

Name	Duplex	Reference No	
Address	135-7 Cotham Road, Kew	Survey Date	13 December 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	C
Date	1936	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

Not applicable, refer Recommendations.

Intactness ☐ Good ☒ Fair ☐ Poor

Heritage Status ☐ HV ☐ AHC ☐ NT ☐ BPS Heritage Overlay

History

The single-storey duplex at 135-7 Cotham Road - formerly 103 and 103a Cotham Road - were built for Mrs Josephine and Miss Gertrude Kisby in 1936. They were constructed on the site of a brick house built prior to WWI and occupied by Mrs Thomson.¹ Municipal rate records for 1935-6 described them as unfinished flats.² The 1936 edition of the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria* listed 103 Cotham Road as 'vacant'; the following year's listing recorded Mrs Josephine Kisby resident at 103 and Frank Ellis at 103a, indicating that the present duplex had been completed. The duplex residences were generous in size and amenity, as built – each consisted of two bedrooms, separate lounge and dining rooms and a maid's room.³

Mrs Kisby owned both properties until the middle of the 1950s, occupying the larger of the two, at the corner of Kent Street, and letting out the adjoining residence.⁴ Occupants of 137 Cotham Road included Gordon Gummow (c.1937-8) and Frank and Elsie Ellis (c.1940–58).⁵ Mrs. Kisby died in 1953, and the property was subdivided in 1955, with two separate owners from this date.⁶

In 1978, 135 Cotham Road was converted into medical consulting rooms for a subsequent owner. Plans sourced from the City of Boroondara Planning File for the property indicated that it had previously been used as a photographer's residence and studio.⁷

(G Butler & Associates, Kew B-graded buildings study (draft), 2001, additional research by Lovell Chen, 2005)

Description & Integrity

The duplex at 135-137 Cotham Road, Kew, comprises a pair of single-storey double-fronted interwar bungalows of brick construction. Sited on a corner allotment, they are essentially symmetrical other than for a diagonally projecting bay at number 135, with a small section of parapet wall which projects

through the roofscape above, and return verandah addressing the corner. The hipped roofs are clad with terracotta, have simple corbelled brick chimneys and take a bellcast form over the front verandahs which are supported by singular and paired Doric columns. A low dwarf wall extends between the columns and number 137 retains sections of original wrought iron balustrade. As constructed, the walls displayed a natural roughcast rendered finish above a face brick plinth; however the walls of number 135 have been rendered and painted. The main entrances are located in the side elevations and contain a pair of glazed timber-framed doors, which are repeated in the projecting corner of number 135, the glazing of which has been replaced, and in a single form in the façade of number 137. Each façade and the side elevation of number 135 contain a bow window and a tripartite group of timber-framed double-hung sash windows with leadlight top sashes.

The brick fence which fronts number 137 probably dates from 1960, and a more recent timber picket fence fronts number 135.⁸ An original brick garage is sited at the rear of number 137.

Historical Context

The generous allotments along the north side of Cotham Road were developed with a combination of brick and weatherboard residences prior to 1904, prompted by the close proximity of train and tram services. Infill development occurred in the early years of the twentieth century.⁹

Comparative Analysis

The duplex at 135-137 Cotham Road, Kew, can be compared with its immediate rear neighbour at 2 Kent Street (C-graded), which would appear to be related, given the stylistic similarities and matching elements such as leadlight pattern and chimney detail; albeit a single dwelling.

In considering the broader context, while not common in the Kew area, there are numbers of interwar single-storey duplexes in Hawthorn and Camberwell. The use of the Old Colonial style applied to an interwar duplex, however, as in this example, is unusual. Here, the hipped roof and colonnaded exterior is a thoroughgoing effort at Colonial revivalism, the approach being to use a shared hipped roof and verandah form to link semi-detached houses. The Old Colonial form itself is found applied to detached houses across the municipality, see for example, Purchas and Teague's 10 Findon Crescent, Kew (q.v., B-graded), its Camberwell predecessor by Irwin and Stephenson at 112 Mont Albert Road, and the striking and graceful 15 Deepdene Road, Camberwell. Georgian and Regency detailing was also becoming popular in 1930s apartment design, in Boroondara and elsewhere, but seldom with the controlling verandah usage seen here. The closest verandahed apartment design in Boroondara appears to be Frederick Green's slightly later *Cloville* Flats at 31-9 Cookson Street Camberwell, of 1939 (C graded), albeit there the Old Colonial full-length verandah is mixed with an impressive array of Neo-1880s and Neo-Federation detailing.

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

CRITERION E: The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

135-7 Cotham Road is an interesting example of how Old Colonial revivalism could be applied in a semi-detached dwelling. Its prominent hipped roof with integral verandah works well in unifying the two divisions. The combination of Old Colonial with more contemporary detailing in the wall surfaces, fenestration, dwarf walls and chimneys creates a lively mixture.

Statement of Significance

135-137 Cotham Road, Kew, is of local historical and architectural significance as an unusual example of a single-storey interwar duplex designed in the Old Colonial style, using a shared hipped roof and verandah form to link semi-detached houses. The presentation of the building has been compromised, however, by a succession of changes: the re-rendering and painting of the walls to no. 135, the loss of most of the original wrought iron balustrading, and the replacement of the original fence (which is now in two parts, one 1960s brick and the other timber picket).

Grading Review

Downgrade to C. While an interesting building, the effect of the alterations is such that the building is no longer considered to warrant a B-grading or the application of a site-specific heritage overlay.

Recommendations

Not recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme.

Identified By

Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, Kew Urban Conservation Study, 1988

References

General: Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, Kew Urban Conservation Study, 1988, G Butler & Associates, Kew B-graded places study (draft), 2001.

Specific:

¹ *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, 1932-1938.

² City of Kew Rate Books, 1935-36, '2 Flats unfinished', brick, nav £55, Cited in G Butler & Associates, Kew B-graded places study (draft), 2001.

³ Drawings sourced from the City of Kew Building Index, #148, dated 11 October 1935.

⁴ City of Kew Rate Books, 1954-55 #3053, nav £85.

⁵ Pattern of occupation derived from listings in the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, various years between 1939 and 1959.

⁶ Subdivision plan #32230, Cited in G Butler & Associates, Kew B-graded places study (draft), 2001.

⁷ Drawings sourced from the City of Boroondara 40/409/03487, Part 1.

⁸ City of Kew Building Index cards, #885, dated 13 September 1960.

⁹ MMBW Plan no. 65, Municipality of Kew, scale 160':1", dated c.1904 with 1933 overlay.