

## City of Whitehorse Heritage Overlay William Street Precinct

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**Buildings:** William Street Precinct

**Address:** 28-44 William Street,  
Box Hill

**Melway Map Ref:** 47 E11

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**Building Type:** Residential Dwellings

**Construction Date** 1905-1914

**Architect:** Unknown

**Builder:** Unknown

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### Location

The heritage precinct is located on the east side of William Street in Box Hill. The precinct consists of a group of nine houses from no. 28 to 44 (evens only) and is located halfway between Albion Road to the south and Harrow Street to the north. See appendix 1 for heritage precinct map.

### Review

Andrew Ward's *Whitehorse Heritage Review 2001* identified William Street, Box Hill, as a potential Heritage Overlay Precinct. Graeme Butler's *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review: Heritage Overlay Precincts 2002* also highlighted the precincts worthiness for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay.

### History

The land boom in Melbourne during the 1880s was driven by the expansion of suburban railway lines beyond the city fringes. In 1882 the extension of the Camberwell railway line to Lilydale led to large-scale land subdivision in the area now identified as the City of Whitehorse. This prompted opportunistic landholders to place subdivisions on the market.<sup>1</sup> The land presently known as William Street was originally part of a large acreage owned by prominent Box Hill pioneer George Sims. A Certificate of Title first dated 1881 shows that Sims sold 52 acres to long serving Box Hill Councillor William Ellingworth<sup>2</sup> and a further 8 acres in 1883.<sup>3</sup>

Ellingworth subsequently subdivided the 8 acres into 93 blocks, forming Burley Park Estate, which comprised William, Rose and Victoria Streets, naming Rose and William Streets after his wife and himself.<sup>4</sup> The blocks on the east side of William Street and the west side of Rose Street were sold as valuable villa sites.<sup>5</sup> By 1889, a laneway is shown on the Certificate of Title between Rose and William Streets, probably to enable a night cart to empty cesspits located at the rear of the properties. The

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<sup>1</sup> Lemon, Andrew. *Box Hill*, Lothian, Melbourne, 1978, p.71

<sup>2</sup> Certificate of Title, 1881, C/T Volume 1250, Folio 853, held by the Box Hill Historical Society

<sup>3</sup> Certificate of Title, 1883, C/T Volume 1501, Folio 161, held by the Box Hill Historical Society

<sup>4</sup> Lemon, Andrew. 1978. p.80

<sup>5</sup> Lemon, op.cit., p.80

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resultant blocks sizes featured a frontage measuring 50 feet and a depth of 144 feet, consistent with the current streetscape. See appendix 2 for subdivision map.

At times, Ellingworth went into business with other prospective land owners. One particular transaction in 1889<sup>6</sup> involved Ellingworth selling a number of William Street blocks to his son John Ellingworth and Isaiah Ainger.<sup>7</sup>

The land boom in Box Hill was curtailed by the financial crash of 1890 and at the time, several William Street blocks remained in the ownership of the Ellingworth family. In 1889, Rose Ellingworth was rated as the owner of 28 William Street (allotment 17). During 1906, 40 William Street was sold to Mrs. Mary Ann Wagner by John Ellingworth.<sup>8</sup>

A dwelling at 42 William Street (allotment 24) is reputed to be one of the first houses constructed in the street. A certificate of title dated 1886, shows Alice Catherine Plaisted as the owner.<sup>9</sup> By 1890, the rate books show JA Reid as the occupier, with the structure listed as weatherboard.<sup>10</sup> In 1905, the rate books describe the dwelling as "wood".<sup>11</sup> The original weatherboard dwelling at 42 William Street was eventually demolished c1980 and a new brick residence constructed on the block.

According to rate books, the other houses in the precinct were constructed between 1905 and 1914 and were all listed as weatherboards:<sup>12</sup>

- 28 William Street (allotment 17), constructed 1914;
- 30 William Street (allotment 18), constructed 1914;
- 32 William Street (allotment 19), constructed 1910;
- 34 William Street (allotment 20), constructed 1910;
- 36 William Street (allotment 21), constructed 1910;
- 38 William Street (allotment 22), constructed 1905;
- 40 William Street (allotment 23), constructed 1908;
- 42 William Street (allotment 24), constructed 1886; and
- 44 William Street (allotment 25), constructed 1912.

By the turn of the century the Shire of Nunawading was eager to put the financial crash of the 1890s behind them.<sup>13</sup> Five new factories were opened in 1910 and 1911, as well as two large timber yards.<sup>14</sup> The Elgar Road reservoir constructed between 1912 and 1913 provided employment opportunities for seventy men.<sup>15</sup> Private houses, like those in William Street, were also being built in increasing numbers which bolstered employment opportunities in Box Hill. The diverse occupations of the William Street residents reflect the growth of the area prior to the outbreak of the First World War (WW1). A variety of rate books from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century shows that a carpenter, electrician, reporter, blind maker, labourer, grocer and gentlemen resided in William Street at this time.

