

Addison Street/Milton Street Residential Precinct

Existing Designations:

Heritage Council Register:	nil
National Estate Register:	nil
National Trust Register:	nil

History: Although reclamation of the Elwood Swamp began in 1889, the area that it occupied – bounded by present-day Marine Parade, Dickens Street, Mitford Street and Shelley Street – still remained largely undeveloped at the turn of the century. The MMBW Map, dated December 1897, shows that the triangular tract of land between Barkly Street, Dickens Street, Mitford Street and the newly-formed canal was entirely vacant at that time. Indeed, the only buildings in the area were two modest timber villas on Marine Parade (one on the south corner of Thackeray Street), and a small cluster of non-residential structures on the southwest corner of Dickens and Barkly streets. Directories reveal that the latter was the property of Matthias Lyons, subsequently listed as a dairy and, from 1909, as a grainstore. That year's directory also reveals that there were still only two houses on Marine Parade between Dickens Street and the canal: *Eileen*, occupied by J Jackson, and *Vine Cottage*, occupied by Henry James.

It appears that closer settlement commenced soon afterwards, as the directory for 1910 recorded five new houses along Marine Parade. Two of these were still listed as 'vacant' while another was occupied by George Dean, his wife Ethel, and their young daughter Mary Winifred 'Molly' Dean (born 1905) who, two decades later, would become one of the most well-known residents of Elwood through very tragic circumstances. George Dean, one of the earliest residents of Marine Parade, had been joined, by 1911, by Thomas Dow, G Sharp and A M Ross, the last being the occupant of a large red brick villa, *Rothes*, on the prominent Dickens Street corner.

Development soon spread beyond Marine Parade, down the adjacent portions of Dickens Street and Thackeray Street. A solitary house on the south side of Dickens Street, between Marine Parade and Barkly Street, first appeared in the 1911 directory, identified as *Frencha* and occupied by Edward Vaughan. A year later, two more houses had been built alongside Vaughan's *Frencha*, followed by another by 1913, and then another by 1914. These five early houses, originally Nos 107-115, survive as 77-85 Dickens Street. Nearby Thackeray Street first appeared in the 1912 directory, with a single resident, Benjamin Baker, at what later became No 35 (subsequently changed to 27, and since demolished). The next year, Baker was listed with 'two vacant houses' alongside. There were five houses in total by 1915 - a figure that had doubled by 1918, when the directory listed seven residents on the north side (including Nos 2, 6 and 6) and thirteen on the south. The latter, in fact, was then entirely filled out, with no remaining vacant lots and new houses designated as Nos 9-27 and 31-35 (now Nos 1-19 and 23-27).

Further inland, development of the reclaimed swamp was initially concentrated on Ruskin Street, which first appeared in the 1913 directory with six new houses on its east side (three listed as 'vacant') and another two vacant houses on the west side. A single house had also been built on the north side of Milton Street that year, between Ruskin and Mitford Street, occupied by Robert Glasscock. A year later, Glasscock had four new neighbours (with another 'house being built'), plus five new houses on Milton Street's hitherto undeveloped south side. By that time, all of the new houses in Ruskin Street were occupied, with another two on the east side listed as 'being built'. It was also in 1914 that Meredith Street and Addison Street appeared in the directory for the first time: the former had five houses on the east side (one listed as 'being built') and four on the west side (with two 'being built'). Development in Meredith Street was then restricted to the portion between Barkly Street and Marine Parade, where there were three new houses on the south side (then numbered as 9, 19 and 21) and a single 'house being built' on the north side.

This housing boom burgeoned considerably over the next few years. The seven houses listed in Addison Street in 1914 had increased to twenty by 1915, including three vacant houses, another five under construction, and a shop 'being built' near the Meredith Street corner. Meredith Street itself had also flourished by that time, with ten occupied houses, four vacant houses, plus six more houses and another shop listed as 'being built'. The same directory recorded similar expansion elsewhere, with seven houses under construction in Milton Street, and another eight in Ruskin Street. By 1916, a third shop had been erected in the area, being located on the corner of Barkly and Meredith Streets, then occupied by grocer George Bearpark (now Jerry's Milk Bar). At that time, the total number of houses in Addison Street had jumped from twenty (in 1915) to thirty-two, including five houses recorded as 'being built'. In Ruskin and Milton streets, most houses previously listed as either vacant or under construction were now completed and occupied. Milton Street, indeed, was fully occupied with 26 residents, while Ruskin Street had tenants in all but five of its 35 dwellings. Amongst Milton Street's new residents were the Dean family, formerly of Marine Parade. Molly's father, George Dean, had died in 1913 (two years after the birth of a second child, Ralph) and, four years later, Mrs Ethel Dean moved to a smaller house at 102 (now 86) Milton Street – one of many semi-detached brick dwellings being built in that area at that time.

