

# COTTAGES, ROYAL FREEMASONS HOMES



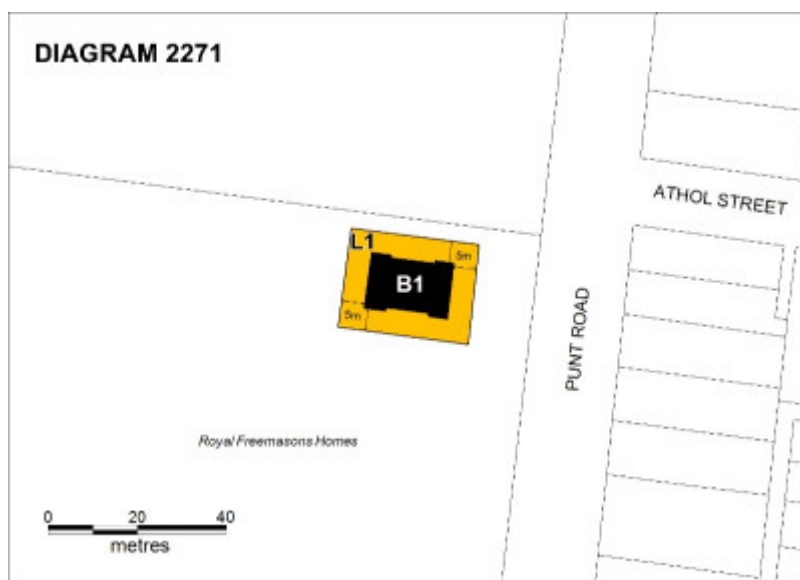
4435\_Cottages\_Royal\_Freema 4435 Royal Freemasons  
Homes 313 Punt Road  
Building 02



4435 Royal Freemasons  
Homes 313 Punt Road Gate  
Plaque 02



4435 Royal Freemasons  
Homes 313 Punt Road Sign  
02



royal freemasons homes.jpg

## Location

313 PUNT ROAD AND 31-75 MOUBRAY STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

## **Municipality**

MELBOURNE CITY

## **Level of significance**

Registered

## **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H2271

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO417

## **VHR Registration**

March 10, 2011

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - January 9, 1997

What is significant?

The pair of cottages in Punt Road, Melbourne, was constructed in 1910 as part of the Royal Freemasons Homes, an early charitable institution which provided care and accommodation for elderly Victorian Freemasons.

In c. 1864, a grant of land was made on Punt Road for the Masonic Charitable Institutions, adjacent to the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (H1002). Though the original intention was to open an orphanage on the site, it was later decided to establish almshouses for 'decayed' Freemasons. The foundation stone for the first trio of cottages at the Masonic Asylum for the aged Freemasons and Widows of Freemasons was laid on 17 June 1867 in front of a gathering of 200 Freemasons, who had marched to the site along Greville Street in full Masonic regalia. The asylum was the first in a group of voluntary charitable organisations established during this period, including the Old Colonists Homes, the Jewish Almshouses and the Immigrants' Home, which constructed accommodation to care for the colony's aged and infirm. This pattern of 'public' charities taking on such care was stronger in Victoria than elsewhere and the asylum was seen as upholding Masonic principles. *The Argus* noted that future masons would be proud that the almshouses were built before a grand lodge. Funds for the asylum were drawn from balls and concerts held by the different lodges.

The provision of cottage accommodation enabled residents to enjoy a sense of privacy and independence, though support services were limited. Residents paid no rent and were given a small allowance, with expectations of certain behaviour placed on them. Though only 11 cottages had been constructed before 1910, there were twenty-seven by 1936. The site comprised two rows of cottages at the north and south boundaries of the site, with a hall (erected by George Coppin in 1903, rebuilt 1953, demolished 2010) and the Convalescent Home (erected in 1928, since demolished) situated in the centre. From the middle of the twentieth century, the Freemasons Homes moved away from the use of cottages and began to construct larger buildings to provide for an increasing number of residents. The cottages of 1910 are now the only remaining cottages from the original

'almshouse' development of the institution. The Royal Freemasons Homes continues to provide care and accommodation for the elderly.

