HERITAGE CITATION

Heritage Overlay number:	HO24
Place Name:	Former Post and Telegraph Office
Other Names:	
Address:	140 Inglis Street, Ballan
Place Type:	House
Designer/architect:	Unknown
Construction dates:	Circa 1874
Architectural style:	Victorian
Level of Significance:	LOCAL
Recommendation:	HO24 should amended, mapping redrawn and new citation adopted.
Assessed by:	heritageALLIANCE Pty Ltd
Assessment Date:	September 2018

Photo:

Facade of 140 Inglis Street, Ballan, July 2018. Photo by heritageALLIANCE

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

140 Inglis Street, Ballan known as the former Post and Telegraph Office, is a two storey Victorian rendered masonry building, dating to circa 1874. It was built for George Flack (snr) and was used as the Ballan Post and Telegraph Office until 1911. The property has been owned by members of the Flack family for 144 years.

The house is incredibly intact and the original fabric includes an unusual cantilevered verandah with ornate timber brackets and decoration. It has a symmetrical façade with three upper sash windows of single pane glass which appear to be original, a single Victorian period timber door and two timber framed windows at ground level and a projecting render band above the verandah which has the outline of a sign announcing "Post & Telegraph Office".

How is it significant?

140 Inglis Street, Ballan is of local historical, rarity and representative (architectural) significance to the Moorabool Shire.

Why is it significant?

140 Inglis Street, Ballan is historically significant for its association with the Flack family who ran businesses in Ballan and still own the property. The property was constructed circa 1874 and is an excellent example of a Victorian masonry building. It is one of only a few Victorian buildings surviving in Ballan which have not been altered.

As a purpose built Post Office it has rarity value because it was privately constructed rather than being built by the Government and is not of a known Post Office style. The rarity value of the building is enhanced by its intactness. (Criterion A & B)

The building retains a number of original features of the Victorian era, including rendered masonry walls with ashlar ruling and mouldings around windows and doors, a cantilever verandah with ornate timber brackets, decoration and single pane sash windows. The hipped roof has a central chimney and a side wall devoid of render indicates an early building (also a Flack store) has been removed. The retention of the generous garden setting with mature trees and prominent site in Ballan enhances its significance. (Criterion D)

History:

Establishment of Ballan:

While the Werribee Hunt Hotel was built in 1848 at Ballan, it was to be another two years before the village was surveyed by Assistant Surveyor Malcolm. Comprising a grid layout to the south of the Werribee River, the township was named 'Ballan' after Robert von Steiglitz's nearby run. Von Steiglitz had bestowed this name to his run after his birthplace in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. In these fledgling years, the township was centred on Simpson Street, given that the Werribee Hunt Hotel was the only substantial building and it was on the route to Portland Bay. From these early years, Ballan was destined to become an important service town and the largest in the Shire.

By the early 1860s, Ballan progressed as a small service town for the surrounding farming and agricultural industries, and as a stopping place along the mail and gold escort route to Ballarat, It boasted a flour mill, an Anglican Church, hotels, a small number of stores and dwellings and a court house. Importantly it was the location of the Ballan Road District proclaimed in 1862, becoming the centre of local government from this time, including the home of the Ballan Shire from 1864 and the Moorabool Shire from 1994.

By 1890, the population of Ballan had reached 400. It accommodated a bank, numerous stores and shops, four churches, State School, Mechanics Institute and Free Library, Shire Hall, Court House, racecourse, cricket and

recreation reserve, flour mill, windmill, rifle, cricket and football clubs and six good hotels. The longer term potential of Ballan as a successful service town was realised in 1890 with the opening of the railway line. In 1978 the Ballan by-pass of the Western Freeway was built and removed the need for travellers to pass through Ballan on their way from Melbourne to Ballarat. Although locals worried that this would negatively affect the town, by 1988, the population of Ballan was 900 and the town was still thriving.

