

Identifier Gatwick Hotel

Formerly Gatwick Hotel



Heritage Precinct Overlay HO5
Heritage Overlay(s)

Address 34 Fitzroy St
ST KILDA

Category Residential:apartment

Constructed 1938

Designer unknown

Amendment [C 70](#)

Comment [New Citation](#)

Significance (Mapped as a Significant heritage property.)

What is significant?

The Gatwick Private Hotel at 34 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda was constructed by 1938 and is one of a number of substantial apartment buildings or private hotels constructed in St Kilda during the inter-war period. It is a three-storey stuccoed building with three street frontages, executed in a restrained Spanish Mission manner. The building is built to the property boundaries to the three streets. The façade (south facing) has a parapet at the top with curved accents at the centre and corners. There is a diamond-shaped motif, made up of four square tiles, at either end of the parapet. The central raised area of the parapet has the inscription 'GATWICK'. Below the parapet is a band of projecting bricks (three courses, each successive course projecting more), which acts as a cornice, though it does not stretch the entire length of the façade. The long Loch Street elevation (east side) is broken up into five sections: three have similar curved parapets to the façade (with the same diamond-shaped tile motif), interspersed with two sections with overhanging eaves, making the terracotta roof tiles visible. The rear elevation (overlooking West Beach Road) has an identical parapet to that of the façade, without the central raised section. The west elevation, which abuts the neighbouring property, has three parapeted sections (front, rear and near the rear) interspersed with two broad setbacks, creating window wells, with overhanging eaves. The exterior of the building including the entrance foyer and awning and other detailing such fenestration is intact. There have been recent repairs to the cement render above many of the windows (possibly to repair the lintels).

The interior of the hotel is also highly intact. On the ground floor the reception office and a spacious (former) telephone booth feature Jacobean dark wood panelling with beveled glass lights above. The former lounge (in the south-east corner) has a large Adamesque ceiling centre in fibrous plaster. The upper two floors also feature fibrous plaster ceiling centres in the stairwells; these are Art Deco in style. The staircase has a wrought-iron balustrade with a lyre motif. The walls of the corridors and stairwell are finished with textured plaster in a swirled pattern below the picture rail. The upper two floors also have timber panelled telephone booths on the landings. The doors to the rooms are highwaisted with two small horizontal panels over two vertical ones. Most doors retain Art Deco door hardware. Reportedly most of the hotel rooms are intact.

Modern fire doors (partially glazed), which have been installed in the corridors and other post-World War II alterations are not significant.

How is it significant?

The former Gatwick Private Hotel is of local historic, social, aesthetic and architectural significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

The former Gatwick Private Hotel at 34 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda is considered to meet Criterion A.4 as one of a number of substantial private hotels or residential apartments constructed in Fitzroy Street during the inter-war period, which illustrate the continuing development of St Kilda as a seaside resort during that time and the transition to higher density living. It is also significant for its use as a boarding house in the post-war era, which illustrates the changing socio-economic circumstances in St Kilda during that time (AHC criterion A.4). Its significance is enhanced by its rarity value as surviving example of a residential hotel that remains in an intact condition both externally and internally (AHC criterion B.2). The former Gatwick Private Hotel is historically significant for its strong associations with the Carbone family who have owned and managed the building at least since 1977. Vittoria Carbone or 'Queen Vicky', in particular is fondly remembered for her compassionate management of the Hotel and her legacy is carried on by her daughters Rose and Yvette today (AHC criterion H.1).

The former Gatwick Private Hotel at 34 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda is architecturally significant a good and very intact representative example of the substantial residential hotels erected for professional people in St Kilda during the inter-war period. The significance is enhanced by the high degree of intactness to both the exterior and interior (AHC criterion D.2).

The Gatwick Hotel at 34 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda aesthetically significant as an intact interwar hotel that contributes to the historic character of Fitzroy Street. Although it is architecturally undistinguished its scale and siting of the building on the street frontage on two sides on a corner site gives it landmark qualities and makes it a prominent and important part of the streetscape on the north side of Fitzroy Street (AHC criterion E.1).

The Gatwick Hotel at 34 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda is socially significant as a long-standing boarding house in St Kilda. It has strong associations with people of different socioeconomic circumstances who have been an important part of St Kilda society since World War Two. While many residents are short term, some have lived at the Hotel since the 1960s and regard it as 'home'. The strength of association and attachment to the Gatwick is demonstrated by its celebration in artworks and writing produced since 2002 (AHC criterion G.1).

Levels of significance:

Primary significance – all 1938 fabric as noted above including the interiors.

Secondary significance – none specified.

No or limited significance – post-WWII additions or alterations.

