

Name	<i>Sheringham Flats</i>	Reference No	
Address	206-8 Cotham Road, Kew	Survey Date	13 December 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	B
Date	1924-5	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries. Note that the property is shown as a single property on the maps, despite a subdivision being noted on the file. If this subdivision was effected there would be no requirement to include the rear block.

Intactness ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

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

History

Sheringham, a block of 4 four-roomed brick flats at 206-208 Cotham Road were constructed for Miss Ethel Villiers and Miss Jean McCormick. Municipal rate records for 1923-4 listed Miss Villiers and Miss McCormick as the owner of a vacant allotment with a net annual value (nav) of £35.¹ By the next year's rate cycle the present building had been constructed.² *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria* listings initially did not describe the property as flats; for several years during the late 1920s two tenants were listed at 206 Cotham Road with a single tenant at 208. Miss Villiers and subsequently Miss McCormick were listed as the tenant of 208, which may suggest that they lived one below the other in the two flats which adjoined Atkins Street – flats 2 and 3. Early residents of the other flats included George Onions, a commercial traveller, William Strong, a clerk, and a Miss Doris Sibly, a teacher.³ Subsequently the building was owned by David H Hare; like the Misses Villiers and McCormick before him, he occupied one of the two flats which adjoined Atkins Street.⁴

An examination of Council building files indicates that the property was subdivided and strata-titled in 2001. At this time the property's front garden was fenced to provide flats 1 and 2 with private garden areas.⁵ Subsequently in June 2002, an additional two-storey unit, facing Atkins Street, was constructed behind the existing building, to a design prepared by Avi Milder P/L. New garaging facilities for the existing flats were also constructed on the rear property boundary at this time.⁶

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

Description & Integrity

Sheringham, at 206-8 Cotham Road at the Atkins Street corner, is a group of originally four brick flats, dating from 1924-5, with walls clad in textured stucco, facing north onto Cotham Road and west onto Davis Street. The design is symmetrical on its north elevation. The main roof is in terracotta

tiling in a Marseilles pattern. The main roof mass is a transverse hip with a central chimney. A central bay facing Cotham Road is used to draw the four original flats together compositionally. The bay has a large, flattened gable of bungalow proportions, with four canted bay windows, each with a small flat roof and formed as a timber-framed box assembly. The upper bays are bracketed out from the front wall on diagonal struts, and while the lower bays are supported on deep stuccoed sills. The bay roofs have chains linking them to the wall above each. (This arrangement is repeated with the four canted bays on the side elevations - minus the suspension chains and with the upper bays' brackets being concave, east and west. On the north elevation, two open balcony pairs, positioned under the main transverse roof, flank the central pavilion. Of these, the west facing balcony is glassed in on the Atkins Street side.

The flats are entered from the side at each end of the building, with the upper flats approached by a robust stair in reinforced concrete with masonry balustrading. A landing halfway up each stair fits neatly with the side bay windows, and forms a roof over the two lower bay windows. A smooth rendered course line marks the floor level of the upper flats.

In 2001 the front yard was divided into sections to separate the two pairs of flats and screen the yards from Davis Street and Cotham Road (see n.5, above). This has been done simply, with timber fences clad in horizontal strips. The original rendered brick pillared fence survives (complete with chain sections) and extends around the street frontages of the property.

An additional unit was added at the rear, facing the side street to the south-west in 2002. This new unit, in brick veneer, continued the hipped roof, stuccoed walling, main course line and brick footings of the original building, and is attached to a rebuilt carport. This unit includes a living room, family and dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, study and two bathrooms, and is linked to a fenced off area of the remaining back yard.⁷ Fence alterations are listed in Kew's Building Index but no other entries are recorded before Kew's amalgamation into the City of Boroondara.⁸

Historical Context

Only a few large mansions and other detached brick villas pre-dated the early twentieth century development along Cotham Road and the surrounding streets to the north – Barrington Avenue, Uvadale Grove, Hopetoun Avenue and Park Street.⁹ The area was developed for residential use during the early decades of the twentieth century, presumably prompted by its proximity to Kew Junction and the tram service.

