Stawell Street Precinct

Heritage Place: Stawell Street Precinct
Address: 1-17 Stawell Street, Prahran

HO Reference: HO787
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 30 July 2024

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Year of Construction: 1918-1919



Photograph of the Stawell Street Precinct.
Source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



Location map and extent of the Stawell Street Precinct.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Residential precinct

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal

Significance Level: Local

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 Stawell Street Precinct, comprising properties on Stawell Street, Prahran, is 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 the Victorian boom era subdivision, and subsequent development created by the group of interwar Bungalow residences;
- The presence of intact freestanding interwar residential buildings designed in the Bungalow style, reflecting the popular application of this style to suburban middle-class housing by the late 1910s;
- The regularity and harmony of the interwar Bungalow residences, primarily characterised by open gables and large roof planes, wide eaves with exposed rafters, roughcast walls, terracotta tiled roofs, dormer windows and masonry verandah piers;
- A considerably high degree of integrity and visual consistency arising from the same construction period and absence of modern infill within the curtilage;
- The uniformity of allotments, scale, siting, setbacks and built forms across the precinct;
- The general retention of original low front boundary masonry fences;
- The retention of early London plane (*Platanus* × *acerifolia*) street tree plantings dating from the interwar period; and
- The retention of original bluestone kerbing and gutttering along Stawell Street.

Later alterations and additions to the properties, including unsympathetic fences, are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Stawell Street Precinct is of local historical and representative significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Stawell Street Precinct is of historical significance as a group of interwar Bungalows and mature early twentieth century London plane (Platanus × acerifolia) street tree plantings that demonstrate middle-class suburban development in the former City of Prahran. Largely concentrated in the comparatively wealthier middle-class pocket of eastern Prahran and the adjacent suburb of Armadale, this phase of development was predominantly characterised by the emergence of freestanding single-storey residences each surrounded by its own garden. Importantly, it resumed eastern Prahran's shift from sparsely developed paddocks to a middle-class enclave that took off during the late Victorian and Federation years. As such, the Stawell Street Precinct not only forms a tangible link to the character and pattern of twentieth century suburban development in this area of Prahran, but also exemplifies the suburban aspirations of its middle-class demographic. (Criterion A)

The Stawell Street Precinct is of representative significance as an intact area of Bungalow style residences and interwar era London plane (Platanus × acerifolia) street tree plantings that clearly demonstrate the style and character of interwar middle-class suburban development in the wider municipality. Stylistically, the group exhibits the key features associated with

Bungalow style, including open gables and large roof planes, wide eaves with exposed rafters, roughcast walls, terracotta tiled roofs, dormer windows and masonry verandah piers. The precinct also encapsulates the key characteristics associated with twentieth century middle-class suburban homes in the municipality as a group of freestanding residences set on suburban blocks with an informal front garden. (Criterion D)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Stawell Street Precinct is of historical significance as a group of interwar Bungalows and mature early twentieth century London plane (Platanus × acerifolia) street tree plantings that demonstrate middle-class suburban development in the former City of Prahran. Largely concentrated in the comparatively wealthier middle-class pocket of eastern Prahran and the adjacent suburb of Armadale, this phase of development was predominantly characterised by the emergence of freestanding single-storey residences each surrounded by its own garden. Importantly, it resumed eastern Prahran's shift from sparsely developed paddocks to a middle-class enclave that took off during the late Victorian and Federation years. As such, the Stawell Street Precinct not only forms a tangible link to the character and pattern of twentieth century suburban development in this area of Prahran, but also exemplifies the suburban aspirations of its middle-class demographic.
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*	The Stawell Street Precinct is of representative significance as an intact area of Bungalow style residences and interwar era London plane (Platanus × acerifolia) street tree plantings that clearly demonstrate the style and character of interwar middle-class suburban development in the wider municipality. Stylistically, the group exhibits the key

