

Identifier Residential Buildings

Formerly 'Sandhurst', 'Maudlands'



Heritage Precinct Overlay HO6
Heritage Overlay(s)

Address 101 Alma Rd
ST KILDA EAST

Category Residential:detached

Constructed 1882

Designer J. Plottel

Amendment C 70

Comment New citation

Significance (Mapped as a Significant heritage property.)

What is significant?

The property at 101 Alma Road, St Kilda East contains a complex of nineteenth century and twentieth century residential buildings. The nineteenth century buildings comprise the Italianate mansion and associated stables constructed in 1882, which was later known as 'Sandhurst House'. The mansion is ornately detailed two and three storey brick rendered building with a low-hipped roof that retains its original slates and cast-iron cresting above the central pavilion. The symmetrical façade is seven bays wide. The render has faintly visible ruling to imitate ashlar. The central three bays form a shallow projecting pavilion. The first two bays on the east side of the ground floor are set back from the front of the house beneath two segmentally arched openings with a rendered Corinthian column at their centre. The two and three storey brick stable block is in the south-west corner of the site and retains original openings and fenestration.

Situated in front and to the rear of the mansion are two, two-storey inter-war walk-up flats in the Bungalow style with Arts and Crafts detailing, which were constructed c.1925 and are likely to have been designed by architect, Joseph Plottel. They have hipped clay tile roofs and roughcast rendered walls and have a high degree of external integrity.

The entry gate pillars at the street corner date from the inter-war period when the apartments were added, while the wrought iron entry gates may be earlier.

The cyclone wire street boundary fence is not significant and there are no important garden plantings.

How is it significant?

The house, stables, apartments and corner gates at 101 Alma Road St Kilda East are of local historic, social and architectural significance to the City of Port Philip.

Why is it significant?

The mansion house, stables and apartment buildings at 101 Alma Road, St Kilda East are historically

significant as evidence of two important phases in the historic residential development in St Kilda during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The mansion house and stables provides evidence of the development boom of the nineteenth century and help to illustrate the pattern of development where fine villas of professional people lined the main roads on the higher ground with workers cottages clustered in the narrower streets on the lower-lying land to the south. The apartment buildings provide evidence of the boom in higher density development in St Kilda during the inter-war period. As a whole, the complex is representative of a distinctive St Kilda land use type, that of a nineteenth century mansion adapted and developed for higher density housing in the twentieth century. The entry gates have interpretive value as they indicate the historic entrance to the property and the gates may be early or original gates associated with the mansion (AHC criterion A.4). The mansion and stables at 101 Alma Road, St Kilda East is historically significant as a good representative example of the type of substantial residences and outbuildings erected for professional people in St Kilda and Melbourne during the development boom of the late nineteenth century (AHC criterion D.2). The significance of the mansion and stables is enhanced by its relative intactness and rarity value as a complex, both in the context of the development of Alma Road and Port Phillip generally (AHC criterion B.2).

The mansion house at 101 Alma Road, St Kilda East is architecturally and aesthetically significant as a fine and relatively intact example of a boom-era Italianate residence. It is notable for its range of decorative detail, which is typical of the style (AHC criterion F.1).

The apartment buildings at 101 Alma Road St Kilda East are architecturally significant as representative examples of inter-war walk-up apartments in the Bungalow style with Arts and Crafts detailing that are typical in design, layout and detailing (AHC criterion D.2).

The apartment buildings at 101 Alma Road St Kilda East are historically important as an example of the work of Joseph Plottel, an prolific inter-war architect who designed a number of apartment complexes in St Kilda, as well as notable civic, commercial and community buildings throughout Melbourne (AHC criterion H.1).

Levels of significance

Primary significance – The c.1882 fabric of the mansion and stables and the c.1925 fabric of the apartments.

Secondary significance – Wrought iron gates and gate posts at corner entry

No or limited significance – twentieth century alterations and additions to the mansion and stables. Cyclone wire fence. Garden plantings.

Primary Source

David Helms, Heritage Assessment, Four Places in Port Phillip, 2008

Other Studies

Description

Sandhurst House

The mansion formerly known as 'Sandhurst House' at 101 Alma Street, St Kilda East, is a (primarily) two-storey rendered brick Italianate house of the early 1880s set on a large corner block. The site is entered from the corner via wide wrought-iron (with cast-iron panels) carriage gates, or a pedestrian gate to their right. A stable block stands at the south-west corner of the block. Two two-storey blocks of flats, one in front and one at the rear, were built on the grounds in the 1920s.