Primary Source

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

Other Studies

Description

The Gatwick Hotel, at 34 Fitzroy Street, Saint Kilda, is a three-storey stuccoed building with three street frontages, executed in a restrained Spanish Mission manner. The building is built to the property boundaries to the three streets. The façade (south facing) has a parapet at the top with curved accents at the centre and corners. There is a diamond-shaped motif, made up of four square tiles, at either end of the parapet. The central raised area of the parapet has the inscription 'GATWICK'. Below the parapet is a band of projecting bricks (three courses, each successive course projecting more), which acts as a cornice, though it does not stretch the entire length of the façade.

The long Loch Street elevation (east side) is broken up into five sections: three have similar curved parapets to the façade (with the same diamond-shaped tile motif), interspersed with two sections with overhanging eaves, making the terracotta roof tiles visible. The rear elevation (overlooking West Beach Road) has an identical parapet to that of the façade, without the central raised section. The west elevation, which abuts the neighbouring property, has three parapeted sections (front, rear and near the rear) interspersed with two

broad setbacks, creating window wells, with overhanging eaves.

The façade is five bays wide. The entrance, in the central bay, is a segmentally arched opening, with a Tudor label mould, inside which are white marble steps leading up to the front door. The walls of the stairway are panelled with brown marble bordered in dark grey marble. The double doors are dark-varnished timber with four horizontal glazed panels below an Art Deco ziggurat motif at the top (comprising a square central window pane and four narrow side bars). There is a large transom with three panes above the double doors. The entrance is sheltered by a small cantilevered box awning.

Above the entrance are windows to the first and second floor corridors. They are single sash windows with leadlights in the upper sashes. The leadlights have small yellow glass lights with a heraldic motif at the centre. Identical leadlights are found to the stairwell windows on the Loch Street elevation. On either side of the central bay are two bays of windows to hotel rooms. They are paired two-over-two sashes with horizontal muntins. All of the windows on the first and second storeys have concrete flower boxes resting on small corbels (the paired windows share a single, longer box). The ground floor windows also have two-over-two sashes, but have simple rendered sills instead of flowerboxes.

The side and rear elevations have mainly the two-over-two sash windows with horizontal muntins and simple rendered sills (apart from the stairwell windows, as noted). On the Loch Street elevation, near the rear (in the second parapeted section), three differentiated ground floor windows indicate the presence of a former common room: there is a large picture window with a curved muntin between it and three transom panes. On either side of this window is a pair of the two-over-two sash windows. There are two chimneys on the Loch Street elevation, both near the edge of the roof. They are rendered with a projecting band near the top below with an upside down 'T' motif on each face. A single terracotta chimney pot survives on the rear chimney. At the very rear of this elevation, the building steps in to provide a tiny walled courtyard at ground-floor level, presumably for storage of rubbish bins. Above the bins storage are three levels of toilets, indicated by the external waste pipes and smaller, louvered windows. The rear of the building also has a raised basement, due to the slight slope of the site. There are two one-over-one sash basement windows on the Loch Street side and five on the West Beach Road side.

The exterior of the building is intact. There have been recent repairs to the cement render above many of the windows (possibly to repair the lintels).

The interior of the hotel is also highly intact. On the ground floor the reception office and a spacious (former) telephone booth feature Jacobean dark wood panelling with beveled glass lights above. The former lounge (in the south-east corner) has a large Adamesque ceiling centre in fibrous plaster. The upper two floors also feature fibrous plaster ceiling centres in the stairwells; these are Art Deco in style. The staircase has a wrought-iron balustrade with a lyre motif. The walls of the corridors and stairwell are finished with textured plaster in a swirled pattern below the picture rail. The upper two floors also have timber panelled telephone booths on the landings. The doors to the rooms are highwaisted with two small horizontal panels over two vertical ones. Most doors retain Art Deco door hardware. Reportedly most of the hotel rooms are intact. The one viewed (on the first floor) was divided into bedroom and sitting room areas by a head-height timber and glass partition. Each section of the room had its own fibrous plaster Art Deco ceiling centre. Modern fire doors (partially glazed) have been installed in the corridors.

History

The Gatwick Private Hotel was constructed by 1938. It replaced a nineteenth century house known as 'Lockings' that was occupied by members of the O'Donnell family in the early decades of the twentieth century. The O'Donnells owned both this property and the adjoining lot to the south-west. In May of 1936 the subject property was sold to Margaret Carter who later that month transferred the property to 'Maribeale Pty Ltd' of 34 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda (Land Victoria 1). Sands & McDougall Directories show that in 1936 the house on this site was still listed as being occupied by the 'Misses O'Donnell'. In 1937 the notation is 'Flats being built' and by 1938 the Gatwick Private Hotel is listed at 34 Fitzroy Street along with Mrs L.M. Beale who presumably was the manager.

