

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name	Hotel Max, 30 Commercial Road, Prahran	
Address	30 Commercial Road PRAHRAN	Significance Level A2
Place Type	Hotel	
Citation Date	2010	



Hotel Max

Recommended VHR No HI No PS Yes
Heritage Protection

History and Historical Context

Prahran's Pubs

Inns or hotels were usually the first commercial buildings to appear in Prahran's early settlements and were typically built on the main tracks and at cross roads to provide accommodation and refreshment for travellers. Hotels also became important meeting places and centres of social life for local communities.

By the 1850s, Prahran had over twenty hotels (1). Many were small pubs offering refreshments to local workers at the end of a hard day's labour. Later hotel building in the 1860s and 1870s was mostly confined to the western parts of Prahran and typically occurred on sites along main roads not taken by earlier hotel builders. A smaller number of hotels could be found tucked away in side streets serving local communities in the low-lying areas of Prahran that were isolated by swampy ground (2).

The number of hotels in Prahran grew to over fifty at the height of the 1880s land boom. The prosperity of the age

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

enabled many publicans to enlarge and improve their hotels. Most of the surviving pre-boom inns and hotels were remodelled and enlarged with rear and upper storey extensions, billiard rooms, repainting and decorative embellishments.

The corner pub remained an important part of working class social life through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, the role of the hotel as a provider of accommodation for travellers and as an entertainment venue and meeting place for local community organisations had diminished. Betty Malone describes how, between 1890 and 1940, the typical pub had become 'much less a community centre and more a male dominated drinking house' (3).

Falling hotel standards and pressure from the temperance movement prompted the State government to reduce the number of liquor licenses. A Licenses Reduction Board was appointed in 1906 and began a process of hotel de-licensing throughout Victoria. In order to meet the standards of the Board and maintain their licenses, several of Prahran's hotels were upgraded.

The gradual relaxation of Victoria's restrictive liquor licensing laws from the late 1960s revived the local hospitality industry (4). Many new restaurants, bars and nightclubs opened in South Yarra and Prahran, some occupying early hotels, but with a change of name, image and style of service to appeal to a new generation of residents and visitors.

The Hotel Max

The Commercial Hotel was constructed on the site of the present Hotel Max c1853-54 (5). In 1875, the Commercial reopened as the Prince Maximilian and was managed by Croatian Antonio Buzolich from 1876 to 1880. Buzolich was a director of the Maximilian Gold Mining Company and chaired company meetings at his Prahran hotel (6).

By 1890, the hotel was again known as the Commercial (7). An MMBW plan of the period shows the hotel built directly on both street frontages with a cellar under its north-west corner (8). The MMBW plan also shows a 'vine covered' yard along the west boundary and a small horse stable in the south-east corner of the site.

A 1939 MMBW plan of drainage for the hotel shows extensive works to the hotel with the building footprint generally taking on its present form. The 1939 MMBW plan also gives the owner's name as Mable M McInerney. The name 'Hotel Max' first appears in the Sands and McDougall directory of the following year along with M and J McInerney as the new occupants (9). This would suggest that the present building on the site was constructed in 1939 or 1940. The Stonnington Thematic Environmental History describes the Hotel Max as being one of the few hotels to have been entirely rebuilt in the interwar period, rather than just remodelled (10).

In 1949, the license for the Hotel Max was transferred from Irene Lynch to Mabel Margaret McInerney (11). J A McInerney is listed as the owner and occupant on a 1951 MMBW plan of drainage for the hotel, which shows a garage addition on the southern boundary (12). The same plan shows additional work was carried out in 1957 and 1966, including replacement of the bar sink and first floor baths, basin and showers (13).

Robert H McIntyre

The design of the Hotel Max has been attributed to architect Robert H McIntyre, father of noted architect Peter McIntyre (14). Robert H McIntyre specialised in hotels and was responsible for a great many hotel designs in the 1930s, including: the rebuilding of the Prince of Wales Hotel, St. Kilda (1936); the Prospect Hill Hotel, Kew (1936); the Hotel Max, Prahran (c.1937); alterations and additions to the Alpine Hotel, Bright (1938); alterations and additions to the Cumberland Hotel, Castlemaine (1938); the Railway Hotel, Yarraville (1938); complete reconstruction of the City Club Hotel, Collins Street (1938); extensive alterations to the Toorak Hotel, Toorak Village (1938); and, additions and modernisation of the Palace Hotel, Racecourse Road, Newmarket (1939).