The north-facing façade of the house is symmetrical and seven bays wide. The render has faintly visible ruling to imitate ashlar. The central three bays form a shallow projecting pavilion. The first two bays on the east side of the ground floor are set back from the front of the house beneath two segmentally arched openings with a rendered Corinthian column at their centre. The first bay has a segmentally arched sash window, the second is the front door. The door is four-panelled with cricket-bat mouldings, and has sidelights and a transom. The west side of the ground floor has two very long segmentally arched windows with rendered label moulds and stone sills. The central pavilion has three windows, which are probably identical to these two (but could not be seen clearly during the inspection). A rendered stringcourse links the bases of the window label moulds. A simple rendered entablature divides the ground floor from the first.

The first floor of the façade is rather more ornate. Both corners of the façade and the central pavilion have rendered quoins. The windows, all segmentally arched sash windows, have decorative rendered architraves and entablatures. The central window has a triangular pedimented entablature resting on corbels with an acroterion at the top, flanked by windows with straight entablatures beneath paterae. The paired windows on

either side of the central pavilion have a single straight entablature over them, resting on four corbels. Beneath each of these windows is a raised vermiculated panel, between which is a vermiculated patera.

Above the first floor is a cornice of paired brackets, alternating with paterae and cricketbat mouldings. The low hipped roof retains its original slates and cast-iron cresting above the central pavilion. The roof is ventilated by projecting semicircular vents with ornate cast-iron grilles (grille missing from the west side). The numerous chimneys (six are visible) of varying sizes are rendered with mouldings defining the shaft and ornate cornices with acanthus leaves. At the top are three to four semicircular withes per chimney.

The east side elevation overlooks Raglan Street. It is divided into a two-storey front half and a three-storey rear. The quoins, stringcourses and cornice of the façade continue on the front half, which has no windows but is dominated by a wide chimney breast in the middle. The rear half is divided by stringcourses between the floors but has a simpler bracketed cornice. The ground floor has a door flanked by rectangular sash windows.

The first floor has two segmentally arched windows on either side of a blind window, all with label moulds. The second floor has two segmentally arched windows. Above them is another semicircular roof vent with a cast-iron grille. At the rear of this elevation is a later brick toilet addition, which stretches the height of the building.

The west elevation of the house is two-storeys high. The front half, like that on Raglan Street, continues some of the façade elements, like quoins, stringcourses and the cornice with paired brackets. A chimney breast dominates the centre of this section.

Behind it is a rectangular sash window on the ground floor. The upper sash features a leadlight with a classical swag design. On the first floor is a small casement window. The rear half of this elevation has segmentally arched windows, one (or two – visibility was poor due to trees) on the ground floor behind the central chimney breast. There are two on the first floor which appear to have been reduced in size as there is a simple label moulding above them for much larger windows.

The rear elevation is quite disparate. The east side is three-storeys tall and has the simple bracketed cornice continued round from Raglan Street, as well as another semicircular cast-iron roof vent. The south face of this section is obscured by the brick toilet block. A central section of the rear elevation (probably a stairwell, judging by the leadlights) steps down to the west side of two storeys. The windows on this elevation are rectangular sashes. A number have been converted to doors to serve a 20th-century fire escape.

The stable block is found in the south-west corner of the site. The south section is two-storeys tall with a pedimented gable-front with corbelled ends. The front (east-facing) has been painted, but the speckled manganese bricks are visible on the south elevation. The ground floor has a wide rectangular opening, though above it two segmental arches are visible, indicating the original openings. The first floor has a central double ledged door with upper windows (glass gone). Above it is a winch and on either side, sash windows (glass gone). All three openings are segmentally arched. The north part of the stable is single storey with a pedimented gable at the north end. The openings to this section have been enlarged. At the back (west side) of the stable, it is apparent that both the two- and single-storey sections once extended further. This is confirmed by the 1897 MMBW plan which shows an identical stable on the neighbouring property, which shared a party wall.

Sandhurst Court

The two, two storey apartment buildings, one constructed at the front of the Mansion, and one constructed to the rear are of a similar basic symmetrical layouts comprising two apartments on the ground floor and two above with relatively minor variations in detailing. They show the influence of the Bungalow style with Arts and Crafts detailing that was used extensively in residential architecture during the inter-war period.

