

COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
8-12 COMMERCIAL ROAD,
PRAHRAN

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd to investigate the significance of the properties at 8-12 Commercial Road, ^{Prahran} Toorak, in order to determine the appropriateness of their inclusion within the schedule to the Heritage Overlay within the planning scheme. The report builds on work carried out by Context Pty Ltd in the *City of Prahran Conservation Review*, 1993.

The *City of Prahran Conservation Review* graded the group as A2+ (almost certainly of regional significance). It is not presently listed on the Victorian Heritage Register or the Register of the National Estate or classified by the National Trust.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This report finds that the houses and shop at 8-12 Commercial Road, Prahran, are of regional significance and should be added to the schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the local section of the Stonnington Planning Scheme and nominated to the Australian Heritage Commission for inclusion in the register of the National Estate.

HISTORY

William Donald purchased lot 39, the Crown allotment east of Punt Road, at the land sales in 1850. Soon after, Donald sold off some of the frontages in Punt Road. After 1870 Donald subdivided the area between High Street and Commercial Road, creating Perth Street, Donald Street and Alfred Street¹, (formerly known as William Street).² Alfred Street, between Commercial Road and Greville Street was gazetted in 1882.³

In 1886 Joseph Bulling owned vacant land at the west corner of Commercial Road and Alfred Street.⁴ By the following year three brick buildings of eight rooms each, had been erected on the site.⁵ The rate books indicate that the three properties were transferred to Lilly Bros. of Queen Street, but this may have been an agent, as the 1899 MMBW drainage plan shows Joseph Bulling as the owner. From 1887 Robert Edgar, grocer occupied the corner shop and Susan Pool and Jane Philips occupied the dwellings.⁶ In 1891, James Lilly⁷ is rated as the owner of the three buildings which were numbered 8, 10 and 12 Commercial Road. In that year, gentleman Arthur Buffon occupied the brick dwelling of seven rooms at number 8, accountant Edward Pearce occupied number 10 and grocer, William Davis occupied the corner building, consisting of nine rooms.⁸

DESCRIPTION

The houses and former shop at 8-12 Commercial Road are located on a busy and noisy thoroughfare in Prahran which accommodates both buses and trams. The streetscape of Commercial Road is, as the name might suggest, a patchwork of commercial developments, residential houses, and institutions. This particular group of buildings sits opposite a multi storey hotel.

The group comprises three two-storeyed attached terraces, two of which present as houses to the street while the third, at the corner, is a shop. The inscription *Commercial Buildings 1886* is centred over the party wall which divides number 10 from number 8. The houses at 8-10 Commercial Road are finely detailed Italianate terraces with arcaded masonry loggias at both levels. The reveal of these arches

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- 1 Plan of Portion 39, Parish of Prahran, the property of William Donald, undated. Prahran History Collection.
 - 2 Betty Malone, 'Discovering Prahran No. 3' unpublished manuscript.
 - 3 Alfred Street south of Greville Street gazetted 17 March 1882.
 - 4 City of Prahran Rate Book, 1886 no. 5849.
 - 5 Ibid., 1887 nos. 6828-6830.
 - 6 Ibid.
 - 7 Prahran Rate Book 1890-91, Nos. 6309-6311.
 - 8 Ibid.

features a strong dog-tooth pattern, and the arches themselves rest on cast iron posts. The parapet which sits above the entablature appears to be in poor condition, and has several balusters missing. A similar Italianate balustrade also acts as the rail to the second storey balcony.

