

Port Phillip Heritage Review

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6.35 Middle Park & St Kilda West Precinct – Ho444

Existing Designations:

Heritage Council Register: nil

National Estate Register: nil

National Trust Register: nil

Previous Heritage Studies:

Conservation Study 1975: Zones 12, 20 & 23 (all); 24, 25 & 28 (part)

Conservation Study 1987: UCI: Precincts E (part) and F

Heritage Review 2000: Heritage Overlay 3 (part)

6.35.1 History

The post-contact development of the study area can be traced back to the 1850s with the establishment of a military reserve, which, as Andrew Ward has noted, covered 77 acres of foreshore land and included the rifle butts at MiddlePark.²⁷⁵ Access to the reserve was facilitated by the creation of a wide thoroughfare – later to become Albert Road and Kerferd Road – that extended from St Kilda Road all the way to the beach. As recorded in the 1987 heritage study,

Kerferd Road and Albert Roads, shown on an 1855 map of Emerald Hill as the 'Beach Road', were set immediately south of the township of Emerald Hill and north of the swamplands around the Albert Park lagoon. In a similar manner to Sandridge Road (now City Road), Kerferd/Albert Road was set down as an access route that existed in advance of any built development along it as, initially, its main purpose was to give access between St Kilda Road and the military reserve along the foreshore. While portions of Albert Road, close to the areas that had already developed, were soon subdivided, the development of Kerferd Road was far slower.²⁷⁶

On that same survey map, dated June 1855, a small rectilinear building – labelled as a battery – is shown at the seaside end of the Beach Road. The vast expanse of land to the south-east, extending from the Beach Road to Fitzroy Street in what was then the Borough of St Kilda, was indicated as the South Melbourne Park Reserve and comprised two elongated expanses of marshland. Along the foreshore was a “proposed marine parade” with two parallel roadways (corresponding, respectively, to present-day Beaconsfield Parade, Danks Street and Page Street), which indicated the extent of a planned residential estate. On the contemporaneous and partly speculative Kearney Map (1855), the same subdivision is shown in even greater detail, with the proposed street blocks optimistically divided into smaller individual allotments. However, it failed to develop at that time.

In 1857, the new St Kilda railway line passed through the area, bisecting the two elongated swamps in the park reserve. The land to the north-east of the railway was transformed thence into a public park – with the former swamp becoming an ornamental lake – while the rest, to the south-east, remained as an undeveloped enclave between the booming settlements at South Melbourne and St Kilda. As Andrew Ward observed in the 2000 heritage review,

²⁷⁵ Andrew Ward & Associates, Port Phillip Heritage Review, Version 2 (2000), Volume I, p 75.

²⁷⁶ Allom Lovell Sanderson, “South Melbourne Urban Conservation Study” (1987), p 3/17.

Whereas the higher land later known as Emerald Hill and the St Kilda Hill was not surprisingly the first to attract urban development, it was surrounded by less attractive lower lying ground; MiddlePark was occupied by swamp, sand dunes and ti-tree.²⁷⁷

The situation was no better at the south-eastern end, in the portion within the Borough of St Kilda. Writing in the 1930s, municipal historian J B Cooper – who well remembered the swamp as a boy – provided this first-hand recollection:

The WesternSwamp was a continuation of marshy land from the south end of the Albert Park lake. The surface of the marshland, in a south-westerly direction, sometimes in very wet seasons reached as far as the north end of Beaconsfield Parade. Ordinarily the swamp, following the falling levels, extended to the other side of the St Kilda railway embankment. Settlement was sufficient, in and about Fitzroy street, to make it desirable that the swamp should be drained. We recall memories of the time, some 55 years ago, when we, with other schoolboys, thought it fun to step over a portion of the swamp by means of railway sleepers that were nailed to a small wooden viaduct.²⁷⁸

There was virtually no development of this swampy seaside land for another decade. In another reminiscence, J B Cooper wrote of the foreshore at West Beach being occupied by Chinese fisherman during this period; their makeshift dwellings were recorded in a pencil sketch by artist Louis Buvelot before “the St Kilda council eventually ejected the three or four old Chinese from the collection of old iron, bags, wood, and mud bricks, which the fishermen called their homes”.²⁷⁹

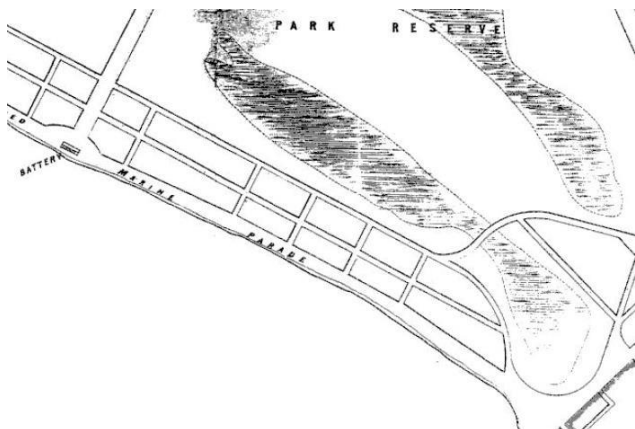


Figure 6.35-1 – Detail of 1855 survey map, showing land between Kerferd Road (top left) and Fitzroy Street (lower right)

(source: Map Collection, State Library of Victoria)



Figure 6.35-2 – A rare photograph of the WesternSwamp, c.1855, looking south-east towards Fitzroy Street, St Kilda

(source: J B Cooper. A History of St Kilda, p 200)

The Hodgkinson Map (1864) shows the St Kilda railway line, the purported seaside subdivision and a large expanse of swampland between them, while the more detailed Cox Map (1866) depicts only a few scattered buildings along the foreshore, with a fenced enclosure between the swamp and the railway.

In 1870, the Borough of St Kilda took the first decisive steps to reclaim this land when the WesternSwamp was partially drained “at the at the insistence of the Central Board of Health”.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Ward, op cit, p 24.

²⁷⁸ J B Cooper, The History of St Kilda from its First Settlement to a City and After, 1840 to 1930. Vol I, p 199.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, p 163.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p 200, quoting the first annual statement of the Borough of St Kilda, dated 30 September 1870.