		features associated with Bungalow style, including open gables and large roof planes, wide eaves with exposed rafters, roughcast walls, terracotta tiled roofs, dormer windows and masonry verandah piers. The precinct also encapsulates the key characteristics associated with twentieth century middle-class suburban homes in the municipality as a group of freestanding residences set on suburban blocks with an informal front garden.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	This place does not meet this criterion.
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 continuing and developing cultural traditions*	This place does not meet this criterion.
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 Stawell Street Precinct consists of a group of nine interwar Bungalow residences. The group is situated along the western side of Stawell Street, which extends north from Dandenong Road and terminates at the rear of the former Victorian era mansion, Larnook, at 519 Orrong Road, Armadale. Stawell Street is a wide bi-directional street with on-street parking, bluestone kerbing and guttering, concrete crossovers and footpaths and a nature strip on either side. Kerb extensions edged with bluestone are located at the junction of Stawell Street and Karbarook Avenue. The nature strip along Stawell Street is planted with mature London Plane trees (*Platanus x acerifolia*), trimmed to form a consistent vase form. The mature trees form a dense deciduous canopy, framing the streetscape in a linear fashion.

The residences along Stawell Street consist of a group of freestanding single and double-storey interwar Bungalows with varied and Arts and Crafts influences. This can be observed in the general form of all the masonry and roughcast residences, which generally present asymmetrical double and triple fronted open gable façades and large roof planes clad with terracotta roof tiles.

Other demonstrated elements typical of the interwar Bungalow style include Arts and Crafts derived half-timbered open gables typically clad with timber battens, timber shingles, or both. Gable bay roof overhangs are lined with timber and generally include narrow window banks. Some larger window bays incorporate balconies, and can be observed at 1 and 7 Stawell Street, or in the projecting window bays at 9, 11, and 13 Stawell Street. Larger window banks across the front façades generally consist of grouped timber sash windows. Chimneys are typically tall with a simple tapering form. Of note are the face clinker brick chimneys at 5 and 9 Stawell Street, which are expressed along the façades.

Residences present a relatively consistent and wide setback. Owing to the shorter lengths of the allotments, the wide front setback and building massing, residences include a significantly smaller backyard with rear extensions of various extents. The street front boundaries are generally demarcated by low front brick or timber picket fences with varied heights, profiles and finishes.

Overall, the Stawell Street Precinct presents a cohesive group of interwar Bungalows stemming from consistencies in massing, intersecting open gable forms, materials, and fenestration. In addition, uniform setbacks allow for a wide front yard, and rows of mature London Plane street trees (*Platanus* × *acerifolia*) further reinforce the consistency of the streetscape.

Within the group, alterations visible from the streetscape typically include altered front walls and fences, as well as the addition of carports and garages along the façade. The majority of residence also include rear extensions. However, these largely remain obscured from view. The only major unsympathetic extension visible from the public domain consists of the skillion dormer addition to the southern elevation at 9 Stawell Street, and the upper floor addition at 3 Stawell Street. Considering the above, the Stawell Street Precinct is considered to be in good condition and of high integrity overall.

- ### Alterations and Additions

- Most residences include rear single-storey extensions of various extents.
- Second-storey skillion dormer addition to the southern elevation of 9 Stawell Street (1980).
- Second-storey open gable addition to 3 Stawell Street. Materials and overall form are generally sympathetic (1984).
- Rear garages added to 5 and 7 Stawell Street.
- Carport added to 1, 7 and 11 Stawell Street.
- Garages added to the front yard at 3, 15 and 17 Stawell Street.
- Unsympathetic tall brick front fence alterations to 15 and 17 Stawell Street.

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 residential buildings at 1-17 Stawell Street are situated on land that was originally subdivided as Crown Portion 64 during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Division of Survey and Mapping 1850). Consisting of thirty and a half acres of land bounded by the line of Barnato Grove, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and the line of Michie Mews, Portion 64 was purchased as an investment for merchant James Rae (Malone 2003, 22). Characterised by fairly level land that drained naturally to the bay rather than to the Yarra, the allotment was considered prime residential and commercial land that was distinct from the poorly drained land that dominated a significant portion of western Prahan. Despite the quality of the land, its distance from the city centre meant that the area was slow to develop. Consequently, although a scattering of working-class timber dwellings on small allotments had been erected further west of the subject area by 1856, Portion 64 remained largely undeveloped and in use as small farms and market gardens (Surveyor-General's Department 1856) (Malone 2003, 26).

