

HISTORY : The Central Club was first licensed as Cremean's Hotel in February 1887 and opened in November. The architect was William George Wolf, American born in 1855. He arrived in Australia in 1878 and lived and practised in Richmond until 1886. He designed many hotels, including four in Richmond, also Dr Lalor's house at 293 Church Street (Vol.2, pp.99 & 100). He shot himself in 1898.¹

The design included "a figure of Hospitality" standing in bold relief on the highest part. It had 45 rooms, including 33 bedrooms. The interior had heavy cedar panelling : billiards room, dining, drawing, sitting rooms and a horse trough in Swan Street and cost £5000.²

L. Cremean was a timber merchant of Swan Street.³ The hotel was extended along Coppin Street before 1898.⁴ It was renovated and extended in 1958, with pale green tiles to lower walls, a saloon bar and the lounge extended. Architects were P.J. O'Connor & Brophy, 317 Collins Street.⁵

VISUAL DESCRIPTION : A three-storey, Boom Baroque Revival stylar rendered hotel. It extends for three broad bays in Swan Street, there is a corner splay and for 1½ bays in Coppin Street. The extension of four narrower astylar bays is simplified. There is a cornice and frieze at each floor level and the parapet. The ground storey has round headed windows in pairs or triples, with architraves over string-course mould. The second storey has Palladian windows at the corner bays and in Swan Street, a recessed balcony at centre, with balustrade and flat headed openings on Corinthian collonette pairs with shared impost blocks. The final bay has a similar group as windows. At second storey, the corner bays have tripartite windows with pilasters, the centre rising as a pediment. This recessed balcony is arcaded with Corinthian colonettes on imposts. The final bay has a triple with pilasters and a broad pediment on block corbels. The parapet cornice advances and recedes. It is dentilated with rosettes over the pilasters. The half-bays on Coppin Street and the splay have round headed windows with architraves at each level, all surmounted with a rondel. There are six intact, deeply moulded chimneys.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS : 319-321 Swan Street, William Wolf (Ref : 18); Prince Alfred Hotel, 619 Church Street (Ref : 159); 164 Swan Street; 49-53 Bridge Road; 293 Swan Street (ref : 19); 102 Elizabeth Street (ref : 106) and 418-422 Bridge Road, other three-storey hotels of about 1888, such as The Swan Hotel, 425 Church Street, 1889.

SIGNIFICANCE : A three-storey, Boom Baroque Revival hotel of 1887, designed by Richmond architect, William Wolf, which is relatively intact. Of local architectural significance.

INTACTNESS : Although it lacks its parapet, this three-storey hotel is relatively remarkably intact. The only other alteration is a bottleshop inserted into the central bay in Swan Street, ground storey, recent doors and one chimney altered. The interior is generally greatly altered, however it retains its magnificent three-level stair, which divides at the landings. The timber balustrade is intact. Also, there are round-headed openings. The upper levels were not inspected.

CONDITION & THREATS : Very good. Alterations are proposed to open up the performance area.

REFERENCES : 1. Bruce Trethowan, "William Wolf". Investigation Project, Faculty of Architecture, University of Melbourne, 1974.

2. Richmond Guardian, 12 November 1887.

3. Richmond Australian, 12 January(?) 1887.

4. 1898 MMBW plan 1064.

5. Specification held, R-BHS & The "Age" 8 September 1979.