This was achieved by the construction of an 18-inch (45cm) bluestone drain that ran from the Albert Park lake, along Cowderoy Street, to an outfall on the bay. A map of the area, prepared by Clement Hodgkinson in 1871, not only shows the alignment of this new drain, but also that a portion of the proposed seaside subdivision had already been formalised – namely, those four blocks defined by Fraser Street, York Street, Cowderoy Street, Park Road and what was then known as Marine Parade (now Beaconsfield Parade). The two smaller blocks east of Cowderoy Street (designated as Sections 1 and 4) were divided respectively into fourteen and twelve smaller allotments, while the two larger blocks to the west (designated as Sections 3 and 4) were each carved up into eight larger allotments. The Vardy Map of St Kilda (1873) shows that no fewer than twenty houses has been built on these four sections by that time; these were mostly in the form of detached villas, with a notable exception being a large mansion, Maritimo, which occupied a two-acre site near the east corner of Marine Parade and Cowderoy Street.

Further north, the contiguous municipality of Emerald Hill was not far behind in its efforts to reclaim and develop the swampland. As the 1987 heritage study succinctly noted:

In 1875, the Emerald Hill Council move to survey, resume and sell lands west of the railway line in the MiddlePark area, as far as the foreshore. Large sums were spent on reconstruction and in 1876, Ferrars Street was extended to St Kilda Road and named Canterbury Road along its new southerly extension. Although reclamation of the ti-tree swamp followed immediately, the district remained remote and unappealing.²⁸¹

The extent of development at that time is evident on a survey map that Sir John Coode prepared for the Melbourne Harbour Trust in 1879, which shows that a few blocks had then been formalised at the northwestern fringe of the precinct. These extended the full length of Kerferd Road (back to Mills Street) and partly along Canterbury Road (as far as Harold Street), thus forming a roughly L-shaped area. Further south-east, a few more sections were nominally outlined, flanking the town boundary; otherwise, subdivision patterns within the Borough of St Kilda were the same as shown on Vardy's 1873 plan, with a small area of swampland remaining between Park Street and the railway line.

It was around the same time that another notable improvement was made: the realisation of the foreshore boulevard, which – first mooted over two decades earlier – was finally constructed in 1878-79 as an unemployment relief project. In January 1879, the following was reported in the *Argus*:

The Emerald Town Council have resolved to honour the British Premier. At the last meeting, the Mayor (Councillor Boyd) after speaking in eulogistic terms of the Earl of Beaconsfield, tabled a resolution to the effect that the new military road about to be formed between Sandridge and St Kilda should receive the title of Beaconsfield Parade.²⁸²

²⁸¹ Allom Lovell Sanderson, op cit. p 3/18.

²⁸² *Argus*, 18 January 1879, p 6.

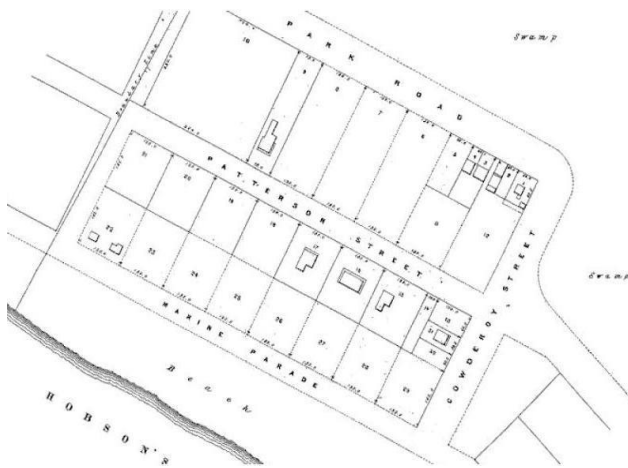


Figure 6.35–3 – Detail of the Vardy Map (1873) showing the sparsely developed allotments in St Kilda West

(source: Map Collection, State Library of Victoria)



Figure 6.35–4 – 1889 photograph by David Wood, showing then recently-completed terrace houses at 62-65 Canterbury Road

(source: Port Phillip City Collection)

In January 1880, soon after the completion of the new seaside thoroughfare, architect William Pitt called tenders for a grand seaside hotel on the corner of Beaconsfield Parade and Cowderoy Street – the first of several public facilities to appear along the promenade. By decade's end, it had been joined by the Kerferd Road pier (1887-89) and public baths at Armstrong Street (1890). At the other end of Armstrong Street, residential expansion was spurred by the construction of the Middle Park Railway Station (1882). A contemporaneous subdivision plan, published in Jill Barnard's history of Albert Park, shows the extent of surveying carried out since John Coode completed his map only a few years before.²⁸³

The later map shows that the area bounded by Canterbury Road, Kerferd Road, Fraser Street and Beaconsfield Parade had been formalised into over forty sections, which, except for those bounded by present-day Mills, Neville and McGregor streets, were all carved up into smaller residential lots. Only a small strip of land at the south-eastern end, indicated on Coode's 1879 plan as a swamp, remained entirely unsubdivided at that time. This – the final remnant of the notorious West Swamp – was finally reclaimed a few years later, following an 1883 deputation to the Commissioners for Public Works.²⁸⁴ This project, completed in March 1884 at a cost of £5,260, involved the replacement of the original 18-inch channel with a covered stone culvert of 4½ feet (1.37 metre) diameter, which extended for a distance of 41 chains (825 metres) from the railway line. As J B Cooper later noted, “the adequate drainage of the land had the effect of greatly increasing the value of the west beach lands”.²⁸⁵

The subsequent development of these subdivided sections was swift. Canterbury Road and Kerferd Road, for example, were both listed for the first time in the Sands & McDougall Directory in 1882. Amongst the early occupants of the latter roadway was an omnibus stable, which occupied the entire block between Herbert and Carter Streets. Otherwise, both strips tended to be characterised by higher-status residential development, attracting wealthier residents who lived in suitably grand

²⁸³ Jill Barnard, *People's Playground: A History of the Albert Park*, p 49.

²⁸⁴ Letter, Secretary to Commissioner of Public Works to Town Clerk, Borough of St Kilda, 20 July 1883. Item 252, St Kilda Historical Correspondence, Port Phillip City Collection.