Comparative Analysis

In its form, proportions and general appearance *Sheringham* presents as a large detached house, reflecting an approach to flat blocks common in the 1920s, when there was a certain stigma attached to apartments and their occupants, particularly in real estate circles. Several similar designs appeared in the *Australian Home Builder* in the early 1920s. Flats were considered acceptable for 'young people' and workers who had not settled down. Long term flat dwellers, however, were often considered either indolent or disorganized by many involved in building and architecture.¹⁰ In this regard, *Sheringham* compares interestingly with the later 340 Cotham Road (q.v., B-graded), constructed at a time when apartment life had generally become more acceptable. In several of its details *Sheringham* also reflects other aspects of apartment design in Melbourne during the 1920s, in adapting a series of elements from contemporary bungalow designs. These include the low-pitched central gable, the arrangement of windows into identical, 'applique' timber and glass cases, diagonal and curved brackets, conspicuous flat-topped piers similar to those found on single-storey Bungalow verandahs and porches, projecting sections of flat roofing, and the extensive use of textured stucco. Presumably because these designs rose more than one storey, they were being referred to as 'Manhattan bungalows' in *The Australian Home Builder* by mid-1920s. Amongst the more conspicuous examples were flats by Harold Lawson, JAB Koch and others spread along sections of St Kilda, Dandenong and Toorak Roads, and many of these have now been demolished. Manhattan Bungalow components are clearly used here as well, but in an interesting fusion with the 'detached house' configuration.

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

CRITERION D: The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as a part of a class or type of places or objects.

Sheringham is a representative and generally intact example of a Melbourne apartment design of the 1920s. In its proportions and general bearing it has been designed to resemble a large detached (and therefore 'respectable') house, while using adapted components from contemporary bungalow design.

Statement of Significance

Sheringham at 206-8 Cotham Road, Kew is of local historical and architectural significance as a representative and generally intact example of a Melbourne apartment design of the 1920s. In its proportions and general bearing it has been designed to resemble a large detached (and therefore 'respectable') house, while using adapted components from contemporary bungalow design. Despite some additions and the redevelopment of the rear of the block, the principal elevations of the original flat block are intact and the block retains its original fencing.

Grading Review

Unchanged.

Recommendations

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 City of Kew Rate Books, 1923-24, #3474, nav £35.

² City of Kew Rate Books, 1924-25 #3834, nav £225.

³ *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, various years between 1925 and 1930.

⁴ City of Kew Rate Books, 1957-58, #4307-4310, nav £100 each.

⁵ Details of recent history and subdivision plan #PS 501851 F, dated 11 September 2001, and other details sourced from the City of Boroondara Planning File.

⁶ Drawings sourced from the City of Boroondara Planning and Building Files, esp. Ref. BOR/01/1499 relating to the fifth apartment and garage added by Avi Milder dated 24 June 2002. The permit, issued by the Glen Iris Consulting Building Surveyor, is listed as BS-1214-20010394/0 and dated 18 July 2002.

⁷ See Avi Milder, sketch plans, and the subdivision survey by Neil Webster, dated 11 September 2001. Both are held in Boroondara archives

⁸ City of Kew Building Index, #6626, dated 14 May 1993.

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

¹⁰ This may explain why *Sheringham* was not listed as flats for some years. See, in particular, the addresses by representatives of the American Real Estate Association to Australian audiences in the period 1918-25, regularly reported in *Australian Home Builder* and *Australian Home Beautiful* later. The influential Sydney-based *Building* carried a regular column on 'Tenants I have Known' by George Taylor in the period before World War 1 and his wife Florence also wrote on flats and their problematic place re the 'home building spirit'. Australian apartment life was also presented as a social evil in some films of the period, notably in Ken Hall's *The Squatter's Daughter*, as a variation on Hollywood's popular opium-den/perils of Pauline genre. Graeme Davison remarked on the public disapproval of apartment life in *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, 1978, rev. ed., Monash, 2006.