

Kent House, 15 Swanston Street, Queenscliff



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Location

15 Swanston Street, QUEENSCLIFF, QUEENSCLIFFE BOROUGH

Municipality

QUEENSCLIFFE BOROUGH

Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO55

Heritage Listing

Queenscliffe Borough

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 1, 1982

Statement of Significance as recorded under the Queenscliff Heritage Study 2009

Kent House is of historical and architectural significance to the Borough of Queenscliffe. It is historically significant as a substantial historic residence in Queenscliff, which supported an earlier and similarly substantial house. Prominent owners associated with the property, if not specifically the 1909 house, included Melbourne manufacturer William Wright, the Hon Thomas C Harwood (member of the Legislative Council from 1899-1912), and George Admans, former Queenscliffe Borough Mayor and owner of the Grand Hotel. Architecturally, although additions and modifications have made it difficult to read the original 1909 components, *Kent House* retains important elements including the prominent observatory tower over the front entrance, with its distinctive detailing and treatment; and the post-supported verandah which wraps around most of the exterior albeit it is partly enclosed. The generous grounds/setting to the house also enhance its presentation, and an appreciation of it as a significant residence.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Queenscliffe - Queenscliffe Urban Conservation Study, Allom Lovell & Associates P/L, Architects, 1982; Queenscliffe - Queenscliffe Heritage Study, Lovell Chen, 2009;
Construction dates	1859,
Hermes Number	120759
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

15 Swanston Street was described in 1863-4 as an eleven-room stone and brick house with a slate roof and a good garden. It was valued higher than any other private house in Queenscliff. Four years passed and the valuation rose again, the property being leased out in that year to George Steavenson.(4)

Physical Description 2

The new house had an M-hip roof, a concave-roof verandah to the south, west and eastern faces and a glazed observatory tower. Part of the western verandah was enclosed and the lower walls clad with shingles. The round iron columns and simple timber balustrading still exist on parts of the verandah with the verandah floor supported on stone piers much as with El Tambo. Like El Tambo, double glazed doors open onto this verandah.(7)

The observatory tower, which is the most prominent feature, is styled in a similar way to other towers of the period, such as at 50 King Street; the railing, timber eaves-brackets with fretted tulip-infills and the tapering stuccoed colonettes provide the character of the tower.

Other items of interest include an established exotic garden, a timber coachhouse with scalloped barge-boards which stands to the north of Kent House and a reputed underground ballroom.(8)

Physical Description 3

Extract from the 2009 study

The original building at 15 Swanston Street was described in 1863-64 as an 11-room stone and brick house with a slate roof and a good garden. However, it was burnt to the ground in August 1904.

The existing building on the site largely dates from 1909 and is a single-storey, rendered masonry residence with Colorbond-clad hipped roof forms. Several rendered chimneys punctuate the roof. A verandah supported on round iron columns, with a floor supported on stone piers, wraps around almost the entire house but has been enclosed in parts, particularly on the south and west elevations, and part of the north, with timber-framed glazing to the upper walls and the lower walls clad with shingles.

The observatory tower, which is the most prominent feature, is positioned over the front entrance on the west elevation. It is styled in a similar way to other local towers of the period, such as at 50 King Street; and has a square plan, pairs of arch-headed timber-framed windows, timber eaves brackets with fretted tulip-infills, and tapering rendered colonettes. A similar style of fretwork has also been applied to the gable ends and gambrels of the house as well as to the gable on the rear (east) of the verandah.

A timber coach house with scalloped barge-boards stands to the north of the house, within the property boundary.

Later additions and modifications to the residence tend to obscure and make it difficult to read the original 1909 sections of building. It is also noted that the east and west components of the roof/building (including chimneys), separated by the tower, differ in form which potentially indicates different stages of construction and/or architectural treatment (this would be confirmed through closer inspection).

A non-original timber picket fence is located on the property boundary to Swanston Street, with a timber-gated entrance and contemporary timber pergola/lych gate over. A basement level is reputed to contain a ballroom.[i]

[i] QS 12.1.1918.

Intactness

GOOD

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/>