# Malvern Road Commercial Precinct, Prahran

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| **Heritage Place:** Malvern Road Commercial Precinct | **HO Reference:** HO786 |
| **Address:** 330-340 Malvern Road, Prahran | **Citation status:** Final |
| | **Date Updated:** 5 April 2024 |
| **Designer:** 330-334 – Unknown; 336-340 – Henry Cheel | **Year of Construction:**1885-1886 |
| **Builder:** 330-334 – Unknown; 336-340 – Henry Cheel | |



Photograph of the Malvern Road Commercial Precinct at 330-340 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.




Location map and extent of the Malvern Road Commercial Precinct.

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| **Heritage Group:** Commercial | **Key Theme:** Retailing and hospitality |
| **Heritage Type:** Commercial precinct | **Key Sub-theme:** Serving local communities |
| **Significance Level:** Local | |

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| **Controls:** | ☐ | External paint controls | ☐ | Internal alteration controls | ☐ | Tree controls |
| | ☐ | Include on Victorian Heritage Register | ☐ | Incorporated Plans | ☐ | Outbuildings and fences not exempt |
| | ☐ | Prohibited uses may be permitted | ☐ | Aboriginal Heritage Place | ■ | Solar energy system controls |

## Statement of Significance

### *What is significant?*

The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct, comprising a group of Victorian era commercial shops on Malvern Road, is locally significant.

The precinct is wholly characterised by contributory graded buildings.

Character elements that contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The consistent allotment pattern established by Victorian era subdivisions, and the subsequent development created by the group of late Victorian commercial shops;
- The presence of intact two-storey Victorian shops designed in the Italianate style, reflecting the application of this style to commercial buildings in the late nineteenth century;
- The regularity and harmony of the two-storey Victorian shops characterised by rendered façades, pedimented parapets, parapets with Italianate balusters, timber sash hung windows, expressed architraves and a resolved corner treatment;
- The prominent corner siting of the two groups of shops, forming a striking entrance to Bendigo Street; and
- The uniformity of allotments, scale, siting, setbacks and built forms across the precinct.

### *How is it significant?*

The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it significant?*

The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct is of historical significance as a contained group of late Victorian era commercial properties constructed during the Victorian land boom period in 1885-86. An offshoot of the general proliferation of commercial shops along the intersection of Malvern Road and Chapel Street during the economic and land boom of the 1880s, the precinct demonstrates a key phase of commercial growth in the municipality. Over their lifetime, the shops in the precinct have housed a long list of shopkeepers that established their various trades and businesses to meet the needs of this rapidly developing community. As such, the precinct also illustrates the integral role retailing played in the City of Stonnington. (Criterion A)

The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct is of aesthetic significance as a group of substantially intact and visually harmonious late Victorian era shops. Noted late Victorian style features across the buildings include rendered facades, pedimented parapets, parapets with Italianate balusters, timber sash hung windows, expressed architraves and a resolved corner treatment. These features along with their unique siting combine to form a compelling, small pair of bookend shop rows that are visually distinctive exemplars of late Victorian era commercial properties. (Criterion E)

## HERCON Criteria Assessment

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|---|---|---|
| *A* | *Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history* | The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct is of historical significance as a contained group of late Victorian era commercial properties constructed during the Victorian land boom period in 1885-86. An offshoot |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | of the general proliferation of commercial shops along the intersection of Malvern Road and Chapel Street during the economic and land boom of the 1880s, the precinct demonstrates a key phase of commercial growth in the municipality. Over their lifetime, the shops in the precinct have housed a long list of shopkeepers that established their various trades and businesses to meet the needs of this rapidly developing community. As such, the precinct also illustrates the integral role retailing played in the City of Stonnington. |
| *B* | *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *C* | *Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *D* | *Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *E* | *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics* | The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct is of aesthetic significance as a group of substantially intact and visually harmonious late-Victorian era shops. Noted late Victorian style features across the buildings include rendered facades, pedimented parapets, parapets with Italianate balusters, timber sash hung windows, expressed architraves and a resolved corner treatment. These features along with their unique siting combine to form a compelling, small pair of bookend shop rows that are visually distinctive exemplars of late Victorian era commercial properties. |
| *F* | *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *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 the* | This place does not meet this criterion. |

| | | |
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| | *continuing and developing cultural traditions* | |
| *H* | *Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.* | This place does not meet this criterion. |