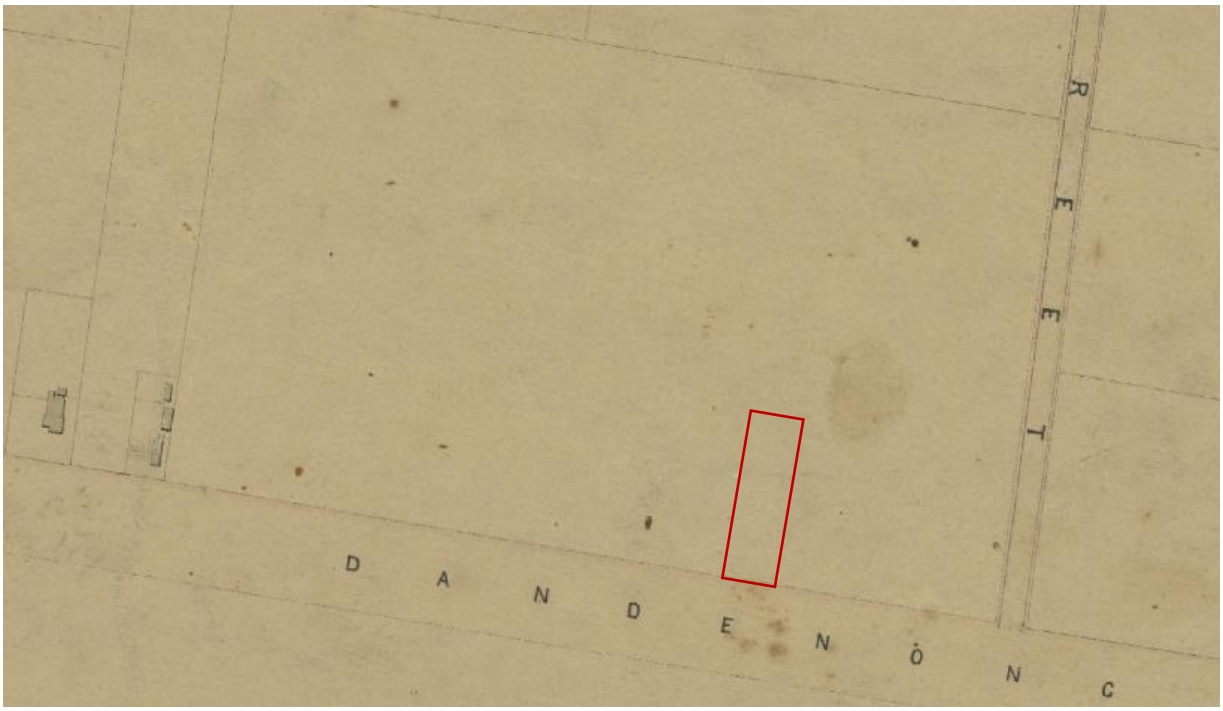


Figure 1. 1856 map showing approximate location of the Stawell Street Precinct in red and undeveloped surrounds. *Source*: Public Record Office Victoria.

Farming and market gardening land disappeared from the late 1870s onwards, and the boom period saw further subdivisions and the establishment of several large residential properties in the area and surrounds (C. J. and T. Ham, n.d.). As a new suburban area with well drained land that was in close proximity to St Kilda, the area attracted wealthy businessman as well as

several members of the legal profession (Malone 2003, 36). Consequently, noted dwellings erected in the area's surrounds during the 1880s boom period include prominent lawyer and politician Sir Archibald Michie's residence Killara (1883), judge Thomas a'Beckett's six-acre estate Karabrook (1881-1882), as well as Bendoc (c.1880s) and Glenrowan (1879).