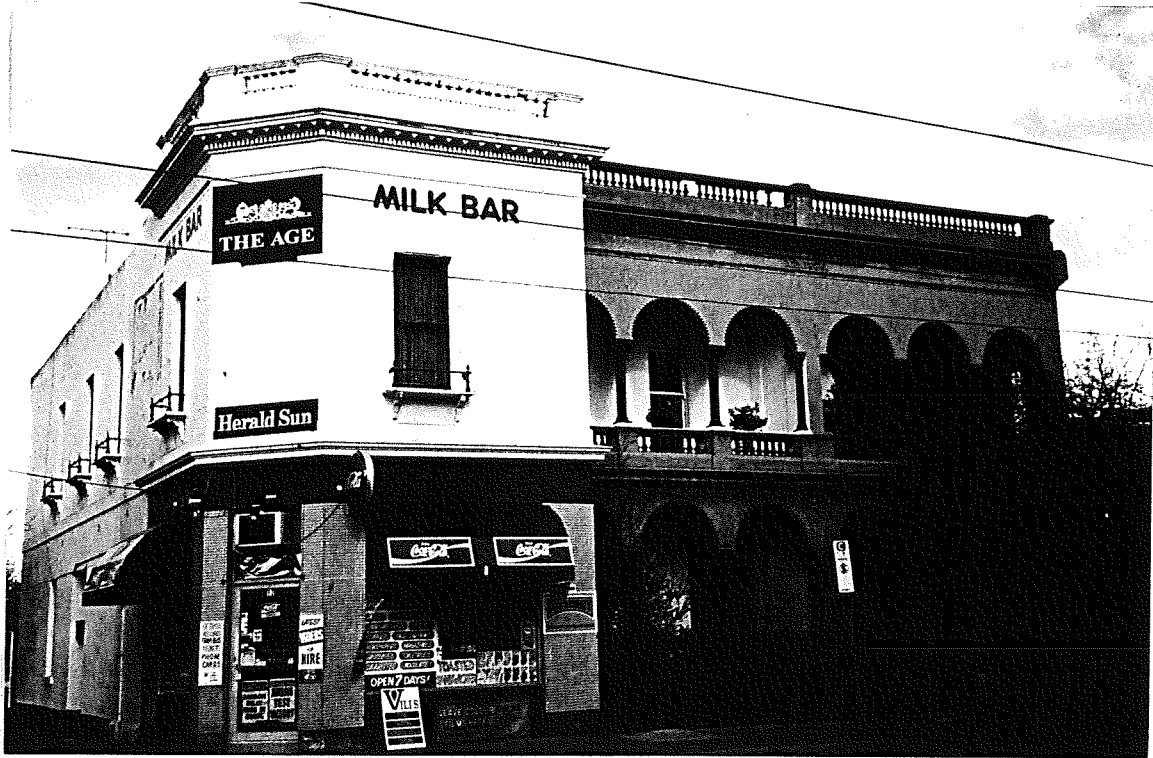


Illustration 1 *Commercial Buildings, 8-12 Commercial Road, Prahran.*
Source: Author's Collection.

The main face of the pair of houses at 8-10 Commercial Road retains an unpainted cement finish, although the walls within the verandah at no. 10 have been painted cream. As is typical of many Victorian terrace houses, small gardens front the houses at 8 and 10, with a cast iron fence to the street.

The shop at 12 Commercial Road is located on the corner of Commercial Road and Alfred Street, and at present houses a milk bar. The building has been used in a commercial capacity since 1887⁹. The shop has been altered to a substantial extent on the ground floor, to the extent of the painted external walls, the windows and doors, the tiled area around the shopfront, the modern canopies to the windows, and the fact that a corner verandah which once graced the building has been demolished.¹⁰ The east facade is plain in its treatment, with the only ornament the cast iron railings to the first floor balconettes. The building permit records of the (former) Prahran Council suggest that no major alterations have been made to the group.¹¹

9 Prahran Rate Book 1887, Nos. 6828-6830.

10 MMBW house cover, 1900.

11 Prahran Council Building Permits.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This group of houses and shop is unusual in terms of its resolution as a single composition. While corner shops were not uncommon in the Victorian and Federation period, they were generally treated as individual building elements rather than being integrated with a residential terrace. The design most probably reflects the tentative nature of commercial development along this section of Commercial Road.

In addition, the group are a handsome and finely detailed composition in their own right, substantially externally intact except for the alterations to the ground floor of the corner shop. The fact that much of the external render remains unpainted enhances the integrity of the group and its appearance.