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

- (1) Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, p.114.
- (2) Betty Malone, *Prahran's Pubs 1852-1998*, p.11.
- (3) Betty Malone, *Prahran's Pubs 1852-1998*, p.30.
- (4) Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, p.114.
- (5) Betty Malone, *Prahran's Pubs 1852-1998*, p.68.
- (6) Ilija Sutalo, *Croatians in Australia: Pioneers, Settlers and Their Descendants*, p.167.
- (7) Sands and McDougall Melbourne Directory, 1890.
- (8) MMBW Detail Plan no.957, State Library of Victoria.
- (9) MMBW Plan of Drainage, no. 16712. Held by South East Water.
- (10) Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History: Update 1 Addendum* (March 2009) p.10.
- (11) *Argus*, 12 November 1949, p.27.
- (12) MMBW Plan of Drainage, no. 16712. Held by South East Water.
- (13) MMBW Plan of Drainage, no. 16712. Held by South East Water.
- (14) Phillip Goad, *Optimism and Experiment in Melbourne: The early works of Peter McIntyre 1950-1961*, published online at: <http://users.tce.rmit.edu.au/e03159/ModMelb/mm2/modmelbprac2/pm/Goad%20on%20McIntyre%20a>

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

The Hotel Max illustrates the following themes as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006):

7.4.1 Early Hotels

7.4.2 Developing a Modern Hospitality Industry

Description

Physical Description

The Hotel Max is located on the south-west corner of Commercial Road and Donald Street, Prahran. It is a double-storey interwar Moderne style building of face brick and render construction with a parapet concealing a hipped terracotta tiled roof. Both the Commercial Road and Donald Street facades are built directly on the property boundary but with a curved corner characteristic of the Moderne idiom. The curved steel-framed window at the corner and port hole windows on the ground floor of the Donald Street elevation are also typical Moderne style elements. The first floor has a band of timber-framed double-hung windows with horizontal glazing bars and a continuous projecting sill and lintel creating a streamlined effect. The strong horizontal emphasis of the facade is offset by vertical tower element on the west side of the Commercial Road facade. The tower has a rendered surface with horizontal incisions which contrast with the colour and texture of the face brickwork on adjoining parts of the first floor facade.

The hotel exterior remains substantially intact to its c1940 state although the dark tiled dado seen in an early photograph above has been removed (see figure 5 above). Original door joinery on the ground floor has been replaced and two window openings on the Donald Street elevation have been enlarged. One of the two 'Hotel Max' signs seen in the early photograph above has also been removed while the other has been relocated to the rendered tower. A brick garage on the rear boundary is presumably one of the c1950s additions described in the history above.

The interior of the hotel was not inspected in detail during the preparation of this heritage assessment but nonetheless appears to have been extensively refurbished.

Comparative Analysis

Interwar Hotels in Stonnington

The Hotel Max was one of a number of Victorian era hotels in Stonnington to undergo extensive alterations and additions in the 1920s and 1930s. These improvements were usually made by publicans anxious to retain their licences by meeting the requirements of the Liquor Licenses Reduction Board. Hotels in the Municipality which are known to have been rebuilt or remodelled in the interwar period are described below.

Argo Hotel, 62-74 Argo Street, South Yarra.

A hotel was built on this site c1866 and was rebuilt or at the very least substantially remodelled c1927. It has an understated Mediterranean style facade which remains largely intact to its interwar state. A current planning scheme amendment seeks to include the site on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay.

Former Duke of York Hotel (Edwards Tavern), 213-215 High Street, Prahran

A Victorian corner hotel, rebuilt in the 1920s with stylised classical Grecian ornament common to hotels of the period.

Malvern Vale Hotel, 1321 Malvern Road, Malvern

A hotel was first established on this site in 1865. Originally known as the Butcher's Arms, it was renamed the Malvern Vale Hotel in 1889. The building was extensively altered c1925 to a design by Joy and McIntyre architects. It has a fairly plain facade with modern alterations and additions.

Orrong Hotel, 709 High Street, Armadale

A Victorian hotel rebuilt in an interwar Moderne style with a stepped corner tower. The hotel's interwar facade appears to remain broadly intact to its overall form but original detailing has been removed or obscured by a modern render finish. It is not currently subject to a heritage overlay control.

Prahran Hotel (former Highbridge Hotel), High Street, Prahran

A Victorian corner hotel, remodelled in 1940. The facade remains highly intact and is dominated by two broad streamlined render bands, typical of the Moderne style. The building is covered by an individual heritage overlay (HO268).

Station Hotel, 96 Greville Street, Prahran.

A Victorian double-storey corner hotel, rebuilt or remodelled in the interwar period with stylised classical detailing. The facade remains largely intact notwithstanding modifications to some ground floor openings. The hotel is a B grade building in the Chapel Street heritage overlay precinct (HO126).

