
Ardvarnish



65 Murphy Street, South Yarra



65 Murphy Street, South Yarra

Location

65 Murphy Street SOUTH YARRA, STONNINGTON CITY

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO563

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 16, 2016

What is significant?

'Ardvarnish', at 65 Murphy Street, South Yarra, is significant. It was built in two major stages. A single-storey, six-room brick house was constructed here in 1872 for butcher James Bennet. Around 1881 Joseph Harris moved to the property and in 1887-88 he engaged architect-builder Norman Hitchcock to remodel and enlarge the house, adding an upper storey and three-storey tower. The house has rendered masonry walls and a verandah to the ground floor only, with a balustrade terrace above.

The front fence is sympathetic but not significant.

How is it significant?

'Ardvarnish' is of local architectural, aesthetic and historic (associational) significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Architecturally, 'Ardvarnish' is a highly intact example of a substantial Victorian Italianate towered villa, with a picturesque asymmetrical composition created by the projecting three-storey tower to the facade. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, it is distinguished by the exuberant use of applied cast-cement classical ornament in a somewhat naïve manner, characteristic of Norman Hitchcock's work. This includes swags below the eaves, vermiculated panels, Corinthian pilasters, tower balustrade, and human faces. The design is also of interest for its skilful integration of the 1872 ground floor and front verandah into the enlarged 1888 house. (Criterion E)

Historically, the house is significant for its associations with notable Melbourne architect Norman Hitchcock and with his client, notable local resident Joseph Harris (1833-1925), horticulturalist, nursery proprietor, local Justice of the Peace, Mayor of Prahran (1874-1876), and MLA for South Yarra (1880-1894). (Criterion H)

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| Heritage Study/Consultant | Stonnington - City of Stonnington Victorian Houses Study, City of Stonnington, 2016; |
| Construction dates | 1887, |
| Hermes Number | 200119 |
| Property Number | |

Physical Description 1

'Ardvarnish', at 65 Murphy Street, South Yarra, is a towered Italianate mansion set behind a generous front garden but with narrow side setbacks, particularly on the north side. At the front of the property is a sympathetic timber and ripple-iron fence (the same seen in the 1960s John Collins photo, but unlikely to be original).

The northern third of its facade is dominated by a three-storey balustrade tower, while the southern two thirds sit behind a corniced parapet. The walls are finished in cement render with a wide range of cast-cement ornament. The hipped roof is not visible from the ground, but it comprises three parallel hips, running east-west. Chimneys are rendered, with deep cornices and curved wythes at the top.

The verandah stretches across the ground floor level and wraps around the projecting base of the tower. It is reached by a short flight of bluestone steps near the tower. At first-floor level there is only a balustrade, creating a large balcony. Verandah posts are of timber with a square profile, stop-chamfered middles, and built-up capitals. The verandah frieze sits within a timber frame with separate brackets below (the form of cast-iron typical of the 1870s). The frieze is in a rinceaux pattern with a flower within a circle. Posts are paired at the corners, with two brackets creating a Moorish arch between them. Above the ground floor is a deep cornice, enhanced by the use of an ogee-profile gutter at its top. The balustrade above has a heavy cast-iron pattern within a timber frame. Based on the materials and details, it appears that the ground-floor structure and elements have survived from the original 1872 stage of construction.

Windows to the first floor are typical one-over-one double-hung sashes, while the ground floor windows have very large four-over-four full-length sash windows with very large two-over sidelights. These ground-floor windows also appear to survive from the 1872 house.

Cast-cement ornament is focussed below the first-floor cornice and parapet, so dates from Norman Hitchcock's extension (as does the entire tower). There are large brackets below the cornice, with bulbous swags between them. Below this is a band of vermiculation. On the console at the south end of the parapet is a bearded man's head, set above a large corbel. The same treatment continues around the tower. Above it, the third level has pairs of small round-arched windows on each side, framed with Corinthian pilasters. There is a repeat of the frieze details (brackets alternating with swags and a vermiculated band), but with a lady's head on the end consoles. At the very top is a balustrade.

As viewed from the street, 'Ardvarnish' is highly intact to its 1888 form and details. The house is generally in a very good condition, though there is some deterioration visible to the cast-cement ornament at the top of the tower.

Local Historical Themes

This place illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, rev. 2009):

3.3.3 Speculators and land boomers

8.1.2 Seats of the mighty - Mansion estates in the nineteenth century

8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

It is also of historical interest for its association with later owner Lieutenant-General Sir Harry Chauvel (1865-1945), Australia's greatest cavalry leader, who led the Battle of Bethsheba in 1915, and his wife Lady Sybil Chauvel.

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/>