Heritage Citation – Precinct

Heritage Place: Williams Road Terraces Precinct
Address: 238-248 Williams Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO751
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 7 March 2022

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Year of Construction: c.1888-1890 (238-244 Williams Rd); c.1890-1891 (246-248 Williams Rd)



Photograph of 238-248 Williams Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of Williams Road Terraces Precinct.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings.
Heritage Type: Terrace

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

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Recommended for the Heritage Overlay as a new precinct.

Controls:	☐ External paint colours	☐ Internal alterations	☐ Tree controls
	☐ Victorian Heritage Register	☐ Incorporated Plans	☐ Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	☐ Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐ Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Williams Road Terraces Precinct, comprising six two-storey Victorian Italianate terraces on Williams Road, Toorak, is significant.

The precinct is wholly characterised by contributory graded buildings.

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

- The distinctive pattern of the late 19th century subdivision;
- A high degree of intactness of the Victorian Italianate terraces arising from two close periods of construction and absence of modern infill;
- The regularity and harmony of the terrace group, characterised by hipped roofs with corbelled brick and render chimneys concealed by elaborately ornamented parapets finished with a smooth stucco render, open upper level balconies, filigree iron lacework, timber framed sash windows with expressive window sill and lintel, and moulded ornaments.
- The uniformity of setbacks, allotment sizes and building heights; and
- Predominance of period appropriate low cast iron palisade fencing.

Later alterations and additions to the properties are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Williams Road Terraces Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it *significant?*

The Williams Road Terraces Precinct is of local historical significance as a group of residential terraces that were developed in two stages as investment properties following the 1886 subdivision of Woodside Estate, which precipitated the area's shift from sparsely developed land to a suburban upper-middle class enclave. The dwellings were developed during an important phase whereby the land boom of the 1880s that saw a period of land speculation, rapid subdivision and development. The terrace group thus forms a tangible link to this period of development. (Criterion A)

The Williams Road Terraces Precinct is of local aesthetic significance as a visually cohesive row of semi-detached boom era Victorian Italianate terraces. Minor alterations aside, the buildings retain a high level of integrity as a group and demonstrate stylistic cohesion through uniformity in built form, materials, ornamentation, fenestration, fencing, setbacks and height. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Williams Road Terraces Precinct is of local historical significance as a group of residential terraces that were developed in two stages as investment properties following the 1886 subdivision of Woodside Estate, which precipitated the area's shift from sparsely developed land to a suburban upper-middle class enclave. The dwellings were developed

		during an important phase whereby the land boom of the 1880s that saw a period of land speculation, rapid subdivision and development. The terrace group thus forms a tangible link to this period of development.
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 Williams Road Terraces Precinct is of local aesthetic significance as a visually cohesive row of semi-detached boom era Victorian Italianate terraces. Minor alterations aside, the buildings retain a high level of integrity as a group and demonstrate stylistic cohesion through uniformity in built form, materials, ornamentation, fenestration, fencing, setbacks and height.
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 Williams Road Terraces Precinct is a group of six Victorian Italianate terrace houses. The two storey brick structures are laid with a Flemish bond and painted. The parapet section above the upper level is finished with a smooth stucco render. The main structure consists of a hipped roof clad with corrugated sheet metal. The roof form is obscured by the front and side parapet and is only visible when viewed from the rear of the properties. Single corbelled chimneys extend from the main roof of 238-244 Williams Road and two corbelled chimneys extend from the main roof of 246-248 Williams Road.

The front facades of each terrace at 238-244 Williams Road are mostly symmetrical. However, the location of the front doors are mirrored at each pair of terraces. The ground floor facade of each terrace includes a timber entry door with sidelights and fanlight and a timber sash window with sidelights with an expressed sill. The ground floor fenestration is capped with a rendered flat gauged lintel with a keystone featuring an incised texture. The upper floor level of each terrace includes a balcony with ornate cast iron lacework and two timber sash windows extending from the floor. The party walls between the terraces include blind arches, an expressed fluted face and precast console brackets with paired supports. The lower console bracket features a lion head moulding while the upper bracket features a bust moulding.

The buildings at 246-248 Williams Road are slightly different to that of 238-244 Williams Road, being built one year after the initial set of four terraces. The ground floor facades vary in terms of fenestration with 246 Williams Road containing an off-set entry door and a bay window which likely replaced an original window, and 248 Williams Road containing two tall timber sash windows. The current entrance to 248 Williams Road is off Woodside Crescent via a single door with a moulded keystone above; this was likely a secondary entrance for the building and the front door has been converted to a window. The upper floor level of each terrace includes a balcony with ornate cast iron lacework. There are two timber sash windows extending from the floor at 248 Williams Road and an arched opening with stained glass on the northern party wall. Owing to a glass infill to 246 Williams Road, it is difficult to confirm the extent of modification to the upper floor façade of this building. The party walls are more restrained in style, with painted brickwork and little to no ornamentation.

