

'Grandview' and 'Devon'

**45 & 47 Darling Street, South Yarra**

Place type: Residential Buildings (private), House

Significance level: Local



Recommended protection: Planning Scheme

Architectural style: Victorian period (1851-1901) Italianate

**Locality history**

South Yarra, situated on the elevated south side of the Yarra River, emerged as a suburb of Melbourne in the 1850s. Before that, from the late 1830s and until the early 1840s, George Langthorne's Anglican Mission for the Aboriginal people was situated near present-day Anderson Street. The Botanical Gardens had been reserved in 1846 and the surrounding land began to be developed for large residential estates in the 1850s. The second director of the gardens from 1859, Government Botanist Ferdinand Mueller, resided in South Yarra, as did his deputy, Charles Wilhelmi.

Government House (1876) was situated close by in the Domain, and although situated outside the suburb of South Yarra, the vice-regal presence provided an influential social cachet to the area. On the elevated ground between the Yarra River and Toorak Road a number of mansions on large estates were established, including 'Como', 'Avoca', 'Redfern' and 'Airlie'. The Botanic Gardens, also outside South Yarra, lent a strong character to the area. Wealth enabled the development of extensive private gardens, and large properties were often laid out with gravel walks and beds, large expanses of lawn and orchards. Smaller villas were also embellished with garden beds, and also often sported a fashionable fernery.

At the southern end of South Yarra, between Toorak Road and Commercial Road, the land was subdivided with generally smaller allotments. Although a predominantly middle-class suburb, there were also narrow streets of small cottages that accommodated the working class and the lower middle class (including, for example, salesmen and shopkeepers). Here there were also a number of corner hotels established. Working-class men and women often worked as domestic servants, groomsmen, drivers and gardeners for those in the big houses, where

they were often accommodated in servants' quarters. Workers were also employed in factories along the river flats and lower-lying ground closer to Chapel Street. Industries operating in the 1880s included brickworks, jam and preserving works, and soap works (Whitworth 1879: 433). Some remnant industrial buildings survive along the river, although most are altered.

South Yarra was accessed from the city via St Kilda Road, and also by a punt across the Yarra. The South Yarra railway station was first opened on Toorak Road in the 1860s, servicing the private Hobsons Bay railway, but was expanded in the 1880s when the station was added to the new Oakleigh line. The strip along Toorak Road and along Chapel Street (bordering with Prahran) developed into a busy shopping and commercial area.

South Yarra was home to many of Melbourne's wealthiest and most influential people, including businessmen and merchants, professionals, academics, retired graziers and diplomats; the close proximity to Victoria Barracks also attracted military men to the suburb. Well-known families that lived in South Yarra in the nineteenth century included the Armytages and the Deakins. A number of fine churches and private schools, including Melbourne Girls' Grammar School (Merton Hall), and Melbourne Grammar School and Christ Church Grammar School (outside the municipality), were established in the mid to late nineteenth century.

The suburb has a concentration of examples of fine architecture, from Victorian-era mansions through to Modernist styles, with a number of notable architects represented. From the early twentieth century and through the interwar period, many large estates were subdivided and grand homes were converted into flats and boarding houses. A number of fashionable interwar-era apartment blocks were erected in the Botanic Gardens area, along Alexandra Avenue and between Domain Road and Toorak Road.

### Place history

These matching double-storey freestanding terrace houses were erected in 1892-93. They were named 'Grandview' and 'Devon', the former name referring to the elevated position of the house and the views offered. A real estate report on one of the houses from 1986 claimed it occupied the highest point in the street. This area of South Yarra was established early as a fashionable locality to reside.

The houses were most likely erected by plasterer William H. Carter. In 1892, Carter owned 45 Darling Street (the site of both houses), on which was erected a 6-roomed timber house for which he paid rates of £50. The following year, Carter paid rates of £50 each for no. 45 and no. 47 Darling Street, which were described as brick houses of 8 rooms each. In 1894 a 'Furnished balcony bedroom' was offered to lease at 45 Darling Street (*Argus* 17 October 1894). Carter remained the owner until 1899 when Elizabeth Thompson was listed as the owner of both houses (RB). The two dwellings appear to have been on a single title.