By the mid-1920s, the former swampland had thus been entirely transformed into a comfortable middle-class residential estate. The end of that decade, however, saw it take on an unexpected notoriety with the brutal murder of Molly Dean. By 1930, she was a 25-year old schoolteacher, aspiring novelist, and sometime artist's model. She was also engaged to noted artist Colin Colahan, a leading member of Melbourne's bohemian set, in which Molly herself became an active participant. On the night of 20 November 1930, Molly had attended a film screening in the city with her fiancée and several friends, after which she caught the tram alone to St Kilda Station. Stopping to phone Colahan just after midnight, Molly missed the last tram through Elwood, and had no choice but to walk the three miles to her home in Milton Street. Just before one o'clock, the resident of 5 Addison Street heard moaning, and emerged to find a pool of blood and discarded items of women's clothing beside the front gate. In a secluded laneway opposite the house, Molly was found in a pool of blood. As the *Truth* reported on 27 November:

Her head was cruelly battered, her neck swathed in one of her own stockings, and her body so terribly mutilated that only a frenzied ghoul could have been responsible. Mary Dean was not killed in the perpetuation of a criminal offence, she was done to death in a brutal fashion, and so terribly dealt with . . . that the lunacy of jealousy can be the only possible explanation.

Although rushed to the Alfred Hospital, Molly died a few hours later. As her friend Betty Roland later recalled, the murder case subsequently became a *cause celebre* in Depression-era Melbourne, with a shattering effect on its bohemian community. Molly's fiancée, the artist Colahan, was the chief suspect until, after a bizarre series of twists, he finally proved that he was at home at the time of her phone to him on that fateful night. Suspicion turned to Adam Graham, a family friend whose appearance and mannerisms matched an eyewitness' account of a man seen observing Molly at St Kilda station. At the inquest in February 1931, a number of grubby details became known, including the fact that Molly's mother, who objected to her bohemian friendships, had instructed Graham – with whom she reportedly shared an 'improper relationship' - to trail her daughter. The Coroner concluded that Graham was, indeed, the murderer, and he was committed to trial. But a trial never took place. In a final twist, Graham wed the elderly Mrs Dean, ensuring that she could not give evidence against him; a ruling of *nolle prosequi* was announced, and Graham was set free. The case, which remains unsolved to this day, continues to evoke fascination – it was the basis for George Johnston's novel, *My Brother Jack* (1964) and, more recently, inspired a play, *Solitude in Blue*, produced in Sydney in December 2002.

Physically, the streetscapes of this part of Elwood have changed little since Molly Dean's time. The intense housing boom of the 1910s left relatively few vacant allotments remaining when Elwood underwent a subsequent boom of residential development during the 1920s and '30s. Housing from this era was concentrated in those very few hitherto underdeveloped parts of the precinct, including the portions of Milton and Meredith Street between Addison and Barkly streets, and parts of Addison and Ruskin Street to the south of Meredith Street. The apartment boom of the 1930s, which otherwise characterises so much of Elwood, is barely represented here. Similar, there was very little infiltration in the post-war period, largely restricted to a few multi-storey blocks of flats (mostly in Ruskin Street) and, more recently, some new townhouses, all built on the sites of the precinct's original Edwardian building stock.

Ironically, the house at 5 Addison Street, in front of which Molly Dean was attacked in 1930, was one of the relatively few casualties, and is now occupied by an innocuous block of 1960s flats. The laneway opposite, where her battered body was found, still remains virtually as it was in 1930, its bluestone pitching and ramshackle rear fences still evocative of a brutal event in the history of this leafy and picturesque Edwardian suburb.

Description: The precinct comprises large portions of those principal streets that were laid out following the sale of the reclaimed swampland around 1910: Barkly Street, Addison Street and Ruskin Street (running north-south) and Milton and Meredith streets (running east-west). The precinct also includes some of the smaller streets between Barkly Street and Marine Parade: all of Lawson Street and Lytton Street, most of the Meredith Street extension, and part of Thackeray Street. Finally, the precinct also includes a discrete cluster of buildings on the corner of Dickens Street and Marine Parade, which include some of the earliest houses that were built in the area in the early twentieth century. The streets themselves vary in form; those to the west of Barkly Street (ie Thackeray, Lawson and Meredith Street West) are relatively narrow, having concrete footpaths without nature strips, while those to the east (eg Addison, Milton and Meredith streets) are much wider streets, with nature strips and avenues of mature deciduous trees forming a particularly distinctive element. Most streets retain original bluestone kerbing.

