed in 1869 and converted to flats in 1920, at 2 Wimbledon Avenue, Elwood is significant.

Alterations and additions made after 1945 are not significant.

How is it significant?

Wimbledon Mansions at 2 Wimbledon Avenue, Elwood is of local historic, representative, and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Wimbledon Mansions is of historic significance for its associations with the early residential development of this area near the St Kilda Botanical Gardens and is representative of the mansion estates that established the character of Elwood as a desirable residential neighbourhood in the nineteenth century. It also demonstrates the mansion estate subdivision of the early twentieth century which included the conversion of the original single residences to flats, and subdivision of the grounds to enable more intensive residential development. (Criterion A)

Wimbledon Mansions is of aesthetic significance as a fine example of a mid-Victorian mansion with more restrained detailing when compared to later examples such as Rotherfield. This includes the window decoration of moulded architraves and bracketed sills, with keystones to the upper windows, the vermiculated quoining, and the simple frieze with paired brackets. The exception is the ornate cast iron return verandah, which dates from the later nineteenth century and has fluted columns with Corinthian

capitals, finely detailed lacework frieze and brackets and balustrades, a frieze of paired brackets with medallions and cricket bats moulds to the lower fascia and dentilling to the upper fascia. (Criterion E)

Thematic context

Victoria's framework of historical themes

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

Port Phillip thematic environmental history

5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.2 Shaping the suburbs (5.2.2 Private development), 5.3 Diverse Housing (5.3.1 Mansions and grand villas, 5.3.5 Higher-density housing)

History

Contextual history

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

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

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

Wimbledon

The development of the St Kilda Botanical Gardens from c.1860 led to the surrounding area becoming a desirable residential neighbourhood. By the end of the nineteenth century Blessington, Tennyson, and Dickens streets and the west side of Brighton Road were lined with substantial villas, and mansions set in large grounds.

What is now 2 Wimbledon Avenue was originally a large property with a frontage to Brighton Road (Figure 1). Rate books indicate that this site was undeveloped in January 1869, comprising one acre of vacant land owned by tobacconist George Touzell. The rate book for the following year (dated 7 March 1870) lists a

new ten-roomed brick house, with a Net Annual Value of £180, owned and occupied by Charles Berghoff, a merchant. The house is shown on the 1873 Vardy plan of this area (Figure 1). At that time, it had a timber verandah to the front only and which did not return on the side.

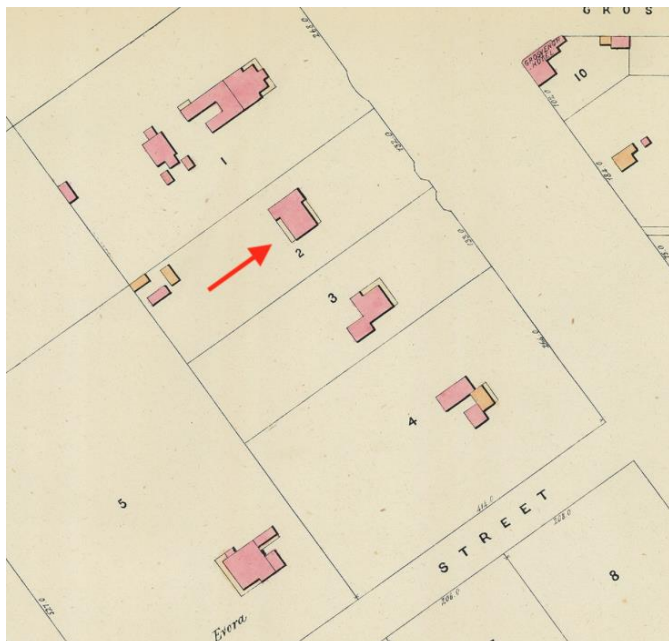


Figure 1: Extract of Vardy plan no. 10 South Ward. Wimbledon indicated.

Mr Berghoff remained in the house until around 1877; it was then briefly occupied by one E.P.S Sturt. The next owner was Mrs Elizabeth McKinnon, a widow, who resided there herself until c.1884, when she rented it out. Her tenants included Sir Peter Scratchley (c.1885), John A. Wallace (c.1887-91), Joshua Cushing (c.1893-94), Albert Parker (c.1895) and John C Teare (c.1896-1900). Mrs. McKinnon then returned, remaining in residence until her death in 1903. It was then occupied by a Miss M. McKinnon, presumably her daughter, for several years thence. The 1898 MMBW plan shows the verandah extended along the south side, and additions at the rear when compared to the Vardy plan (Figure 2).