The MMBW plan of 1895 shows a pair of matching freestanding dwellings, each with a bay window to the facade and steps leading from the footpath to the front verandah. The dwellings appear to have been sewered upon construction, or soon after, as the toilet at no. 45 has no nightsoil collection point.

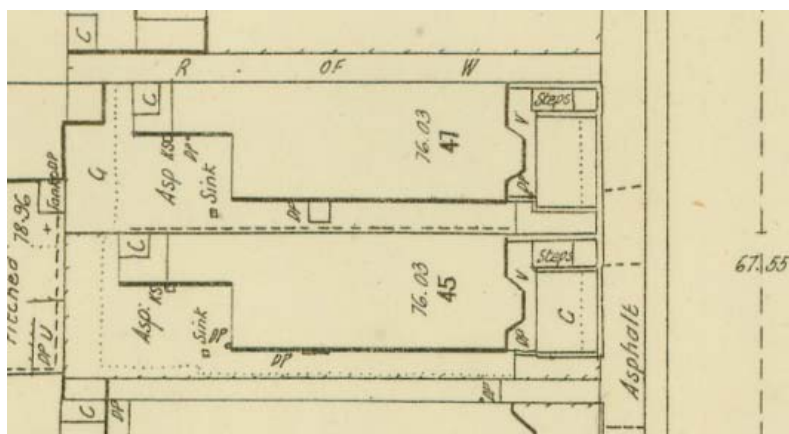


Figure 1. MMBW Detail Plan 946, City of Prahran, dated 1895 (source: SLV).

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## Physical description

The houses at 45 and 47 Darling Street, South Yarra, are a pair of freestanding Italianate terrace houses of identical design. As displayed on their parapets, no. 45 is called 'Grandview' while no. 47 is 'Devon'. Both are two-storey and double-fronted, with brick walls (overpainted) finished with details in cement render. The chimneys are of red brick with a moulded cement-render cornice, indicating the original colour palette.

Each house has a classic terrace houses form, with blank party walls, wing walls enclosing the sides of the two-storey verandah, and a parapet concealing the hipped roof, but there is a small setback between them. The faces of the wing walls are finished in rusticated render with consoles at the top of each level. Resting atop each wing wall is a cast-cement orb. The same orbs are seen at either end of the parapet (missing from no. 47).

The houses are elevated above a raised basement finished in rusticated cement render, and the front entrance is reached via a flight of bluestone steps with a balustrade railing, which continues across the front verandah. Number 47 also retains a short front path of tessellated tiles, in beige, brown and terracotta, leading to the front steps. Their setback from the street is minimal.

Each house has the front entrance to the north side of the front elevation, beside which is a canted bay windows finished in cement render, with capitals between the sash windows and a moulded label mould. The front door has sidelights and a highlight, a six-panel door with

bolection mouldings, and sits within a rendered surround. Upstairs, the first floor has two full-length double-hung sash windows in a symmetrical arrangement.



*Figure 2. Detail of 47 Darling Street (source: Context 2016).*

The verandah of each house has a single cast-iron post and a combined cast-iron frieze and brackets in a pattern suggesting a Greek anthemion motif. The first floor verandah has a circular motif for its frieze and brackets. The balcony railing is supported on slender cast-iron balusters, mimicking turned timber, with cast-iron panels between them. These panels have stylised leaves, a flower and geometric 'stick' pattern that shows the influence of English architect and furniture designer Charles Eastlake's 'Modern Gothic' decorative style.

Up top, there is a dentilated cornice above a continuous row of cast-cement swags. The parapet has short panelled piers at either end (with an orb on top) and a pair of piers at the centre, framing the house name. Above the name is a cast-cement half-shell motif on the backdrop of a semicircular pediment. The remainder of the parapet is filled with cast-cement balusters.

The houses are externally intact, apart from the overpainting of the face brick, the loss of the parapet orbs from no. 47, and the replacement with similar at no. 45 of the ground-floor balusters and verandah column.

### **Comparative analysis**

The terraced house form was introduced from Britain and characterises inner suburban development from the 1850s to the 1890s in Australia's capital cities. A terrace house is defined as a dwelling with blind boundary walls, designed to fit on a narrow building block. While the most common type of terrace house in Melbourne is the terrace row, of three or more houses sharing party walls, the terrace house was also built in pairs (semi-detached) and even singly where more space was available (Tibbits & Goad 2012:695).