²⁸⁵ J B Cooper, *op cit*, p 214.

houses, often designed by prominent architects – a trend that would continue well into the early twentieth century. Canterbury Road, for example, would eventually include houses designed by such architects as George Wharton (1883), Frederick de Garis (1884), Wilson & Beswicke (1884), Arthur Lewis (1886), Watts, Tomb & Furrar (1895), Sydney Smith & Ogg (1898) and Thomas Ashworth (1913).²⁸⁶ The last named was in fact a local resident who had set up his office in the Canterbury Buildings, a block of residential shops built opposite the Middle Park Railway Station in 1888. He not only went on to design the aforementioned public sea-baths on Beaconsfield Parade, but also private residences in Hambleton Street, Harold Street, Longmore Street, Nimmo Street and Park Place.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, settlement of the study area remained concentrated on the northwestern fringe – that is, the L-shaped area nominally defined by Kerferd Road, Mills Street, Canterbury Road, Neville Street and McGregor Street. Towards the end of the 1880s, a few of the sections outlined on the c.1882 plan but not yet subdivided further were carved up; these included the block bounded by Page, Little Page, Mills and Boyd Streets, which was divided into 28 new allotments in 1889, and that bounded by Armstrong, Richardson, McGregor and Neville streets, which was carved into 26 allotments the following year. Residential development continued in the northern fringe well into the 1890s, with the collapse of the Land Boom in 1892 providing only a temporary lull. The opening of a State School No 2814 on Richardson Street (1887) established it as the de facto main road through the burgeoning suburb; several other community facilities were subsequently attracted to the strip, including a temporary police station (c.1889), new churches for the respective Baptist (1890), Roman Catholic (1891) and Wesleyan (1892) congregations, and a number of corner shops. Otherwise, commercial development was concentrated on the intersecting thoroughfare of Armstrong Street (see separate citation), opposite the new Middle Park Railway Station, where a retail strip flourished from the late 1880s. Elsewhere in the study area, non-residential development was more isolated, with scattered residential shops and a single church – St Anselm's Church of England at the corner of Langridge and Neville streets (1891) – outside the established ecclesiastical zone of Richardson Street.

The first MMBW plan of the area, published in January 1895, provides a useful overview of residential settlement up to that point. This shows intensive development of closely-spaced cottages, villas and terrace houses along the northern fringe, becoming gradually sparser as ones moves inward from the boundary thoroughfares of Kerferd Road and Canterbury Road. South-east of Fraser Street, in the City of St Kilda, settlement tended to be characterised by larger detached villas (and the occasional mansion) on more generous allotments. Further south, in the area bounded by Mills Street, Page Street, Fraser Street and Beaconsfield Parade, residential settlement was far less intensive. The MMBW map shows only a few isolated rows of cottages in that area, along with a couple of scattered villas. Beaconsfield Parade remained similarly underdeveloped, although the few houses erected thereon – like those on the comparable perimeter boulevards of Kerferd Road and Canterbury Road – were larger and grander than their inner counterparts. At that time, the foreshore streetscape was largely dominated by J R Buxton's Italianate mansion, Hughendon, at No 177 (1890), and the nearby Convent of the Good Shepherd (1892) at what is now No 180.

By this time, the former omnibus stable on Kerferd Road (latterly occupied by the Melbourne Tram & Bus Company) had been taken over as the South Melbourne Co-operative Steam Laundry – a rare manifestation of industrial activity within the precinct. Two others – Phillip Mardell's straw hat factory at 62 Harold Street (1895) and Henry Pask's asbestos works at 36 Patterson Street (c.1901) – were located, not surprisingly, within the large expanse of mostly unsubdivided blocks between Mills and Fraser Street.

²⁸⁶ Miles Lewis (ed), *Australian Architectural Index*, s v Middle Park.

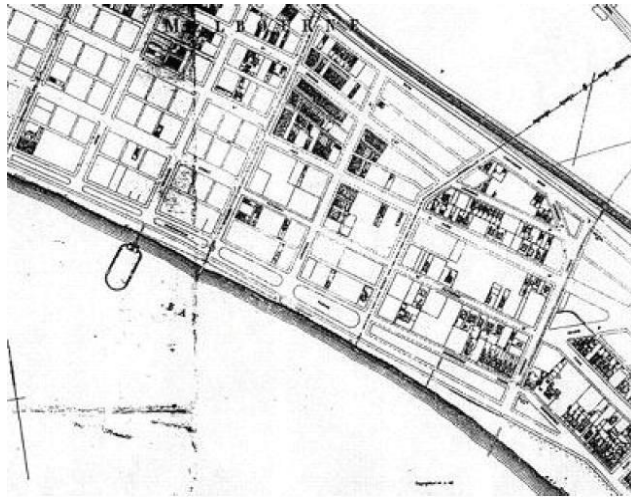


Figure 6.35-5 – Detail of the MMBW Map (1895) showing the extent of residential development by the Boom period

(source: Map Collection, State Library of Victoria)



Figure 6.35-6 – Early twentieth century postcard showing residential development along Beaconsfield Parade

(source: Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria)

These underdeveloped areas finally filled out during the first two decades of the twentieth century. As Susan Priestley has noted, land sales in that area had “cautiously resumed” in 1900 after eight-year hiatus; in 1901, all but four of the suburb's eighteen houses under construction, and its 42 unoccupied houses, were all located in the Canterbury Ward – that is, Middle Park.²⁸⁷ Further land sales took place in 1907 and 1908, with the last allotments offered in January 1910. By that time, Middle Park represented the most significant growth area in the entire City of South Melbourne, accounting for more than half of the 225 new dwellings erected during the period 1908-09.²⁸⁸ As noted in the 1987 conservation study, “the fast development that took place resulted in a consistent Edwardian building stock, particularly towards its southern end, and this gives the Middle Park area its distinctive red-brick terracotta-tiled character.”²⁸⁹

Not surprisingly, this renewed phase of settlement was accompanied by an expansion of existing community facilities. In 1905, a Roman Catholic school was erected beside the Convent of the Good Shepherd on Beaconsfield Parade, and, three years later, the existing state school in Richardson Street was enlarged. Churches also expanded: the local Baptist and Anglican congregations, for example, replaced their original timber buildings with grander brick counterparts, in 1904 and 1919 respectively. The Roman Catholics expanded their own facilities in 1912 and again in 1927 – including the extension and refacing of the existing church and the construction of a new Carmelite Hall (fronting Richardson Street) and Presbytery (fronting Wright Street).²⁹⁰ In addition, several hitherto unrepresented denominations erected new churches along Richardson Street – the Church of Christ at No 135 (1909), the Presbyterians at No 149-51 (1912; demolished) and, finally, the Methodists at No 288-90 (1922). By the time that the latter had opened, the residential boom in Middle Park had

²⁸⁷ Susan Priestley, *South Melbourne: A History*, pp 240, 241.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ Allom Lovell Sanderson, *op cit*, p 3/18.

