

# GEORGE HOTEL



GEORGE HOTEL SOHE  
2008



H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
general view 2009



H0706 George Hotel general



H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
Fitzroy Street facade 2009



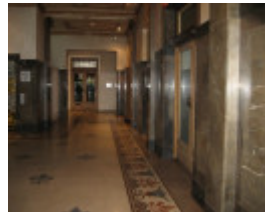
H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
1925 Fitzroy Street entrance  
to hotel 2009



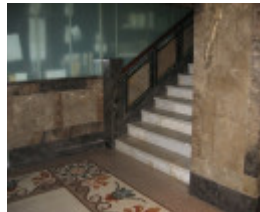
H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
ballroom 2009



H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
Detail of ballroom 2009



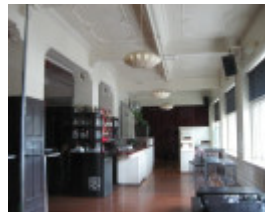
H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
1925 wing ground floor from  
entrance 2009



H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
1925 wing ground floor stairs  
2009



H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
1925 wing stair detail at first  
floor 2009



H0706 George Hotel St Kilda  
1930 front addition to 1880  
building 2009



H0706 george hotel revised plan (May 2009)

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### **Location**

123-127 FITZROY STREET AND 2-10 GREY STREET ST KILDA, PORT PHILLIP CITY

### **Municipality**

PORT PHILLIP CITY

### **Level of significance**

Registered

### **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H0706

### **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO127

### **VHR Registration**

November 9, 1988

### **Amendment to Registration**

August 13, 2009

### **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 28, 1999

What is significant?

The George Hotel, Fitzroy Street, St Kilda was first established as the Terminus Hotel in 1857. It was constructed opposite the St Kilda Railway Station, the terminus of the Melbourne to St Kilda railway line, which was opened the same year. A number of additions were made to the building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, extending the hotel to Grey Street and greatly enlarging the premises.

Already a popular resort, the advent of the railway line to St Kilda increased the number of visitors arriving in St Kilda and the three storey, 26-roomed Terminus Hotel was ideally situated to benefit from this. By the 1860s St Kilda was one of Melbourne's most populous suburbs and it was during this period that the hotel was renamed the George Hotel and the land between the hotel and Grey Street was purchased by its owner, Charles Forster. The Terminus Hotel thrived while many others in the district had closed by the 1860s.

In 1873 Frederick Wimpole purchased the George Hotel and a very long association between this family and the hotel began. Wimpole, who became mayor of St Kilda in 1886, built an adjoining two storey terrace to the west, to accommodate his family. Known as the cottage, it was designed by architect Robert Cowl. In 1880 a three storey building, containing 25 rooms and named the George Family Hotel, was constructed further west towards Grey Street, to designs by John E. Vardy. In 1890 a fourth floor was added to this section.

A four storey building, designed by architect Harry B. Gibbs and erected at the corner of Grey Street in 1885-86, was Wimpole's largest addition to the George Hotel. Another wing, containing a large dining room at first floor level, was constructed at the rear of the George Family Hotel section in c1886. These additions resulted in the George Hotel becoming one of the largest hotels in suburban Melbourne. By the early twentieth century the George Hotel had over one hundred rooms, numerous bars, lounges and a dining room and was amongst Melbourne's leading hotels.

Further works were undertaken at the hotel in the 1920s in an attempt to modernise its appearance. In 1923 an arcade of shops was built at the rear of the hotel, and in 1925 a five storey hotel extension, designed by H. V. Gillespie, was constructed on the site of the 1873 cottage building. In 1930 a building with matching facade was constructed across the Fitzroy Street facade of the George Family Hotel, providing additional hotel rooms.

The visible facades of the present hotel comprise the 1885-86 corner building and the 1925 and 1930 additions. The corner building is in a Renaissance Revival style, typical of the 1880 boom era in Melbourne. It is a parapetted, rendered brick building of asymmetrical composition, with curved corner and circular corner tower, which was originally domed.

Cornices clearly divide the facades of this building into three horizontal sections, which incorporate pilastered bays, some with open loggias. The adjoining 1925 and 1930 facade adopts a restrained classical style, with balustraded parapet and vertical bays of canted oriel windows. A deep entrance portico leads to the interior of the 1925 building which is decorated with marble wall panelling, ceiling panelling and a mosaic floor. The rear dining room is a well lit Victorian space with Corinthian wall pilasters and bracketted ceiling beams dividing the large room into windowed bays.

