

External Integrity

Stone, glazing and bricks painted, the cantilever canopy and most shopfronts new. The upper wall splayed corner is assumed to have possessed openings once.

Streetscape

Major corner element (one of few three-storey buildings) with ornamentation which relates to the earlier commercial core of the centre.

Significance

Architecturally, of only intermediate worth but dominant and contributory to the commercial precinct with its bulk and period detail. Historically, one of the

early large tenancies forming part of a retail centre which held metropolitan status.

Shop

117 Nicholson Street

History

David Griffiths, jeweller, opened a shop next to this site in Nicholson Street around 1892, having just arrived from Maryborough. His early demise, in 1923, left his elder son, Reginald, to continue the already prosperous business.¹ His brother, Ronald, and their sister, Myrtle, expanded the business to include optician services and a new shop image, designed by architects H.W. & F.B. Tompkins in 1936.²



4-89 134-136 Nicholson Street

1 FFOY p.149f
2 ibid.: MMBW CF385399

On a site previously operated as a United Friendly Society dispensary (nominee John Greenwood), the Griffiths family rebuilt the front of the shop in 1936 and completed the modernization of the rear two years later.¹ The Tompkins brothers also designed a new house for Reginald Griffiths at 61 Droop Street, in 1940, (now demolished).² Griffiths' was, for a long time, the most stylish and up-to-date jeweller's (or any) shop in Footscray.

Description

Obviously a renovation, some of the row it once joined survives in nearer its original state at 121 and southward. Nevertheless, the renovation was complete and accomplished, introducing a full-blown Moderne styled facade to the then dominantly late Victorian streetscape. Vertical ribbing frames the upper level and wraps over the top as rounded shoulders for the otherwise austere parapet. The main window group is topped with a similarly rounded cement hood, the framing is steel and above it, the firm's trade (Jewellers) is spelt out in avant-garde surface-mounted metal lettering.

The canopy echoes this vernacular and, below it, the gleaming streamlined brass-framed and vitrolite shopfront provides a faithful expression of the 1930s and the Moderne art form. Terrazzo flooring is patterned and bears the firm's name. Internal fittings appear original.

External Integrity

Fluorescent batten fitting attached to window hood and a sympathetic illuminated sign under the canopy.

Streetscape

Although its design destroyed part of the 1890s period streetscape, it retains the parapeted stuccoed form of its former row and the 19th Century streetscape which extends to the south.

Significance

Architecturally, a masterly and complete Moderne shop design. Historically, identified with a locally prominent jeweller family.

Shops and Residences 134-136 Nicholson Street

History

Claimed as Footscray's first chemist cum dentist, John William Smith had established his business in Nicholson Street (opposite the Mechanics Institute) in 1854.³ Apparently prospering from his business, Smith engaged local architect, Charles Polain, to design a speculative shop and residence row in Anderson Street, Yarraville (q.v.) and this pair, all in the same era. Polain called tenders in 1889 and Smith (136) and bootmakers, Roelens & Burdett (134) were in place by 1890.⁴ The familiar name of T.H. Buzza opened his business in place of Smith, late in the 1890s, while Smith's grandson, William Osmond Smith, was to open other pharmacies in Footscray, Carlton and Brunswick.⁵

Hesse Brothers (furniture sellers) and F.V. Dean (dairy produce) occupied the pair during the c1920-35 period, prior to a long occupation of 134 by Herbert Adams Pty. Ltd. and 136 as a butchers shop.⁶ Hesse Brothers' slogans included *...That has only cheapness to recommend it is dear at any price and (We) sell Superior Goods at prices usually quoted for the inferior article, also, We have an Enormous Turnover ... This is no secret but it Counts!*

A photograph from c1907⁷ shows Hesse's occupation with cast-iron verandah complete, the pattern being similar to the Corporation type. The parapet is adorned with walls (entablature), cast-iron finials (alternate piers) and draped urns (alternate piers). Signs are very much in evidence, on the verandah fascia and as board signs on the verandah roof. The shopfront possessed a low stall board.