The establishment of postal and telegraph services throughout the Moorabool Shire from the mid-19th century was essential to the ongoing development of towns and rural centres. The postal service kept pace with population growth and surviving post office buildings are a physical legacy of the growth of towns and centres at particular periods in the history of the study area. The ability to send and receive mail was essential in otherwise isolated rural communities. [Moorabool Shire Heritage Study Stage 1, Thematic Environmental History, D. Rowe and W.Jacobs, 2010]

The Ballan Post Office appears to have been first established at a large tree adjacent to the Werribee River crossing and later transferred to an established building. The first notice of a post office appears to be in July 1844 with "R W Steiglitz" (von Steiglitz) to be post master at "Ballan on the Werribee River". [Port Phillip Government Gazette, 9 July 1844:102] An early sketch drawing dated November 1850 associates this site with a large fallen tree. Under the title "New Post Office" the Chief postmaster in Melbourne announced some changes to the Ballan postal service and a new post office established in Ballan without identifying where it actually was to be conducted apart from being actually within the township. By December 1850 Governor La Trobe was announcing in the Victorian government gazette that a site had been fixed for a village known as Ballan. The impact of this is that blocks of land had been surveyed and regularised for sale and settlement and for the construction of buildings to align with what would become streets.

The Post Office:
Only four purpose-built post office buildings survive in Moorabool Shire today. The Ballan Post and Telegraph Office, 140 Inglis Street, Ballan, was built in 1874 by the Flack family and has remained in their ownership ever since. The current Ballan Post Office at 125 Inglis Street was built in 1911 by the Commonwealth Post Master General's Department. At Blackwood, and possibly the second post office in that town, there is the extant building at 26 Martin Street, apparently built in 1873, and is now a private house. At Gordon, the purpose built post office at 65 Main Street opened in 1890 and continues to function as a post office today. [Thematic Environmental History]

In 1841, overland mail communication was established once a week between Melbourne and Portland, the route being via Ballan, Mount Buninyong, Mount Emu, Fiery Creek and Grange Burn. The contract for this service led to post offices being opened at Ballan, the Grange (Hamilton) and Fiery Creek (Streatham). [Post office, Victoria historical summary, Geelong Advertiser, Tuesday 27 January, 1863, p.3]

A post office was first opened in Ballan in 1844 on the property of Robert von Steiglitz. The post office evidently moved around, with the addresses of the sites unknown and at one time the office moved to the house of Mr James of Bacchus Marsh". [Port Phillip Government Gazette, 24 February 1847:67] The first official post master mentioned in the archives was John Horner in 1851 upon Victoria becoming a Colony where control from NSW was relinquished. In 1853 Robert Denholme became post master before George Flack in 1855.

George Flack was then the post master until 1874. Coincidentally this was the date that has been ascribed to the former post and telegraph office building. Mrs McDonagh became the postmistress and carried on the business with her daughter until 1886. Mrs O'Shea briefly ran the office in 1887 and then Mrs Chadwick ran the office from 1889 until 1900. [National Archives Australia, Post office file B5846, Ballan]

George Flack had built a store next door to the former post office building in approximately 1854 and it was from here that he operated the first postal service. This general warehouse store operated until at least 1936, when it is no longer seen on aerial photos of Ballan. The eastern side of the former post office building still shows the outline of the former Flack building.

According to local history sources, published by the Ballan Shire Historical Society, the former Post and Telegraph Office was built 1874. This date has not been verified. The building however does read as a building

from the 1870s and given the history of the post office, appears to be correct. [A Pictorial History of the Shire of Ballan, Ballan Shire Historical Society,1989] In 1874 Flack relinquished the job of post master and leased the building he had just built, to the government for £40 a year. It continued to be used as the post office until a new building was constructed at 125 Inglis Street, in 1911.

George Flack was a very hard working gentleman. In the 1850s his family was resident in Collingwood whilst he was also running a store in Ballan. This store was variously described as an Iron Store, a general Warehouseman, a bakery, butchery and general store. By January 1860 he had auctioned his goods in Collingwood and moved to Ballan, taken a hotel keeper's license and built the two storey corrugated iron, Ballan Hotel, on the corner of Fisken and Inglis Street. The hotel and store were then run by various members and generations of the Flack family until the 1930s.