The 1910 cottages, known as the Baker and Voss cottages are of Queen Anne design by domestic architect Edwin J. Ruck. The semi-detached red brick cottages were larger than the nineteenth century designs, which have all since been demolished. Each comprised four rooms, including bedrooms and a front sitting room, with kitchen and toilet facilities. The front gables each feature a large six-paned arched window, plain stringcourses and rough cast with decorative timber work under the eave. There are timber bracketing and friezes on the verandah, and stained glass in the front door. Internally, though rooms have been altered, it is still possible to read the original layout.

How is it significant?

The Cottages, Royal Freemasons Homes are of historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Cottages, Royal Freemasons Homes are historically significant for their association with the public charities which took on responsibility for caring for their aged and infirm in the mid- nineteenth century in Victoria. Though these cottages date from the early twentieth century, they are important as examples of the ideals of almshouses and the provision of accommodation which allowed residents some independence and privacy.

The Cottages are historically significant for their association with the Freemasons and their charitable work. The movement promoted ethics, morality and service to the community and was influential in Victoria from the mid-nineteenth century until World War II.

## 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. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during

further inspection or the carrying out of works 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 works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

#### Interior:

Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.

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

Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted art or religious works or icons.

Demolition or removal of non-original stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings or non-original wall linings (including plasterboard, laminate and Masonite), bathroom partitions and tiling, sanitary fixtures and fittings, kitchen wall tiling and equipment, lights, built-in cupboards, cubicle partitions, computer and office fitout and the like.

Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.

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

#### Landscape:

The process of gardening and maintenance, mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead plants, disease and weed control, emergency and safety works to care for existing plants and planting themes.

## Theme

### 8. Building community life

Construction dates	1910,
Architect/Designer	Ruck, Edwin J,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	4435
Property Number	

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## History

### Freemasonry

Freemasonry is a male only, worldwide organisation that promotes to its members elements of ethics, morality, philosophy, personal development and community service. Though it has its beginnings earlier, Freemasonry was formalised in London in 1717. In Melbourne, the first lodge was formed in 1840. By the early 1860s, there were approximately 60 Lodges and Chapters of the Grand Lodge of England, about 30 under the Grand Lodge of Ireland, and about 10 under the Grand Lodge of Scotland in Victoria. It is estimated that by 1879, '89-90% of [Australia's] manual workers were members of friendly societies'. An English commentator noted that 'One characteristic feature of the social economy of our Australian cousins is the system of mutual assurance which so largely prevails in all towns, and which, under the guise of friendly society benefit societies, supplies all the real benefits of the poor-law system at home without its cumbrous and expensive machinery'. When a local independent body, the United Grand Lodge of Victoria, brought all lodges under one jurisdiction in 1889, it controlled 140 lodges and 6500 members. Many prominent contributors to Australian political life have been masons, including former Prime Ministers Edmund Barton, Robert Menzies and William McMahon, along with six Victorian governors (including Lord Somers and Sir Dallas Brooks) and numerous lord mayors of Melbourne. Along with the Homes, the Freemasons Hospital in East Melbourne is another example of Freemasons' community projects in Victoria and other projects are funded through the Freemasons' charitable trust. The governing body of Freemasonry in Victoria is the United Grand Lodge, under which there are close to five hundred individual Lodges with around 25,000 members.

**References:** *'Getting a Grip: The Roles of Friendly Societies in Australia and Britain Reappraised'* [Labour History, Number 88 May 2005]

eMelbourne, Freemasonry: [www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00611b.htm](http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00611b.htm)

### Charitable Institutions

**References:** 'The Montefiore Homes', Judith Buckrich.

'A Place of Their Own - The Old Colonists' Homes in Victoria', Frances O'Neill

'Poverty abounding, charity aplenty', R.A. Cage

Almshouses and homes for the impoverished elderly were instituted by private charitable groups to give asylum to the growing number of elderly people in the community and as part of a trend of the late 1860s to build schools, institutions and churches. The state of the large benevolent asylums around Australia was worsening. The stimulus for the founding of the Old Colonists' almshouses was the ageing of the pre-gold-rush population, many of whom had no families in the colony to support them. By 1869 the earliest settlers, who had arrived in Port Phillip as young emigrants, would have reached their late fifties and early sixties.

