

Identifier Duplex
Formerly unknown



Within HO7 (recommended)

Address 83-85 Mitford Street
ELWOOD

Category Residential: attached

Constructed c.1924

Designer Unknown

Significance

What is Significant?

The dwellings at 83-85 Mitford Street, Elwood, comprise a semi-detached pair that are expressed as one large bungalow-style house. It has a clinker brick plinth with roughcast-rendered walls above, and a broad gabled roof of cement tiles. There are prominent gabled bays to three sides, with small entry porches at the junctions. The house was evidently erected c.1924.

How is it Significant?

The house is of aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it Significant?

Aesthetically, the house is significant as a representative and substantially intact example of a semi-detached bungalow-style house, articulated a single dwelling. This sub-set of inter-war duplex housing is quite common in Elwood, and this house, with its clinker brick plinth, rendered walls and minimal decorative detailing, can be considered as a typical example, rather than particularly distinguished one. Nevertheless, its T-shaped form, with gabled bays to three sides, is neatly revealed by its corner siting, and the house consequently remains as a prominent element in the streetscape, and forms an appropriate termination to the edge of heritage overlay area HO7.



Description

The building at 83-85 Mitford Street, Elwood, comprises a semi-detached pair of dwellings on a corner site, articulated as a single large bungalow-style house on a T-shaped plan. Of brick construction, it has an unpainted clinker brick base plinth with a roughcast rendered finish above. The broad gabled roof is clad in cement tiles, with board-lined eaves on timber brackets, and three squat roughcast-rendered chimneys. The Mitford Street frontage is symmetrical, with a large gable-end bay that (apart from the change in front fence) does not actually articulate the separate dwellings. Each half has a pair of timber-framed double-hung sash windows with clinker brick sills, quoined reveals and leaded glazing. A brick stringcourse, since overpainted, extends between the springing points of the gable.

To the side of each house, the sloping roof extends to form a small porch, set well back from the street, which is supported on a capped rendered brick pier. A splayed wall marks the front doorway, which retains original panelled timber door and is flanked by small windows, also with leaded glazing. The side elevations each have another gabled bay, similarly detailed to that on the Mitford Street front although that to No 83 has a half-timbered gable rather than a rendered one. The two houses are otherwise virtually identical, except that No 83 retains its original cement tiles while No 85 has been reclad in new cement tiles of a slightly different design.

History

The semi-detached dwellings at 83-85 Mitford Street are first recorded in the *Sands & McDougall Directory* for 1924 as two of 'three houses being built' on the west side of Mitford Street, between Milton and Gordon streets. The following year, these three houses were identified as Nos 93, 97 and 99 – renumbered as 79, 83 and 83 by 1930.

The house at No 97 (now 83) was originally occupied by Horace W Bird, described in electoral rolls as a manager, and his wife Jessie, who remained listed in directories at that address until 1928. The adjacent house at No 99 (now 85) was initially occupied by Cyril Shaw, a printer, and his wife Amelia. They remained there until 1932. Both houses were then occupied by a succession of relatively short-term tenants.

Comparative Analysis

Single-storey semi-detached pairs of dwellings can be articulated in several ways. During the inter-war period, it was atypical for each half to be expressed as a discrete dwelling, with disparate detailing and articulation (eg the quirky example at 22-22a Foam Street, Elwood). More commonly, they were as symmetrical pair, each half forming a mirror-reversal of the other in its composition, fenestration and detailing. This can be seen in several fine examples in the Hammerdale Avenue Precinct, namely 11-11a Hammerdale Avenue (in an unusual Spanish Mission style) and 2-8 Jervois Street.

When adopting the bungalow style, however, such houses were often 'disguised' as a single detached house, typically with a prominent gable-ended bay to the street that often makes no attempt to express the physical division between the two halves. There are numerous examples throughout Elwood, including several on the north side of Mason Avenue (Nos 6-8, 22-24 and 34-36), and others that have been designated as significant or contributory buildings within heritage precincts, such as 4-6 McRae Street and 20-22 Byron Street. These, like 83-85 Mitford Street, are all simply representative of their type and era. Conversely, an example at 17-19 Havelock Street, St Kilda, stands out above the norm for its particularly fine decorative detailing, acknowledged by its inclusion in the *City of Port Phillip Heritage Study* (2000) as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the City of Port Phillip Planning Scheme as a significant building within the *Elwood, St Kilda, Balaclava, Ripponlea* heritage precinct (HO7).

References

Sands & McDougall Directory, various.