A brief genealogy of the Flack family:
George Flack (Snr) born 5 January 1810, at Holborn England, died 13 March 1900, Ballan. He married Catherine Mowbray who died 1898 in Ballan. They had ten children. They must have arrived in Australia prior to November 1852 as Mary Ann Flack was born in Collingwood, that year. Charles Henry Flack son of George and Catherine born 1859, died in 1945. Thomas Flack son of George and Catherine died in 1903.

One of their children George Flack (Jnr) married Fanny Breese in 1875. Their children included George Charles Flack born 1876, Arthur William Flack born 1880, died 1960 and Edward Ernest Flack born 1884, died 1948.

George Flack (Jnr) died in 1905.

George Charles Flack might have married Mary Ann McQualter 1907, died 1954.

Charles Flack (probably Charles Richard?) was married to Mary Ann Mitchell in 1881. They had a number of children including Alexander George Flack who died in 1954, George Alexander born 1884, died 1887, George Lindsay born 1889, died 1964, Charles John Flack born 1881, died 1954 and Arthur William Flack died 1942.

George Flack (Snr) owned the hotel, the post office and the store until his death in 1900, when it was transferred to his sons, George(Jnr), Charles and Thomas. When George (Jnr) died in 1905, Charles Henry Flack became the sole proprietor. Then the property is subdivided into two lots and the children of George Flack (Jnr), Arthur William, Edward Earnest and George Charles Flack became the proprietors. The property is still owned by direct descendants of George Flack (snr) to this day.

The names, Charles, Arthur William and George Flack are repeated a number of times over generations, making the tracing of title information very complicated. Below is the information gleaned from title searches for the property.

Summary of Title information:
Certificate of title Vol 2821 Folio 564195
Dated 27 September 1901, George Flack of Ballan, storekeeper, Thomas Flack, hotel keeper and Charles Henry Flack of Oakleigh, Chemist , are proprietors of 1 acre 0 perch 12 roods, being Crown Allotments 9 and 10 of town of Ballan.

Transfer as to part 1 November 1901, George Flack, Thomas Flack and Charles Henry Flack to George Flack.

Mortgage 21 June 1902, George Flack, Thomas Flack, Charles Henry Flack to Ada Long.

George Flack and Charles Henry Flack, surviving executors of will of deceased George Flack, June 1903
Lease 30 June 1903, George Flack and Charles Henry Flack to Joseph Bromley.

Charles Henry Flack is registered proprietor of the balance of land as surviving executor of the will of George Flack, Deceased. 9 April 1906

Transfer as to balance 9 April 1906, Charles Henry Flack to National Trustees Executors and Agency Company of Australia limited.

Titles office record of subdivision CA 9 and 10 divided from Simpson to Inglis Street, with hotel on one lot and post office and store on other.

Certificate of Title Vol 2849 Folio 569730 (The lot containing the former post office and the store site)
Dated 1 November 1901, George Flack of Ballan storekeeper is proprietor of all that land on the map being part of Crown allotments 9 and 10 section 4. George Flack died 1905 and probate granted to Arthur William Flack, George Charles Flack, both store keepers, dated 7 December 1934.

Edward Ernest Flack, store keeper of Ballan is now proprietor August 1936.

Margaret Anne Lucy Flack of Ballan and Ballarat Trustees Executors and Agency company Ltd December 1949.

Margaret Anne Lucy Flack died 14 August 1964, probate granted to Edward Spencer Flack of Brunswick, 1965.

Edward Spencer Flack, Brunswick, Phillip Edward Flack, Northcote, Alan Robert Flack and Ian Charles Flack of Northcote, tenants in common, 1977.

Edward Spencer Flack, Brunswick, Ian Charles Flack, St Andrews, Philip Edward Flack, Northcote, tenants in common, 2000.

Title Plan CA 9 part and CA 10 part Volume 2849 Folio 730. Rectified plan 2 June 1977

Post office on parcel 1 of CA 9 part parcel 2 CA 10 part vacant land at back of post office.

Thematic Context:

Theme 3:   Transport and Communications

        Theme 3.5: Establishing and Maintaining Communications

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Description:
This two storey brick and render residence was built and operated as a post office for 37 years. It is set on the street alignment over which is a timber supported cantilevered awning. The house is architecturally an 1870s (Victorian period) style with windows only onto the street and rear. The timber single pane sashes are original and the whole laid out near symmetrically save for the entry on the lower right.