The built fabric within the precinct consists overwhelmingly of late Edwardian housing in the Queen Anne Revival mode (the so-called Federation style), broadly characterised by the use of face red brickwork (often tuckpointed) with roughcast rendered banding and combined hipped and gabled roofs clad in red Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles. Within the precinct, its most common manifestation is in the form of semi-detached pairs. These mostly have symmetrical façades, each half being expressed as a mirror-reversed single-fronted dwelling, often with a curved, canted or rectangular bay window with timber-framed casement sashes and highlights, and a half-timbered and/or roughcast-rendered gable end to the street. Each individual house has an attached verandah along the outer side or, in some cases, a recessed porch to the inner side, flanking a central party wall (eg 81-83 Dickens Street). Both variations use a standard vocabulary of timber posts (typically turned, sometimes plain, tapered or stop-chamfered) with timber slat or fretwork friezes and matching brackets. The most cohesive strips of this type of housing can be seen in the northern and southern extremities of Addison Street, the southern end of Ruskin Street, and along Lytton Street. The last named is particularly notable for recurring details such as timber brackets to roof eaves and window awnings, although the houses themselves have been somewhat compromised by the overpainting of original face brickwork.

Amongst these ubiquitous semi-detached red brick pairs, there are a few anomalous examples that hark back to the Victorian era in their form and detailing. The two pairs at houses at 8-14 Addison Street, for example, have atypical corrugated galvanised steel roofs with matching bullnosed side verandahs, and ripple iron awnings to the bay windows. At 69-71 Milton Street is a pair of single-fronted terraced dwellings, which are unmistakably Edwardian in their red brickwork, rendered banding and tiled roof, but otherwise recall the previous generation in their use of vermiculated ornament and cast iron verandah friezes. The semi-detached pairs also include a few examples that are expressed (or disguised) as a single double-fronted detached dwelling in the Victorian mode: an asymmetrical street frontage with a projecting bay to one side with a recessed wing alongside, sheltered by a broad verandah. Examples include 77-79 Dickens Street, 31-33 Meredith Street and 65-65a Milton Street. There are also a few detached single dwellings in the precinct that evoke this Victorian Survival mode, such as 29 Meredith Street and 85 Dickens Street – the latter formerly Edward Vaughan's Frencha, one of the oldest surviving houses in the precinct.

Otherwise, the detached Edwardian houses in the precinct are in the form of red brick Federation-style villas, with materials and detailing comparable to semi-detached houses described above. A fine row at the eastern end of Milton Street includes examples with curved (Nos 68, 55) or canted (Nos 66) bay windows, and some that display somewhat atypical elements such as a slate roof (No 66), canted verandah (No 68) or an attic storey (No 58). Many of the larger and more prominently-sited villas in this area (eg 57, 67 and 70 Ruskin Street) have return verandahs; amongst the more notable is the pair flanking the intersection of Milton and Ruskin Street (ie Nos 71 and 73 Milton), which actually appear to be a mirror-reversal of the same design, with distinctive splayed corner bay

windows at the verandah return. Similar detailing can be seen in two interesting villas at 29 and 34 Addison Street. Another particularly fine villa (and one of the oldest in the precinct) is the former Rothes at 52 Marine Parade, having a prominent return verandah with tessellated floor, turned posts and oversized curved brackets.

Contemporaneous timber housing is rare within the precinct, and is almost entirely restricted to the older portion, west of Barkly Street. A number of timber villas in Lawson and Meredith streets achieve cohesion through their double-fronted form, weatherboard cladding and hipped corrugated galvanised steel roofs; individually, however, they differ in composition and detailing. Some have asymmetrical frontages in the Victorian Survival mode, with canted bay windows (2 Lawson Street) or rectangular bay windows (29 and 37 Meredith Street). The last example here is particularly fine, with an atypical block-fronted façade, half-timbered gable end with unusual sunburst motif, and finely detailed verandah. The house at 4 Lawson Street is entirely different, having a symmetrical façade with tripartite casement sash windows that flank a central gabled porch with half-timbered gable ends and stop-chamfered posts. The attic-storeyed weatherboard house at No 3 is exceptional, with a steep tiled roof, roughcast rendered upper walls, curved bay windows, recessed porch and shingled spandrels, set amidst a well-established orchard garden.