The hotel had a variety of occupants in the early twentieth century, including permanent residents, overseas visitors, regular country guests and occasional guests. By the early 1950s St Kilda had attracted less desirable visitors, and in 1958 the Wimpole family sold the George Hotel after owning it for more than eighty years. The public areas of the hotel were subsequently updated and it became a fashionable venue in the early 1960s. In particular the c1886 dining room became the Crystal, and later the Seaview, Ballroom, and this space was used for many live musical performances through to the 1970s.

The original Terminus Hotel building and the George Arcade at the rear of the building were demolished in 1976 to accommodate a drive-in bottle shop. That same year the hotel was renamed the Seaview Hotel.

After closure in 1987, the hotel was purchased by Donlevy Fitzpatrick and restoration and apartment conversion was undertaken in the early 1990s. Much of the original decoration was reproduced at this time.

How is it significant?

The George Hotel, St Kilda is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The George Hotel, St Kilda is of historical significance for its associations with the development of St Kilda into a premier seaside resort. Its fabric provides an illustration of the early development of this suburb, its popularity then subsequent demise in the mid-twentieth century and its rebirth in more recent years.

The George Hotel, St Kilda is of historical significance for its association with the Wimpole family who operated the hotel for over eighty years and occupied it continuously over these years. Frederick Wimpole in particular developed it into a leading hotel establishment.

The George Hotel, St Kilda is of historical significance as one of the largest hotels constructed in suburban Melbourne from the mid-1880s.

The George Hotel, St Kilda is of historical significance for its fashionable use by long term residents until the 1950s and as a popular resort for wealthy travellers from both overseas and the country from the 1880s.

The George Hotel, St Kilda is of historical significance for its popular use as a live music venue in the 1960s and 1970s. Many local musicians began illustrious careers at the Crystal, and later the Seaview, Ballroom.

The George Hotel, St Kilda is of architectural significance as a fine example of the work of H. B. Gibbs, who designed the corner building (1885-86) and the dining room wing (c1886). The former dining room, now known as the ballroom, is of note as a large, decorated Victorian space which accommodated the large number of guests at the hotel.

The George Hotel, St Kilda is of architectural significance for the decorative interior of the public spaces of the 1925 building.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

## **Specific Exemptions:**

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan.

General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable.

Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

### **Exterior:**

\* Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.

\* Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.

### **Interior of public spaces (including the ballroom, foyers and bars):**

\*Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.

\*Demolition or removal of non-original stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings or non-original wall linings, bathroom partitions and tiling, sanitary fixtures and fittings, kitchen wall tiling and equipment, lights, built-in cupboards, cubicle partitions and the like.

\*Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.

\*Removal of non-original tiling or concrete slabs in wet areas provided there is no damage to or alteration of original structure or fabric.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and that the central plant is concealed.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of electric clocks, public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

\*Installation of plant within the roof space.

\*Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.

### **Interior of apartments:**

\* All interior alterations are permit exempt, excluding structural alterations, provided such work has no effect on the exterior of the buildings.

Construction dates	1857, 1873, 1880, 1884, 1925, 1930,
Architect/Designer	Cowl, RR, Gibbs, Harry B,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	1108
Property Number	

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## History

### HISTORY OF PLACE

St Kilda developed as a popular village after the first land sales in 1842 due to its proximity to Melbourne, its seaside location and its views of the bay. By the 1860s, it had developed into one of Melbourne's most populous suburbs, stimulated by the opening of the Melbourne to St Kilda Railway Line in 1857. Already a popular resort at this time, this increased the number of visitors to St Kilda. The Terminus Hotel was one of a number of hotels built in St Kilda to cater for increasing numbers of holiday makers and daytrippers, and as a venue for meetings and functions. The advent of the cable tram to St Kilda in 1888 provided further impetus to the development of the suburb as a popular recreational destination.

The three storey, 26-roomed Terminus Hotel (later the George Hotel) was opened the same year that the railway line from Melbourne was opened and it was ideally located opposite the railway terminus to benefit from this. Proposals to extend the line beyond Fitzroy Street continued into the 1880s. This resulted in the siting of the hotel well east of Grey Street, the splaying of the front west corner of the building and the undeveloped character of the Grey Street corner block until the mid 1880s.

In 1873 Frederick Wimpole purchased the George Hotel and began a very long association between the Wimpole family and this hotel. He arrived in Victoria in 1858 and began his first venture in hotels the following year at the National Hotel, South Gisborne. After marrying Emma Hall in 1861, they moved to the Volunteer Hotel, Daylesford, then moved to the city by 1870. He became the publican of the George Hotel, St Kilda later that year, purchased it three years later and immediately began a construction programme that continued for a number of years. The hotel then remained in the Wimpole family until 1958.

