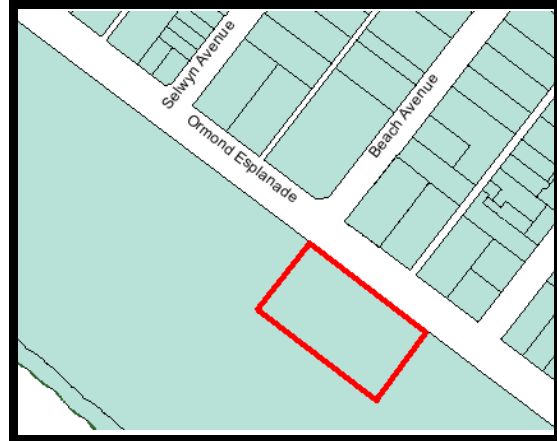


Identifier Community Centre/Beach House Cafe
Formerly Elwood Bowling Club



Not within a HO area

Address Ormond Esplanade
(at Vautier Street) ELWOOD
Category Public

Constructed 1925
Designer Unknown

Significance

What is Significant?

The former bowling club is a simple single-storey timber-framed and fibro-clad building with a gabled roof of corrugated steel. Founded in 1925, the club closed in the 1990s and the building was converted to a community centre and café. The enclosed grounds include a detached brick storeroom of similar date, although no trace now remains of the bowling greens themselves.

How is it Significant?

The former bowling club is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip

Why is it Significant?

Historically, the former bowling club is one of the earliest remaining buildings along the Elwood foreshore. Erected in 1925, it provides evidence of the expansion of recreational facilities along the beach during the inter-war period, and is now the only survivor amongst the complex of early twentieth-century clubhouses that included the original premises of the angling club, lifesaving club and croquet club, all of which have since been replaced by post-war buildings. More broadly, the former bowling club is also of some interest as the only one in the municipality that is located along the foreshore and, indeed, one of only four bowling clubs thus sited along the entire east coast of Port Phillip Bay.

Aesthetically, the former bowling club is significant as a distinctive element in the foreshore landscape. Although slightly altered and generally of little architectural pretension, its simple form and detailing, including strapped fibro-cement cladding with weatherboard dado, is representative of its type and era.

Description

The original bowling club is a single-storeyed timber-framed building on a rectangular plan, with a broad gabled roof of corrugated galvanised steel. The exterior walls are clad with weatherboard to window sill height, with strapped cement sheeting above. The principal façade, to Ormond Esplanade, has a central double doorway (sheltered by a non-original verandah) flanked by pairs of wide timber-framed fixed-sash windows, with louvred highlights. The exposed side elevation, to the north, has similar windows, another door, and, above, a louvred vent to the gable apex. The south end of the former clubhouse has been engulfed in a substantial single-storey addition, containing the cafe; part of this echoes the form and materials of the original building, culminating in an enclosed verandah-like dining area along the south and east walls, with retractable roof, continuous bays of timber-framed casement-sash windows, and a corner entrance.

North of the clubhouse is a detached weatherboard toilet block (of recent date) and a small red brick pavilion with terracotta-tiled gambrel roof, roughcast rendered banding, weatherboard infill, louvred vents and small square windows. Its original function is unknown, but it is at least contemporary with (if not earlier than) the main building.

History

The Elwood Bowling Club was officially opened on Saturday, 3 October 1925, when the wife of the club president, Mrs F C Smith, threw the inaugural jack and the wife of the senior vice-president, Mrs A E Watson, threw the first bowl. The ceremony was also attended by the then Mayor, Councillor Cummings, who 'wished the club success in the ensuing season'. The new premises was one of a large number of bowling clubs whose official openings were reported in September and October of 1925, including those at Armadale, Ascot Vale, Brunswick, Camberwell, Carlton, Carrum, Collingwood, Elsternwick, Glen Iris, Ivanhoe, Kew, Middle Park, Moonee Ponds, Murrumbeena, North Fitzroy, Northcote, Sandringham, Sunshine and Thornbury.

A site plan in the Health Department's Public Building files shows that the bowling club at Elwood occupied an allotment 189 feet (57 metres) by 184 feet (56 metres), with its timber-framed clubhouse set back 142 feet (43 metres) from Ormond Esplanade. This building, 65 feet (20 metres) by 44 feet (13 metres) in plan, contained a large clubroom with an adjacent billiard/card room, and associated facilities (office, kitchen and lavatories) along the seaward side.

The bowling club ceased in c.1991, and the former premises was subsequently converted into a council-operated community centre and café. The enclosed open space between the former clubhouse and the road, originally the bowling greens, became a children's playground.

Comparative Analysis

There are five lawn bowling clubs within what is now the City of Port Phillip; all are located in or beside public parks, although the former club in Elwood is the only one along the foreshore. The other clubs in the municipality are of greater vintage: St Kilda (founded 1865), Albert Park (founded 1873) and Middle Park (founded 1903). However, their built fabric varies; the clubhouse at St Kilda, for examples, includes a portion dating back to 1876 (in fact the oldest purpose-built bowling club building in Australia) and another portion added in 1927. The present Albert Park clubhouse, located within St Vincent's Gardens, dates from as recently as 1958.

The example at Elwood must be seen in the context of the small cluster of sporting club premises that developed along the foreshore in the inter-war period: the lifesaving club (1921), the sailing club (1924), the croquet club (c.1937) and the angling club (c.1939). All of the original buildings, however, were replaced in the post-war era. Ironically, all of these clubs still remain in operation while the bowling club, which does not, is the only one that retains its original pre-war building.

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

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

References

'Bowls', *Argus*, 6 October 1925, p 6.

Public Building File No 9976, Health Department files, VPRS 7882/P1. PRO