## Description

- ### Physical Analysis

The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct consists of two groups of attached Victorian era commercial buildings. The buildings are situated along the southern side of Malvern Road, flanking the junction with Bendigo Street. The streetscape along Malvern Road and Bendigo Street include bluestone kerbing, concrete gutters, and bitumen laid footpaths.

The two groups of two-storey commercial buildings include three shopfronts each. The masonry buildings present a similar massing and height and are finished with render or bagged brick. The buildings feature skillion and hipped roofs clad with corrugated sheet metal, however views of the roof profile are obscured by the raised façade parapet.

The group at 330-334 Malvern Road feature a chamfered façade addressing its corner position. The principal façade includes two shopfronts at 330 and 332, and a corner shopfront entrance at 334 Malvern Road. The façade does not include a full-length awning over the footpath, however contemporary canvas awnings have been installed at 330 and 332. The level course is demarcated by a cornice moulding across the façade with additional dentils at 334.

The upper level includes a central bank of paired timber sash windows with an extruded sill. The windows are topped with an arched pediment form supported with two moulded corbels. Each shop front is demarcated by pilasters with moulded detailing on the upper level. The architrave above the windows includes cornice mouldings with dentils. The façade is topped with a parapet featuring a repeated and overlapped moulded circular pattern and piers with a vermiculated shield panel. The chamfered façade edge at 334 features an expressed metal sun motif ornament mounted to the wall. This decorative sun motif is not original and was likely added during the interwar period. The return edge of the façade along Bendigo Street includes a blind opening with a similar window treatment and parapet to the principal northern façade.

The group at 336-340 Malvern Road, also known as ‘Cheel’s Buildings,’ was constructed in 1885, as indicated by the expressed lettering on the parapet. The symmetrical façade is more modest in form and detailing compared to the neighbouring group. The ground level is highly altered with an enlarged shopfront fenestration with varied wall tiling finishes. The ground level is protected under a cantilevered skillion awning. The upper level includes a pair of timber sash windows with a shaped architrave along each shop front. The architrave includes cornice mouldings flanked by shaped corbels with a pre-cast lion head moulding. The flat parapet includes a central projecting arched form which features the precast lettering over a vermiculated horizontal panel. It is flanked by squat piers with pre-cast urn and scroll mouldings. The side elevation fronting Bendigo Street is also comparatively more modest with a stepped parapet form and a bagged brick wall. It includes a secondary entrance and two sash windows, lacking the ornamentation seen on the front elevation.

The ground level shopfronts of the group are highly altered. However, the shopfronts remain largely intact above the awning line. The main unsympathetic alteration within the group is the contemporary colour scheme at 334 Malvern Road. 330-334 Malvern Road is in good condition; however, 336-340 Malvern Road presents a weathered stucco and bagged brick surface with some damage to precast parapet elements. The Commercial Precinct at 330-340 Malvern Road varies from fair to good condition and is of moderate integrity overall.

- ## Alterations and Additions

330-334 Malvern Road:

- Ground level shopfronts highly altered with new fenestration.
- Canvas awnings added to 330 and 332 Malvern Road, Prahran.
- Removal of the sash window and installation of a sliding window with fixed top sash at 332 Malvern Road (by 2017).
- 334 Malvern Road overpainted with a contemporary dark colour scheme (by 2017).
- Wall mounted expressed metal sun motif added to the corner façade of 334 Malvern Road.
- Rear of the properties laid with concrete.

