

Highbridge Hotel, 82 High Street, Prahran



History and Description

The Highbridge Hotel stands on an historic site, where one of Prahran's earliest inns, known as Morrow's Family Hotel, was located in 1855 or earlier. A building is marked on that corner of High Street and Hotham Road (the earlier name for Upton Road) on James Kearney's 1855 map of the area. Morrow's Family Hotel with stabling was recorded in Prahran's earliest 1856 rate book.¹⁴⁴ This building was described as a 10-roomed family hotel with bar, stables and an iron kitchen and stove.¹⁴⁵ Morrow, who came from Waterford in Ireland, lived at the hotel until his death in 1870.¹⁴⁶ Morrow's was one of a number of early hotels built to service Prahran district residents and provide accommodation for travellers during the prosperous 1850s gold rush years. Although some sites of these old inns are still occupied by hotels, many of the hotel buildings have been rebuilt or substantially remodelled.

Morrow's Hotel was rebuilt in 1886 and modernised and extended in 1940.¹⁴⁷ Still known as Morrow's Hotel in the 1890s, an 1895 MMBW drainage plan showed a substantial building on the site with stables and outbuildings at the rear.¹⁴⁸ By the late 1890s, Morrow's became one of the many Victorian hotels owned by the Carlton Brewing Company and was described as a 12-roomed brick building.¹⁴⁹

144. Prahran Rate Book 1856 No. 2574.
145. Prahran Rate Books 1857 No. 2864.
146. Betty Malone, *Prahran's Pubs. 1852-1988*, p.19.
147. Malone, p. 62.
148. MMBW Detail Plan No. 963.
149. Prahran Rate Book 1898-99 Windsor Ward Nos. 9702, 9703.

The designer of the upgraded building is unknown. However, by the turn of the century, the firm of Sydney Smith and Ogg was associated with it.¹⁵⁰ The Carlton Brewing Company and architects Sydney Smith and Ogg worked together from c1900 upgrading many Victorian hotels, including a number of important hotels in Melbourne's central business district. This upgrading formed part of Carlton Brewery's expansion from that time. The 1900 plan shows the hotel as 2-storeyed with stables and a cellar under the front corner section of the building.¹⁵¹ In 1940, the building was modernised and extended at the rear, the old stables and outbuildings being demolished to accommodate the new work.¹⁵²

The exterior of the present building presents a predominantly 1940s appearance and a majority of the fabric of the building appears to date from this period. The orange cavity brick walls are divided horizontally by rendered sections. A typical Art Deco 'cascade' motif features the date 1940. On the western side of the High Street facade, a single storey shop has been added now functions as a restaurant. Internally, the rear rooms and service areas on the ground floor have been altered several times over the years. A section of internal wall, dividing the hotel dining area and the single storey restaurant to the west, could possibly be remains of the earlier building.

Significance

The Highbridge Hotel, once known as Morrow's Family Hotel, has regional significance as an example of an 1880s hotel modernised and rebuilt in 1940. It has regional historical significance as the third hotel on an historic site. The earlier hotel dated from the 1850s gold rush era. This hotel and its predecessor have been important Prahran district meeting places over a very long period. The building remains externally intact, representing a typical Art Deco hotel design, and is of local architectural importance as an example of the manner in which commercial buildings were often improved in the World War II era. It is likely that the cultural sentiment associated with this building which has served as a social centre for generations attributes additional significance to this property.

Sources

City of Prahran Rate Books, Windsor Ward.

City of Prahran Valuers records, Windsor Ward.

Malone, Betty. *Prahran's Pubs. 1852-1988*.

MMBW Detail Plan No. 963.

MMBW House Cover No. 1650.

Analysis & Recommendations

It is recommended that this property be ranked A2 for the following reasons:

- The hotel has regional significance relating to its long history as the site of an important district hotel.

150. MMBW House Cover No. 1650.

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- The building has local architectural significance as an externally intact example of a hotel designed in the Art Deco style, popular during and immediately after the Second World War.