²⁹⁰ Priestley, *op cit*, p 298. Priestly, however, is mistaken in her assumption that the local Baptist congregation did not have a building in Albert Park prior to 1904, as their original church in Richardson Street is clearly shown on the 1895 MMBW plan.

already somewhat abated; indeed, as Andrew Ward has succinctly put it, “by the outbreak of the Great War, the rush to populate the municipality was all but over”.²⁹¹

Since the end of the First World War, residential development in the precinct has largely been characterised by apartments. This trend was initially more widespread in the area south-east of Fraser Street – that is, the City of St Kilda, where apartment development has been a significant and recurring theme throughout the twentieth century.²⁹² Indeed, the first modern apartment block in the former municipality – and, indeed, one of the first in suburban Melbourne – was erected in 1914 on the portion on Canterbury Road formerly occupied by swampland. The opening of the new electric tram route through the area in 1926 – with a route that extended along Danks Street, Patterson Street and Park Street to Fitzroy Street – prompted the construction of many apartment blocks, both along those streets and others within reasonable walking distance.²⁹³ It is significant that new apartments blocks in the study area were rarely built on previously undeveloped allotments; rather, they were erected on the sites of older mansions and villas (especially, south-east of Fraser Street, those early houses that had been shown on the 1873 Vardy Map). In the former City of South Melbourne, one Tudor Revival style apartment block was erected on the former site of Mardell's hat factory.

While this flat-building trend continued into the post-war period, the typology itself transformed into multi-storey blocks, and the epicentres for development moved to the major thoroughfares of Canterbury Road and Beaconsfield Parade, respectively overlooking the Albert Park Lake and the sea. This trend was especially noticeable in that stretch of beachfront boulevard within the City of St Kilda, where the first apartment tower, Edgewater Towers had been built (just outside the present study area) in 1960. By the end of the decade, local property developer Nathan Beller described this portion of Beaconsfield Parade – extending from Fraser Street to Alfred Square – as Melbourne's coming residential area and further predicted that the real estate represented by these new high-rise apartment blocks (and typified by his own twelve-storey Sunset Towers at No 350) would soon be at a premium.²⁹⁴ As had been the case in the 1920s and 30s, the construction of new apartment blocks in the 1960s and '70s necessitated the demolition of existing buildings, including several mansions as well as the former Convent of the Good Shepherd on Beaconsfield Parade.

6.35.2 Description

Nominally bounded by Canterbury Road, Kerferd Road, Beaconsfield Parade and Fitzroy Street, the precinct occupies a vast wedge-shaped area between the Albert Park reserve and the beach. Its relative flatness betrays its origins as reclaimed swamp, with only a gentle downward slope from north-west to south-east. It is subdivided into a grid-like pattern of blocks, defined by streets running parallel and perpendicular to Beaconsfield Parade (slightly angled, east of Cowderoy Street, to follow the kinked coastline). Canterbury Road, which follows the railway line, curves at a steeper angle and thus creates irregular wedge-shaped and triangular blocks along the north fringe of the precinct. A hierarchy of roads is evident: the major thoroughfares of Canterbury Road, Kerferd Road and Beaconsfield Parade, with their broad grassed median strips; the wide and often tree-lined local streets running north-west/south-east (eg Richardson Street & Danks Street, et al) with much narrower secondary streets bisecting the blocks between them (eg Canterbury Place, Neville Street, Little Page Street, Ashworth Street, et al) and the wide south-west/north-east streets providing vistas, respectively, to the ocean and the Albert Park reserve. Building stock is dominated by residential development, representing phases of settlement from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Notwithstanding an inevitable (if scattered) overlay of higher density housing from the 1920s to the 1970s, the precinct retains a strong Victorian and Edwardian character through

²⁹¹ Ward, op cit, p 76.

²⁹² Anne Longmire. *St Kilda: The Show Goes On*, p 61.

²⁹³ Ward, op cit, p 76.

²⁹⁴ Longmire, op cit, p 199.

cohesive and closely-grained streetscapes of individual dwellings on relatively narrow allotments: predominantly single or double storey in scale, and variously freestanding, paired or in rows.

The largest and grandest residences proliferate along Kerferd Road and Canterbury Road – two major thoroughfares that mark the precinct's north-west and north-east boundaries and represent epicentres for evidence of its early development. This is most evident at what might be termed the northern fringe – that is, the north-west end of Canterbury Road and the north-east end of Kerferd Road. Here, streetscapes are dominated by rows of double-storey Victorian Boom-style terraces (eg 1-5, 7-11, 25-36, 42-47, 62-65, 92-98 and 112-16 Canterbury Road; 3, 19-35, 49-53 and 57-61 Kerferd Road) interspersed with single-storey Victorian villas (eg 6, 12, 19, 21, 7-72, 88, 90 Canterbury Road; 55, 79-83 Kerferd Road) and the occasional grand Edwardian or inter-war residence (eg 20, 67, 73, 79, 118 Canterbury Road). At the opposite ends of these two major thoroughfares – that is, the south-eastern end of Canterbury Road and the south-western end of Kerferd Road – this situation is reversed, with Edwardian and inter-war dwellings dominating over their Victorian counterparts. The latter, however, remain prominently represented by double-storey terrace houses (eg 149-63, 165-73 Kerferd Road; 219-21, 229-30 Canterbury Road), large detached villas (eg 175 Kerferd Road; 157, 216 Canterbury Road) and smaller cottages (eg 179-83 Kerferd Road; 187 Canterbury Road).



