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## CHUNG ON RESTAURANT (FORMER)



593-597 Mt Alexander Road



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P1040050.jpeg

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### Location

593-597 MT ALEXANDER ROAD, MOONEE PONDS, MOONEE VALLEY CITY

### Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

### Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO358

### Heritage Listing

Moonee Valley City

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

#### What is significant?

The building at 593-597 Mt Alexander Road, which was constructed c.1887 as three Victorian era shops and residences, and with later additions associated with the Chung On Cafe/Restaurant is significant. The upper facade has a Mannerist composition, which is divided into three bays by rendered brick pilasters. These pilasters, which incorporate decorative elements including masks and consoles, extend through the cornice to form the parapet. The parapet, which has pressed cement balusters, conceals the corrugated galvanised steel clad hipped roof of the building from view from Mount Alexander Road. Each bay of the upper portion of the facade contains a window. These windows have been unsympathetically altered. Flanking each window are moulded rendered

pilasters that are similar to the others on the facade (but absent from these are masks and consoles, which may be extant but concealed behind the upper awning). Above the window at centre is a segmental pediment, and above the windows at each end are triangular pediments. A portion of the frieze, which is disproportionately deep, is visible at each end of the facade. Overlaid upon the original Victorian era decorative scheme are the alterations and additions for the Chung On Restaurant. This includes:

- A new steeply pitched awning with splayed corners. The fascia of the awning is lined in coloured lights and neon and remnants of the original neon signage including dragons flanking a circular motif sit astride the front above the entrance. There is a second, small awning, just below the original cornice.
- New shopfronts clad in red mosaic tile with large window openings. The wide, splayed, front entrance is recessed and there are square tiles with Chinese motifs set into the undercroft above the entrance.
- Remnants of the restaurant colour scheme, which comprised red to the pilasters and green to the cornices and wall medallions.

Alterations and additions at the rear of the building, and any alterations made to the facade after the closure of the restaurant in 2007 are not significant.

### **How is it significant?**

The former Chung On Restaurant is of local historic, social, and architectural significance to the City of Moonee Valley.

### **Why is it significant?**

It is historically and architecturally significant as a typical example of a speculative commercial development associated with the land boom in Moonee Ponds. While Mt Alexander Road developed as a retail area prior to Puckle Street much of the early development has been lost and the significance of this place is enhanced by its rarity value as one of the few relatively intact nineteenth century shop rows to survive. (Criteria A & D)

The conversion to the Chung On Cafe/Restaurant is historically and socially significant as evidence of the influence of migration upon the post-war development of suburban Melbourne. Restaurants established by migrants, which offered an opportunity for social and economic advancement, profoundly changed public dining in Victoria and the Chung On Restaurant was one of the largest and most successful not only in Moonee Ponds, but also suburban Melbourne. While Chinese people have lived in the City of Moonee Valley since gold rush times there are few tangible places to illustrate this history and this building is a good and well-known example of a successful and long-standing business established by Chinese migrants, which is demonstrated by the distinctive additions made to the facade. It is also significant for its strong and continuing associations with the Doon family, in particular Dick and Danny who became prominent and influential members of the local and Chinese communities. (Criteria A, B, D & H)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Moonee Valley - Moonee Ponds Activity Centre Heritage Study (2011), David Helms Heritage Planning & Management, 2011;
Construction dates	1887, 1975,
Other Names	Shops, Chung On Cafe, Chinese restaurant,
Hermes Number	162940
Property Number	

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## **Physical Description 1**

The former Chung On Restaurant occupied what was originally three separate shops in a two-storey late-Victorian brick commercial building on the west side of Mount Alexander Road in Moonee Ponds, southeast of

the Moonee Ponds Junction.

Overlaid upon the original Victorian era decorative scheme are the alterations and additions made c.1975 after the restaurant expanded to occupy all three shops. These include two awnings, which are clad in corrugated galvanised steel. The smaller of these awnings is situated on the frieze on the upper level, and a larger awning projects from the facade above the ground floor shopfronts. The fascia of the larger awning is lined in coloured lights and neon and remnants of the original neon signage. The awnings make a vague reference to the roof forms of pagodas in China. Similarly, the red detailing of the paint scheme is evocative of traditional Chinese architecture, with red being associated with good luck. Other elements that reinforce the Chinese character include a pair of metal dragons on the awning and the square tiles with Chinese motifs set into the undercroft above the wide splayed entrance. The shopfronts, which are of recent origin, are divided into three bays. Two (central and left) have doorways, while the remaining bay has a large bi-fold window. Bi-fold windows also flank the central doorway. The walls of the shopfronts are clad in red ceramic tiles.

Despite these alterations, the building's earlier Mannerist composition is still intact on the upper part of the facade. This is divided into three bays by rendered brick pilasters. These pilasters, which incorporate decorative elements including masks and consoles, extend through the cornice to form the parapet. The parapet, which has pressed cement balusters, conceals the corrugated galvanised steel clad hipped roof of the building from view from Mount Alexander Road.

Each bay of the upper portion of the facade contains a window. These windows have been unsympathetically altered. The width of the window openings has been reduced (bricked-in at their sides), and much of the original window frames have been removed and replaced by unsympathetic metal frames. Steel grills have been inserted below the springing line of the arches of each of the window openings. Flanking each window are moulded rendered pilasters that are similar to the others on the facade (but absent from these are masks and consoles, which may be extant but concealed behind the upper awning). Above the window at centre is a segmental pediment, and above the windows at each end are triangular pediments. A portion of the frieze, which is disproportionately deep, is visible at each end of the facade.

The building is in good condition and has a relatively high degree of external integrity to the two development stages (c.1887 and c.1975). The interior was not inspected, however, what appear to be parts of the original decor are visible through the front window. The rear boundary of the subject site extends along the east side of Ascot Vale Road. The rear of the building, as visible from Ascot Vale Road, is utilitarian in character and of little appreciable heritage value.

The buildings in this part of Mount Alexander Road are eclectic in scale, period and style. The building on the subject site is one of three Victorian buildings on the west side of Mount Alexander Road between the junction and an unnamed lane (to its south). The remainder of the buildings on this side of the road are Post-war Modernist buildings of no heritage significance, and little appreciable architectural value. The opposite side of Mount Alexander Road, southeast of Moonee Ponds Junction retains a little more Pre World War II character, albeit its scale and rhythm has been disrupted by unsympathetic Modernist development.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

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