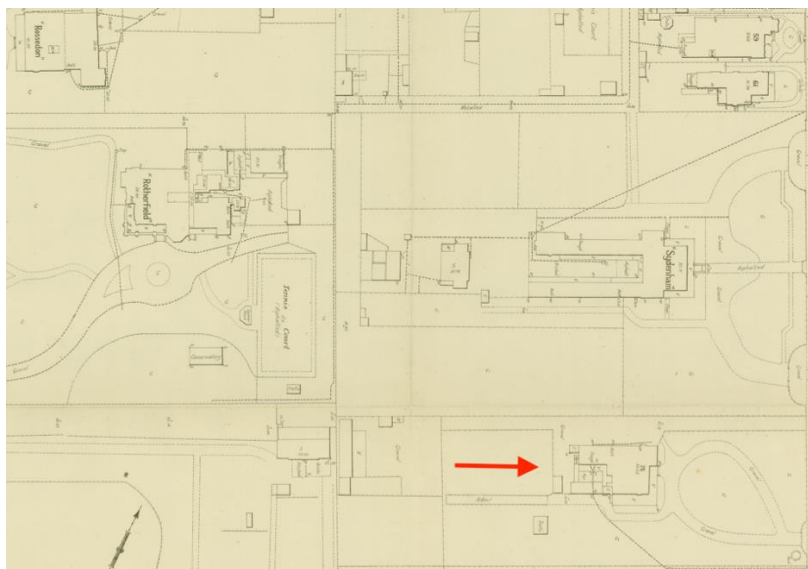


Figure 2: Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan No. 1384 (extract) showing Wimbledon (indicated by arrow) and surrounding mansion estates. Brighton Road is at left (Source: State Library of Victoria collection)

The building remained a single residence until it was acquired by Andrew McPhail. In 1920 McPhail converted the mansion into four flats, adding a two-storey wing on the west side (BP), and he later (c.1922)

subdivided much of the estate to create Wimbledon Avenue and new allotments along Brighton Road. The mansion itself was retained on a large allotment fronting the new avenue.

The converted building was renamed 'Wimbledon Mansions' and in 1925 McPhail continued to reside in one of the flats, leasing the others out (SM).

References

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

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan no.1384, dated 1905

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

St Kilda Council building permits (BP): 4140, 21 April 1920

St. Kilda Rate Books: 1874-1900. PROV

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 1925

Description

The former Wimbledon Mansions is a large double-storey Victorian Italianate mansion of rendered masonry construction with a hipped roof with bracketed eaves, penetrated by tall chimneys with moulded caps. The house faces toward Brighton Road, which was the original frontage of the property.

Asymmetrical in plan, it has a projecting flat fronted bay beside the ornate return verandah (possibly a later addition), which has fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, finely detailed lacework frieze, brackets and balustrades, a tiled floor, a frieze of paired brackets with medallions and cricket bats moulds to the lower fascia and dentilling to the upper fascia. The bay has tall sash windows in a tripartite arrangement with narrow outer sashes flanking a wider inner sash. These have moulded architraves and bracketed sills, with keystones to the upper windows. Similar windows are in the main elevation behind the verandah. The front door has sidelights and highlights and there is a niche with a bracketed ledge in the wall beside. and there is vermiculated quoining to the wall corners.

Along the west side of the mansion, fronting Wimbledon Avenue, is a double-storey rendered brick addition, dating from the early 1920s. It has a gabled roof of Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles, and boarded infill to the gable end.

The building is in good condition and has relatively good external integrity. External changes include the installation of a steel staircase to the front of the verandah, replacement of the roof cladding.

Comparative analysis

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

Earlier mansions built prior to 1880, by comparison were characterised by more restrained and subtle decoration, and simple, often symmetrical massing.

The mansions were often set within spacious grounds with landscaped formal gardens and were accessed by a carriage driveway. Most included a complex of outbuildings, including stables. Later re-subdivisions resulted in the loss of most original gardens, although sometimes remnant buildings or trees remain on the same or sometimes different lots. For example, while the Hammerdale mansion was demolished, two trees

from its once extensive gardens – a palm and a stone pine – survive in the rear yards of houses on the west side of Hammerdale Avenue, St Kilda (TEH).

The former Wimbledon Mansions is associated with the early residential development of the area surrounding the St Kilda Botanical Gardens. It is representative of the mansion estates that established the character of this area as a desirable residential neighbourhood for the homes of businessmen and professionals in the nineteenth century, in which several mansions were built. Many of these have been demolished (for example, Ascog), or significantly altered and converted to flats (for example, Himalaya at 10 Tennyson Street). Other surviving examples include:

- Hartpury (c.1865, Crouch & Wilson) 9 Milton Street, Elwood (Citation 2098, Individual HO191). Two storey rendered brick with reconstructed cast iron verandah. Converted to flats.
- Whin Bank (1875-76, J.A.B. Koch) 34 Mitford Street, Elwood (No citation). Two storey rendered brick with arched verandah and pediment to the projecting bay. Converted to flats.
- Bundalohn (1884-85, Reed Henderson & Smart) 6 Tennyson Street, St Kilda (Citation 2154, Individual HO269). Less common example in red brick with rendered details. Verandah removed and converted to flats.
- Rotherfield (1890-91, David C. Askew) 14 Hennessy Avenue, Elwood (Citation 336). Fine and intact Boom style mansion.

The changes associated with the flat conversion of the Victorian mansion to Wimbledon Mansion flats were confined to a discreet addition at the rear and the main elevations remain largely intact. The pre-1880s construction date is illustrated by relatively restrained detailing with the exception of the ornate verandah, which is likely to be a late nineteenth century addition.

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 a Significant place within the St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs precinct.

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, *City of Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Other images



Front (east) elevation facing Brighton Road showing return verandah and later staircase.



The view from Wimbledon Avenue



Rear view from Wimbledon Avenue showing the 1920 addition