Figure 6.35-7 – Double-storey Boom-style Victorian terrace houses, Kerferd Road



Figure 6.35-8 – Row of single-fronted Victorian timber cottages, Erskine Street



Figure 6.35-9 – Double-fronted Victorian brick villas, 76-78 Park Street, St Kilda West

While this type of high-class pre-Second World War residential development is most evident along the wide perimeter thoroughfares of Kerferd Road and Canterbury Road (and, to a lesser extent, Beaconsfield Parade), it also spills into the contiguous side-streets. This is particularly evident in those streets south-east of Fraser Street – the former City of St Kilda – where residential development began prior to the 1870s. Although research indicates that (with the exception of the much-altered mansion at 177 Beaconsfield Parade), none of the early houses shown on the 1873 Vardy Plan remain standing in this area, it nevertheless strongly remain characterised by high-status Victorian and Edwardian dwellings. Mary Street, for example, is distinguished by a fine streetscape of double-storey terrace houses from both periods (eg Nos 7-15, 12-16, 21-31, 28), with other notable specimens in the contiguous blocks of Park Street (eg Nos 35-39, 36-40) and Loch Street (eg No 27). There are also some fine freestanding single-storey villas from both the Victorian (eg 34 Mary Street, 64 Park Street; 6 York Street, 1, 2 and 23 Loch Street) and the Edwardian eras (eg 34, 40 Mary Street; 3 York Street). Surviving Victorian-era housing becomes sparser between Fraser and Cowderoy streets; in addition to a few relatively isolated villas in these areas (eg 24, 26 and 36 York Street; 126 Park Street), a notable cluster of Victorian timber villas, with asymmetrical frontages incorporating canted bay windows, still remains at the far south-eastern end of Longmore Street (Nos 7-15, 31, 33, 37).

Elsewhere in the precinct, the tendency for grander pre-war dwellings is also notably evident along the northern fringe, where more double-storey Victorian terrace houses can be found at the top

ends of Mills Street (Nos 9-23), Nimmo Street (Nos 3, 8-14) and in nearby Herbert Street (Nos 31-39, 86), as well as the furthestmost blocks of Page Street (eg Nos 94-102) and Danks Street (eg Nos 182-184, 191-195, 225-227). This part of Danks Street also contains a large freestanding double-storey Italianate residence at No 197, which, along with the comparable and nearby Hughenden in Beaconsfield Parade, represent rare survivors of several such mansions in the precinct, many of which (eg 50-51 Canterbury Road; 315-17 Beaconsfield Parade) were demolished for post-war apartment development.

The comparably grand thoroughfare of Beaconsfield Parade, which marks the south-western boundary of the precinct, was once characterised by a similar mix of high-status Victorian dwellings – mostly concentrated at the extreme north-east and south-west ends of the boulevard – with a later infill of grand Edwardian and inter-war housing. Characteristically, development along this prominent promenade was always (and continues to be) driven by an acute awareness of its prime beachfront position, befitting its long-established reputation as one of Melbourne’s most iconic bayside boulevards. From the 1860s onward, architecture along Beaconsfield Parade became increasingly typified by stylistic grandeur and a tendency for bay windows, balconies, towers, rooftop eyries and other features to exploit the bay views. This trend continued into the twentieth century (demonstrated by such surviving examples as No 324, 243-45, 367-68) and, after the Second World War, began to re-assert itself even more strongly in the form of high-rise apartment buildings – sometimes of quite bold and striking design (eg Nos 313, 333) – and, more recently, in smart re-interpretations of the seaside terrace type (eg No 183, 249). Today, amidst this subsequent overlay of twentieth century redevelopment, evidence of the earlier Victorian phase remains in the form of numerous double-storey terrace houses (eg Nos 178-82, 184-86, 210-13, 246-47 335), a few grand villas (Nos 147, 361) and a large intact Italianate mansion (the exceptional Hughenden, at No 177). At the St Kilda end of the strip, a smaller mansion survives in a somewhat altered state at No 312, standing behind (and integrated into) a multi-storey post-war apartment block built along the property's street frontage.



Figure 6.35-10 – Double-storey Victorian terrace house, Mary Street



Figure 6.35-11 – Set of Double-storey terrace houses, Mary Street



Figure 6.35-12 – Row of Double -storey terrace houses, Beaconsfield Parade

In contrast to the higher-status residential development that is evident along the three major perimeter thoroughfares, in the contiguous blocks of some of their side streets, and in the local streets south-east of Cowderoy Street, the precinct is otherwise characterised by streetscapes of more modest single-storey Victorian and Edwardian housing. Again, a clear distinction is evident: in the northern fringe of the precinct – that is, the vaguely L-shaped area defined to the north-east of Page Street and Park Road and the north-west of Fraser and Mills streets – Victorian dwellings are far more predominant than Edwardian, while in the remaining central area – bounded by Mills Street, Page Street, Fraser Street and Beaconsfield Parade – the reverse is true. The northern fringe is dominated by closely-grained late nineteenth century housing, most commonly manifest as small single-storey single-fronted cottages in brick (plain, bichromatic or rendered) or timber (invariably

block-fronted), with corrugated steel-clad hipped or gabled roofs and simple posted verandahs. These modest dwellings proliferate along the principal north-west/south-east streets (eg Herbert, Hambleton and Richardson streets) as well as the top ends of the intersecting north-east/south-west streets (Mills, Wright, Harold, Nimmo and McGregor streets); they also form some particularly striking streetscapes in those narrow streets that run between the blocks (eg Herbert Place, Carter Street, Erskine Street, Neville Street and the far end of Little Page Street), where they occupy even narrow allotments and are built even closer to the property line.

More elaborate Boom-style single-storey terrace houses, with ornate moulded parapets, can be found scattered throughout this area; these also exist in rows, most notably in the north-east/south-west streets (eg Nos 28-32 Harold Street; 18-28, 39-45, 66-76 Nimmo Street and 150-68 Mills Street). In this part of the precinct, streetscapes of modest single-fronted Victorian cottages are occasionally interspersed with contemporaneous single-storey double-fronted villa (or, less commonly, by a similarly-scaled Edwardian or inter-war dwelling). These larger Victorian villas, variously in brick or timber, with symmetrical or asymmetrical facades, can also be found in more extensive groups, most notably at the south-eastern ends of Herbert Street (eg Nos 66-82) and Hambleton Street (eg Nos 94-138) and the north-western end of Page Street (Nos 108-124).

In this part of the precinct, Armstrong Street (running north-south) and Richardson Street (running east-west) form two particularly significant internal thoroughfares. The former is characterised by some fine Victorian and Edwardian strip shops (see separate precinct citation); the latter also attracted a degree of commercial development, with numerous corner shops still standing (albeit invariably no longer in use as such). These include modest single-storey examples (eg 364 Richardson Street, 92 Mills Street and 37 Nimmo Street) and grander double-storey ones, with residences above (Nos 193, 256 and 310 Richardson, and 31 McGregor Street).