As already mentioned in the historical overview, there was relatively little residential development in this part of Elwood during the 1920s. This typically consisted of conventional detached dwellings in the ubiquitous bungalow-style of the period, with face red brickwork and terracotta tiled roofs creating cohesion with the earlier dwellings. These can be seen in the southern end of Barkly Street (which largely developed in the later 1920s) and those portions of Milton Street and Meredith Street between Addison and Barkly Streets. In a few instances, the 1920s houses paid greater homage to the earlier building stock by adopting the same symmetrical double-fronted semi-detached composition; this can be seen in a few isolated examples (such as Lytton Street) or, more extensively, along the west side of Ruskin Street, south of Meredith Street

The development boom that had decreased during the 1920s continued to do so into the 1930s. Multi-storey blocks of flats, ubiquitous elsewhere in Elwood, were rare in this part of the suburb. The few examples include a block of Tudor Revival flats at 292 Barkly Street, and some Art Deco and Functionalist counterparts at 24 Meredith Street, 91 and 102 Milton Street, 16 Tennyson Street and 27 Ruskin Street. These last four listed, although built on the reclaimed swampland estate, fall just outside the boundaries of the proposed heritage area. There are even fewer post-war buildings in the precinct: a solitary block of 1960s flats at 46 Ruskin Street. While there are contemporaneous blocks of flats nearby, notably in the portion of Ruskin Street between Milton and Meredith streets, this, too, is actually just outside the proposed precinct boundary. More recent development is limited to a relatively small amount of townhouses, including those at 19 Thackeray Street, 42 Meredith Street, 77 Milton Street, and several down by the canal (which, again, fall just outside the precinct boundary).

References:

Sands & McDougall Directory. Various.

Travis M Sellers, 'The Artist, the Fiancée and Murder at Elwood', *St Kilda Chronicle*, December 2000, pp 27-28.

Betty Roland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, Melbourne, 1984. pp 68-75.

[this memoir includes an account of the Molly Dean case by someone who knew her well]

Thematic Context:

- ▯ Land Reclamation
- ▯ Closer Settlement, 1900-1920

Comparative Analysis: Within the broader City of Port Phillip, there are relatively few comparable examples of the type of residential development seen on the site of the Elwood Swamp. Most parts of St Kilda, South Melbourne and Port Melbourne were characterised by dense development in the nineteenth century, which left little scope for comparable development in the early twentieth century. The most comparable examples can be found in East St Kilda, where there was relatively little development in the late nineteenth century but a minor residential boom in the first two decades of the twentieth.

In Lambeth Place (part of HO6), the west side of the street comprises a long row of paired houses in red brick, albeit articulated as attached single-fronted terraces, and very similar housing can also be seen in Glenmark Street, albeit in less intact condition. This form, representative of a hybrid Victorian/Edwardian style, is atypical in the Elwood precinct (eg a unique pair at 69-71 Milton Street), which is otherwise characterised by the more mature Queen Anne Revival form of semi-detached housing, with individual asymmetry and collective symmetry. This more mature manifestation can otherwise be seen in East St Kilda streetscapes such as Hawsleigh Avenue (part of HO316), Godfrey Avenue and Kalymna Avenue (the last two having been recently recommended as heritage precincts). Hawsleigh Street is the least extensive of the three, with red brick semi-detached houses extending along only one side of the street. Godfrey Avenue and Kalymna Avenue both have their contemporaneous housing along both sides of the streets; the former (developed from 1914) is more consistent in style, consisting almost entirely of semi-detached red brick pairs, with a single example each of a contemporaneous detached red brick villa and a block-fronted timber dwelling. Kalymna Avenue (also developed from 1914) is more diverse, with an even mix of semi-detached and detached houses of both red brick and timber construction.

These precincts are certainly more intact than the Elwood precinct, in terms of their degree of infiltration by non-contributory buildings - Godfrey Avenue, for example, has no non-contributory buildings at all. The Elwood precinct stands amongst all other examples in the municipality out for its sheer scale, comprising a network of several interconnecting streets rather than, as is the case in the East St Kilda precincts, a single street. Being a larger precinct, it encapsulates a more varied range of buildings (ie detached and semi-detached housing) as well as a number of contemporaneous shops (the latter not represented in any of the examples in East St Kilda).

Statement of Significance:

What is Significant?

