

148-150 Highett Street, Richmond

COMMENTS BY ROBYN RIDDETT IN RELATION TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF 148-150 HIGHETT STREET, RICHMOND

1.0 Introduction

Allom Lovell & Associates are undertook a review of heritage overlay controls within the City of Yarra in 1998 and as a consequence have been requested by the City of Yarra to comment on the heritage significance of the property at 148-150 Highett Street, Richmond in relation to the heritage significance of this property.

2.0 Current Heritage Status of 148-150 Highett Street, Richmond

The properties were not included in the recommendations for Heritage Overlay controls as a result of the 1998 review, which was undertaken within the scope of the brief and the constraints in terms of time and budget. The fact that the properties were not recommended for heritage overlay protection is an anomaly, as they are clearly of local significance and warrant protection by virtue of a Heritage Overlay Control. There are a number of similar bluestone detached cottages or double storey houses in the City of Yarra which have been included in the Heritage Overlay Schedule either as part of a precinct, or in their own right if outside a precinct. The Highett Street properties are not of state significance and therefore do not warrant inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register.

3.0 History

The pair of houses at 148-150 Highett Street, Richmond, were constructed in 1870-71.

The Richmond rate books for 1869 and 1870 show the site now occupied by the houses to be vacant land comprising two lots, each with a Nett Annual Value (NAV) of £4. The owner of the corner block (now No. 148) is not listed, while the eastern lot was owned by James Jones, a storeman.¹

The following year, the eastern lot had been acquired by William Waring, a mason. By that time, Waring owned and occupied a three-room stone house (ie. No. 150), possibly built by himself, with an NAV of £13. The corner block was still not developed nor its owner listed.²

By 1872, William Waring had acquired the corner lot (ie No. 148) and was the owner of two four-room stone houses, each with an NAV of £18. Waring continued to occupy the eastern house, while the corner house was occupied by George Gatehouse, a gent[leman].³ By 1875, Waring no longer lived in the eastern house, but continued to own both, which by then each had an NAV of £20. The houses were occupied by John Lemon(?), a bookmaker, and James Lindell(?), a rate collector.⁴

By 1890, William Waring had died, as the rate books show the houses to be owned by Mrs Waring, a widow. The occupants were Christian Fricke, a laborer, and William Field, a bootmaker. The houses each had an NAV of £26. By this time, Highett Street had been numbered, and the houses appear in the rate books and Sands & McDougall directories as Nos. 118 and 120.⁵

1 Richmond Rate Books, 1869 (date of rate 18 November 1869).

2 Richmond Rate Books, 1871 (date of rate 20 October 1870).

3 Richmond Rate Books, 1872 (date of rate 28 November 1872).

4 Richmond Rate Books, 1875(A).

5 Richmond Rate Books, 1890.

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Figure 1 148-150 Highett Street, Richmond

Figure 2 East elevation of No. 148 Highett Street

148-150 Highett Street, Richmond

Jesse Huntingford, a plumber, had acquired the two houses by 1894, by which time the current street numbers were in use. Christian Fricke continued to occupy No. 148 until at least 1905, by which time it was listed as a five-room stone house with an NAV of £19. No. 150, still only four rooms, was occupied by Francis [sic] Morris, a widow, and had an NAV of £15.⁶

4.0 Physical Description

The properties were inspected from the street. The front section of both semi-detached properties is single storey and constructed of coursed bluestone. (Figure 1) The party wall is of brick and terminates in a parapet which projects above the ridge and roof line for fire separation. The single roof is a simple hipped structure clad with slate, with that at no 150 having been recently renewed. Projecting through the roof are four painted brick chimneys, two in each property. No. 150 has a conventional timber-framed verandah with a cast iron frieze. The timber appears to have been replaced but the cast iron may be original. No 148 has an Edwardian style timber-framed verandah with a timber frieze in lieu of cast iron. The shared roof of both has a concave profile and with a galvanised steel quad profile gutter which also matches that on the building proper. The verandah floors are concrete. The bluestone façade and east elevation are unpainted at No. 150 but at No. 148 the bluestone façade has been painted pink, as have the quoins to the side (west) elevation which is otherwise rendered and also painted pink. Both properties share a simple timber picket front fence to Highett Street. No. 148 has a conventional paling fence to Bank Street.

At the rear of No. 148 are several additions including a brick and fibro-cement sheet skillion roofed lean-to attached to the west elevation. (Figure 2) To the rear (south) is an attached, weatherboard extension with a skillion roof abutting what appears, from the street, to be masonry party wall. (Figure 3) The roof is penetrated by a plain brick chimney which presumably services the kitchen. Abutting this weatherboard extension to the west is a skillion roofed weatherboard lean-to, the rear (south) wall of which is brick. At the rear is a recent, c.1950s? brick addition which in turn abuts what appears from the street to be a brick garage but which may be a habitable area given the sash window in the north elevation. Attached to the c. 1950s brick addition is a small weatherboard clad external toilet. Subject to a more detailed site inspection, none of these additions is of heritage significance and could be demolished.

The garden area to the west is filled with grass, concrete paths and areas and minimalist shrubs. Other than as part of the curtilage it has no heritage significance.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

At the time of writing, the details of the proposed development have not been given to me, so my comments are confined to an assessment of the existing and general constraints which should apply to any development of the site.

The bluestone sections of both properties are significant at the local level and should be protected by the planning scheme in their own right as they are outside the Richmond Hill precinct which is located nearby. The rear of No. 150 was not inspected and is not visible from the street. The additions at the rear of No. 148 appear to be of no significance and could be demolished. A detailed site inspection should be undertaken to confirm this. If upon inspection it is found that the rear of No. 150 is similar then the same comment applies. It is recommended that the paint be removed from the bluestone on No. 148.

6 Richmond Rate Books, 1905-06.

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Figure 3 The side yard of No. 148 Highett Street

Turning to the nature of any new development, clearly what is constructed to respond to the bluestone cottages and should enhance their setting. Heights in the immediate area are confined to below two storeys with most buildings, predominantly residential, being single storey. (Figure 4 and Figure 5) For this reason new construction should be restricted to two storeys. Further away from the site are the public housing high rise flats, which are very visible on the skyline from the subject site. (Figure 6) In nearby streets such as Bososito Street there are some multi-storey industrial style buildings containing new apartments. However, these few taller buildings should not be taken as a height datum in reference to the subject site which sits predominantly in a low-rise area and which is situated on a prominent corner.

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Figure 4

The corner of Bank and Highett Streets showing a two storey development on the opposite corner

Figure 5

Highett Street opposite the subject site looking east. Buildings are two or single storey

148-150 Highett Street, Richmond

Figure 6

Highett Street opposite the subject site looking west. Other than for the high rise public housing, buildings are restricted to two or single storeys