336-340 Malvern Road:

- Ground level shopfronts highly altered with new fenestration.
- Rear of the properties laid with concrete.

# History

- ## Historical Context

The area presently known as Stonnington is the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. Formerly characterised by pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot) and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), this once thriving habitat provided Traditional Owners access to a range of water, plant and animal resources integral to their way of life. The onset of colonialism not only saw the transformation of these landscapes, but also Woi wurrung and Bunurong displacement through violence and land dispossession, as is evident in the establishment of George Langhorne's Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve along the southern banks of the Yarra River in present day Prahran and Toorak. Operating under the guise of 'protection', this reserve ultimately became a focal point for segregation, dislocation, and colonial control of Aboriginal people's lives (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31).

Despite decades of ongoing dispossession, the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington has an enduring presence to this day. Through continued resistance and the passing down of Indigenous knowledge, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people maintain an ongoing connection to, and care for Country.

European settlement in what would become the suburb of Prahran grew gradually following the 1849-1850 Crown Land Sales, which saw the subdivision of land bounded by present day Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road into fifty-one allotments (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). George Langhorne, the Commissioner of an 1837 Aboriginal mission in the area south of the Yarra River around Punt Hill, called this area 'Pura-ra-ran', a compound of two

Bunurong words believed to mean land partially surrounded by water (O'Callaghan 1922, 54). In 1840 the name was changed to Prahran for official use.

While higher ground overlooking the Yarra to the north of Prahran was quickly acquired and settled by the colonial elite following the 1840 Crown Land Sales, the majority of present-day Prahran, being of poorly drained low-lying land characterised by wetlands, was primarily purchased by land speculators. These areas were subsequently and re-sold for farming, industry and housing the working classes. The high level of natural deposits of alluvial clay in the area meant that pockets of low-lying land were used as brickyards (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 17). By 1856, the land encompassing Prahran was primarily characterised by a scattered series of timber and brick workers cottages set on narrow allotments to the west of Williams Road, while land to the east and south remained undeveloped or in use as paddocks (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The area was also distinguished by its strong market garden character during this period, with much of the land awaiting development being used for cultivation during the 1850s and 1860s (Malone 1983, 12).

The area underwent a period of rapid change following the 1880s land boom, which spurred the replacement of many small, mid-nineteenth century cottages with more ornate, single-fronted Victorian and Edwardian style terraces that could house the influx of factory workers as part of the area's growing brick manufacturing, food processing and textiles industries around Chapel Street and Commercial Road. Additionally, upper-middle class enclaves and mansion estates in the formerly undeveloped area of eastern Prahran were also developed to house the wealthy settling adjacent to the suburb of Armadale (Malone 2000, 20). Comprising higher ground with no major drainage problems, this area attracted comparably wealthier residents (Malone 2003, 1). These transformations were also compounded by the construction of impressively detailed shops along Chapel Street, solidifying the strip as a popular retail and commercial centre by the late nineteenth century (Allom Lovell 2000, 45).

Pockets of the suburb continued to be used as a centre for small-scale manufacturing into the early- and mid-twentieth centuries. Although business restructuring and trade liberalisation in the late twentieth century ultimately resulted in the closure and demolition of many of these factories, built remnants of this era can be seen at the c.1910 Former Kia-ora Cordial factory chimney at 181-187 High Street, Prahran and at the former milliner factory at Grattan Street, Prahran (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 95). Today, Prahran's working-class history is best represented through the relatively modest late nineteenth and early twentieth century single fronted cottages and dwellings that dominate the suburb's building stock. Meanwhile, traces of late nineteenth century middle-class residential development are best seen in the grand Victorian dwellings adjacent to Armadale along Grandview Grove.