As noted above, the Gatwick Private Hotel was one of the last of the substantial private hotels erected in St Kilda during the inter-war period that catered for a more up-market clientele. During World War Two it provided accommodation for the U.S. armed forces when officers from Base Section Four headquarters at Port Melbourne, under the command of Colonel Galloway were billeted at the Prince of Wales Hotel (where an officer's club was established), and at the Gatwick Hotel, which were both owned or managed at that stage by Edwin Jewell. According to Longmire (1989:122) both hotels were 'highly regarded for the facilities they provided'. The Gatwick Hotel lacked a dining room so officers and their 'female friends' dined at the Prince of Wales where 'the freezer was stacked with ice-cream and the pantry full of unprocured goods'

(Longmire, 1989:122) After WWII, standards at the Gatwick Private Hotel and other guest houses declined.

At some time in its history the Gatwick, like many other buildings as noted above, became a short or long term rooming house for people of more limited means and it was no longer the 'gentleman's hotel' with its 'highly regarded facilities' of before the war. Title information shows that from 1944 to 1977 it was owned by Louis Whyte, an 'investor'. In 1977 it was purchased by Ronald and Vittoria Carbone as joint proprietors with Vittoria continuing as sole proprietor from 1983 after Ronald's death (Land Victoria 2). Vittoria or 'Queen Vicky' as she affectionately came to be known ran the guest house until her death in 1998 and according to her daughter, Rose, ran the Gatwick 'more like a home than a hotel' and held the view that 'everyone deserves to be treated with respect' (SKHS, 2007).

As previously noted the Gatwick Hotel was one of 12 boarding houses listed in a 1978 St Kilda accommodation guide. The rates were \$20 per week 'room only' or \$25 p/w 'bed and breakfast' with different rates for casuals. The bathrooms were shared, but it was noted that each room had a 'vanity basin with hot and cold water'. Linen blankets were supplied. There were no kitchens for tenants, and some rooms had a sitting room area which is furnished with a table and chairs and easy chairs. The building was described as 'old but fairly clean' and they advised that they would accept 'pensioners, people on unemployment benefits and families' (Davis, 1978:50).

Rose and her twin sister, Yvette, helped their mother with the running at the Gatwick 'from an early age'. They continue to own and manage the Gatwick today and carry on the tradition established by their mother. As noted above it is now one of the few remaining rooming houses in St Kilda. According to Rose around 85% of the residents have lived at the Gatwick for more than 5 years and the longest staying resident moved in, in the 1960s and many now regard it as 'home' (SKHS, 2007).

As one of the last boarding houses in an increasingly gentrified St Kilda the Gatwick is often (rightly or wrongly) perceived as reason for many of the anti social activities happening in and around Fitzroy Street. This has inspired a former resident to write a witty poem where all manner of social ills from local drunks to world events can be explained away by the phrase 'Blame it on the Gatwick' (SKHS, 2007). In 2002 an exhibition of historical and contemporary photographs of the Gatwick and artworks by about 30 residents was exhibited at St Kilda Town Hall (The Age).

Comparative analysis

As noted in the History, the former Gatwick Private Hotel is one of a number of substantial private hotels or residential apartments constructed in Fitzroy Street during the inter-war period, which illustrate the continuing development of St Kilda as a seaside resort during that time. Architecturally it is undistinguished, but its significance as an important component in the Fitzroy Street streetscape is a consequence of its scale, massing and siting, which is comparable with other landmarks including the former 'Ritz', 'Mansions', 'Majestic', 'Regal', 'Seaview', and 'Kingsgrove'. It is also significant for the level of intactness to both the exterior and the interior. The interior is especially notable as all of the other buildings have been significantly altered internally as part of conversion to apartments and other uses from the 1980s onwards.

The continuing use of the Gatwick as a private hotel/boarding house adds to its significance. It is one of only three original buildings along Fitzroy Street still used for their original purpose – the others are the private hotels 'Elenara' and 'Thalassa', which were constructed in 1912. The Prince of Wales Hotel retains its residential hotel component and there is a recently constructed boarding house building at the rear of the Regal apartments.

Thematic Context

Settlement: Growth and Change; Depression and recovery: the inter-war years
Ways of life: St Kilda

Recommendations

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

References

Primary sources
Land Victoria 1, Certificates of title Vol. 6047 Fol. 281/282
Land Victoria 2, Certificate of title Vol. 6733 Fol. 480

Sands & McDougall Directories, 1934-38

Secondary sources

'Apartments and boarding houses in St Kilda, January 1978', compiled by Irena Davis Accommodation Officer with St Kilda Community Group

'At the Gatwick, the school of art knocks', article in the 29 September 2002 edition of The Age, viewed online (1 July 2008) at <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/09/28/1032734371529.html>

Longmire, Anne, St Kilda. The show goes on. The history of St Kilda Volume 3: 1930 to July 1983, Hawthorn, 1989

St Kilda Historical Society (SKHS), 'Gatwick Hotel, Fitzroy Street St Kilda' article in 'St Kilda Times', Newsletter Issue No.186, August-September 2007

Ward, Andrew, Port Phillip Heritage Review, Version 2, 2000, Vols. 1-6