64-68 High Street, Windsor

Place type: Residential Buildings (private), Terrace

Significance level: Local

Recommended protection: Planning Scheme

Architectural style: Victorian Period (1851-1901) Italianate (Boom style)

Locality history

Windsor lies in the south-west corner of the former City of Prahran, bounded by Punt Road, High Street, Dandenong Road and Williams Road. Windsor developed as a distinctive pocket of smaller, more affordable housing for the working-class (servants, labourers, skilled tradespeople) and the lower middle class (shopkeepers, mechanics, salesmen). Following the first land sales in the 1840s and 1850s, small timber and brick cottages were erected along either side of narrow streets. In 1855 there was not a single large house within the bounds of Windsor (Kearney, 1855). An early suburban railway station was opened in Windsor in 1859, as part of the private Hobsons Bay line, which encouraged housing development in the immediate vicinity.

The small houses of the working-class in Windsor were rudimentary, and families lived cheek by jowl in narrow streets. Cottages had minimal land and there was little public open space. Community life was lived on the streets, as well as in the churches, schools and other places of learning. The Prahran Mechanics Institute, which encouraged self-improvement (of the mind) among working-class men, opened in High Street in 1856. As was often the case in poorer urban areas, there was a stronger representation of the smaller Nonconformist and independent Protestant denominations in Windsor than elsewhere in Stonnington. For example, the first Salvation Army citadel in Victoria was opened in Windsor in the 1860s (Context 2006: 183). The social demographic of Windsor encouraged church and charitable groups to make provision for the poor and the ill. A Catholic order of nuns established Presentation Convent on Dandenong Road in 1873 with a mission to teach girls from poorer Catholic families (Wilde 1993: 234). The first school for deaf people in Victoria was opened in Windsor in 1860 (Context 2006: 189).

Local men and women (and children over 14) were employed in local shops and factories and in service positions for the big houses, as well as all manner of occupations, for example with the railways, as labourers in construction work, and as carters and delivery men. Many women

and girls were employed as outworkers in the textile industry and as off-site whiteworkers (laundress who wash whites) for the big houses. Women with little financial support often took in boarders to help make ends meet.

The busy commercial strip of Chapel Street provided a focal point for Windsor, though the quality of commercial buildings at the Windsor end were somewhat inferior to the South Yarra end. All manner of traders operated along Chapel Street and a tramline was constructed in 1888, which brought more shoppers. There were also a number of hotels, both on Chapel Street and in small side-streets. Windsor had a significant Jewish population by the late-nineteenth century, some of whom operated pastry shops in Chapel Street.

Unlike other areas of the City of Stonnington, Windsor contains a predominance of working-class housing. Examples can be seen in the small narrow streets on the east side of Chapel Street such as McIlwrick Street (formerly Hanover Street, but renamed during World War I), and the block of streets between Chapel Street and Punt Road. A handful of early cottages from the 1850s and 1860s survive.

Housing development continued through the boom years of Melbourne in the 1880s and early 1890s, with many small cottages improved and replaced by larger dwellings. The suburb was reduced in area in the 1960s when the new road Queensway was built in the 1960s and a slice of south-west Windsor was taken off; and the area on the south side of Queensway became part of St Kilda (Wilde 1993:142).

Place history

This row of three terrace houses was erected in 1891. In 1890 no. 68 High Street was listed as a timber house rated at £34, owned by Harriet Bruce, while no. 66 was originally a very basic 3-roomed timber house, owned by her husband Joseph Bruce (RB). By 1891, numbers 64 and 66 High Street were listed as brick house of 5 rooms each, rated at £40 each, and no. 68 was an 8-roomed (double-storey) brick house, rated at £54, all listed under owner Harriet Bruce. Harriet (and Joseph) remained the owner-occupier of the new house at 68 High Street (RB). This would explain why it is a larger and more prestigious two-storey dwelling, while the adjacent single-storey houses were rental properties.

Harriet Bruce's husband Joseph Edwin Bruce was a builder, so it is likely that he was responsible for erecting the new dwellings in 1891. Harriet and Joseph lived at 68 High Street with their large family and leased out the other two dwellings. Harriet died in 1900 and Joseph remained living at the house until at least 1912; he died in 1921 (S&McD). All three residences were sold at auction in 1965 (*Age*, 11 August 1965; *Age*, 11 September 1965).
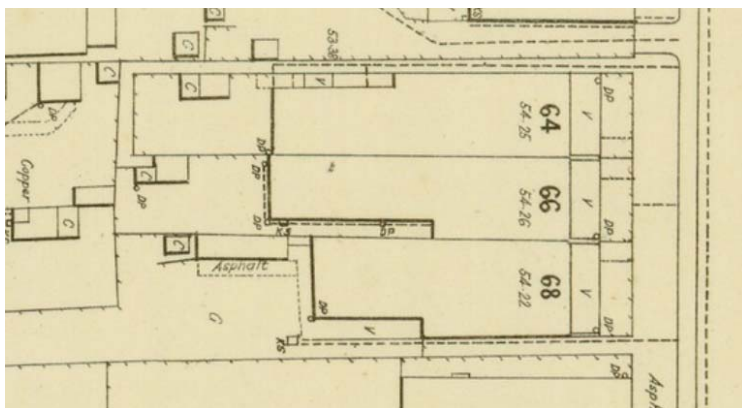

Figure 1. MMBW Detail Plan no. 963, dated 1898 (source: SLV).