Stawell Street was also created and partially subdivided by this period, however its only building was Malwyn A'Beckett's residence known as Wyuna (MMBW 1900). According to Malone, the present-day plane trees (*Platanus* × *acerifolia*) that line Stawell Street were planted during the street's formation, although historical aerials indicate that they were likely an interwar era planting (Malone 2003, 37) (see Figure 3). Development in the area stalled following the depression of the 1890s however, and with the exception of several scattered Victorian boom era properties, the area remained relatively sparse by the turn of the century (MMBW 1900) (see Figure 2).

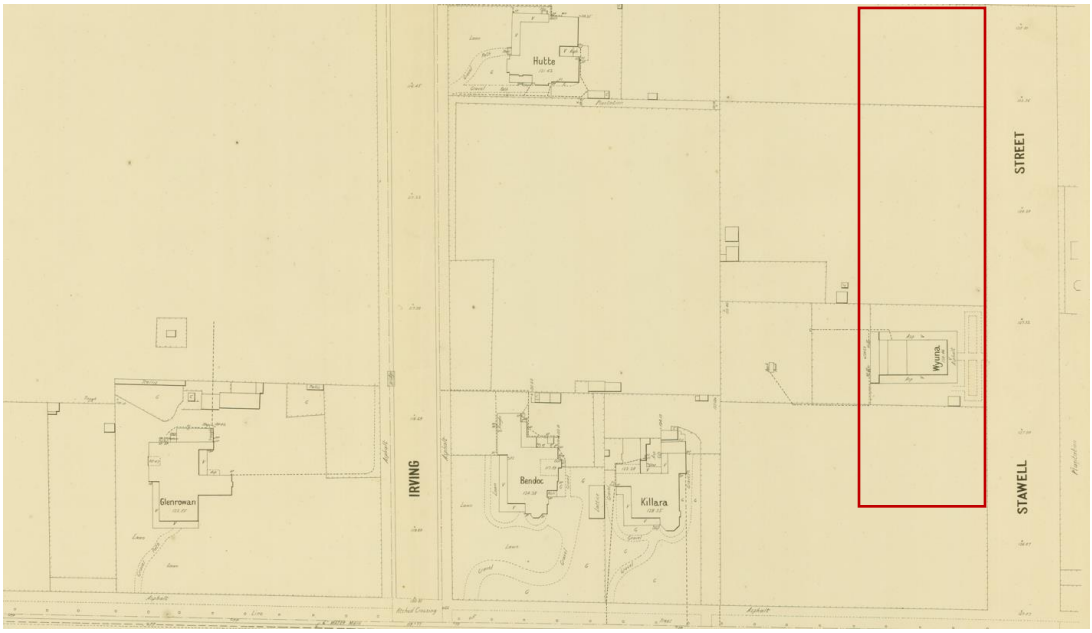


Figure 2. 1900 MMBW plan. 1001 showing the approximate site of Stawell Street Precinct (then largely vacant with the exception of Wyuna) in red, and surrounding boom era residences. *Source*: State Library of Victoria.

Further residential development along Stawell Street did not resume until the early interwar period in 1918 following the economic recovery of the early twentieth century. Initial residences included 7 Stawell Street, which was owned and occupied by cabinet maker George Boness (Prahran Rate Books 1918). The remaining dwellings at 1-5 and 9-17 Stawell Street were subsequently developed in 1919, and known occupants included Thomas Phillipson at 1 Stawell Street, Johanna Webb at 3 Stawell Street, Leonard Jordan at 5 Stawell Street, secretary Frederick Proctor at 9 Stawell Street, agent John Kelsall at 11 Stawell Street, manager Arthur Trapp at 13 Stawell Street, secretary Edwin Brownell at 15 Stawell Street and accountant Henry Haynes at 17 Stawell Street (Prahran Rate Books 1919). The majority of these occupants were also the owners. By 1928, 1 Stawell Street was converted into a duplex, however it was subsequently reverted back to a single residence by 1938 (Prahran Rate Books 1928-38).