Unemployment was common throughout the 1850s and 1860s and 'the derelict, the aged and infirm of the whole colony tended to gravitate to Melbourne and become dependent on charitable organisations.

The voluntary principle in the charitable sphere was stronger in Victoria than elsewhere. In NSW the convict presence had pushed the government into taking responsibility for the care of the aged and infirm, but in Victoria this work was taken up by voluntary charitable organisations. The Immigrants' Home at Prince's Bridge and the Benevolent Asylum at North Melbourne, provided care for large numbers of sick and aged poor. These institutions were known as 'public charities' whose subscribers elected committees to carry on their administration and make decisions on admissions. Although Government contributions were essential to their existence, these charities remained, in their early years, in the private rather than the public domain. Organisations in Melbourne which were also turning their attention to the care of the aged at that time were the Old Colonist's Homes, North Fitzroy, established in 1870, the Masonic Almshouses in Punt Road were established 1867, the Jewish Almshouses in St Kilda Road were being planned by 1869, and in Fitzroy, close to the site of the Old Colonist's Homes, the Licensed Victuallers, The Foresters and the St Patrick's Society were each granted land for almshouses in 1870.

In dealing with the sick, the aged and the destitute (private/subscriber referral), Victoria rejected the English example. In England the destitute were dealt with according to the poor law which established workhouses in each district to house those unable to provide for themselves. Harsh conditions in the workhouse were believed

to be necessary to deter the able-bodied poor from imposing on its provision. The workhouses were feared and hated by the poor. In effect, however, the institutions such as the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum established by the public charities in Victoria to deal with the sick and destitute members of society were similar to the workhouses. These asylums were more like prisons than homes; overcrowded and dirty. Often the rules were like those of a prison or an English poorhouse where the inmates had to follow strict rules to ensure they were allowed to remain.

When the Old Colonists applied to the government in 1869 for land 'for erecting Almshouses upon .' it was implicit in their choice of words that they were adopting a particular English method of charitable enterprise. They were selecting one of the several English models available, not a benevolent society, not a workhouse or poorhouse or asylum, but an almshouse suitable for the deserving and respectable poor. It was argued that a system of private charities was preferable as the poor would have a greater appreciation for sums received from funds derived from private donation and administered by an army of volunteer workers. The development of a network of charitable institutions that co-operated and behaved as if a poor law was in operation was unique in Victoria.

Those who supported the cottage system of accommodation for the aged in the late nineteenth century stressed the advantages of privacy and independence for the inmates. These privileges were though appropriate for the deserving poor. Such independence was, of course, subject to the inmates behaving in a circumspect manner, and some degree of tension between independence and supervision could not be avoided. The pensions at Old Colonists relatively generous in the nineteenth century. When old-aged pension was introduced in 1901, many inmates left the Benevolent Asylum as they considered themselves able to live on the old age pension, less than the pension at the Old Colonists Homes.

New regulations for the old aged pension came into force in 1917. For the first time those in institutions were allowed to claim the pension. Dependence on the old age pension was regarded as shameful and many were reluctant to admit their status as a pensioner.

## HISTORY OF PLACE

In 1858, a meeting of Hon William Clark Haines, John Thomas Smith, Hon Andrew Clarke, and Professor W. Parkinson Wilson was held to petition the Government for the grant of a block of land to 'establish an Orphan Asylum for the children of deceased Freemasons.' Appeals were made for a site on St Kilda Road, following the initial offer of one at the junction of Russell, McKenzie and Victoria Streets, Melbourne, which was considered unsuitable.

Five acres, 21 perches of land on Punt Road were temporarily reserved c.1864 for 'Masonic Charitable Institutions. By 1867, the Freemasons had apparently abandoned plans for an orphanage, and instead proposed 'to erect [...] one or more Almshouses for decayed Freemasons or the widows of deceased indigent brethren.' In a letter to the Board of Lands and Works in 1864, the chairman noted 'There are about 60 Lodges and Chapters of the Grand Lodge of England, about 30 of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, and about 10 under that of Scotland, throughout Victoria, exclusive of a large number of Freemasons from various causes not affiliated with any Lodges, and the schools and asylum will be open to all.' [...] These institutions I respectfully submit will necessarily relieve public Charitable Institutions aided by Parliamentary Grant of those otherwise unavoidable recipients of public charity, and the Grant will be strictly in accordance with numerous precedents'.