The building is topped with a corrugated metal hipped roof peaked with a large Victorian rendered chimney. Early illustrations appear to show it was a corrugated roof from the beginning. George Flack, the owner, had an iron store and his hotel is built of iron in some sections although originally it was entirely clad in iron.

The verandah awning is worthy of mention as it predates the trend for cantilevered awnings by something like 40 years and is unusual in the Victorian context. The cantilevered support structure and valance are all intricately worked timber and the roof itself is of self-supporting concave corrugated metal sheets.

In the projecting render band above the awning are the now barely visible words; POST & TELEGRAPH OFFICE. The paint on the building which covers the ashlar ruling set in the render is also an early paint scheme. At the rear is a single storey skillion extension of exposed brick with a tall brick chimney serving the kitchen fireplace.

The house stands on an undeveloped block of land (save for the house) running from Inglis to Simpson Streets being parcel 1 part of Crown Allotment 9 and Parcel 2 part of Crown allotment 10 which gives effect to a linear half acre of land upon which the only elements are the large Cypress trees and the house. There is a second extension to the house on the rear west side but this is only partly visible.

The interior has not been inspected and may be unaltered. The house does not seem to have had many renovations other than new guttering and downpipes. Of importance will be any remnants of the post office period.

Comparative buildings:
Other local post offices
Only four purpose-built post office buildings survive in Moorabool Shire. The current Ballan Post Office at 125 Inglis Street was built in 1911 by the Commonwealth Post Master General's office.

At Blackwood, and possibly the second post office in that town, there is the extant single storey weatherboard building at 26 Martin Street, apparently built in 1873 as a private house.

At Gordon, the purpose built post office at 65 Main Street opened in 1890 and continues to function for its original purpose today and has no similarity to the Ballan building. Its appearance is of a public structure rather than a domestic one.

Other Buildings
There are very few two-storey buildings in Ballan and the quality of this property, in terms of intactness, design and construction stands out.

The former Commercial Bank, 157 Inglis Street, Ballan is a two-storey bluestone and sandstone Victorian Georgian building built in 1857. The building sits on the street and has an unusual crenellated parapet to a slate roof. The symmetrical front has five multipaned windows and a central door on the ground floor. The sandstone quoining is also exaggerated to match the parapet.

The Commercial Hotel, 153 Inglis Street Ballan, is the most comparable building architecturally. The date of construction is circa 1868. The rendered front with low-key rendered mouldings, multi-pane windows, iron roof and lack of eaves to the eastern section is comparative to the former post office.

Commercial Hotel John T Collins, 1963, State Library of Victoria

Bacchus Marsh Express Office, at 8 Gisborne Street, Bacchus Marsh is a shopfront and office and was built as a two-storey rendered brick shop with a gabled iron roof. A concave corrugated iron verandah was supported on timber posts with decorative brackets and drop pendants. Built between 1868 and 1876 it has some similarities to the former post office in Ballan, with rendered facades, on a street setting and iron roof.
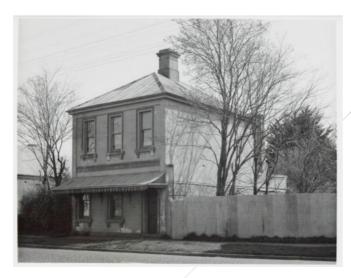
Recommendations:

The heritage overlay on the property should include the entire parcel of land fronting 140 Inglis Street, Ballan, and include the rear outbuildings and the large cypress trees within parcel 1 of CA 9, within C1Z, identified on Council's planning maps as Lot 1 TP620887.

The existing mapping for HO24 on Planning Scheme Map No 27HO, should be altered to reflect this new extent.

Schedule:

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences and Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses	No
Incorporated plan	-
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

JT Collins 1963, State Library of Victoria

JT Collins 1966, State Library of Victoria

Early drawing of the first Post Office in Ballan beside the Werribee River dated Nov. 1850. State Library of Victoria