1 ibid.; MUA
2 MUA
3 FFOY pp.181,182
4 MUA: RB1890,2432-3; RB1891,2506-7
5 FFOY p.181; *The Advertiser* 20/1/1971
6 D1900-1955
7 FFFY

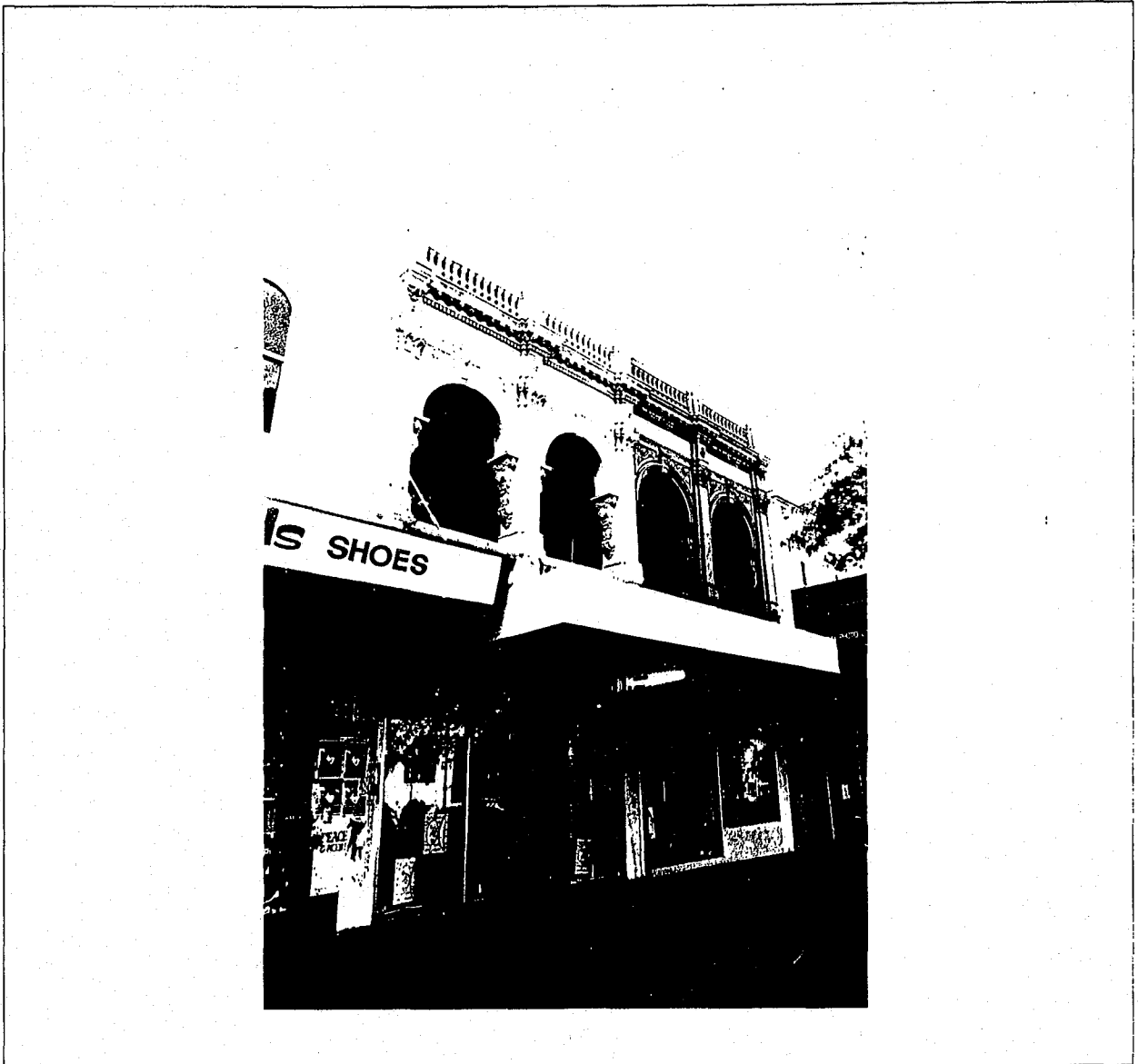
Description

Although the facade brickwork has been painted¹ and the shop is without its original iron post verandah and shopfront, the pair, (now just facades) and a related row to the south (130-136) recently revealed by renovations, possess all of the distinctive ornament associated with the designer (Polain), including rare cast-iron finials.