The northern elevation of 248 Williams Road includes two ground level windows with black timber louvred shutters. The fenestration on the north elevation also features the flat gauged arch with incised textured keystone motif. The base of the north elevation consists of a two-course base of highly textured natural bluestone.

The parapet on each building sits above a level course. It includes two engaged piers supporting a centred projecting arch. The arch includes expressed lettering featuring the names of the terraces reading Ulney, Ullina, Ulupna and Undera. The expressed lettering is absent from the parapet of number 238 and 240.

The terraces have a short set back from the street and are generally demarcated with a short palisade fence, with he exception of 242 Williams Road which has a solid masonry fence. 238 and 244 Williams Road have extended the party walls to meet the street front boundary. The front area of the terraces includes a small garden and a short path and patio laid with geometric English tiling. Rear additions of

varying sizes have been added to the terraces. The rear yards of the terraces are accessible from a gravel laid no-through private lane accessible from Woodside Crescent.

238-248 Williams Road is located beside the junctions of Woodside Crescent with Williams Road. The properties appear to be in good condition overall. All of the terraces have modified at the rear with various types of extensions, however these remain obscured from view. The front facades of the group are mostly intact with more modifications evidence at 246-248 Williams Road. However, when viewed as group, the terraces would are considered to have high integrity overall.

- Alterations and Additions

238 Williams Road:

- Brickwork painted.
- Roof reclad with steel sheet metal.
- Rear extension.

240 Williams Road:

- Brickwork painted.
- Roof reclad with steel sheet metal.
- A skylight added to the original roof.
- Rear extension.

242 Williams Road:

- Original palisade fence removed and brick wall with piers added.
- Roof reclad with steel sheet metal.
- Solar panels added to the original roof.
- Services added to the original roof.
- Rear extension.

244 Williams Road:

- Services added to the original roof
- Rear extension.

246 Williams Road:

- Front façade infilled with aluminum framed windows on the ground and upper level.
- Ground floor window converted into a bay window.
- Upper floor fenestration modified (the exact nature of these changes is unclear).
- Roof reclad with steel sheet metal.
- One skylight added to the original roof.
- Rear extension.

248 Williams Road:

- Front entrance converted into a window.
- Roof reclad with steel sheet metal.

- One skylight added to the original roof
- Rear extension.

History

Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

Following the establishment of Melbourne in 1835, squatter John Gardiner and many others like him sought out land in what would become present day Toorak and surrounds on account of its densely timbered landscape, undulating terrain and proximity to water. By 1840, crown land sales marked the area's transition to pastoral settlement, and later in 1851, with the purchase of land in Hawthorn by Thomas Herbert Power, the surrounding environments gradually became a place where the early merchant and squatter elite of Melbourne built their homesteads. In Toorak, this is best represented by the purchase of lot 26 by James Jackson, associate in Jackson, Rae & Co. soap and candle merchants. Jackson was described by politician William Westgarth as 'Melbourne's greatest merchant of this early time' (Forster 1999, 10). It is only fitting that his house, called Toorak House, would be the namesake of what would become arguably the most affluent suburb in Melbourne. Following the discovery of gold in the 1850s and the wealth this produced for ancillary trades, the Toorak area drew in Melbourne's newly wealthy. Today, over a century later, Toorak still has connotations of wealth and prestige as best represented in its history and built environment (Forster 1999, 5–26).

Place History

The land and surrounds of the subject area was sold to Thomas Colclough in June 1849 as Crown Portion 31 and 32 (Foster 1996). Encompassing thirty-two acres extending from Mathoura Road to Williams Road, Colclough immediately subdivided this substantial area of land into large estates, while retaining about ten aces at the northern end (Foster 1996). He subsequently erected a mansion for himself known as Tintern (1849) on retained property at the corner of Toorak Road (then known as Gardiners Creek Road) and Williams Road (Sharpe 2014). During this period, the present day subject area was situated to the south of Tintern and formed undeveloped land, bisected by a creek, at the western boundary of William Bowens' Woodside Estate (Surveyor General's Office 1855).