Terrace houses typically have a full-width front section two rooms deep, with a narrower rear wing with a cut-back to one side allowing windows along it. The privy was located at the rear of the site, often built in pairs. Early examples (generally up to the mid-1880s in Melbourne's suburbs) of terrace rows and semi-detached pairs often have a continuous roof, eaves and verandahs unbroken by party walls. Later in the century, suburban building regulations dictated visible party walls extending out and up to divide verandahs and roofs, as well as parapet walls. These regulations dictated the form of what is now considered a 'typical' terrace house: single or two-storey dwelling with a strong vertical line defining the extent of each dwelling and the parapet used as the focus for cast-cement and cement-render ornament.

The very earliest terrace houses, in early suburbs such as Fitzroy, followed the British model and did not have a front verandah. As this form was adapted to the hotter Australian climate, timber-framed verandahs were added at ground floor level (even for two and three-storey houses). From the 1860s to the 1890s, a distinctive Australian terrace idiom emerged, embellished with cement decoration and full-height verandahs employing cast-iron posts, balustrades, and decorative brackets and frieze (Tibbits & Goad 2012:695-7). Some of the more prestigious examples used masonry arcading (usually rendered brick) instead of the mass-produced cast-iron verandah construction.

While Windsor had by far the densest nineteenth-century development in Stonnington, inner-suburban South Yarra also had a number of semi-detached terrace house pairs, which was an intermediate density. Further to the east, in Armadale and Malvern, as well as Windsor and South Yarra, we see large single terrace houses on wider blocks with space between them. While not attached, they were often built in rows.

Almost all Victorian terraces could be described as Italianate in style, though some lean toward the more substantial Renaissance Revival. There are also a very small number of Gothic Revival examples.

The Italianate style had its origins in the landscape paintings of Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorrain over a century earlier. These two French artists were enamoured with the landscapes and architecture of rural Italy, depicting it as a vision of Arcadia. Their efforts inspired a broader pursuit of 'the Picturesque' in architecture (Statham 2008).

Through the first half of the nineteenth century, the Italianate style spread widely in Britain fuelled by the works of architects such as John Nash and Charles Barry and through designs promoted in pattern books such as Charles Parker's *Villa Rustica* (1832). In 1845, the style received Royal endorsement when Prince Albert, working with architect Thomas Cubitt, designed 'Osbourne' on the Isle of Wight as a retreat for Queen Victoria and the Royal family. 'Osbourne' with its plain stuccoed expression and tall balustraded tower would become the model for many large residences throughout the Empire including Government House in Melbourne.

The style, which emerged as the preferred expression for Melbourne's grandest mansions of the mid-century, was quickly adapted to suit more modest suburban villas and terraces. As Hubbard (2012:357) notes:

*Flexibility and adaptability were the secrets to the success of the Italianate style. It could range from the simplest of buildings to the grandest. It was not a precise style and could accommodate different levels of architectural sophistication. It could be formally symmetrical or informally asymmetrical. While towers were standard, they might be reduced to just a porch. The style was easy to copy and could be used by speculative builders buying stock items for decoration. Most importantly, the Italianate style used the vocabulary of classical architecture freely but sparingly, generally with relatively plain expanses of wall and bipped roofs with bracketed eaves.*

As the style evolved to accommodate less substantial residential types, the deliberate asymmetry and rambling form inspired by the Picturesque massing of wings and towers of buildings such as 'Osbourne' became less central to the mode. So much so that the Italianate terrace forms of the 1880s were not substantially different to their forebears of a generation earlier apart from an appliqué of 'Italian' detailing.

The Italianate house is so common in the Melbourne area that this is the standard image people hold of the 'Victorian house'. Condensed to its key features, they would be a hipped roof with an M-profile (i.e. having a central valley to the rear half, which allows a low ridgeline), bracketed eaves, chimneys with a cornice at the top (a run cement-render moulding), and a timber or iron-framed verandah with cast-iron ornament to all but the grandest houses. Common extras included a faceted (canted) bay used to create an asymmetric composition (or occasionally used symmetrically), and windows that had a round or segmental arched opening, some of which were embellished with run cement-render mouldings or delicate hood moulds.