The foundation stone was laid on 17 June 1867, adjacent to Wesley College on the south side of the site. Designed by Frederick Barnes, the first cottages were completed at the end of 1867, constructed by Robert Dalton for a cost of £569. W.S. Vardy, who was accepted as an inmate with his wife, was appointed caretaker. An opening ceremony was preceded by a public procession down Greville Street, Prahran by members of Melbourne lodges wearing Masonic regalia. *The Argus* reported 'The most important ceremony that has as yet been witnessed in Victoria was performed yesterday, when the three provincial grand masters of the English, Irish and Scottish constitutions jointly laid the foundation stone of the new Masonic alms-houses, to be erected on a site granted by the Government adjoining the Punt-road, South Yarra. This is the first instalment of the Masonic charitable institutions of Victoria. The asylum was seen as upholding Masonic principles and funds were drawn from balls and concerts held by the different lodges.

The next cottages - 4, 5 and 6 - were opened in 1877, with cottages 7 and 8 not opened until 1895. Though the home was referred to as the Freemasons' Homes, its official title was 'Masonic Asylum for the Aged Freemasons and Widows of Freemasons'. More cottages followed in 1897 and 1903. The foundation stone for the Baker and Voss cottages (12 and 13) was laid in August 1910, with the cottages designed by Edwin J. Ruck (who was also

associated with the Old Colonist's Homes in North Fitzroy). The provision of cottage accommodation enabled residents to enjoy a sense of privacy and independence, though support services were limited. Residents paid no rent and were given a small allowance, with expectations of certain behaviour placed on them. Though only 11 cottages had been constructed before 1910, there were twenty-seven by 1936. The site comprised two rows of cottages at the north and south boundaries of the site, with a hall (erected by George Coppin in 1903, rebuilt 1953, demolished 2010) and the Convalescent Home (erected in 1928, since demolished) situated in the centre. From the middle of the twentieth century, the Freemasons Homes moved away from the use of cottages and began to construct larger buildings to provide for an increasing number of residents. The cottages of 1910 are now the only remaining cottages from the original 'almshouse' development of the institution. The Royal Freemasons Homes continues to provide care and accommodation for the elderly.

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

### ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

#### a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

The two remaining cottages at the Royal Freemasons Homes, Punt Road, are historically significant as they reflect the importance of such organisations contributing to public charitable causes in the nineteenth century. This was viewed as both a responsibility to society and upholding the principles of the Freemasons. The cottages are historically significant as representatives of the movement of public charities in Victoria taking on responsibility for the provision of care of the aged and infirm, which was higher than in other colonies. In New South Wales, for example, the government was forced to take on this responsibility due to the large number of convicts in the colony.

The cottage construction demonstrates the ideals of nineteenth century almshouses and attitudes towards 'deserving poor', as the smaller accommodation allowed residents a level of independence and privacy not seen at other charitable institutions such as the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum.

#### b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

#### c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

#### d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.

The Cottages at the Royal Freemasons Homes are important as examples of twentieth century almshouses.

#### e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

The Cottages at the Royal Freemasons homes are of architectural significance as representative examples of domestic Queen Anne style design.

#### f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

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 their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

#### h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

The Cottages are of historical significance for their association with the Freemasons in Victoria. Freemasonry was an influential movement from the mid-nineteenth century until World War II, which promoted ethics, morality and service to the community.

## **Plaque Citation**

This pair of cottages was constructed in 1910 as part of the Royal Freemasons Homes, an early charitable institution established in 1867 which provided care and almshouse accommodation for aged and needy Victorian

Freemasons and their wives.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All of the building marked B1 on Diagram 2271 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 2271 held by the Executive Director being part of Crown Allotment 43B Parish of Melbourne South at South Yarra.

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*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/>*