Figure 6.35-13 – Victorian and Edwardian two-storey terraces, Mary Street



Figure 6.35-14 – Edwardian red brick villas, Richardson Street (note street trees)



Figure 6.35-15 – Mixed streetscape, St Kilda West, with inter-war and post-war flats

Richardson Street, distinguished by its fine avenue of mature street trees, still provides evidence of contemporaneous community facilities such as the Middle Park Primary School at Mills Street, several corner shops and no fewer than five churches – of which only two remain in use as such. All five are of red brick construction, and, except for the grand and Baroque-style Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, are of relatively modest scale, and in the Gothic idiom. Elsewhere in the precinct, on-residential buildings from the late nineteenth/early twentieth century are considerably sparser: demonstrated, for example, by the occasional Victorian residential shop (eg 32, 170 Mills Street, 41 Canterbury Road) or inter-war dairy (24 Herbert Street; 14, 20 Cowderoy Street) on or near a major thoroughfare. The former St Anselm's Anglican Church (also in red brick) still stands at 41 Park Road – albeit since converted into apartments – while another notable survivor is the former asbestos factory, an eye-catching Edwardian red brick building at 36 Patterson Street.

In the centre of the precinct – that part bounded by Mills Street, Page Street, Cowderoy Street and Beaconsfield Parade – evidence of nineteenth century development is sparse. Aside from the aforementioned high-status residences on Beaconsfield Parade, there is a small cluster of modest single- and double-fronted Victorian dwellings straddling the corner of Park Road (Nos 42-58) and Langridge Street (Nos 33-45) and, otherwise, only a handful of scattered specimens, including a few more single-fronted cottages (eg 2 Patterson Street) and some double-fronted villas (eg 89 McGregor Street, 101 Harold Street, 126 Park Street and 379 Danks Street). These isolated buildings stand out amongst the subsequent layer of Edwardian residential development that otherwise dominates this part of the precinct: typically, single-storey red brick dwellings with hipped and/or gabled roof of red terracotta tile (or, sometimes, in slate or corrugated galvanised steel), half-timbered and/or rough-cast gable ends, and porches with turned posts and timber slat friezes). These exist both as single-fronted dwellings in pairs or rows, or as larger double-fronted asymmetrical villas.

As a whole, the precinct thus remains strongly characterised by pre-First World War development, with identifiable zones where Victorian built fabric dominates over Edwardian, or vice versa. By contrast, later twentieth century development has occurred in a more piecemeal fashion, with scattered manifestations throughout the core of the precinct, and slightly more extensive redevelopment in the streets east of Fraser Street, and along the perimeter thoroughfares of Canterbury Road and Beaconsfield Parade. Those two perimeter thoroughfares otherwise stand out for their high concentration of buildings – across all eras – that have been designed to exploit views, respectively, of the Albert Park Reserve and Port Phillip Bay.

East of Fraser Street, inter-war apartment blocks – a significant sub-theme in the history of the former City of St Kilda – tend to proliferate. These are typically two- or three-storey walk-up flats in a range of fashionable styles of the 1920s and '30s including Moderne (eg 200 Beaconsfield Parade, 6 Loch Street; 41 Longmore Street), Tudor Revival (eg 98 Park Street), Spanish Mission (eg 251 Beaconsfield Parade) and Georgian Revival (eg 16 York Street). Counterparts in the former City of South Melbourne, west of Fraser Street, are less common, with most examples situated – not all all surprisingly – in the blocks closer to the beach, or along the tram line (eg 223 Page Street, 109 Nimmo Street). With the exception of a few aforementioned grand attic-storey residences along Canterbury and Kerferd Roads, single dwellings from the inter-war period are rare. Apartment development from the post-Second World War era is similarly concentrated along the major thoroughfares of Beaconsfield Parade and Canterbury Road and, again, in the former City of St Kilda area, south-east of Fraser Street. In the latter area, such development is characterised by low-rise (three or four storey) modernist buildings in face brick and concrete; some are of architectural interest in their own right. High-rise apartment development proliferates along Beaconsfield Parade and, to a lesser extent, Canterbury Road; most of these are of somewhat unremarkable design, although a few are of architectural interest for their bold forms (eg 1 Cowderoy Place), interesting detailing (eg 313 and 333 Beaconsfield Parade) or unusual finishes (eg 350 Beaconsfield Road).

6.35.3 Comparative Analysis

While largely characterised by cohesive streetscapes of late Victorian and Edwardian housing, the Middle Park/St Kilda West Precinct is also distinguished by certain areas where, consequent to the vagaries of history, a particular type of era or development is more evident than elsewhere. Considered individually, these sub-precincts do have counterparts elsewhere in the municipality. The most obvious would be the major thoroughfares of Beaconsfield Parade, Kerferd Road and Canterbury Road, which define the south-west, north-west and north-east boundaries of the precinct respectively. It is perhaps tempting to draw comparisons between that portion of Beaconsfield Parade within the precinct (ie from Kerferd Road to Fitzroy Street) with that extending north-west (ie between Kerferd Road and Bay Street) into Albert Park. While these two strips of seaside promenade have much in common historically, there are noticeable differences between their built fabric. In Albert Park, Beaconsfield Parade tends to be characterised by long and intact rows Victorian terraces, with fewer inter-war or post-war apartment blocks. Despite a few instances of heightened architectural exuberance, the streetscape is more cohesive in scale. The reverse is true in

Middle Park and St Kilda West, where Victorian dwellings along Beaconsfield Road are largely overwhelmed by the subsequent overlay of twentieth century (and especially post-War) development. In this respect, this part of Beaconsfield Parade has much more in common with the seaside thoroughfares further south— The Esplanade and Marine Parade in St Kilda, and Ormond Esplanade in Elwood – where inter-war and post-war flats similarly dominate.

From a historical viewpoint, parallels can be drawn between Canterbury Road and the other grand boulevards that overlook the Albert Park Lake reserve – that is, Albert Road to the north-east, Queens Road to the north-west, and Fitzroy Street to the south-east. By the late nineteenth century, all three of these roads were characterised by high- status private residences: principally grand terraces and villas along Fitzroy Street and Albert Road, and larger mansions along Queens Road. These streetscapes, however, were fundamentally transformed in the post-war period by the construction of multi-storey office blocks and other large non-residential buildings. Today, very little evidence remains of pre-war residential development along Queens Road, Fitzroy Street and Albert Road, save for a few notable blocks of terrace houses and mansions along the south end of Albert Road (between Moray Street and Ferrars Street). However, the development of this corner of the Albert Park Lake reserve means that these grand residences no longer enjoy entirely unimpeded vistas across the parkland.