Ornament reflects the emerging English Queen Anne revival in commercial and domestic architecture, with a scrolled raised entablature pediment, swags, wreaths

and distinctive elongated consoles, placed above a Palladian window group and extending to the cornice above. A coloured leadlight lunette is also used here, as a typical Polain device from this era. Two cement ladies bear a shield adorned with the letter 'S' (Smith).

Now that 136 has been temporarily reduced to just a street facade, the wrought iron beam over the shopfront opening is exposed, revealing its maker's name, the British firm, Dorman Long.



4-90 155-157 Nicholson Street

External Integrity

Bricks have been painted, balls missing from parapet piers, shopfronts demolished or replaced (134 with a sympathetic recessed entry), but of intrusive materials), a cantilever canopy added to 134 and both original post verandahs removed. All but the facade of 136 has been regrettably demolished (Smith's own premises) as part of the current renovations.

Streetscape

Part of a small 19th Century group contrasting with adjacent recent commercial architecture which has pursued a common parapeted and flush facade treatment, resulting in a wall-like uniformity. Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century architecture, opposite and in adjacent streets, is still numerous enough to balance the blandness of recent development and suggest a definite commercial character for the retail area.

Significance

Architecturally, still possessing valuable detailing and compositional devices, these have been nevertheless reduced to mere facades and hence, Historically, they possess little expression of their former occupiers except perhaps in the upstairs interior of 134.

**Shops and Residences
155-157 Nicholson Street**

History

Patrick Kerr owned these shops at their construction in 1891, leasing them to a tailor, Walter Dethridge, and estate agents, A.W. & F.C. Coles.¹ While Coles remained there until this century, Charles Gasson (dyer) and Arthur Clarke (hatter) successively occupied the other shop (155).² Francis Clarke (newsagent) occupied 155 in the c1925-30 period with number 157 tenancy varying from Harrold Caldecott & Son (estate agents) to E.S. Bradley (chemist). The Kerr family also occupied 155 in the early 1900s, a Miss J.C. and a Mrs. S.M. Kerr, who were both painters.³ During the 1940s and 1950s, besides the continuing newsagency at 155 (A.G. Ferguson), a more risqué tone crept into the occupancy of 157: Bailey's 'Chic Sin

Lingerie' was the French flavoured style of this period.⁴

Patrick and the subsequent Kerr family members, remain a minor mystery although there were Kerrs in Williamstown. Alex R. Kerr & Co., estate agents, and (more aligned with the painter Kerrs) a David Charles Kerr, decorator were listed there in the 1890s.⁵

Description

A richly ornamented and cemented two-level facade, designed in the manner of the Boom-era architect, Hitchcock, the upper level of this shop and residence pair reflects well its former residence function and the arcading motif is derived from Italian High Renaissance architecture. The parapet is balustraded and piated, the cornice bracketed and Hitchcock's favourite Corinthian order pilasters divide each facade in two. Deep highly detailed brackets support each archway and high-relief foliation fills each arch spandrel. The lions head, placed on each upper pilaster, is another Hitchcock device. The cement is unpainted on 157 and the inner walling of the 155 terrace.

External Integrity

Ground level replaced and canopy added in place of assumed post verandah.

Streetscape

An important part of a long, late Victorian commercial streetscape extending to the north.

Significance

Architecturally, significant for its rich cement detailing and clear expression of the 19th century shop and residence combination also part of a valuable late 19th century streetscape.

**Footscray Mechanics Institute
209 Nicholson Street**

1 RB1891-2,2658-9
2 RB1896,2707-8; RB1899,2653-4
3 D1900-11
4 1945-55
5 WD 1893-4