

May Street Precinct



19 May Street.jpg



36 & 38 May Street.jpg



50 May Street.jpg



May Street Precinct

Location

May Street and Wellington Street KEW, BOROONDARA CITY

Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO805

Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 2, 2019

What is Significant?

The May Street Precinct, comprising 5-45 and 10-50 May Street; and 134-144 Wellington Street, Kew, is significant. It was subdivided as part of three different estates in 1885 and 1886. About half of the houses along May Street were built during the nineteenth century, and tend to be modest single-fronted houses, mostly of timber with a few brick examples. The second half were built mostly from 1910 to 1920, including the three semi-detached pairs on Wellington Street.

The following properties are Non-contributory to the precinct: 22, 25, 31, 33 & 40 May Street. The remainder are Contributory.

How is it significant?

The May Street is of local historical, architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

The May Street Precinct is of historical significance as a tangible illustration of the late nineteenth-century subdivision pattern seen in Kew. The slow development of transport to the suburb meant that the area was characterised by large blocks of land and mansion estates for most of the century, with small suburban subdivisions occurring from the mid-1880s. May Street, which is only a single block long, illustrates this process as it was subdivided bit by bit, as part of three estates: Auburn Grange, Omnibus Reserve and Wellington Reserve estates. This piecemeal progression is demonstrated by the kink in the May Street roadway, which indicates the boundary between two of the estates. (Criterion A)

The precinct is of architectural significance for its collection of houses that represent the dwellings erected in the more modest parts of Kew during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These include a large collection of single-fronted Italianate timber cottages with typical features including hipped roofs with bracketed eaves, rendered chimneys with a cornice, simple front verandahs, and double-hung sash windows, some with sidelights. The Edwardian houses are Queen Anne in style and range from single-fronted cottages with a half-timbered front gable, to double-fronted samples with an asymmetrical facade. A number of early interwar houses have very similar designs, including the gable-fronted form and casement windows. (Criterion D)

The precinct is of aesthetic significance for a number of unusual or particularly ornate examples of Victorian and Edwardian dwellings, in particular the pair of bichrome brick semi-detached Victorian dwellings at 36 & 38 May Street with raking parapets ornamented with blind Serlian arches, and the two pairs of semi-detached Edwardian Queen Anne timber dwellings at 138-144 Wellington Street which have elaborate timber fretwork, leadlight windows and half-timbered gables with an Art Nouveau influence. (Criterion E)

Physical Description 1

May Street runs north-south between Wellington and Fitzwilliam streets, and has a jog in the middle of the street, which creates picturesque vistas. May Street is surfaced with asphalt, with concrete footpaths, and lined with immature birch trees on both sides of the street. Most houses are free standing and detached with small side setbacks, often with low front fences mostly in timber (no original fences survive).

The May Street Precinct comprises the houses on the west and east sides of May Street respectively at numbers 5-45 and 10-50; and six houses on the north-west corner of Wellington Street at numbers 134-144. May Street consists of a mixture of the late 19th and early 20th century houses and is characterised primarily by modest, single storey Victorian and Edwardian houses.

The majority of the Victorian houses are timber, clad in weatherboard or ashlar board, with a relatively small number of masonry examples. Many of the Victorian houses have low hipped roof with expressed eaves, typically seen in the 1870s and '80s domestic Italianate examples. The exceptions are 36, 38 and 46 May Street, which have parapeted gables, a form that became popular in the late 1880s. The semi-detached bichrome brick pair at 36 & 38 May Street has very unusual raking gable form to the front parapet, decorated with inset panels and a blind Serlian window with engaged Corinthian columns surrounded by a heavy moulding. Common window types used in the Victorian houses are double-hung sashes with or without sidelights.

The Edwardian houses in this precinct are characterised by front gabled bays with half-timbering in the apex, and double-fronted houses pair this with a high gabled roof form to create an asymmetrical facade composition, all typical of the Queen Anne style. A few houses retain their original terracotta tiled roofs. The majority of Edwardian places are single-fronted timber houses, with the exceptions of double-fronted houses at 5 & 27 May Street and the semi-detached pairs at 44 & 46 May Street (the only example in brick) and in Wellington Street. Most of the Edwardian dwellings have casement windows in groups of three with highlights, though a few double-hung sash windows.

Among the Edwardian houses, two semi-detached timber-framed pairs at 138 & 140 and 142 & 144 Wellington Street are notable for their high level of decorative details. The pairs are matched to resemble a single villa, with a shared roof clad in terracotta tiles with decorative ridgecapping and finials. Each pair has varied details in the chimneys and timber fretwork. The fretwork at 138 & 140 and curved half-timbering at 142 & 144 are unusual details reflecting Art Nouveau influences. The original door surrounds and highlights in all four dwellings are also notable.

134 & 136 Wellington Street are a weatherboard semi-detached pair with walls of roughcast render above a weatherboard dado. The simple and chunkier timber fretwork and timber posts in these dwellings represent a shift to the Arts and Crafts movement at the transition from the Edwardian to the interwar period.

Other houses in the precinct that illustrate this transition are early interwar houses that continue many of the forms and details of the Edwardian period, with a shift toward lower-pitch gable roofs. The single-fronted houses at 16 & 18 May Street, built c1920-25, are good examples of this continuity. The use of roughcast render for decorating small sections of weatherboard surfaces is still observed as well as the use of decorative notched weatherboards. Common verandah treatments continue to be turned timber posts and timber fretwork. The fine double-fronted Indian Bungalow at 5 May Street, built c1925-30, continues a type that was popular at the turn-of-the-century, with a high tiled and hipped roof continuing over the front verandah and walls of roughcast above a weatherboard dado. It has lost its original verandah posts.

Common external alterations, mainly to the Victorian houses, are to the verandah details, which often have replacement turned timber posts and reproduction cast-iron friezes. Some altered windows and modern carports

are observed in both Victorian and Edwardian places.

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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