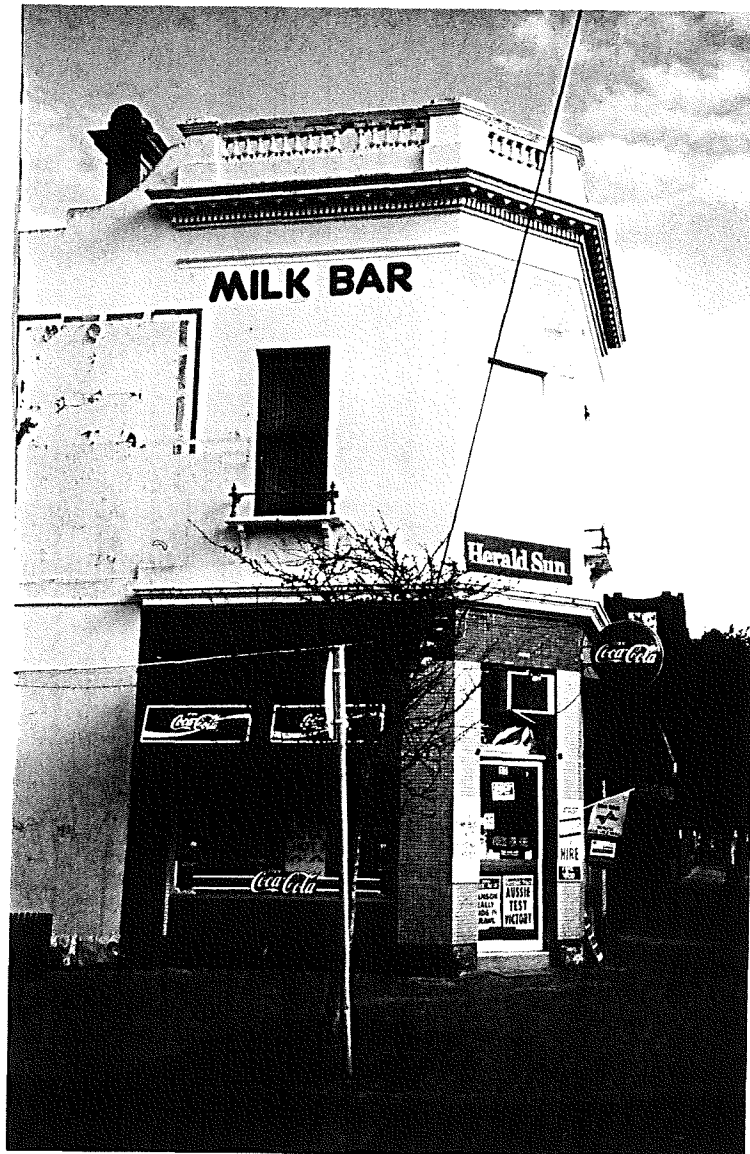


Illustration 2

*Commercial Buildings, 8-12 Commercial Road, Prahran.
Source: Author's Collection.*

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The terrace of houses and corner shop at 8-12 Commercial Road is of regional significance as an unusual mixed residential and commercial composition. While corner shops were not uncommon in the Victorian and Federation period, they were generally treated as individual building elements rather than being integrated with a residential terrace. The significance of the group is enhanced by their integrity and handsome design and detailing, including arcaded loggias with cast iron columns, iron railings to balconettes, and balustrades to first floor balconies and the parapet.

REFERENCES

Context Pty Ltd *Conservation Review, City of Prahran*, 1993.

City of Prahran Rate Books.

Sands & McDougall Directories.

Betty Malone, 'Discovering Prahran No. 3' unpublished manuscript.

MMBW house cover, 1899.

Plan of Portion 39, Parish of Prahran, property of W. Donald, undated, Prahran History Collection.

Sally Wilde, *The history of Prahran*, Melbourne 1993.

addenda

Several factors indicate that the three Commercial Road buildings here being reviewed were not designed as a unified whole. Firstly, the inscription which reads *Commercial Buildings 1886* is centred over the party wall which divides number 8 from number 10, thus possibly indicating that number 12 was not designed at the same time. And, secondly, detailing on number 12 differs in places from the detailing on numbers 8 and 10 which, to all intents and purposes, is identical. The detailing of the chimneys illustrate this point. Despite this, however, some effort has been made to link the three buildings as can be seen in the continuation of the entablature and parapet.