- ## Place History

The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct is situated on land that was originally subdivided as Crown Portion 43 during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Division of Survey and Mapping c.1850). The Portion, which spanned the area bounded by Malvern Road, High Street, Chapel Street and Williams Road, was purchased by brothers William and John Payne (Division of Survey and Mapping, c. 1850). The property was subdivided soon afterwards and most of the smaller allotments had been resold by the mid-1850s (Malone 2001, 2). The 1856 Surveyor General's map shows scattered development across Portion 43, many of which fronted

Commercial Road (later Malvern Road) (see Figure 1). The subject site however, remained vacant.



Figure 1. 1856 map showing approximate location of the Malvern Road Commercial Precinct in red and surrounding development. *Source*: Public Record Office Victoria.

The rate books identify several vacant allotments on Malvern Road into the 1870s. Meanwhile, existing properties were identified as residential with a smaller number of commercial premises in between (Prahran Rate Books 1856-72).

In 1874, builder Alexander Anderson constructed wood and brick buildings on the eastern corner of Bendigo Street and Malvern Road junction (Prahran Rate Books 1874). These buildings appear to have been commercial, with Anderson running a wood store at the location until 1884. During this 1880s boom period, the number of commercial properties gradually increased eastwards along Malvern Road towards the precinct area (Prahran Rate Books 1860-1890).

As part of this spread, Henry Cheel acquired Anderson's property and replaced the 1874 wood and brick structure with the two-storey brick shops in 1885. Then numbered 52, 52A and 52B (later renumbered 336, 338 and 340), he named them Cheel's Buildings. The first to lease the premises were Emma Plant, dairyman Charles Miers and grocer Michael Maddigan.

Having lived on the western corner of Bendigo Street and Malvern Road junction since the 1850s, it is likely that Mary Veitch was also very aware of the opportunity to capitalise on her Malvern Road frontage to build commercial premises. She subsequently oversaw the development of three brick shops on the western corner in 1886 (then numbered 46-50 Malvern Road, Prahran), with hairdresser Edward Dickens (46), fruiterer Elizabeth Mack (48) and produce dealer John Bryan (50) listed as the initial occupants (Prahran Rate Books 1886-7). The two groups of shops are depicted in the 1896 MMBW detail plans as adjacent to a mixture of both residences and commercial shops (see Figure 2). This mixed character reflects the

tentative nature of development in this area of Malvern Road, likely due to its distance from Chapel Street.