Frederick Wimpole was elected to the St Kilda Council in 1875 and was a councillor until 1878. On his return to local politics in 1886 he was elected mayor. He promoted himself and his hotel by publishing *Wimpole's Visitors' Guide to Melbourne, its Suburbs and Interesting Places of Resort* in 1881 and acquired great wealth through various share holdings. He died in 1905 and his son, Frederick junior took over the responsibility of the hotel. Various members of the Wimpole family lived at the George hotel until it was sold in 1958.

Wimpole built a two storey terrace, to the west of the hotel building, to accommodate his family. Known as the cottage, it was designed by architect Robert Cowl. In 1880 a three storey building, containing 25 rooms and named the George Family Hotel, was constructed further west towards Grey Street, to designs by John E. Vardy. In 1890 a fourth floor was added to this section.

A four storey building, designed by architect Harry B. Gibbs and erected at the corner of Grey Street in 1885-86, was Wimpole's largest addition to the George Hotel. Another wing was constructed at the rear of the George Family Hotel section in c1886, containing a large dining room at first floor level, later known as a ballroom.

These additions resulted in the George Hotel becoming one of the largest hotels in suburban Melbourne. By the early twentieth century the George Hotel had over one hundred rooms, numerous bars, lounges and a dining room and was amongst Melbourne's leading hotels.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the St Kilda foreshore was developed and many recreational and refreshment facilities were constructed. The suburb gained a reputation as an extremely popular destination, with fun parks, dance venues, picture palaces, tea rooms and hotels encouraging this popularity. Through the 1920s the construction of flats in St Kilda became very popular and a new, streamlined architecture became prevalent.

Probably as a result of this, further works were undertaken at the George hotel in the 1920s, to modernise the appearance of the building. In 1923 the George Arcade of shops was built at the rear of the hotel, and in 1925 a five storey hotel extension, designed by H. V. Gillespie, was constructed on the site of the 1873 cottage building. In 1930 a building containing additional hotel rooms was constructed across the Fitzroy Street facade of the George Family Hotel. The interiors of the hotel remained essentially unchanged.

The hotel had a variety of occupants in the early twentieth century. These included permanent residents, overseas visitors, regular country guests and occasional guests, such as holiday makers and honeymooners. The hotel was described as having a cosmopolitan character in the 1930s, but by the early 1950s the area had attracted a less desirable component of society. In 1958 the Wimpole family sold the George Hotel after owning it, and residing there, for about 85 years.

The new owners of the hotel began to modernise the hotel and update the public areas. The dining room was transformed into a nightclub, the Crystal Room, and a small cocktail bar known as the Birdcage was inserted into the foyer of the 1925 building. Through the early 1960s the George Hotel was a highly fashionable place to go. The accommodation side of the business initially fared well but then declined, as did the use of the hotel as a venue by the late 1970s. This reflected the demise of the St Kilda area as it attracted a less desirable resident.

The original Terminus Hotel building was demolished in 1976 and the site became a driveway for the hotel's drive-in bottle shop, built at the rear of the building. The George Arcade building, built to the south of George Lane in 1923, was also demolished.

The hotel was renamed the Seaview Hotel in 1976 in an attempt to change its image, and the former dining room became known as the Seaview Ballroom. It was used as a musical venue and was an important centre for live rock in the 1970s. From the late 1970s to the mid-1980s it was the venue for many punk music concerts and other forms of music. Many local bands that performed in the ballroom gained later fame, including Paul Kelly, Hunters and Collectors and INXS.

After struggling with its reputation, the hotel was closed in 1987. In the early 1990s, Donlevy Fitzpatrick bought the George Hotel and began a process of restoration and a conversion to apartments. The hotel had been closed for four years and squatters, thieves, fire and flood had taken their toll on the building.

Restoration work was undertaken in 1993 after extensive deterioration of the building had occurred. This included the reproduction of former Victorian detailing.

The section of the George Hotel at the corner of Fitzroy and Grey Streets was registered by Heritage Victoria in 1988. The remainder of the building was nominated by the National Trust in 1998 and again by Peter Barrett in 2008.

## Previous History

The George Hotel, Fitzroy Street, St Kilda was first established as the Terminus Hotel in 1857. It was constructed opposite the St Kilda Railway Station, the terminus of the Melbourne to St Kilda railway line, which was opened that same year. A number of additions were made to the building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, extending the hotel to Grey Street and greatly enlarging the premises.