Figure 3.1945 aerial showing the erected freestanding residences within Stawell Street Precinct, as well as semi-developed London Plane street trees along Stawell Street. *Source:* Department of Lands and Survey.

Consisting of freestanding Bungalow style residences with generous setbacks allowing for a front garden, these dwellings reflected the comparatively wealthier middle-class nature of eastern Prahran (see Figure 4). As such, they encapsulated the middle-class suburban ideal that of a freestanding single-storey house surrounded by its own garden (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 128).

With the exception of some alterations and additions, all the residences within this precinct have survived against the pressures of postwar development. As of 2023, they continue to be used as private residential properties.

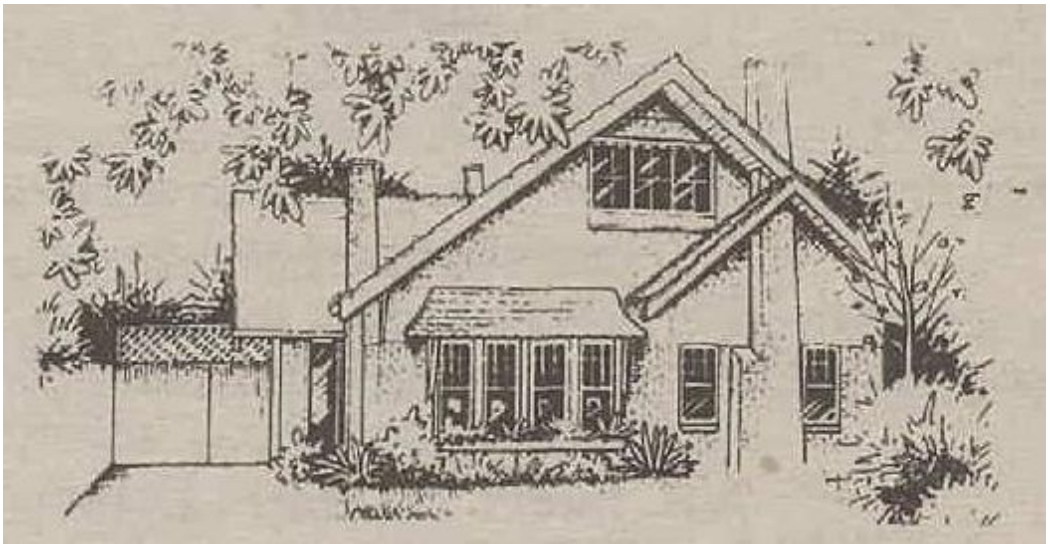


Figure 4. 1992 Real Estate advertising image for 5 Stawell Street. *Source:* Australian Jewish News.

Comparative Analysis

Within the City of Stonnington, the late Federation and early interwar development of freestanding middle-class villas surrounded by its own garden came to define suburban life in the twentieth century (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 130). Reflective of the middle-class suburban ideal of *ruse in urbe* (country in the city), these houses were designed in a variety of styles and ranged from Spanish Mission villas to picturesque Bungalows (Davison 1978, 145). Owing to its homely character derived from the English Arts and Crafts movement, combined with its setting on a suburban block with informal lawns and gardens, the Bungalow proved particularly suitable to this phase of development. Although these developments would find its fullest expression in the neighbouring former City of Malvern, which was slower to develop, they were also occasionally found in middle-class enclaves in the former City of Prahran, as is the case with the Stawell Street Precinct. Comparative examples within the municipality include:

- **Finch Street North Precinct, Glen Iris (HO633).** Located in the former City of Malvern, the Finch Street North Precinct compares directly to the Stawell Street Precinct as a small group of freestanding Federation and transitional interwar dwellings that clearly exemplify middle-class suburban development in the municipality. While it demonstrates a greater diversity of styles, including Arts and Crafts, Queen Anne, and Bungalow, it similarly exhibits a consistency in materials and features, such as dormer windows, prominent gable-ends, face red brick and terracotta tiling. The Stawell Street Precinct is generally more modest than the Finch Street North Precinct owing to the presence of deeper setbacks and sizeable dwellings in the case of the latter.
- **Gascoigne Estate Precinct, Malvern (HO133).** The Gascoigne Estate Precinct consists of a large residential area of Federation and Interwar houses set on generous allotments in wide tree-lined streets. As with Stawell Street Precinct, its housing stock and leafy setting demonstrates a clear association with twentieth century middle-class suburban development. Although more diverse in terms of its incorporation of Queen Anne, Arts and Crafts and Bungalow styles, it compares to the Stawell Street Precinct in terms of consistency of materials, features and setbacks. It is more intact than the nominated area, however it lacks its concentrated Bungalow character.
- **Kelvin Grove Precinct, Prahran (HO141).** The Kelvin Grove Precinct compares to the nominated area as a small group of early 1910s dwellings built in the Federation era. Although its housing stock is derived from the preceding Federation Queen Anne sources as opposed to the Arts and Crafts Bungalow style exhibited at Stawell Street, similarities can be seen in terms of materials, prominent gable roof forms and wide eaves. While individual dwellings within the Kelvin Grove Precinct are more intact than those in the Stawell Street Precinct, the former features a greater number of tall, unsympathetic front fences.

As such, the Stawell Street Precinct not only exhibits a clear association with interwar middle-class suburban development in the municipality, but also comprises a substantially intact and concentrated example of interwar Bungalow residences. As a group, they not only demonstrate similarities to comparable precincts already in the Heritage Overlay in terms of consistencies in setbacks, materials, building heights and styles, but illustrate the key features associated with the Bungalow, including the use of large, simple roof planes, wide eaves with exposed rafters, roughcast walls, terracotta tiled roofs, dormer windows and masonry verandah piers.

The relative absence of this type of housing stock within the suburb of Prahran should also be noted, with comparative examples predominantly located in the slower to develop former City of Malvern. In this regard, Stawell Street Precinct also forms an important counterpoint to other middle-class housing in this area of Prahran, which largely date to the late Victorian and Federation periods.

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*
1 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C
3 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C

Street address	Place type	Style/era	Grading
5 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C
7 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C
9 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C
11 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C
13 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C
15 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C
17 Stawell Street, Prahran	Residential	Interwar Period (c. 1910 – c.1940)	C

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The Australian Jewish News. 1992. ‘Advertising.’ 27 March 1992.

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



North-facing overview of Stawell Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



North-facing overview of Stawell Street from the junction with Karbarook Avenue. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



Oblique overview of the residences along Stawell Street from the junction with Karbarook Avenue. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



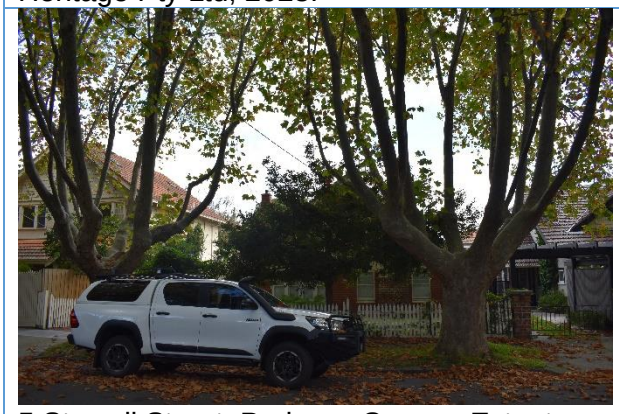
Bluestone edged kerb extension at the junction with Karbarook Avenue. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023).



1 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



3 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



5 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



7 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



9 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



11 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



13 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



15 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



17 Stawell Street, Prahran. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.



Oblique view of the façades and roof profiles along Stawell Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023.

Authors

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Quality assurance review conducted by: Vivian Lu, 2023.