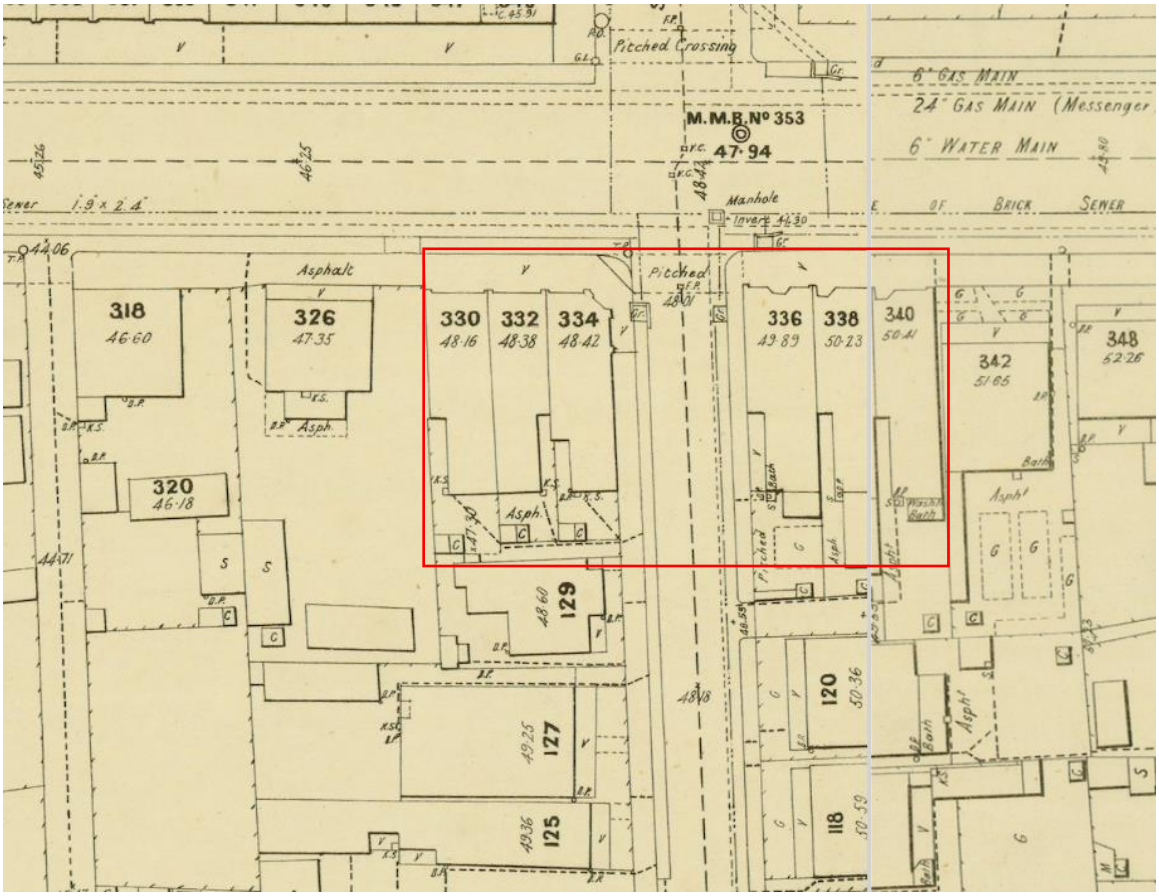



Figure 2. 1896 MMBW detail plans 964 and 984 showing the Malvern Road Commercial Precinct in red. *Source*: State Library of Victoria.

By 1890, the ownership remained the same, but the occupants of the six commercial premises had changed, often multiple times. Umbrella maker Thomas Death was listed as the occupier at the westernmost building, by then numbered 330 Malvern Road. In the other buildings, joiners Beaumont Ankers was listed at 332, butcher Llewelyn Curtis at 334, grocers George Shears and George Cole at 336, confectioners Richard Blith at 338 and clerk John Stenhouse at 340 (Prahran Rate Books 1889-90).

By 1907, the ownership of both buildings had changed. Although occupants often changed frequently, several businesses remained for long periods of time. A fishmongers occupied 332 between 1928 and 1950, while several proprietors occupied the news agency at 336 between 1890 and 1965, including Frederick Clayton, as shown in Figure *3* (Sands and McDougall 1950-65). Furthermore, 338 and 340 of the Cheel buildings were occupied by confectioners from the

1920s to the 1960s. As of 2023, the six commercial buildings continue to be occupied by variety of short and long term tenancies.




Figure 3. Clayton's news agency at the corner of Malvern Road and Bendigo Street, c. 1906. *Source*: Stonnington History Centre.

## Comparative Analysis

The Malvern Road Commercial Precinct comprises two groups of late Victorian era shop rows flanking the junction of Malvern Road and Bendigo Street. Two-storey shops were particularly common in the late Victorian period, with shopkeepers living above their shops. Late Victorian era shops along Chapel Street and Malvern Road were spearheaded by a period of increased economic activity during the 1880s economic and land boom. Reflecting a period of intense economic and commercial growth in the municipality, these boom era shops were often elaborately decorated with detailing derived from Italianate sources, as can be seen in the elaborate parapet, arched pediments and mould detailing at 330-334 Malvern Road. While somewhat more restrained in design, the shops at 336-340 Malvern Road similarly exhibit an ornate parapet with pre-cast mouldings that are characteristic of the typology. Comparative examples in the municipality include:

- **8-12 Commercial Road, Prahran (HO303).** 8-12 Commercial Road comprises a unique group of mixed-use buildings that form an integrated whole. They are comparable to the Malvern Commercial Precinct in terms of style, form and detailing, and similarly exhibit a congruity stemming from consistencies in setback and building heights. Comparative features include the incorporation of an entablature with dentils, parapet with Italianate style balusters and timber framed sash windows. While both properties comprise shops exhibiting resolved corner treatments, 8-12 Commercial Road, Prahran bookends a residential property.

