
161 Commercial Road, SOUTH YARRA

Location

161 Commercial Road, SOUTH YARRA VIC 3141 - Property No 32353

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area Significant

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO126

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Part of the Chapel Street Heritage Overlay Precinct

What is significant?

Chapel Street is a remarkably intact commercial strip comprised principally of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century shops. A number of notable individual buildings are located within the street. These include buildings of State significance such as the Prahran Town Hall buildings (HO15, VHR H0203) and the Prahran Arcade (HO16, VHR H1960) and large numbers of retail and commercial premises of local significance. This latter group includes shops from the 1850s to 1860s (Nos 24-26, 92, 302 and others), premises from the boom and Edwardian periods and buildings across the various periods of development of very high individual significance such as, the former CBA Bank (No 340-44) and former Brown, Corke & Co buildings (No265-7) and the Edwardian emporia. Postwar development is uncommon within the precinct and, with few exceptions, is generally recessive in character

The central sections of Chapel Street between Malvern Road and High Street retain the highest concentration of significant buildings. The character of the street derives from an impressive collection of Victorian and Edwardian retail buildings. However its most impressive buildings are the early twentieth century shopping emporia, a building type more usually associated with the central city shopping district. These emporia are all located between Commercial Road and High Street, and include the Big Store (No 303), Osment Building (No 197-207),

Love and Lewis (No 321-23), the Colosseum (No 229-241), and Read's Stores (No 325). Greville Street developed as an important thoroughfare linking the early civic and retail strip to the railway station. It is more modest in scale than Chapel Street, but dates from the same broad period(s) of development and contributes to the character and significance of the area. Likewise, other satellite elements such as, St Matthews Church, Cecil and Anchor Places and some, nearby, residential buildings fall outside of the retail strip but illustrate the range of activities that were drawn to the early retail centre.

South of High Street and north of Commercial Road (and in Commercial Road itself), the scales of the streetscapes are similar to those of other Melbourne suburban shopping strips. Streetscapes north of Commercial Road retain long sequences of shops and retail groups of ornate boom-era premises such as Conway's buildings, (Nos 411-25), 393-401 and the intact group to the east side of Chapel street between Malvern Road and Grey Street, alongside important Edwardian premises such as the group at Nos 403-409. The former Jam Factory dominates the northern section of the precinct. South of High Street the built form is similar but is realised at a more modest scale. Buildings such as 38A-40 Chapel Street and early retail premises and streetscapes, particularly around Vine, Green and McIlwrick Streets, characterise the area. Several notable Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts have survived in this section of the street.

The former Jam Factory and sections of the OT Cordials Factory around Hillingdon Place recall the early manufacturing industries which once existed in the area. Each retains an early chimney - the last two structures of this type to survive within the Municipality.

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The consistent two-storey height and modest scale of the built form north of Commercial Road and South of High Street;
- The pre-eminence of the Edwardian-era emporia between Commercial Road and High Street;
- Development to front and side site boundaries of allotments;
- Intactness of built form to its original state particularly above verandah level;
- The general absence of car parking accessed from the Chapel Street;
- The general absence of visible upper level additions;
- Mass, rather than lightweight, construction arising from buildings realised in face or rendered brick;
- The consistent patterns of fenestration, with glazed shopfronts at ground floor level and small punched openings above;
- Long sequences of Victorian or Edwardian verandahs;
- Early shopfronts, throughout the precinct but particularly in Windsor; and
- Individually significant buildings throughout the precinct.

How is it significant?

Chapel Street is of architectural, historical and social significance. The section between Commercial Road and High Street is significant at a National level, the sections north of Commercial Road and south of High Street, are significant at a State level.

Why is it significant?

Chapel Street is architecturally significant for its intact streetscapes of nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings, particularly its concentration of boom period shops and its large, early twentieth century shopping emporia usually more closely associated with the central city shopping area. These emporia are architecturally significant for the large range of styles used and their references to American rather than British antecedents. While a number of remarkable buildings and urban environments survive around Chapel street, it is the general level of intactness and the consistency of scale within each block that makes the whole street one of great importance.

Chapel Street is historically significant as one of the most impressive of the shopping strips that developed along Melbourne's cable tram routes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is a reflection of the importance of the public transport networks, that developed in Melbourne in the second half of the nineteenth century, to the growth of the suburban shopping strips. The early development of the strip remains legible through modest shops, particularly in Windsor, and later, often more substantial and more highly-decorated, boom period buildings which survive throughout the strip. Large, early twentieth century shopping emporia clearly demonstrate the pre-World War I retail boom although continuing development into the interwar period remains evident. The area is significant as a reflection of the changing shopping habits of Melburnians between the mid-nineteenth century and the present day. Some notable industrial buildings recall the important role of manufacturing in the area until the relatively recent past.

Chapel Street is socially significant as a one of Melbourne's favourite shopping, recreational and entertainment areas for over a century. It was the most important suburban shopping centre in Melbourne in the early twentieth century, and has again become a fashionable shopping strip, for locals as well as for tourists.

Individually significant buildings

Part of the significance of HO126 derives from the presence of large numbers of buildings of high individual significance. Buildings graded A1, A2 or B are considered to be significant buildings under the City of Stonnington Planning Scheme.

No individual building citations have been prepared as part of this report. Building gradings and brief descriptions are provided in the Schedule of Buildings appended to this citation. However, the Prahran Conservation Study (Nigel Lewis and Associates, 1983) provided detailed assessments of some, very highly-graded buildings within the precinct. Many of these buildings were subsequently protected under individual heritage controls. Others were protected as part of the broad Chapel Street/Commercial Road/Greville Street/Donald Street/Albert Street Precinct, HO126. The Study remains a reference document under the City of Stonnington Planning Scheme and material produced as part of that Study should be read in conjunction with this citation

The following buildings in HO126 were assessed as part of the Prahran Conservation Study. Page numbers in brackets refer to locations in the Study.

- Osment Building, 197-207 Chapel Street, Prahran (DC/5)
- The Colosseum Building, 197-207 Chapel Street, Prahran DC/7)
- Former Brown, Corke & Co buildings, 265-267 Chapel Street (DC/10)
- The Big Store, 303 Chapel Street, Prahran (DC/13)
- Love & Lewis Store, 321-323A Chapel Street, Prahran
- Former Charles Reads Store 341 Chapel Street, Prahran (DC/17)
- Conways Buildings 411-425 Chapel Street, South Yarra (DC/24)
- 38A-40 Chapel Street, Windsor (12/4)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - City of Stonnington - Heritage Precincts - Intact Shop Fronts Survey 2011, Context P/L, 2011; Stonnington - HO126 Chapel Street Precinct Citation Review, John Statham, 2013;
Hermes Number	150854
Property Number	

Shopfront

Intact elements: Metal frame (overpainted), triangular doorway head, cantilevered verandah with pressed metal soffit, Tudor style glazed timber door.

Physical Description 1

Part two-storey Victorian retail group

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/>