The front apartment block, which is more rectangular in layout, has a projecting central section with matching wings set back on either side and faces east toward Raglan Street. It is setback close to the west side boundary allowing an almost full view of the mansion. The hipped tile roof has exposed rafters under the broad projecting eaves and extends to form a porch over the entry to the upstairs apartments. The porches are expressed as voids with square openings that balance the composition of the façade, with the expressed corner pier extending over two levels to support the roof. The walls are covered in roughcast render as are the chimneys. The windows are timber double hung sash with the upper sash divided into nine panes for the windows on the main elevations and single panes elsewhere. Windows are paired in the central projecting bay and have bracketed cornices above and window boxes below. A central raised panel between the windows has the name 'Sandhurst Court'.

In the example to the rear, the external detailing is very similar with the main difference being the porches to the upper apartments that have separate roofs. This block has a narrower front elevation without projecting side bays and a deeper side elevation. As a consequence the upper porches are set back further and accessed by stairwells that run alongside the sidewalls of the building.

Condition and integrity

The house is largely intact. The only feature removed noted is a front verandah, shown in the 1897 MMBW map, which stretched across the entire length of the façade. As noted above, it was replaced in part in front of the main entrance in the 1920s. Additions to the original fabric include the three-storey toilet additions at the south-east corner, and the rear fire escape. There are three garages appended to the north end of the stables. The front carriage gate posts were replaced in the 1920s with rectangular rendered piers, and the original fence with a low pipe and cyclone wire fence.

The apartments are also very intact externally.

History

The mansion house situated at 101 Alma Road, East St Kilda is the surviving example of two almost identical residences that were constructed in 1882 as an investment for Annie M. Cockburne. Rate books for 1880-81 show that Cockburne was the owner of '180 feet of land' in Alma Road (then referred to as Alma Street) and was also the owner and occupier of a nearby house, which had 10 rooms and a Net Annual Value of £180 (RB, 1880-1:1006, 1007). In the following year, Cockburne (now described as Mrs. L. Cockburne) is listed as the owner of two brick houses with identical descriptions and valuations of 12 rooms and £270 respectively, while still residing in her own house nearby. John Quirk occupied the house at the corner of Raglan Street (the subject property, which appears to be referred to as 'Maudlands'), while the adjacent house to the west was leased to Charles Jacob (RB 1881-2:1032, 1033, 1034).

By 1882-83 Thomas Rowan, a surgeon is the occupier of the house on the subject property, while the adjoining house to the west is now owned by Charles Jacobs. The house on the subject property now has a slightly higher valuation of £300 (RB, 1882- 3:1077, 1078). These details are confirmed by the first listing of the mansion house on the subject property in the Sands & McDougall Directory (which were sometimes a couple of years out of date) in 1884 when T. Rowan M.D. is listed as occupier. He is also listed in 1885, 1887, 1888. The address is given as 'Alma Street East (sw cnr. Raglan St)'. In 1889 and 1890 the occupier was Agar Wynne and between 1892 and by 1895 it was Alfred Josephs who had purchased the property in 1891 (Sands & McDougall, Land Victoria). The property address by now was given as 113 Alma Road. The title also contains the first reference to the name 'Sandhurst House', in 1901 when it is listed as the address of the owner, Margaret Joseph.

The Sands and McDougall Directory also shows that Charles Jacobs occupied his house on the adjoining site at least until 1884. In February of that year the Argus included an advertisement for the sale of furniture belonging to Charles Jacob at his residence, 'Urolie', described as being in Alma Road opposite the reserve. By 1895 the listed occupier is Mrs T. Armstrong, 111 Alma Road East.

Both of these houses and their adjoining stables can be seen in the 1897 MMBW Detail Plan, when they are numbered 111 and 113. The houses are almost identical in layout. Entrance to the subject property (shown as No.113) is from a gateway at the corner of Alma Road and Raglan Street. It has a gravelled driveway and a defined garden area at the front and a circular garden feature at the side with the notation 'F' (possibly indicating a fountain?) at its centre. Steps are shown to the north-east corner of the verandah. Access to the stables at the rear is via a right-of-way leading off Raglan Street, which has a plantation along its south boundary.

The MMBW plan also shows development within the block bounded by Alma Road, Chapel Street, Inkerman Street and Raglan Street and vividly illustrates the hierarchy of development in St Kilda at that time. The houses at 111 and 113 are among just 6 large houses on the south side of Alma Road, which occupy much of the land in the top half of the plan. The others include a house with tennis court and extensive gardens at No.109, a large villa at No.100, and two large villas, Nos. 87 and 89, at the corner of Chapel Street. The spacious situation of the large houses along Alma Road contrasts with the densely developed narrow streets with dozens of small cottages running north-south off Inkerman Street that fill the southern half of the plan.

