

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE (cont'd)

This building is a typical example of a bank in the conservative classical style, and like other Terry banks has a marked unity in architectural vocabulary.

The original cement rendered facade has been painted but the bluestone base course remains. The ground floor composed of ruled masonry piers is broken by recessed rectangular panels containing the doors and windows. This is typical Terry fenestration treatment, as seen in Terry's Ballarat London Chartered Bank of 1860 (now demolished), although in this case, there are curved top corners to the plain reveal. The upper floor is unusually austere without any window surrounds. The whole composition is surmounted by a dentillated cornice and debased parapet. Internally, there is little of note, apart from some surviving cornice and the original cedar staircase.

This building has a harmonious facade composition, but is remarkably austere and modest for a Terry bank. The facade treatment has ignored the corner site and is oriented only to the street front. There are better, more refined examples of Terry banks in Victoria, but this building provides an important streetscape component and is of local significance.

NAME: -

ADDRESS: 158-164 Gertrude St.

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1887-1888

ALTERATNS./ADDTNS: Ground floor shop fronts altered, verandah replaced by cantilevered awning

ARCHITECT: Tappin, Gilbert & Dennehy

BUILDER: Unknown

FIRST OWNER: C.R. Blackett/  
Chemist

FIRST OCC./USE: Shops

PRESENT OWNER: Various

PRESENT OCC./USE: Ground floor shops;  
upper floors - boarding house accommodation

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS: Red brick, cement and freestone dressings, slate roof.

INTACTNESS/CONDITION: Upper floor facades intact

AREA/STREETSCAPE: Part of recommended streetscape A13

IMPORTANCE:



This building was constructed in 1887-1888 for Cuthbert R. Blackett, a notable chemist, to the design of architects, Tappin Gilbert and Dennehy. It provides an outstanding specimen of English Queen Anne Revival. The

use of typical Queen Anne motifs - three centred arches, radiating gable end motif, tripartite windows, sill aprons, finials and prominent chimneys - executed in red brick, face freestone and cement trim produce one of the best specimens of this style in Melbourne. The design elements resemble those of the East Melbourne Coffee Palace of 1888, by the same architects.

The building is substantially intact apart from alterations to the shop fronts at the ground floor level. Number 164 retains the original cedar chemist shop fittings and provides an excellent example of an intact interior. The bullnose cantilevered verandah is a later replacement, but the wrought iron brackets are sympathetic with the earlier building. The makeshift structures infilling the balcony have not altered the building fabric itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that this building be added to the Historic Buildings Register as an excellent example of a Queen Anne Revival commercial building. It is also recommended that it be added to the Register of the National Estate and be specified under Clause 8 of the Town & Country Planning Act (Third Schedule)

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE:

This building was constructed in 1887-1888 for Cuthbert R. Blackett, a chemist, to the design of architects Tappin, Gilbert and Dennehy<sup>1</sup>.

Blackett was a chemist of some importance, as described in *Victoria and its Metropolis* of 1888<sup>2</sup>

*"...1879 he was elected to represent Fitzroy in the Legislative Assembly and took part in the memorable political struggles of that period. ..In 1880 he was appointed a member of the Royal Commission for the great Exhibition, was chairman of two important juries, and was soon afterwards appointed a member of the Royal Technological Commission of which body he is now president. ....In 1882 he was again returned to Parliament as member for Fitzroy, but at the next general election, he was defeated.....His private residence is Burlington Terrace, East Melbourne, and his laboratory is in the old County Court, Swanston Street".*

This building is of considerable architectural importance. It provides an excellent example of an English Queen Anne Revival Commercial building. The triple windows, the three centred arches of the first floor loggia and the use of the aprons under the windows are derivatives from Richard Norman Shaws work in England (in particular, Bedford Park, Bath Road of 1881). There appears to be quite a novel use of a semi-circular loop at the bottom of the pilaster panels. The radiating gable end motif is also typical of Queen Anne work and can be seen applied to gable ends in modest domestic work in Melbourne.

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1. *Australasian Builder and Contractors News* 12.11.1887. Tenders called for three storey brick shops in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, for C.R. Blackett. Tappin, Gilbert & Dennehy, architects.
  2. Volume 2 p.463.

The building is intact apart from the ground floor shop fronts which have all been altered (only the dividing pilasters with incised capitals survive). At first floor level, the window openings appear to be intact with some surviving lead-lighting in the side lights. Some makeshift structures have been inserted into the balcony but apart from removal of a small panel of wrought iron, the building has not been altered.

The cantilevered bull-nose verandah is a later replacement, but the wrought iron brackets make it sympathetic to the original building. It is recommended that the verandah be painted an appropriate colour to unify the verandah and facade.

This building resembles the East Melbourne Coffee Palace (cnr. Hotham and Simpson Streets) of 1888, also by Tappin Gilbert and Dennehy. There is a similar use of Queen Anne motifs: tripartite windows, three centred arches, projecting gable ends, cement trim, and intact cement trimmed chimneys. Whilst this building is in an excellent state of intactness, the detailing to the Gertrude Street building is considered superior; face freestone and cement trim, pilaster, sill aprons, gable end decorations and an elegant loggia produce a more sophisticated design solution for this smaller building.

Tappin and Gilbert were also undertaking work in Ballarat at this time: in 1886 they were architects for Reid's Coffee Palace, 128 Lydiard Street, and in 1888, Tappin Gilbert and Dennehy undertook the extensions. This Ballarat building is not in the Queen Anne Style but displays a high Victorian eclectic use of classical motifs.

The upper floor interior was not inspected, due to the use of the upper floors as private boarding accommodation. The consultants were informed that they have been re-modelled and are not intact. The ground floor shop to number 164 is of considerable interest. It has maintained the original use as a chemist<sup>1</sup> and the original cedar counter, glass cabinets, medicine drawers, shelving, mirrors and lining boards survive in excellent condition.

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1. Fitzroy Ratebooks 1889, 164: Thomas Jones, Chemist, occupier, Cuthbert Blackett (owner) Brick Shop, twelve rooms £80.