Racecourse Hotel, 895 Dandenong Road, Malvern East

A nineteenth century hotel with an elaborate Spanish Mission style facade dating from 1926. The hotel remains largely intact to its interwar state apart from large signs mounted above the front entry and over a number of window openings. It has been recommended for a heritage overlay control as part of the proposed Waverley Road Gateway precinct.

Railway Hotel, 29 Chapel Street, Windsor.

A double-storey Victorian corner hotel, altered and extended in 1927. The facade has restrained Grecian revival detailing typical of hotels of the period. The hotel remains substantially intact externally notwithstanding the enlargement of some ground floor openings and the construction of a rear addition. The hotel is an A2 graded building in the Chapel Street heritage overlay precinct (HO126).

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Former Railway Hotel (Angel Tavern) 641 Dandenong Road, Malvern

A mid-nineteenth century hotel with extensive alterations dating from c1925. The facade has a restrained neo-classical character typical of the period and remains substantially intact. The hotel is currently recommended for a heritage overlay control.

Former Royal George Hotel, 257 Chapel Street, Prahran

A double-storey corner building with a very plain interwar Moderne style facade. The building was converted into shops after its ceased trading c1970 and is no longer readily identifiable as a purpose built hotel. It is a C graded building in the Chapel Street heritage overlay precinct (HO126).

Windsor Castle, 89 Albert Street, Windsor

A double-storey Victorian corner hotel remodelled in interwar Moderne style style with Art Deco/Jazz ornament. The hotel remains largely intact externally to its interwar state and is currently recommended for a heritage overlay control.

Interwar Moderne Style

First popular in the 1930s, the streamlined Moderne style was typified by smooth wall surfaces and a horizontal emphasis. Its aesthetic was related to that of contemporary ocean liners, automobiles and aeroplanes and it attempted to capture the sleek lines and sharp or rounded corners associated with the fast and the modern. The style has a horizontal emphasis, heightened by rounded corners and parapets. Designs with curved corners sometimes featured curved windows. Walls were of brick, often rendered to emphasis the streamlined quality of the design. Cream brick was a popular alternative, and was sometimes used in combination with rendered surfaces. Dark brown manganese bricks and tapestry bricks were used for decoration. Jazz (or Art Deco) ornament was sometimes used around openings or on parapets and is generally seen as the decorative overlay to the streamlined Moderne style. It often took the form of zigzag or chevron patterns on rendered walls or streamlined vertical fins which rounded off just above the parapet.

Many nineteenth century hotels were refaced in the 1930s in the contemporary Moderne or Jazz style. The style lent itself to remodelling of nineteenth century hotels as its characteristic horizontal streamlines could easily follow old render string courses and cornices, and ziz-zag ornament could replace Italianate mouldings. The style's association with progress made it especially popular with hotel keepers who needed to demonstrate to the Licenses Reduction Board that they operated a hygienic and up-to date establishment.

The former United Kingdom Hotel, Clifton Hill, is recognised as one of the finest examples of the Jazz Moderne style in the State and is included on the Victorian Heritage Register. Examples of identified local significance with heritage overlay controls include the Court House Hotel, North Melbourne, the Royal Hotel, Richmond, and the Terminus Hotel, Abbotsford.

Conclusion

In terms of its architectural quality, historical interest and level of integrity, the Hotel Max compares favourably with other interwar hotels in Stonnington with existing heritage overlay controls. The Windsor Castle Hotel and Prahran Hotel can also be catergorised as examples of the interwar Moderne style but adopt a more angular expression with an overlay of ornament more overtly derived from Jazz or Art Deco sources. The Orrong Hotel more closely resembles the stripped, streamlined forms of the Hotel Max but is less intact.

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Hotel Max, 30 Commercial Road, Prahran, is a double-storey streamlined interwar Moderne style hotel. First known as the Commercial Hotel and later the Prince Maximilian Hotel, the original c1853-54 hotel on the site was rebuilt

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

c1940.

How is it Significant?

The Hotel Max is of local architectural and historical significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it Significant?

The Hotel Max is of historical significance for its ability to demonstrate the major interwar trend of rebuilding or remodelling hotels which followed the introduction of the Licenses Reduction Board. The hotel is of additional historical significance for the enduring use of the site as licensed premises for over one and a half centuries.

The Hotel Max is of architectural significance as a good and largely externally intact example of a streamlined interwar Moderne style hotel. The hotel's significance is further enhanced by its association with prolific interwar hotel architect Robert H McIntyre.

Assessment Against Criteria

Assessment of the precinct was undertaken in accordance with the processes and criteria outlined in the Australian ICOMOS (Burra) Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance.

Recommendations 2010

External Paint Controls

No

Internal Alteration Controls

No

Tree Controls

No

Fences & Outbuildings

-

Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted

-

Incorporated Plan

-

Aboriginal Heritage Place

No

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.