In a nutshell, the Middle Park/St Kilda West Precinct is a former swampland and military area that, within the space of only a few short decades (from the 1880s to the 1910s), established itself as a thriving seaside suburb. Consequent to this unusual set of circumstances, the precinct, when considered as a single entity rather than a collection of discrete sub-precincts, has virtually no direct comparators elsewhere in the municipality. In particular, it represents a stark contrast to the contiguous townships of South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and St Kilda, which were initially settled in the late 1840s and developed steadily from that time. As an example of an area that underwent little development before the Land Boom period, but which filled out during the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Middle Park/St Kilda West Precinct has some aspects in common with St Kilda East and Elwood. The former has a similarly heterogeneous mix of Victorian and Edwardian housing stock: small pockets of cottage and villa development from the 1880s Boom era (eg Chusan Street), a few mansions (eg 63 Alexandra Street), and rows of lookalike Queen Anne red brick houses from the 1910s (eg Kalymna Street and the contiguous portion of Inkerman Street). These, however, tend to be isolated, scattered amidst an infill of later twentieth century redevelopment, including numerous inter-war subdivisions (eg Hughenden Street, Murchison Street, Mooltan Avenue) and major thoroughfares (eg Hotham Street, Alma Road, Lansdowne Road) dominated by post-war apartment development. Consequently, East St Kilda lacks the historic and architectural cohesion that is evident at Middle Park/St Kilda West.



Figure 6.35–16 – Edwardian red brick villas, McGreggor Street



Figure 6.35–17 – Edwardian red brick villas, Nimmo Street



Figure 6.35–18 – Row of Victorian timber cottages, Middle Park

Elwood, by contrast, represents a somewhat more pertinent comparator due to the fact that, like Middle Park, residential settlement was hampered by the fact that much of its northern fringe

(bounded by Glenhuntly Road, Dickens Street and Mitford Street) was occupied by a huge expanse of swampland. Although a few houses were built along the streets adjoining the swampland, further development did not take place until reclamation was completed in 1889. As was the case in Middle Park, subsequent development during the 1890s was localised, with a significant boom taking place during the early twentieth century. Consequently, housing stock in this part of Elwood is very similar to that seen in Middle Park/St Kilda West: some scattered high-status Victorian residences (eg Southey Street), larger pockets of 1890s villas and cottages (eg Moore and Cyril Streets) and rows of typical Queen Anne red brick dwellings (eg Addison, Ruskin and Meredith streets) where the swamps used to be.



Figure 6.35-19 – Victorian timber cottages in Chusan Street, St Kilda East



Figure 6.35-20 – Edwardian red brick villas in Inkerman Street, St Kilda East



Figure 6.35-21 – Row of Edwardian red brick villas in Ruskin Street, Elwood

(Sources: Heritage Alliance. East St Kilda Heritage Review [June 2004] and Elwood Heritage Review [June 2005])

6.35.4 Comparison With Earlier Heritage Studies

The bulk of the present study area coincides with what was identified in the 1975 conservation study as Potential Conservation Zone (hereafter PCZ) No 12, and in the 1987 study as Urban Conservation Area UCI(F). In the earliest study, the area was described as a secondary residential precinct with high potential as a conservation zone, being characterised by “primarily single-storey Victorian, Edwardian and Queen Anne housing on wide well-planted streets”. In the 1987 study, the same area was lauded for its “outstanding residential building stock, uniform in both form and date of construction and occasionally counterpointed with mixed businesses or small warehouses.” It was further concluded that “the late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings form the backbone of the area's significance”. In the first heritage review undertaken by the City of Port Phillip, Andrew Ward clarified the distinctively hybrid character of Middle Park by noting: “the architectural character being primarily mid to late Victorian to the north of Mills Street and south of Mary Street and of the Federation period in between”.

In addition, the 1975 study drew particularly attention to two smaller sub-precincts within: the top end of Armstrong Street (PCZ No 20) and the full length of Richardson Street (PCZ No 28). The former was described as a “predominantly Victorian double-storey brick shopping group”, being identified both as a significant non-residential precinct and a community focal group in the Middle Park area. Richardson Street, which crosses Armstrong Street, was noted for its “predominantly Victorian and Queen Anne, single with some double storey brick housing groups”. Specific attention was drawn to its “high incidence of schools and corner shops” as well as its “strong landscape qualities with extensive tree planting”. Both Armstrong Street and Richardson Street were deemed to be of medium potential as conservation areas; in the present review, Armstrong Street was considered to be of sufficient import for assessment and documentation as a separate HO precinct (see citation), while the predominantly residential Richardson Street was considered to be an integral part of the broader Middle Park area, and thus not be considered separately from it.

In the 1975 conservation study, the three boundary thoroughfares of Kerferd Road, Canterbury Road and Beaconsfield Parade were identified both as major traffic routes and primary identity streets within what was then the City of South Melbourne. Beaconsfield Parade (PCZ No 25) was described as having “Victorian and Queen Anne, single and double storey housing, occurring adjacent to low and high rise flat development”. Presumably because the latter was not deemed to be especially important in its own right, the strip was considered to have only low potential as a conservation zone. By contrast, Canterbury Road (PCZ No 23) – characterised by “Victorian and Queen Anne building groups; small and medium sized allotments; strong streetscape” – was deemed to have medium potential, while Kerferd Road (PCZ No 24) – characterised by “Victorian and Queen Anne Housing groups; strong identity with excellent streetscape” – was deemed to have high potential. The latter conclusion was echoed in the 1987 conservation study, which earmarked both sides of Kerferd Road as a discrete conservation area, designated as UCI(E). This significance was acknowledged again in 2000 by Andrew Ward, who described Kerferd Road as one of several “civic spaces of great distinction” within the City of Port Phillips.²⁹⁵

6.35.5 Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Middle Park/St Kilda West Precinct comprises a large wedged-shaped area bounded by the major thoroughfares of Canterbury Road, Fitzroy Street, Beaconsfield Parade (one of Melbourne’s premier beachside boulevards) and Kerferd Road. Owing to the swampy land, residential development was delayed – commencing at the south-eastern (St Kilda West end) in the early 1870s, spreading along the north-western fringe (Kerferd Road, Canterbury Road and the top ends of intersecting side streets) from the late 1870s to the 1890s and then finally infilling during the early 1900s and 1910s. Today, the precinct remains strongly characterised by a broad range of late Victorian and Edwardian housing stock, with contemporaneous commercial and community-oriented buildings (corner shops, churches, schools and hotels).

