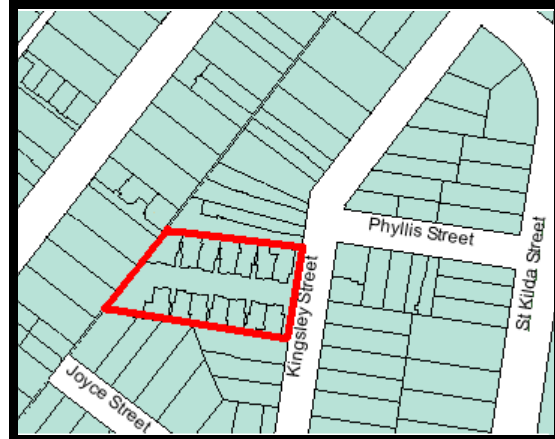


Identifier "Cromer Court" Flats
Formerly unknown



Not within a HO area

Address 22-24 Kingsley Street
ELWOOD

Category Residential: apartment

Constructed 1940-41

Designer Unknown

Significance

What is Significant?

Cromer Court at 22-24 Kingsley Street, Elwood, is a development of 14 single-storey brick villa units, built c.1941. It comprises two rows of six semi-detached pairs, plus two single units, flanking a central common driveway leading to rear garages. The units are similar in form (some even being mirror-reversed) but otherwise exhibit variety in detailing, materials and finishes.

How is it Significant?

The flats are of architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it Significant?

Architecturally, the *Cromer Court* flats are significant as a rare example of inter-war residential units in a bungalow court development. While such clusters of villa units became ubiquitous from the 1950s onwards, they were uncommon in the 1920s and 30s, even in areas such as St Kilda and Elwood, where multi-unit dwellings proliferated. Amongst the very few recorded examples in the City of Port Phillip, *Cromer Court* stands out as the largest and the most intact.

Aesthetically, the flats are significant as a fine and intact collection of inter-war semi-detached dwellings, exhibiting notable cohesion in terms of their general form, fabric and fenestration, while simultaneously displaying variety in terms of finishes (roughcast render, face brick of various colours) and detailing (stringcourses, decorative brick, etc). The aesthetic qualities of the individual units are enhanced by their carefully considered siting, their intact context (*viz* original front fence and detached garages) and their landscaped setting.

Description

Cromer Court is an inter-war bungalow-court development on a large block, comprising fourteen single-storeyed brick villa units, arranged as two rows of semi-detached pairs flanking a central common driveway, leading to rear garages. The unit pairs are similar in form, with hipped tiled roofs, symmetrical triple-fronted facades, side entry porches, and tripartite windows. They otherwise exhibit some variety in materials, finishes and detailing, although some are simply mirror-reversed versions of others. Flats 1-2 and 8-9 are cream brick, with clinker brick dado and dark brick stringcourses, while flats 3-4 and 10-11 are entirely clinker brick, with multi-paned windows and decorative brickwork in a sub-Tudor Revival idiom. Flats 5-6 and 12-13 have face red brickwork with cream brick stringcourses, to the innermost bay, and a roughcast rendered finish to the flanking projecting bays. The detached units (No 7 and 14) are expressed as individual double-fronted villas in clinker brick, with orange brick banding.

The site has a red brick front fence with brown brick plinth and capping; driveway gate piers are set back behind small flower beds and bear the name CROMER COURT in metal lettering. The red-tinted cement driveway is flanked by grassed areas with silver birch trees, and leads to a detached four-car red brick garage at the rear, with a stepped parapet embellished with dog-toothed soldier bricks. Beyond are two detached two-car garages, of more utilitarian form. The front two units (Nos 1 and 8) have their own attached garages, fronting the street.

History

On 27 August 1940, a building permit application was made by M J Carroll, an East Brighton builder, for the erection of 14 single-storey villa units in Kingsley Street. The completed flats are first recorded in the *Sands & McDougall Directory* for 1942. At that time, they were designated as No 20-24, and were identified simply as *Cromer Court* flats, with no additional entries for individual residents. This continued until 1950, when the directory listed all fourteen tenants by name. Leo Webster (No 1), Eric Kent (No 2), Lionel Gissing (No 3), Robert Taylor (No 4), John Thompson (No 5), Arthur Spinks (No 6), Arthur Gallagher (No 7), John Mahoney (No 8), William Germon (No 10), Mrs S M Basto (No 11), Vernon Thurgood (No 12), John Davidson (No 13) and Sydney Francis (No 14). Electoral rolls reveal a broad cross-section of professions amongst these early occupants, including a jeweller, a grocer, two salesmen, two managers, a company director, a process worker and a shipyard progressman.

Comparative Analysis

As an epicentre for apartment development from the late 1910s until the 1970s, Elwood has blocks of flats in a broad range of styles and types. During the inter-war period, however, the most frequent manifestation was in the form of conventional walk-up flats of two or three storeys. Blocks of flats in a courtyard development were less common (eg *Kingsley Court*, 4-6 Kingsley Street, c.1920s; *Surrey Court*, 71 Ormond Road, 1933), while courtyard developments of single-storey villa units were rarer still. These so-called bungalow court developments were introduced to Melbourne in the 1920s by architect John Gawler, but they did not become widely popular. A few early examples, however, are known to survive in St Kilda: *Enfield Court*, an 8-unit development at 46 Jackson Street (attributed to Gawler) and two others at 96 Grey Street (4 units) and 27-29 Jackson Street (8 units), both actually named *Bungalow Court*. Although later in date, *Cromer Court* in Elwood is more extensive than these, having fourteen units.

Within Elwood proper, *Cromer Court* as only two comparative examples: stylistically, it is similar to the *cul-de-sac* development of semi-detached inter-war housing in McCrae Street (c.1935) and, functionally, to the much later (but still atypical) courtyard development of 24 villa units at 2 Southey Grove (1955).

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

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

References

Sands & McDougall Directory. Various.

Terry Sawyer, 'Residential Flats in Melbourne', research report, University of Melbourne (1982)