This area was rapidly transformed following the 1886 subdivision of Woodside Estate, which saw the creation of seventeen grand allotments fronting Woodside Crescent and Williams Road (Muntz & Bage 1886; The Age 1886). As with many other contemporaneous Victorian estates in the area, this subdivision process was largely an outcome of the gold rush and Melbourne's subsequent 1880s land boom, which saw a period of subdivision, land speculation and development across Armadale. As Melbourne experienced a period of unprecedented prosperity, growth and development, urban boundaries were pushed out as people, sharing in the ideals of home ownership, sought new residential lands (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 41). Within this context, the land comprising the Williams Road Terraces

Precinct, as well as 2-4 Woodside Crescent, formed Lots 17, 18 and 19 of the subdivision and was purchased by Charles Pearson in 1886 (Prahan Rate Books). Reflecting the feverish atmosphere of the land boom, whereby land was taken up, subdivided and re-sold by entrepreneurial settlers and speculators, Pearson sold these lots to George Usher by the late 1880s (Prahan Rate Books 1887-1890).

By 1890, Usher had erected four six roomed two-storey terraces along Williams Road, being the current 238-244 Williams Road (then numbered 234-244 Williams Road), as well as two five roomed residences now listed as 2 and 4 Woodside Crescent (Prahan Rate Books 1890). Usher resided in the southernmost terrace on Williams Street, with the other three terraces were rented to artist Thomas Codingwood, Henry G. Bown and traveller George Lester respectively (Sands & McDougall 1890; Prahan Rate Books 1890). By the following year, Usher had constructed the remaining two terraces at 246 Williams Road and 248 Williams Road (then numbered 242 and 244 Williams Road) (Prahan Rate Books 1891).

From 1894, James S. Adams of Alphington is listed alongside Usher as the owner of the properties at present day 238-244 Williams Road. Usher was declared insolvent by mid-1895, and by 1897, Adams is listed as the sole owner of the terraces (The Argus 1895; Prahan Rate Books 1897). Usher resided at 238 Williams Road until 1905 and is listed as the owner until the property was transferred to Adams in 1900 (Prahan Rate Books 1900). A MMBW illustration of the terraces around this period in 1898 shows two groups of semi-detached terraces sitting on uniform allotment sizes, each with a front verandah, front and rear garden and outhouse. Although the map does not list the names of each individual terrace, extant expressed lettering along the parapet projecting arch indicates that the original names of the terraces at present day 238-244 Williams Road were Undera, Ulupna, Ullina and Unley respectively. As 246 and 248 Williams Road were erected at a slightly later period, they do not feature names nor lettering.

The street numbers were altered in c.1925-1930 to their present listings following the demolition of the adjacent Woollahra Estate and subsequent erection of four single-storey interwar houses (Sands & McDougall 1925-1930). This group of terraces has survived intact against the pressures of interwar and post-war development. Today, these dwellings are privately owned and continue to be used as residential properties.

Comparative Analysis

Built in the Victorian Italianate style as investment properties for George Usher, this group of two-storey terraces is directly comparable to several semi-detached Victorian Italianate terrace groups that were also constructed in the municipality as investments during the boom era. Popularised following the development of Toorak House in 1850 and its subsequent use as the Governor's residence in 1854, the use of Italianate derived elements in domestic architecture was particularly prevalent in the Victorian colony. Its connotation with the social and political elite was integral to its success, and the style grew in popularity during Melbourne's 1880s boom period as a result of rapid population growth, prosperity and development.

Key comparative examples include:

- **Wilson Street Precinct, 66-74 Wilson Street, South Yarra (HO379).** The Wilson Street Precinct is a residential area of late 19th and early 20th century buildings, including both freestanding buildings and groups of two-storey Italianate terrace buildings. While it is much larger in scale, it incorporates

a pocket of semi-detached two storey terraces at 66-74 Wilson Street that are directly comparable to the Williams Road Terraces Precinct in terms of style, built form, cast iron lacework detailing, fenestration, iron palisade fencing, short setback and visual cohesiveness. They are noticeably more modest than the Williams Road Terraces Precinct by virtue of their restrained ornamentation, lacking the elaborate parapets, moulded detailing and expressed window sills and gauged lintel. However, unlike Williams Road Terraces Precinct, it is distinguished by its prominent front facing chimneys and their construction within the same year.

- **Bush Inn Estate Precinct, Toorak (HO380).** The Bush Inn Estate Precinct comprises a residential area developed during the land boom era of the 1880s. As with the Wilson Street Precinct, it is larger in scale than the Williams Road Terraces Precinct. However, it includes grand double-storey terraces, particularly along Evelina Road, that are directly comparable as an intact terrace group with an highly ornate appearance. Analogous features include ornamented parapets concealing hipped roofs, cast iron lacework detailing, fenestration, iron palisade fencing and broader visual cohesiveness. Unlike the Williams Road Terraces, however, they were constructed at the same time, are further set back from the street, have a raised siting and are lacking in period appropriate fencing.
- **Terrace, 64-68 High Street, Windsor (HO580).** This series of highly detailed and ornate boom era terraces, built in 1891, consists of two semi-detached single-storey and one two-storey buildings. It is directly comparable to the Williams Road Terraces in terms of its size (curtilage), ornamented parapets, cast iron lacework, and moulded ornamentation. Of the pair, however, Williams Road Terraces Precinct presents as a more unified group of buildings through cohesiveness in setback, height, built form and parapets.