There were three general types of cladding for Italianate houses. The most modest were clad in timber weatherboards or blocked boards emulating expensive ashlar. The two most common types were finished in cement render or face brick. Rendered houses could obtain a high level of run and cast ornament at an affordable price, leading to some highly embellished examples. All, even the most modest, had ruled render with incised lines to emulate the more expensive stone construction. Face brickwork was also common, usually dark brown Hawthorn bricks with cream brick dressings (bichrome) from the late 1860s, and later in the century with red brick accents as well (polychrome). Some architects and designer-builders created bold patterns with the coloured bricks. As good building stone was not common in Victoria, very few houses were built of stone. Early examples were of bluestone, such as the grand 'Bishopscourt' in East Melbourne.

As Melbourne's land boom reached its height in the late 1880s and early 1890s, both grand and small houses in the Italianate mode were covered with increasingly florid and extravagant ornament, some of it straying beyond Italianate's traditional classical vocabulary. These houses are often referred to as 'Boom Style', particularly small terrace houses with enormous showy parapets. While the most common type of 'Boom Style' house is related to the Italianate, it can also be applied to other types of buildings of that era, including the Gothic Revival Olderfleet Buildings and the Renaissance Revival Block Arcade, both in Melbourne. Kohan and Willis (2012:97) note that 'Boom Style' is not a definable style but instead a compositional approach with richly adorned facades.

The development of the former City of Prahran and the western part of the former City of Malvern coincides with the emergence of the Italianate forms of expression in Victoria. Consequently the City of Stonnington retains a disproportionate number of Melbourne's better examples of the mode. A number of these, typically the grandest and most elaborate mansions or those associated with Victoria's most notable families, have been added to the Victorian Heritage Register. These include: 'Toorak House', 'Greenwich House' and 'Mandeville Hall', in Toorak; 'Stonington' in Malvern; and 'Malvern House' in Glen Iris.

Examples of Italianate terrace houses that are of individual significance in Stonnington's Heritage Overlay can be divided into a number of groups according to the number of dwellings (attached or detached), their size, ornament and level of architectural sophistication.

Examples built in the 1870s until about 1885 have exposed eaves to the front (and sometimes to the sides of end walls), and the walls are usually of bichrome or polychrome face brick. By the late 1880s, all terrace houses had a front parapet, almost always finished in cement render. The walls below were usually rendered as well.

Examples of terrace houses with a fully-fledged parapet, often with cast-concrete balustrades and a pediment at the centre of the row or above each house include the single-storey house at 1 Northcote Road, Armadale (in HO130); the single-storey row at 39-49 Chatsworth Road, Prahran (in HO127); two-storey rows at 45-55 Greville Street, Prahran (in HO456); 167-179 Williams Road, South Yarra (in HO142); 74-80 Sutherland Road, Armadale (in HO397); 167-179 Williams Road, South Yarra (in HO142); 6-18 Avoca Street, South Yarra (in HO150); and 286-292 Williams Road, Toorak (in HO155); two-storey detached houses at 906 Malvern Road, Armadale (in HO130); and two-storey semi-detached houses at 17-19 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra (in HO137); 1-1A Evelina Road, Toorak (in HO380); and the particularly ornate 11-13 Cromwell Road, South Yarra (HO228). The most ornate of these houses are considered Boom-style examples of the Italianate.

While most of the parapeted examples have a render finish to both the parapet and walls, there are a few examples that pair face brick with a rendered parapet. Examples are the group of free-standing terrace houses in Stanhope Street, Malvern (44-52, 88 & 92 Stanhope Street, various HO numbers), 25 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra (in HO137); and the single-storey row at 39-49 Chatsworth Road, Prahran (in HO127). An extremely fine example is the row at 131-135 Williams Road, Prahran (in HO155), which has a parapet to the central dwelling but eaves and a witch's hat roof to the sides, as well as a generous return verandah. The two-storey semi-detached pair at 31-33 Cromwell Road, South Yarra (in HO137) is also very fine, with face brick and pinnacles used in its unusual parapet. The detached house at 62 Tivoli Road, South Yarra (in HO149) has exuberant polychrome brickwork and a parapet incorporating face brick and render.