Sources

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Physical description

The houses at 64-68 High Street, Windsor, comprise a small terrace row of one two-storey and two single-storey single-fronted dwellings. Stylistically they can best be described as the Boom-style variant of Italianate, with the highly decorated and boldly modelled parapets. These parapets conceal the hipped roofs and nearly double the height of the facades of the single-storey houses at nos. 64 and 66.

The front walls are of tuckpointed brown Hawthorn brick with cream brick dressings in the form of beltcourses and surrounds to the upper half of the front door and front window. The front window of nos. 64 and 66 is a double-hung sash with sidelights and barley twist colonnettes in between. At no. 68 the sidelights sit within separate surrounds. Each has a front door that is six-panelled with fielded panels and bolection mouldings; no. 66 has both etched glass and ruby flashed glass; and no. 68 retains geometric leadlights with painted pictorial panels (the door to no. 64 was not clearly visible). No. 66 also retains original cream and terracotta-coloured biscuit tiles to the front path.

The single-storey houses at nos. 64 & 66 both have bullnose verandah roofs and a dentilated verandah beam. The cast-iron frieze sits within a timber frame, with separate brackets. Both are in a fairly standard pattern featuring three flowers in a vase. The two-storey no. 68 has the same dentilated verandah beam at ground floor level, and cast-iron frieze (in timber frame) and brackets at both levels. There is also one fluted cast-iron column at each level, and a first floor balustrade of alternating cast-iron panels and posts.

The parapets of all three houses are identical. Just above the verandah roof, there are three panels infilled with a repeating triangle design to the frieze. The dentilated cornice rests on modillions supported on consoles, with small panels between them. Above it is a parapet

decorated with a diminutive blind arcade. Above its centre bay is a flat pediment flanked by large scrolls. No. 68 retains two cast-concrete eagles atop the pediment.

Figure 2. Detail of the verandah roof and parapet of 64 High Street (source: Context 2016)

The single-storey houses have a very high level of intactness, with the corrugated iron verandah roof of no. 66 renewed with a slightly deeper profile. The bichrome brick of the two-storey no. 68 has been rendered to the front (with an original section visible on the east side elevation).

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,

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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.

The prevalence of attached housing types is very clearly related to the subdivision and settlement patterns of the different suburbs. For example, all terrace rows assessed in the Victorian Houses Heritage Study are located in Windsor. As noted by the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context, 2009) in the first land sales in the 1840s:

> *At Windsor on the south-west corner of the study area, the blocks were smaller and brought the highest price per acre, presumably because of their proximity to the already developing suburb of St Kilda, from which settlement was expected to flow. This corner was soon subdivided for working-class housing and small shops.*

This early subdivision pattern has had a lasting impact on Windsor, with small allotment sizes leading to development of denser dwelling types than elsewhere in Stonnington. Both early examples of terrace rows with unbroken roofs and eaves are seen in Windsor, as well as later examples with expressed party walls.

While Windsor had by far the densest 19th-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 hipped 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); 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 25 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra (in HO137); 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, like the terrace row at 64-68 High Street.

The houses in the Stonnington Heritage Overlay with the most comparable design interest seen in a Boom-style parapet are 286-292 Williams Road, Toorak; 1-1A Evelina Road, Toorak; 11-13 Cromwell Road, South Yarra; and 76 Tivoli Road, South Yarra (Significant in HO149). Of these examples, the semi-detached pair at 11-13 Cromwell Road built in 1890-91 is the

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most interesting and ornate. Not only is the parapet a lively composition covered with cast-cement decoration, but the double-storey verandah has paired posts and a large amount of cast-iron detail. Bryce Raworth attributes the design tentatively to architect Norman Hitchcock (Place citation, nd).

Figure 3. 13 Cromwell Road, South Yarra (HO228) (source: Google Streetview).

In comparison, 64-68 High Street can be considered a 'builder's version' of the style, using stock verandah details, but showing equal creativity in designing the dominating parapets.

The intactness of the single-storey houses is very high. While the two-storey house at no. 68 has been rendered, it still plays an important part as the dominant element of the row, with its parapet still intact and the only one to retain cast-cement eagles on top.