As the above comparative analysis has demonstrated, the Williams Road Terraces Precinct comprises a small group of two-storey semi-detached terraces with period appropriate front fences that are of similar, if not of favourable, design merit and intactness to analogous examples currently protected on the Heritage Overlay. This is particularly due to its visual cohesiveness and retention of original detailing such as moulded ornamentation, elaborate parapets, filigree iron lacework and fenestration.

Precinct Map



Grading Plan

* 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*
WILLIAMS ROAD			
238 Williams Road	House	Victorian period (1851-1901)	C
240 Williams Road	House	Victorian period (1851-1901)	C
242 Williams Road	House	Victorian period (1851-1901)	C
244 Williams Road	House	Victorian period (1851-1901)	C
246 Williams Road	House	Victorian period (1851-1901)	C
248 Williams Road	House	Victorian period (1851-1901)	C

References

Advertising. (1886, February 19). *The Age,* 1886.

Context Pty Ltd. 2009. 'Stonnington Thematic Environmental History.' Unpublished report prepared for City of Stonnington. PDF file.

Foster, D. 1996. 13 Tintern Avenue. Textual material. Prahan Collections, ref no. PH23071. Stonnington History Centre.

Foster, D. 1999. 'Melbourne's Most Fashionable Suburb: A History of Toorak, East of Kooyong Road 1840–1998.' Unpublished Masters diss., Monash University.

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works. 1898. *Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan. 972, Prahran*. State Library of Victoria.

Muntz & Bage. 1886. Land subdivision- Woodside Crescent. Architectural and technical drawing material. Prahan Collections, ref no. PH11206. Stonnington History Centre.

New Insolvents. (1895, June 5). *The Argus,* 5.

Prahan Rate Books, Toorak Ward, 1885-1900.

Sharpe, S. 2014. 22 Gordon Street, Toorak. Textual material. Stonnington History Centre Collection, ref no. SHC62017. Stonnington History Centre.

State Library of Victoria, Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, detail plan No. 972, dated 1898.

State Library of Victoria, Sands & McDougall Street Directories of Victoria, 1880-1974 ed.

Stonington City Council. 2013. Heritage Citation Report: Bush Inn Estate, Toorak. Hermes ID 104285. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonington City Council. 2013. Heritage Citation Report: Wilson Street Precinct, South Yarra. Hermes ID 104947. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2020. Heritage Citation Report: 64-48 High Street, Windsor. Hermes ID 200131. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Surveyor General's Office. 1855. *Melbourne and its Suburbs.* Map. Historic Plan Collection VPRS 8168/P0002. Public Records Office Victoria.

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.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images



North-east facing view of 238-248 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



South-east facing view of 238-244 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



East facing view of 238-244 Wiliams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



East facing view of 244-248 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



South-east view of upper levels at 238-244 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



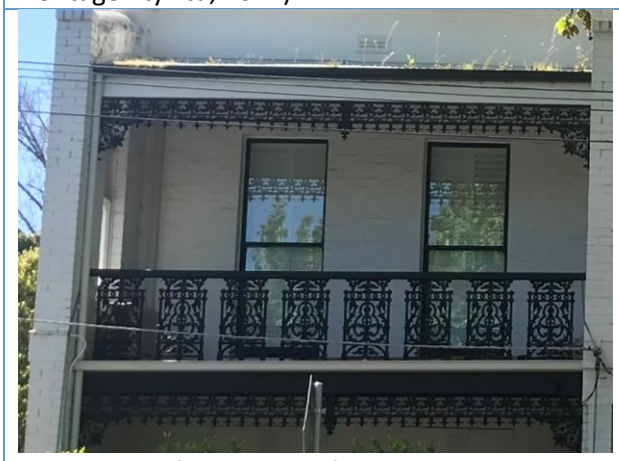
Detail view of upper level at 246-248 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of parapet and moulded detailing at 242 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of parapet, precast finials and moulded detailing at 244 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of upper level fenestration and cast iron lacework at 248 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of upper level mould detailing and cast iron lacework at 238 Williams Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

Citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022 (Vivian Lu, Hayley Edmonds and Reuel Balmadres).
Quality assurance review conducted by: Corinne Softley.