How is It Significant?

The precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is It Significant?

Historically, the precinct is significant as a notable and highly atypical expanse of late nineteenth and early twentieth century inner-suburban residential development, conspicuously sandwiched between the much older settlements of Port Melbourne (Sandridge), South Melbourne (Emerald Hill) and St Kilda. With the contemporaneous development of Middle Park and St Kilda West hampered by a notorious expanse of swampland and a foreshore military reserve, it was not until the late 1870s and early 1880s – when the swamp was reclaimed, military presence was withdrawn and the new Middle Park Railway Station was opened (1882) – that residential expansion could begin in earnest.

The major boundary thoroughfares of Kerferd Road and Canterbury Road were amongst the first to develop, attracting the attention of wealthier citizens who built large and grand residences – a trend that continued into the early twentieth century and established these roadways as prestigious residential addresses. Elsewhere in the precinct, specific areas ably illustrate the two closely-spaced phases of intense settlement: housing from the 1880s and '90s along the northwestern fringe, and to the south-east of Fraser Street, and counterparts from the 1900s and 1910s in the blocks closer to the beach. Contemporaneous non-residential buildings provide evidence of the expansion of community services during this key period: most notably the five churches, one school and numerous corner shops established along Richardson Street.

²⁹⁵ Ward, op cit, p 73.

A scattered but noteworthy overlay of later twentieth century development is represented by large inter-war dwellings along Canterbury Road, inter-war shops (including three dairies), low-rise inter-war apartment blocks (which significantly follow the alignment of the 1926 electric tramway route), and larger post-war counterparts in the former City of St Kilda and, most notably, as high-rise towers along Beaconsfield Parade. These apartments ably illustrate a tendency towards higher density living that has been a significant theme in the former City of St Kilda from the 1920s to the 1980s.

Aesthetically, the precinct is significant for its fine and largely intact streetscapes of Victorian and Edwardian housing. The former, concentrated along the north-western fringe and in the former City of St Kilda south-east of Fraser Street, represent most of the ubiquitous dwelling types associated with the era: small single-fronted cottages in brick and timber, more ornate Boom-style terraces, larger double-fronted villas, two-storey terrace houses and a few mansions. Edwardian housing, concentrated in the beachside blocks between Mills and Fraser Street, is dominated by modest single-storey red brick dwellings in the Queen Anne style, in attached rows, semi-detached pairs or freestanding. The boundary streets of Kerferd Road and Canterbury Road are especially notable for larger and grander residences from the period 1890-1930, including fine rows of double-storey Victorian terrace houses, large Victorian and Edwardian villas and inter-war attic-storey bungalows. Today, the high-status Victorian, Edwardian and Inter-War dwellings along Canterbury Road constitute the most intact remaining streetscape of the four prestigious residential boulevards (cf Albert Road, Queens Road and Fitzroy Street) that originally overlooked the Albert Park Lake reserve.

Aesthetically and architecturally, Beaconsfield Parade stands out for its high concentration of residential buildings (from all eras) that – befitting its status as one of Melbourne’s most iconic beachfront promenades – not only generally display a higher level of architectural expression but were also explicitly designed to exploit views across the bay. Thus it is of especial significance within the precinct as a specific and consistent architectural pattern, rather than a reflection of any single era.

Irrespective of their style and era, the pre-war buildings within the precinct exhibit notable cohesion through their broadly consistent scale (mostly one and two storey) and materials, their closely-grained siting and relatively narrow setbacks. Many of the streetscapes are enhanced by their settings, which includes original bluestone kerbs, gutters and pitching to laneways and crossovers (particularly along Kerferd Road), landscaped median strips (again in Kerferd Road, and the far end of Danks Street) as well as some outstanding rows of mature deciduous street trees (most notably on Mary Street and Richardson Street, as well as Park Street, Page Street, York Street)

6.35.6 Thematic Context

- Transport
 - Tramway and Railway Improvements
- Settlement: Growth and Change
 - The Late Nineteenth Century Boom
 - Depression and Recovery: the Inter-War Years
- Ways of Life
 - South Melbourne
 - St Kilda

6.35.7 Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme.

Retain original bluestone elements (ie kerbing, guttering, spoon drains and pitching to laneways and crossovers)

Retain significant deciduous street trees, especially notable avenues in Richardson and Mary Streets.

Along Beaconsfield Parade, ensure any new development responds to the strip's special edge condition as one of Melbourne's iconic seaside boulevards, which sets it aside from the streets that run through the remainder of the precinct.

6.35.8 References

1. Books

- a. J B Cooper, *The History of St Kilda from its First Settlement to a City and After, 1840 to 1930*. 2 vols (1931).
- b. Susan Priestley, *South Melbourne: A History* (1995).
- c. Jill Barnard & Jenny Keating, *People's Playground: A History of the Albert Park* (1996)

2. Heritage Studies

- a. Yuncken Freeman Ashton Wilson, "South Melbourne Conservation Study"(June 1975).
- b. Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty Ltd. "South Melbourne Conservation (Social Impact) Study" (1976).
- c. Allom Lovell Sanderson Pty Ltd, "South Melbourne Urban Conservation Study" (May 1987).
- d. Andrew Ward & Associates, "Port Phillip Heritage Review", Version 2 (August 2000).

3. Historic Maps

- a. Surveyor General's Office (James Kearney, compiler), "Map of Melbourne and its Suburbs"(1855).
- b. Henry L Cox, RN, "Map of Hobson's Bay and River Yarra" (1866).
- c. Department of Land & Survey (John Lardner, surveyor), "Map of the Lagoon in Albert Park" (1871).
- d. St Kilda Borough Council (John E S Vardy, surveyor), "Plan of the Borough of St Kilda" (1873).
- e. Melbourne Harbour Trust (Sir John Coode, engineer), "General Plan shewing Harbour Improvements" (1879)
- f. Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, 160 feet to 1 inch sewerage plans (1895).

6.35.9 Assessment

Simon Reeves, Built Heritage Pty Ltd, June 2010 (revised 14 July 2011).