Thematic context

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

3.3.3 Speculators and land boomers

8.5.1 'Struggletown' - working-class housing in the nineteenth & early twentieth century

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?
The terrace row at 64-68 High Street, Windsor, is significant. It was built in 1891 by owner and builder Joseph Bruce, replacing two earlier timber cottages. Joseph and wife Harriet Bruce replaced their timber house at no. 64 with a two-storey terrace house, adjoined by two single-storey rental houses.

The row can best be described as the Boom-style variant of Italianate, with tall, highly decorated and boldly modelled parapets concealing their roofs. The front walls are of tuckpointed brown Hawthorn brick with cream brick dressings in the form of beltcourses and

surrounds to the upper half of the front door and front window. The single-storey houses at nos. 64 & 66 both have bullnose verandah roofs, a dentilated verandah beam, and cast-iron in a timber frame with separate brackets. The two-storey no. 68 has the same dentilated verandah beam at ground floor level, and cast-iron frieze (in timber frame) and brackets at both levels. There is also one fluted cast-iron column at each level, and a first floor balustrade of alternating cast-iron panels and posts.

The render applied to the front façade of no. 64 is not significant.

How is it significant?
The terrace row at 64-68 High Street are of local architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?
Architecturally, the terrace row is a representative example of the Boom-style houses constructed in Melbourne's suburbs in the late 1880s and early 1890s. More modest examples, such as these, are similar to earlier terrace houses below verandah level, with bichrome brick walls and cast-iron verandah detail, but they are distinguished by their over-sized and highly detailed cement rendered parapets and high level of intactness. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, the terrace houses are distinguished for their creatively decorated parapets and cornice. Just above the verandah roof, there are three panels infilled with a repeating triangle design to the frieze and a dentilated cornice resting on modillions. Above it is a parapet decorated with a diminutive blind arcade. Above its centre bay is a flat pediment flanked by large scrolls. No. 68 retains two cast-concrete eagles atop the pediment, and is also distinguished for the fine stained glass with handpainted panels, around the front door. (Criterion E)

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay to the extent of the whole properties at 64-68 High Street as defined by the title boundaries.
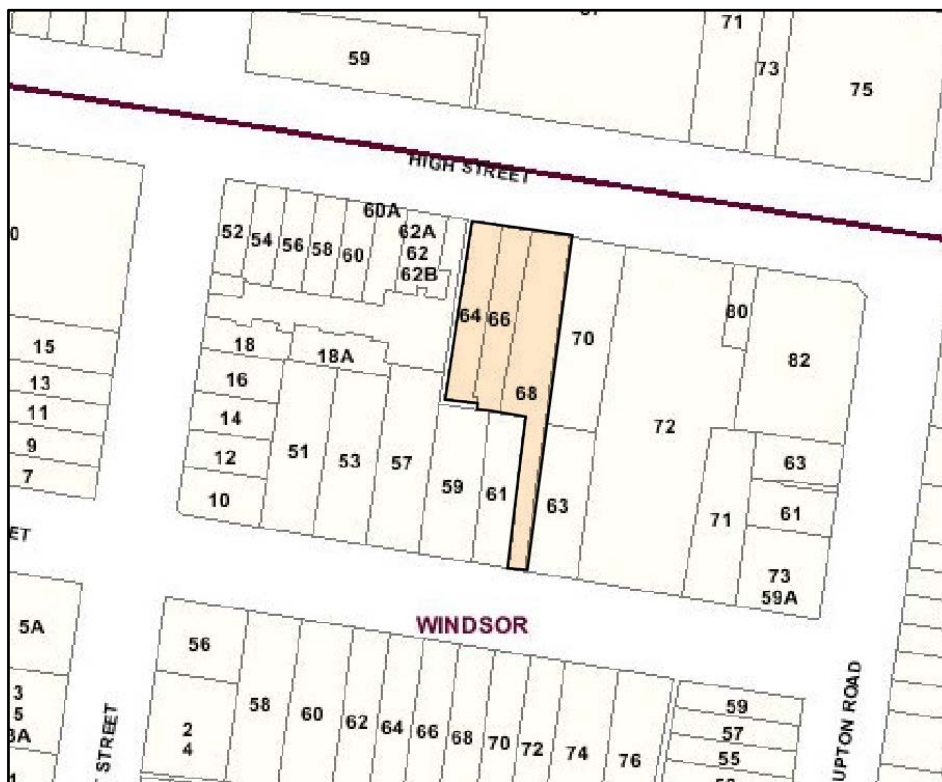
HO Schedule controls: None

Figure 4. Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 64, 66 & 68 High Street, Windsor (source: www.land.vic.gov.au)

Recommended grading: A2

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