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<b>Name</b>	<i>Cotham</i>	<b>Reference No</b>	
<b>Address</b>	340 Cotham Road, Kew	<b>Survey Date</b>	13 December 2005
<b>Building Type</b>	Residence	<b>Grading</b>	B
<b>Date</b>	1937	<b>Previous Grading</b>	B



#### Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

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**Intactness**    ☒ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Poor

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

#### History

Previously a vacant allotment of 90 x 225 feet and owned during the 1930s by Herbert Wright,<sup>1</sup> *Cotham*, a block of six flats, was built for Mrs Anne Prentice in 1937. Two of the flats were of five rooms, while the remaining four were of six rooms each.<sup>2</sup> Residents of the flats included managers, solicitors and other professional people.<sup>3</sup> After the death of Anne Prentice in 1952,<sup>4</sup> the property was subsequently owned by a Mr and Mrs Mitchell.<sup>5</sup>

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

#### Description & Integrity

*Cotham* is a block of six flats with roughcast stucco on the walling and an eventful roofline of steep gables punctuated by clinker-brick corbelled chimneys and a small copper-clad pyramidal tower. The roof is clad in glazed tiles in the Marseilles pattern. The flats' internal layouts are expressed by a repeated series of asymmetrical façade episodes with two of the four three bedroom flats being angled at 90 degrees to the rear of the site. The front elevation to Cotham Road therefore presents the living and dining room elevation as a 'side' for the other two three-bedroom units, and the two-bedroom units are sandwiched in between the three-bedroom units.<sup>6</sup>

The windows are almost all sashes, some grouped on either side of a fixed plate glass window in the Chicago pattern then popular in Melbourne apartment designs, some being simple paired sashes and some being triple sashes under arches. The arches in this design are flattened and outlined solidly with clinker brick, and the same border surrounds all windows visible from Cotham Road, apart from the oblong stair well windows. There are three pairs of balconies in the projecting pavilions, fronting the living and dining area of each flat. One of these holds a stair hall, with the other two stairs being

recessed rather than expressed. '*Cotham*' is inscribed vertically down the front elevation in 'period' lettering.

The hedged garden looks contemporary with the building, though probably renewed over the years, and the trees along the drive to the north and east sides are mature.

The front fence and gate are in similar colours and texture but are not original. A car port was added at the rear, out of sight from Cotham Road.<sup>7</sup>

### Historical Context

The area in the vicinity of the subject property was generally vacant up until the early twentieth century, other than for a few large mansions situated on substantial allotments, and the *Genazzano Convent*.<sup>8</sup> The area was generally not developed for residential use until the early decades of the twentieth century.

### Comparative Analysis

Constructed in the late 1930s, *Cotham* dates from a period when apartment living was gaining in respectability. After the Great Depression, building a detached house was no longer as automatic, or easy, as it had been.<sup>9</sup> In common with most of Melbourne's later 1930s flats, *Cotham* was medieval in demeanour, with a picturesque, undulating roofline, inviting nooks and bays, shared stair and entry halls, and use of overlapping spaces (bedrooms over stairs, primarily) to conserve ground area and tighten the plan.<sup>10</sup> The stuccoed walling was common in flats too, though by no means universal; bare clinker brick was also popular. The plans, entry system, scales, garden usage and the external system of changeful 'village' elevations also give this group much in common with contemporary suburban flat designs in Britain and the United States.<sup>11</sup> Locally they compare directly with Bernard Evans' Old English apartments at 33 Queens Road, South Melbourne, and elsewhere in that area including Evans' Toorak and Glen Iris Villages, c. 1938. The segmentally arched recessed balconies are similar to earlier examples such as 219 Cotham Road, Kew, of 1917 or 35 High Street, Kew, of 1914 (both q.v.) and are relatively uncommon in buildings such as this one; flat topped recessed balconies were more common in flats of this period.

### 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.*

*Cotham* is a fine, representative and externally intact example of a flat block of the late interwar period, where Medieval forms and styling has been applied to group and modulate modern flats. To the extent that its external form expresses the layout of the flats within, the design reflects the new acceptability and prestige of apartment life in the later 1930s.

### Statement of Significance

*Cotham* is of local historical and architectural significance as a fine, representative and externally intact example of a flat block of the late interwar period, where Medieval forms and styling has been applied to group and modulate modern flats. To the extent that its external form expresses the layout of the flats within, the design reflects the new acceptability and prestige of apartment life in the later 1930s.

### 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:*

<sup>1</sup> City of Kew Rate Books, 1929-30, #4656, nav £65.

<sup>2</sup> City of Kew Rate Books, 1937-8, #4640-4645, nav £100-121.

<sup>3</sup> City of Kew Rate Books, 1939-40, #4673-8, cited in G Butler & Associates, *Kew B-graded places study* (draft), 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Births, Deaths and Marriages Indexes, State Library of Victoria, cited in G Butler & Associates, *Kew B-graded places study* (draft), 2001.

<sup>5</sup> City of Kew Rate Books, 1957-8 #4359-4364, nav £90-110.

<sup>6</sup> See preliminary drawings for an assortment of internal alterations, possibly those relating to the brick fence and internal additions by L Chester and given a permit dated 27 June 1984: see City of Kew Building Index, # 1135.

<sup>7</sup> Details sourced from the City of Kew Building Index, #1217, dated 16 August 1984.

<sup>8</sup> MMBW Plan no. 66, Kew, scale 160':1", dated 1904.

<sup>9</sup> There was an acute housing shortage in Australia following the Depression, and apartments filled much of this need, frequently being subdivisions of larger old houses or made up from verandah wall-ins.

<sup>10</sup> See, in particular, the 'existing conditions' on the 1984 working drawings for the internal renovations.

<sup>11</sup> American examples include Newhall and Blevins' pioneering 1897 flats in Commonwealth Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts (now part of MIT), Grosvenor Atterbury's Forest Hills Gardens apartments in New York of 1914-22, 2 Alden Avenue in New Haven Connecticut, of c. 1935, and the English and French Villages by Edmund Gilchrist and others of c. 1930 in Philadelphia. For the last see Edward Teitelman and Richard Longstreth, *A guide to Philadelphia Architecture*, MIT, Cambridge MA, 1976.