Title information shows that the subject property was sold in 1920 to three people; Thomas Eaton, Michel Isaacson and Joseph Plottel (Land Victoria). Plottel was an architect/developer who was active in Melbourne in the inter-war period (see below) and at least three other apartment blocks in St Kilda have been attributed

to him (see Comparative analysis). His other notable commission in St Kilda was the Synagogue in Charnwood Grove, designed in 1926. He is likely to be responsible for the design of the two, two storey blocks of apartments that were constructed c.1925 in the grounds of 'Sandhurst'. The 1925 Sands & McDougall Directory lists only a single occupant for this property, which is described as 101 Alma Road. In 1926, six occupants are listed, increasing to 10 in 1927, which indicates that the flats were almost fully tenanted by that stage. By 1929, the name 'Sandhurst Court' is used for the property.

Joseph Plottel, architect

Joseph Plottel (1883-1965) trained in England and Melbourne. He was active in Melbourne between 1911 and World War II. Plottel is best remembered as the designer of the Footscray Town Hall (1936) and the Beehive Building, Elizabeth Street (1934), but his oeuvre included a broad range of ably designed industrial, commercial and domestic buildings in a variety of styles. Other projects include 325 Collins Street (1911), 586 Bourke Street (1911), Charnwood Estate Synagogue (1925-27), Yarra Yarra Golf Club (c.1929), Venetian Court, Hotel Australia (c.1930) and Flinders Way (c.1929), along with a number of factories and some houses (Lewis, 1977).

Comparative analysis

The mansion house on the subject site is typical of the substantial residences erected for professional people in St Kilda (and Melbourne generally) during the late nineteenth century. Of the examples in Alma Road that can be seen in the 1897 MMBW map this is the only one to survive substantially intact. Where others have survived they have been almost completely or partially enveloped by later development such as the houses at 40, 87 and 89 Alma Road. One surviving example that remains relatively intact is the house at 158 Alma Road (north-west corner of Hotham Street). This house also retains a stables building at the rear.

The stables buildings are rare surviving examples of this building type. Other examples identified by the Port Phillip Heritage Review 2000 include at the rear of 33-39 Dalgety Street, St Kilda, 30 Howe Crescent, South Melbourne, and 11 Princes Street, St Kilda.

The apartment buildings on the subject property are typical examples of the walk-up apartments during the inter-war period in St Kilda. The relatively early date of these apartments is shown by the use of external stairways; later apartments tended to have fully or partially enclosed stairs – Plottel's earlier development at 26-28 Blessington Street in 1915 being a very early example of the use of fully enclosed stairs (Ward, 2000).

Apartments in St Kilda were constructed in the full range of architectural styles and among the most common was the Bungalow style, which was used extensively for all types of inter-war residential buildings in St Kilda. Other comparable examples identified by the Port Phillip Heritage Review 2000 include 'Glenmore Court' at 58-60 Carlisle Street, St Kilda, the flats at 1-3 Oak Grove, and the flats at 12 Shelley Street, Elwood. The flats may be compared to Plottel's other known apartment developments 'Clovelly', constructed in 1937 in an 'Old English' style at 136 Alma Road, 'Clarendon', constructed in a more fully realised Arts & Crafts style in 1915 at 26-28 Blessington Street, and 'Waverley', a Bungalow/Arts & Crafts mixed retail and apartment building constructed in 1920 at 115-119 Grey Street.

The apartments on the subject property are representative rather than outstanding examples, however they are notable for the apparent care that has been taken in their design and siting, particularly of the front block to ensure that views to the mansion house are retained, and for the relatively high degree of external intactness.

Thematic Context

Settlement: Growth and Change; The late nineteenth century Boom, Depression and recovery: the inter-war years

Recommendations

Recommended inclusions:

Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the City of Port Phillip Planning Scheme

References

Primary sources

Land Victoria, Certificate of titles

Municipality of Emerald Hill Rate Books, as cited

'Valuation for assessment of all rateable property in the municipality of Emerald Hill made August by Geo. Avery Fletcher, Surveyor and Valuator' – referred to as '1855i' (VPRS)

Secondary sources

Allom Lovell & Associates, City of South Melbourne Urban Conservation Study, 1987

Daley, Charles, The History of South Melbourne: From the foundation of settlement at Port Phillip to the year 1938, Melbourne, 1940