

FAIRHALL



FAIRHALL SOHE 2008



h00060 fairhall hotham along street east melbourne front



fairhall h60 hotham street also showing no 152



fairhall h60 rear june2000



154 hotham street east melbourne h60 extent of registration july 2000

Location

154-156 HOTHAM STREET EAST MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0060

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO149

VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

Amendment to Registration

October 19, 2000

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 7, 2000

What is significant?

Fairhall, 154 Hotham Street, East Melbourne is a two storey brick house constructed in 1860. The main facade, recreated in a Georgian style, is probably unrecognisable from the original 1860 building. The house appears to have been extended eastwards to the boundary with 152 Hotham Street in 1869. At this time, although possibly later, the balustraded parapet and entrance portico were added. The main facade is stuccoed. The comprehensive Georgianisation of the house in the 1950s included changes to the fenestration to give a more harmonised appearance, the replacement of the front door and the insertion of a semicircular fanlight.

The house was occupied from 1953 until 1986 by William R Johnston, a noted Melbourne antiques, furniture and art importer, collector and dealer. Internally the structure of 'Fairhall' remains essentially as Johnston left it, a cosmopolitan and personal expression. The drawing room, known as the green room, was once divided by bi-folding doors but these were removed by Johnston and replaced by a pair of columns with Ionic capitals. Similarly, he inserted a pair of columns with Egyptian capitals into the main first floor room, known as the yellow drawing room.

The hallway and staircase have a dado height timber wainscot. All the cornices are quite plain. The single storey kitchen area at the rear is faced with beaded lining boards. The rear of the green drawing room was extended by Johnston, and French windows were inserted leading to the small rear garden. The first floor verandah with canopy was added over this area in 1993. The cast iron gates to the rear garden were moved to Fairhall in 1992 from Johnston's country residence at Tylden, Central Victoria. The date of the front fence is not known, but is compatible to the house.

Fairhall is now a house museum, the permanent home for the Johnston Collection.

How is it significant?

Fairhall is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Fairhall is architecturally significant as a clear expression of the movement in the 1950s among a small group of elites in Melbourne, some of whom were to be instrumental in forming the National Trust in Victoria, to adopt a sophisticated and cosmopolitan outlook. It demonstrates the interest and aspirations of some post-Second World War elites for a nostalgic form of Europe, particularly England. In the 1950s Johnston considerably altered the internal and external appearance of the house to align it loosely with the Georgian style of late eighteenth century London. This conscious affectation is reflected internally by the columns and fireplaces Johnston added, which attempted to give the house a more sophisticated, informed and cosmopolitan flavour in contrast to the restrained style of the mid Victorian period from which the house originally dates.

Fairhall is historically significant for its associations with William R Johnston, a noted collector and dealer of antiques, artworks, porcelains and furniture. Whilst he specialised in importing Georgian and Regency pieces, he was an eclectic collector and was not a purist. His eclecticism is reflected in the collection now housed in Fairhall.

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions:

1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.

4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

Exterior

* Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.

* Removal of extraneous items such as pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.

Interior

* Painting or wallpapering of previously painted/wallpapered walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.

* Removal of paint from originally unpainted or oiled joinery, doors, architraves, skirtings and decorative strapping.

* Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.

* Installation, removal or replacement of curtain track, rods, blinds and other window dressings.

* Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted artworks.

* Refurbishment of existing bathrooms, toilets and or en suites including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.

* Removal or replacement of existing kitchen benches and fixtures including sinks, stoves, ovens, refrigerators, dishwashers etc and associated plumbing and wiring.

* Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed and any original light switches, pull cords, push buttons or power outlets are retained in-situ. Note: if wiring original to the place was carried in timber conduits then the conduits should remain in-situ.

* Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

* Installation, removal or replacement of smoke detectors.

* Installation, removal or replacement of security locks to doors and windows.

Construction dates 1860,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,

Hermes Number 374

Property Number

History

History of Place:

The architect of 154 Hotham Street is not known. Notice of intent to build was given on 19 March 1860. The MCC permit lists James Cummings as the owner of a two storey house to be built on Hotham Street, "near the Bishop's Palace on the north side, west of Powlett Street" (Burchett Index Permits No.176). In March 1860 architect Thomas Watts tendered for the erection of a house in Hotham Street (Argus 22 March 1860). In June 1860 architect Leonard Terry tendered for the erection of a house in Hotham Street (Argus 30 June 1860). Neither of these tenders would seem to be for Fairhall, as the building permit issued on 19 March 1860 names the builder already, so tenders must presumably have already been called before that date.