<sup>6</sup> Certificate of Title, 1889, C/T Volume 2183, Folio 521, held by the Box Hill Historical Society

<sup>7</sup> Certificate of Title, 1893, C/T Volume 2488, Folio 487, held by the Box Hill Historical Society

<sup>8</sup> Certificate of Title, 1906, C/T Volume 3108, Folio 537, held by the Box Hill Historical Society.

<sup>9</sup> Certificate of Title, 1886, C/T Volume 1887, Folio 369, held by the Box Hill Historical Society.

<sup>10</sup> City of Box Hill Rate Books, 1890, microfiche 17, p.66.

<sup>11</sup> City of Box Hill Rate Books, 1905, microfiche 106, p.71

<sup>12</sup> City of Box Hill Rate Books, *Individual references TBC*, held by the Box Hill Historical Society.

<sup>13</sup> Lemon, op.cit., p.115

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.131

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

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### Description

The William Street heritage precinct consists of a row of nine single storey detached houses and their associated lots (see appendix 3). The houses are situated amongst attractive mature gardens, set back from the tree-lined streetscape behind a variety of timber fences. The street is wide and edged on both sides with historical bluestone drainage channels (two pitcher) and kerbs.

Out of the nine residences, eight of the houses are relatively well preserved examples of Edwardian era (1901-WW1) house styles. The residences are more humble in nature when compared to similar period housing in Mont Albert, Surrey Hills and other Box Hill areas. The remaining property (no.42) is a c1980s modern style residence that replaced the former 1886 residence.

All the houses remain on their original block dating from William Ellingworth's 1883 subdivision. Although the blocks were resized to accommodate the rear laneway in 1889, only minor changes have occurred since that period. Apart from the modern brick house (no.42), most blocks retain the original dwelling that has undergone little or no change to the main elevation. Where extensions have occurred they are to the rear and are generally not visible from the street.

The eight earlier-built houses are of timber framed and weatherboard clad construction under a steeply pitched corrugated metal roof. All eight houses are of similar size, height and materials, and retain a comparable level of detail including a projecting bay and short front verandah. This provides the precinct with a consistent and homogeneous appearance.

The steeply pitched roofs feature a variety of details: vented Dutch gables and / or long front slopes that encompass the front verandah and are predominantly red in colour. Tall red brick chimneys with corbelling and / or roughcast render banding add to the picturesque roofscape.

The gable to the projecting bays is half timbered with roughcast infill. On the more decorative houses the gable is often projecting but the bargeboards are all simple in nature and occasionally terminated with a turned timber finial. Windows on this element are generally a set of tall paired double hung timber sashes, although one property does display a further box bay in which these paired sash windows sit. In most cases the window has a simple bracketed hood detail.

Windows in other locations are also generally paired but where a single sash window appears it is often slightly larger.

Verandahs are generally short in length and raised. Access is therefore via a short set of steps that leads to the central front door. Decoration to the verandah is commonly through the timber posts, frieze and balustrading. In most cases the posts are turned or squared and the balustrading is of a ladder type decoration with vertical elements. The friezes have the most variety and range from the simple ladder type, to detailed fretwork depicting floral or simple Art Nouveau motifs. The iron lacework, of no. 32, is assumed to be not original as it is inconsistent with the house style and from an earlier period.

The property at no. 44 is considered the largest property in the precinct through its deeper projecting bay and L-shaped corner verandah and is a good example of a more humble and modest Edwardian era residence.

Although the properties originally date from the Edwardian period it is acknowledged that some architectural features and materials present are not necessarily original. However, it is clear that those alterations which have occurred have been sympathetically undertaken and are consistent enough that they do not detract from the precinct.

To the rear of the properties is the former access lane which has bluestone pitchers used in its central drainage channel.

## City of Whitehorse Heritage Overlay William Street Precinct

Characteristics of the precinct are as follows:

- Edwardian era residences;
- Single storey detached dwellings (sometimes with double storey rear additions);
- Roofs are steeply pitched and covered in corrugated metal;
- Similar setbacks from the street;
- Tall red brick chimneys with decorative detailing;
- Weatherboard external wall finish with simple half timbering and roughcast detailing to front projecting gable;
- Short front verandah with simple timber detailing;
- Tall timber double hung sash windows, often paired;
- Timber fences; and
- Bluestone channels and kerbs.

### Comparative Analysis

A review of comparative examples of formerly proposed and current heritage overlay precincts in the City of Whitehorse area revealed a number of similar collections of Edwardian style houses that have been identified for their cultural heritage significance.

The following precinct was proposed but was not adopted as a heritage overlay;

- Windsor Park Estate Precinct, Surrey Hills
  - Arrival of the railway in 1882 boosted development both areas. Albeit Surrey Hills developed earlier than Box Hill;
  - Core of Victorian and Edwardian style housing, making the precinct not as complete from a singular era as the William Street precinct;
  - Larger blocks and more ornate housing than those on William Street; and
  - Similar employment opportunities in the two areas. Mixture of timber and brick, making William Street more homogenous with its timber only house construction.