'Grandview' and 'Devon' compare most closely to the pair of houses at 17-19 Hawksburn Road and the single house at 25 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra.

The two-storey pair at 17-19 Hawksburn Road were built separately but their party walls butt up against each other to form a semi-detached pair. Their walls are rendered, veranda cast-iron detail is intact, and no. 17 appears to retain an original palisade iron fence. The ground floor window has sidelights, while the first floor windows are simple sashes. The parapet is balustrade with a triangular pediment at the centre. The cast-cement urns at the end of the parapets have survived. In comparison, 'Grandview' and 'Devon' are slightly less intact and the parapet design is a little less sophisticated, but they are distinguished by the canted bay windows, the unusual cast-iron patterns, and the cement render detail to the canted bay window and around the front door, which add interest to the standard terrace house form.



*Figure 3. 17-19 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra (Significant in HO137) (source: Google Streetview).*

The house at 25 Hawksburn Road is more ornate than its neighbours, with heavy verandah cast-iron in a more unusual pattern, and a profusion of cast-cement decoration including swags to the cornice frieze, urns on the wing walls and parapet. Instead of the standard balustrades, the parapet has a guilloche motif (interlocking circles), and there is a cast shell at the centre of

the semi-circular pediment. The walls are of face brick (probably polychrome), but it has been overpainted. In comparison, ‘Grandview’ and ‘Devon’ are of a similar level of intactness and they share equally ornate cast-iron verandah detail. The level of cast-cement ornamentation is very similar, with swags and shells and orbs, but slightly less lavish.



Figure 4. 25 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra (Significant in HO137) (source: Google Streetview).

‘Grandview’ and ‘Devon’ also compare well in their intactness and detail to the semi-detached two-storey terrace houses at 1-1A Evelina Road, Toorak.

In conclusion, ‘Grandview’ and ‘Devon’ compare well in intactness to other houses of their type, and are at the higher end of ornamentation and interest for details such as the cast-iron patterns.

### **Thematic context**

This place illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, rev. 2009):

*3.3.3 Speculators and land boomers*

*8.2 Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal*

### **Assessment against criteria**

Assessment of this place was carried out in relation to the HERCON model criteria as set out in the VPP Practice Note ‘Applying the Heritage Overlay’ (2015).

### **Statement of significance**

#### **What is significant?**

‘Grandview’ and ‘Devon’, at 45 & 47 Darling Street, South Yarra, are significant. These identical freestanding Italianate terrace houses were built in 1892-93 by owner William H Carter, a plasterer by trade, to replace a single timber house on the site.



The houses are two-storeys in height, with brick walls (overpainted) and cement render dressings, including balustraded parapets, wing walls and canted bay windows. They are both high set, reached by a short flight of original steps.

#### **How is it significant?**

‘Grandview’ and ‘Devon’ are of local architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

#### **Why is it significant?**

Architecturally, they are intact representative examples of the substantial houses built for the middle-class residents of South Yarra during the boom years of the 1880s and early 1890s. The terrace house form, with blind boundary walls, designed to fit on a narrow building block, was most commonly built in rows in the densely packed inner suburbs. In the better part of Stonnington, particularly South Yarra, there were many free-standing houses that followed the terrace typology on more spacious sites. ‘Grandview’ and ‘Devon’ exhibit typical features of this type, including the blind boundary walls and verandah wing walls creating a focus on the front façade, and the balustrade front parapet which became ubiquitous after 1885. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, they are distinguished by the level of cast-cement detail, which likely reflects the trade of their first owner, in particular the contrast of rendered surrounds to windows and the front door and to the canted bay window with the face brick (obscured by overpainting), and the profusion of ornament to the parapet, cornice and frieze, as well as the cast-cement balusters to the front steps and verandah. The uncommon cast-iron patterns to the verandahs, particularly the Eastlake style balustrade panels featuring stylised leaves, flowers and geometric ‘stick’ patterns, are also of note. (Criterion E)

#### **Recommendations**

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay to the extent of the whole properties at 45 & 47 Darling Street as defined by the title boundaries.

HO Schedule controls: None



Figure 5. Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 45 & 47 Darling Street, South Yarra (source: [www.land.vic.gov.au](http://www.land.vic.gov.au))

Recommended grading: A2