The owner was James Cummings, a surgeon dentist of Collins Street. The house, the original extent of which is not known, was enlarged in 1869. A building permit in April 1869 for "additions to house" in Hotham Street "on north side - west of Powlett" listed Cummings as the owner and John Wright as the builder (Burchett Index MCC Permits No.3133 5 April 1869). Did the 1869 additions include building to the east side of a previously three bayed facade? Was the balustraded parapet added after at this time? Was the portico added at this time or sometime later?

The portico is very similar to a known Terry house in East Melbourne, 'Braemar' at 178 George Street, built in

1865. It also has similarities to the portico at another Hotham Street house, 'Chandos', designed by Nahum Barnett in 1885.

It is known from photographic evidence that the current facade was finished by William Johnston after his purchase of the house in 1953. He completely altered the ground floor fenestration so that it matched the layout and style of the first floor windows (Anthony Knight, The Johnston Collection, 1997 p.14). In the 1960s he also installed the mahogany front door and fanlight. (windows (Anthony Knight, The Johnston Collection, 1997 p.23).

Cummins sold the house in 1883 to George Dougherty, a solicitor. The house remained in the Dougherty family until 1953 and was known as 'Cadzow'. When William Johnston purchased the house for 6,500 pounds he renamed it 'Fairhall' (Anthony Knight, The Johnston Collection, 1997 p.14). He was a collector of antiques, furniture, decorative and fine arts. He specialised in Georgian and Regency period pieces.

In addition to altering the facade, Johnston apparently demolished outbuildings shown on the MMBW plan of the 1890s, at the rear. Johnston, after initially letting out the house as flats, performed numerous other internal alterations. In the drawing room he removed the dividing folding doors, inserted a pair of columns with Ionic capitals, installed the chimney piece and fireplace, and extended the room to the rear. In the main first floor room he added a pair of columns with Egyptian capitals. All the main fireplaces must be considered Johnston additions as well.

Initially Johnston let Fairhall as flats. In 1972 Fairhall became home and a display house for Johnston's collection. It was used for displaying pieces for auction, and as a contrived stage set for selling his shipments of antiques from England. Kent Antiques of Armadale later became Johnston's retail outlet (Anthony Knight, The Johnston Collection, 1997 p.15).

Johnston bequeathed the house and collection as a Charitable Trust and endowed it with several million dollars. The Trust has several members, including a nominee of the National Trust. However, the house is not owned or managed in any way by the National Trust, although a separate Johnston Endowment trust was also set up to support the national Trust's aims. Nothing can be removed from the collection but the trustees can, and do, add to it.

'Fairhall' is linked by an internal door to 152 Hotham Street, which was also owned by Johnston. Although it is operated by the trustees, 152 Hotham Street does not form part of this registration.

Associated People: William R Johnston.

He began working life in the furniture department of Buckley & Nunns, and then moved on to Ackerman's, a furniture dealership. He began arranging auctions. In 1947 a trip to London fired his imagination and began his interest in collecting late eighteenth and early nineteenth century arts and antiques. Much of his collection was sourced from England. He established an antiques business in Greenwich, London in the late 1940s, and later bought a house in the same area. He established an antiques export business and began shipping furniture to Australia. Johnston, well known in the antique trade, was an eclectic collector and was not a purist (Anthony Knight, The Johnston Collection, 1997 p.64-5). Johnston died in 1986. After his death he wished his furniture, porcelain and paintings to be displayed in domestic surroundings in 154 Hotham Street. 152 Hotham Street, which he also owned, was to be a curator's residence and administrative wing.

Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended in that the Heritage Register Number 60 in the category described as a Heritage Place is now described as:

Fairhall, 154 Hotham Street, East Melbourne, Melbourne City Council.

EXTENT:

1. All of the building marked B1, and all the structure marked F1 (fence with bluestone base) as marked on Diagram 60 held by the Executive Director.

2. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 60 held by the Executive Director, being part of the land described in Vol. 9932 Folio 716 in the Parish of Melbourne North, shown on Plan of Consolidation No. 172122B.

Dated 11 October 2000

RAY TONKIN
Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 42 19 October 2000 p.2538]

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>