- **Toorak Village Precinct, Toorak (HO425).** The Toorak Village Precinct features a substantially intact collection of late-Victorian, Edwardian and interwar retail buildings. Of particular interest are the Tudor revival style shops which define the character of the village. While more diverse in style and provenance than the Malvern Road Commercial Precinct, similarities can be drawn from the late Victorian corner shops at 464-470 Toorak Road, which compare in terms of condition and degree of integrity. Comparative architectural features also include Italianate style pedimented parapets, decorative mouldings, expressed architraves and timber sash hung windows.
- **Hawksburn Retail Precinct, South Yarra, Toorak and Prahran (HO412).** The Hawksburn Retail Precinct comprises a range of single and two-storey commercial buildings dating from the late Victorian, Edwardian and interwar periods. As with the Toorak Village Precinct, it is more diverse in style and provenance than the Malvern Road Precinct. However, its late Victorian commercial buildings, including those at 519-523 Malvern Road, Toorak and 479-493 Malvern Road, South Yarra, are directly comparable in terms of their intact upper floors, altered ground floors and consistent incorporation of Italianate style detailing. The precinct also has examples of commercial properties with resolved corner treatments as present in the Malvern Road Commercial Precinct.

As demonstrated above, the Malvern Road Commercial Precinct comprises an intact pocket of late Victorian shops that compare well to similar examples on the Heritage Overlay in terms of visual distinction and intactness. Unlike the majority of extant late nineteenth century shops within the municipality, which are typically situated in concentrated commercial areas either on or adjacent to Chapel Street, High Street and Toorak Road, the area immediately to the east and west of the Malvern Road Commercial Precinct is interspersed with residential buildings, effectively illustrating the tentative nature of commercial development in this area of Malvern Road. As such, the Malvern Road Precinct not only forms a distinctive pair of bookend shop rows, but also offers insight into the wider pattern of commercial development along this area of Malvern Road.

## Precinct Map




## Grading Table

* S: Significant

C: Contributory

NC: Non-contributory

Refer to Heritage Victoria's Model brief for consultants (p.6) for explanation of designations.

*Note: the Style/era column follows the architectural style categories set out in Heritage Victoria's HERMES Orion heritage database and does not necessarily reflect the date of construction. For details on construction era(s) where available, refer to the Place History section.*

| *Street address* | *Place type* | *Style/era* | *Grading* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 330 Malvern Road, Prahran | Commercial | Victorian Period (c.1854-1901) | C |
| 332 Malvern Road, Prahran | Commercial | Victorian Period (c.1854-1901) | C |
| 334 Malvern Road, Prahran | Commercial | Victorian Period (c.1854-1901) | C |
| 336 Malvern Road, Prahran | Commercial | Victorian Period (c.1854-1901) | C |
| 338 Malvern Road, Prahran | Commercial | Victorian Period (c.1854-1901) | C |

| Street address | Place type | Style/era | Grading |
|---|---|---|---|
| 340 Malvern Road, Prahran | Commercial | Victorian Period (c.1854-1901) | C |