The Addison Street/Milton Street Precinct comprises much of the residential estate that was laid out on the site of the Elwood Swamp in the 1910s: most of Addison Street between Dickens Street and the canal, the portion of Milton Street between Barkly Street and Mitford Street, the portion of Meredith Street between Marine Parade and Ruskin Street, the portion of Ruskin Street between Meredith Street and the Canal, the portion of Barkly Street between Pozieres Street and the canal, all of Lawson and Lytton streets, and most of Thackeray Street. The precinct also includes a small sub-precinct straddling the corner of Marine Parade and Dickens Street, containing some of the earliest houses on the estate. Largely developed in the 1910s, the entire precinct consists overwhelmingly of housing in the Queen Anne Revival (the so-called Federation) style, mostly as semi-detached brick pairs as well as some detached villas of both brick and timber construction, and several contemporaneous shops. There are a relatively small number of later (post-1930) buildings.

How is it Significant?

The Addison Street/Milton Street precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it Significant?

Historically, the precinct is significant as the largest and most swiftly-developed residential estate in Elwood, more substantial and more successful than even the largest speculative subdivisions of the 1880s boom period. Developed from c.1910 and almost entirely filled out by 1920, the estate provides evidence of the intense residential development in this part of Elwood, prompted not only by the reclamation of the Elwood Swamp but also by the expansion of the tramway network in the early twentieth century.

The precinct is also important as a marker for the site of the Elwood Swamp itself, a ubiquitous presence for Elwood's early residents for fifty years prior to its reclamation at the turn of the century. Certain parts of the precinct are also of historic and social significance for their association with local resident Molly Dean, whose brutal (and still unsolved) murder in 1930 was a cause celebre in Melbourne at that time and continues to evoke fascination; these sites include her house at 86 Milton Street and the actual murder site in a laneway opposite 5 Addison Street.

Aesthetically, the precinct is significant for its fine and cohesive streetscapes of housing in the Queen Anne Revival idiom of the early 1910s, characterised by asymmetrical composition, terracotta tiled roofs, face red brickwork with rendered banding, bay windows and verandahs or porches with turned timber posts and ornamental timberwork. Within this broad cohesion, the precinct nevertheless exhibits a fine degree of variety in its late Edwardian building form (semi-detached and detached houses) and detailing, which is further enhanced by a lesser number of contemporaneous houses of timber construction, and some brick shops. Later building stock (ie 1920s and '30s) is mostly sympathetic in scale and materials, and is largely representative of its era. The housing in the streets to the east of Barkly Street are greatly enhanced by their setting: sympathetic (if not original) timber picket fences, particularly wide streets with bluestone kerbing, and broad nature strips with mature deciduous trees creating a leafy and enclosing canopy.

Recommendations: Buildings and street trees recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme.

The site of Molly Dean's murder (that is, the laneway off Addison Street) should be interpreted.

Assessment: Simon Reeves, Heritage Alliance.



Typical row of semi-detached Queen Anne Revival housing in Ruskin Street



Unique Victorian/Edwardian hybrid terrace housing at 69-71 Milton Street



Former grocer's shop (now Jerry's milk bar) at 345 Barkly Street, erected c.1915



Substantial Edwardian brick villa at 52 Marine Parade; note intact return verandah



Former residence of Molly Dean and her family at 86 (formerly 102) Milton Street



Site of Molly Dean's 1930 murder: the narrow laneway opposite 5 Addison Street



Row of 1910s detached weatherboard cottages on north side of Lawson Street



Exceptional block-fronted late Edwardian timber cottage at 37 Meredith Street



- Significant
- Contributory
- Non-contributory
- Proposed extent of heritage overlay

Significant

Addison Street: 2, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75;

Barkly Street: 296, 298, 300, 302, 304, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 316, 318, 320, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 353, 355, 357, 359, 361, 363, 365, 367, 369, 371, 373, 375, 377;

Dickens Street: 77, 79, 81, 83

Lawson Street: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10

Lytton Street: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12;

Marine Parade: 52

Meredith Street: 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56;

Milton Street: 53, 55, 57, 59, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 94, 96, 98, 100;

Ruskin Street: 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 29, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84.

Thackeray Street: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 23

Contributory

Addison Street: 4, 11, 13, 37, 62;

Dickens Street: 85

Hood Street: 7

Marine Parade: 53, 54

Meredith Street: 15, 16, 17, 24, 35;

Milton Street: 61;

Non-contributory

Addison Street: 53;

Meredith Street: 9, 38, 40;

Milton Street: 77, 77a;

Ruskin Street: 46;

Thackeray Street: 19;