The following are the relevant and current heritage overlay precincts;

- Thomas Street Precinct, Mitcham
  - Late Edwardian houses dating from 1918, not as early as those in William Street, inform that Box Hill was developed earlier than Mitcham;
  - Mixture of late Edwardian and interwar housing, making the precinct not as complete from a singular era as the William Street precinct; and
  - Setback and consistency is similar for both.
- Mont Albert Residential Precinct, Mont Albert
  - Victorian, Edwardian and Interwar style housing, making the precinct not as complete from a singular era as the William Street precinct;
  - The Mont Albert Residential precinct also displays different phases of development; and
  - Arrival of the railway in 1882 boosted development both areas. Albeit Mont Albert developed earlier than Box Hill.
- Churchill Street Precinct, Mont Albert
  - Large Edwardian and Interwar houses with Arts and Craft influences, making the precinct not as complete from a singular era as the William Street precinct;
  - Similar uniformed setbacks; and
  - Housing aimed at the upper middle class.

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The William Street Precinct is comparable as a representative example of a collection of houses of this style that have retained their early subdivision parameters. However, in comparison to the above mentioned precincts, the houses of the William Street Heritage Precinct demonstrate a humbler scale and level of detailing which reflects the social context of their construction.

### Significance

#### *What is significant?*

The William Street Precinct, comprising properties 28 to 44 (evens only) with a frontage to William Street including: the wide street; bluestone channels and kerbs; mature street trees; houses; other buildings; elements; fences; and fabric remaining from the Edwardian period.

#### *How is it significant?*

The William Street Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Whitehorse.

#### *Why is it significant?*

The William Street Precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance for the well preserved Edwardian style dwellings. The houses in the precinct are good representative examples of the more humble and working class houses of the Edwardian era housing style, reflecting the lives of the residents who built or rented them while living in the Box Hill area. (AHC Criterion A)<sup>16</sup>

Aesthetic significance is further achieved through the group of houses that are similar in materials, form and level of detailing that provide the streetscape with a consistent and homogenous appearance. (AHC Criterion D and E)

The William Street Precinct is of historical significance for its ability to represent the early development pattern of Box Hill, associated with the land boom of the 1880s. (AHC Criterion A)

The precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance for the distinctive wide street and block subdivision of the former Burley Park Estate, characteristic of the Victorian era. The precinct demonstrates how the estate developed further during the Edwardian period and the effect the financial crash (1890s) had on these types of speculative developments during this time. (AHC Criterion A)

Contributing to the setting and aesthetic significance of the precinct, the mature street trees, bluestone channelling and kerbs and the existence of the rear lane, along with the retention of the original block size and the positioning of the residences on them, enhance the expression of the Edwardian era development. (AHC Criterion D and E)

The heritage precinct is of historical significance for its association with William Ellingworth, a long standing Councillor, and his family who were prominent settlers and landowners in the Box Hill area, and responsible for the creation of the Burley Park Estate. (AHC Criterion H)

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<sup>16</sup> AHC Criterion sourced from *A guide to Heritage Listing in Australia*, Department of environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2008.

**City of Whitehorse Heritage Overlay  
William Street Precinct**

Appendix 1

Map of precinct





**City of Whitehorse Heritage Overlay  
William Street Precinct**

**Appendix 3 – Individual property information**



- 28 William Street (allotment 17)
- Contributory building
- Constructed 1914
- Edwardian style
- Near original detailing as expected on this era of building

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010



- 30 William Street (allotment 18)
- Contributory building
- Constructed 1914
- Edwardian style
- Deep render on chimney depicting a later alteration

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010



- 32 William Street (allotment 19)
- Contributory building
- Constructed 1910
- Edwardian style
- Projecting box bay
- Later addition of Victorian lacework to verandah

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010



- 34 William Street (allotment 20),
- Contributory building
- Constructed 1910
- Edwardian style
- Near original detailing as expected on this era of building

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010

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- 36 William Street (allotment 21),
- Contributory building
- Constructed 1910
- Edwardian style
- Near original detailing as expected on this era of building

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010



- 38 William Street (allotment 22),
- Contributory building
- Constructed 1905
- Edwardian style
- Recent rear extension plus front window alterations

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010



- 40 William Street (allotment 23),
- Contributory building
- Constructed 1908
- Edwardian style
- Modifications to front windows

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010



- 42 William Street (allotment 24)
- Non – contributory building
- Original house constructed 1886
- Modern brick residence c 1980s

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010

**City of Whitehorse Heritage Overlay  
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- 44 William Street (allotment 25)
- Contributory Building
- Constructed 1912
- Edwardian style
- Recent rear extension and carport
- New roof
- Larger front projection
- Corner verandah

Photo source: HLCD Pty Ltd, April 2010