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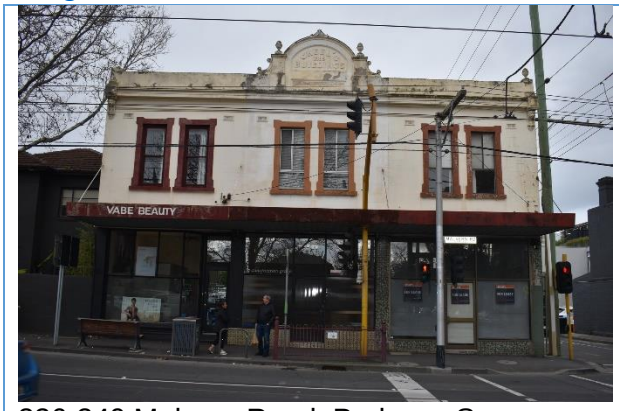
Surveyor-General's Department. 1856. *Prahran Municipality*. Map. Historic Plan Collection VPRS8168. Public Record Office Victoria.

Unknown. c.1906. Clayton's bookshop on the corner of Malvern Road and Bendigo Street. Graphic materials. Prahran Collections, ref no. PH7370. Stonnington History Centre.


## Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain as well as desktop resources.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

## Images




336-340 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



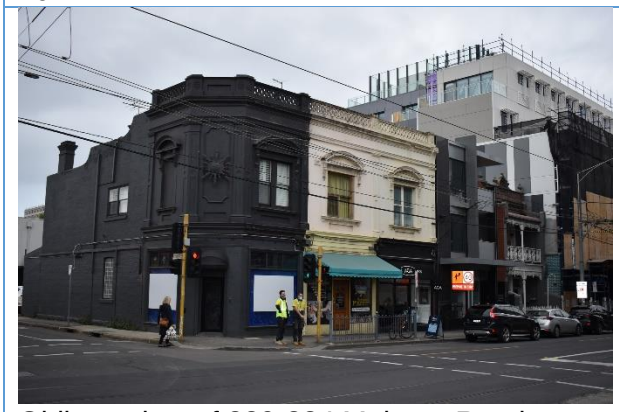
Detail view of the upper level and parapet at 336-340 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



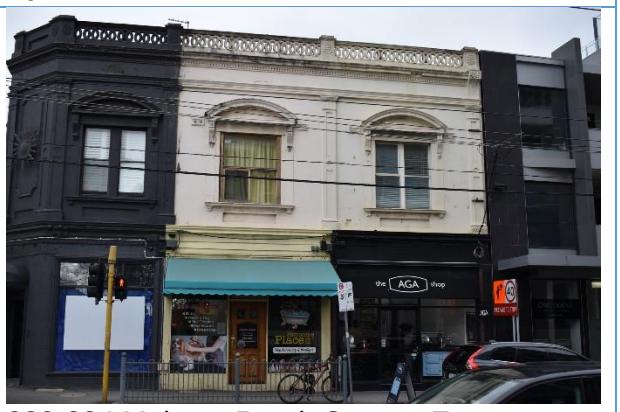

Ground floor shopfront at 336 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.




Ground floor shopfront at 338 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Oblique view of 330-334 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.




330-334 Malvern Road. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



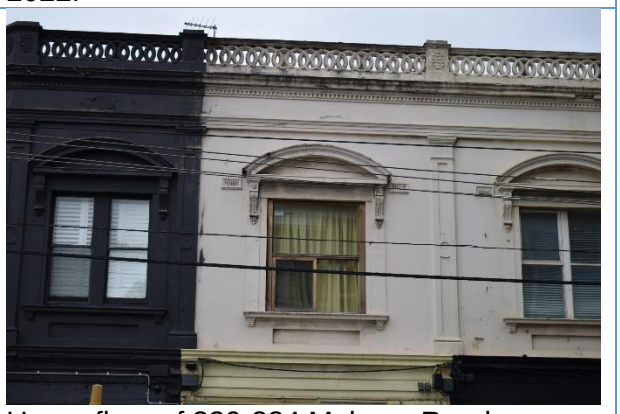
Shop front at 334 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.




Ground floor shopfront at 332 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.




Ground floor shopfront at 330 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Upper floor of 330-334 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.

## Authors

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**Quality assurance review conducted by:** Vivian Lu, 2023