Already a popular resort, the advent of the railway line to St Kilda increased the number of visitors arriving in St Kilda and the three storey, 26-roomed Terminus Hotel was ideally situated to benefit from this. By the 1860s St Kilda was one of Melbourne's most populous suburbs and it was during this period that the hotel was renamed the George Hotel and the land between the hotel and Grey Street was purchased by its owner, Charles Forster. The Terminus Hotel thrived while many others in the district had closed by the 1860s.

In 1873 Frederick Wimpole purchased the George Hotel and built a two storey terrace adjacent to it to the west, to accommodate his family. Known as the cottage, it was designed by architect Robert Cowl. In 1880 a three storey building, containing 25 rooms and named the George Family Hotel, was constructed further west towards Grey Street, to designs by John E. Vardy. In 1890 a fourth floor was added to this section.

A four storey building, designed by architect Harry B. Gibbs and erected at the corner of Grey Street in 1884-6, was Wimpole's largest addition to the George Hotel. Another wing was constructed at the rear of the George Family Hotel section in c1886, containing a large dining room at first floor level, later known as a ballroom.

These additions resulted in the George Hotel becoming one of the largest hotels in suburban Melbourne. By the early twentieth century the George Hotel had over one hundred rooms, numerous bars, lounges and a dining room and was amongst Melbourne's leading hotels.

Further works were undertaken at the hotel in the 1920s. In 1923 the George Arcade was built at the rear, containing shops and hotel rooms, and in 1925 the two storey terrace, built in 1873, was demolished and replaced by a five storey hotel building designed by H. V. Gillespie. In 1930 a building containing additional hotel rooms was constructed across the facade of the George Family Hotel.

The first two stages of the hotel have been demolished; the original Terminus Hotel in 1976 and the adjacent two storey terrace in 1925. The earliest extant section of the hotel is therefore the 1880 George Family Hotel which remains behind the 1930 extension. The George Arcade was also demolished in 1976.

Restoration work was undertaken in 1993 after extensive deterioration of the building had occurred. This included the reproduction of former Victorian detailing.

**The draft statement of significance and the above history were produced as part of an Online Data Upgrade Project 2008. Sources were as follows:**

Peter Andrew Barrett *The George Conservation Management Plan*. Melbourne 2007

G. Upton. *The George, St Kilda Life and Times*. Melbourne 2001

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*Wimpole's visitors' guide to Melbourne, its suburbs, and interesting places of resort.* (Melbourne : A.H. Massina, 1881)

This guide was published primarily for sale to the visitors to Melbourne for the 1880-1881 International Exhibition. Frederick Wimpole was the proprietor of the George Hotel, opposite the railway terminus at St. Kilda. The guide includes twelve "drives round Melbourne" by J. H. "the racy correspondent of the *Argus and the Australasian*"; J. H. being James Hingston. These drives take us as far afield as Keilor, Dandenong, "Bulla Bulla", and Eltham, all of which are described in detail.

## **Plaque Citation**

Established in 1857, the buildings of this large imposing hotel date from the 1880s and 1920s. Operated by the Wimpole family for 80 years from 1873, it became a leading establishment for travellers and residents.

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

*a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history*

The George Hotel is illustrative of the development of St Kilda into one of Victoria's early resorts. The sequence of changes to the fabric demonstrates periods of change in the history of St Kilda, its early development, its popularity then subsequent demise in the mid-twentieth century and its rebirth in more recent years.

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

*d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.*

The George Hotel is one of the largest hotels constructed in suburban Melbourne from the mid-1880s. It is a fine example of the work of Melbourne architect, H. B. Gibbs, who designed the corner building (1885-86) and the dining room wing (c1886).



*e Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.*

The interior of the large decorated c1886 dining room and the portico, foyer and stairs of the 1925 building at the George Hotel, exhibit fine characteristics of their respective periods.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

*g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.*

An important use of the George Hotel was as a fashionable residence by long term occupants until the 1950s and as a popular hotel for wealthy travellers from both overseas and the country from the 1880s. In the 1960s and 1970s it was important for its popular use as a live music venue.

*h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.* Frederick Wimpole was a hotelier, mayor of St Kilda and leader in developing Victoria's tourist attractions. He was responsible for developing the George Hotel into a leading hotel establishment.

## **Extent of Registration**

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 0706 in the categories described as Heritage Place.

George Hotel  
123-127 Fitzroy Street and 2-10 Grey Street  
St Kilda  
Port Phillip City

### EXTENT

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 706 held by the Executive Director, being all of the land described in Certificates of Title Volume 5715 Folio 884.
2. All the building marked B1 on Diagram 706 held by the Executive Director.

Dated 13 August 2009

Jim Gard'ner  
Acting Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 33 13 August 2009 2185]

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*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.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*