

## OLD COLONISTS HOMES



OLD COLONISTS HOMES  
SOHE 2008



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1 coppin avenue 14 20  
coppin avenue front view  
aug1990



1 coppin avenue & 19  
coppin avenue front view  
aug1990



1 coppin avenue & 36  
coppin avenue the burdett  
& mary laycock homes  
rear view aug1990



1 coppin avenue! 47 coppin  
avenue rear view aug1990



1 coppin avenue 8 coppin  
avenue front window  
aug1990



1 coppin avenue on ders  
& association cottages  
aug1990



henty avenue & 5 henty  
avenue rear view aug1990



henty avenue & 7 henty  
avenue rear view aug1990



fripp avenue & 6 fripp  
avenue corner view aug1990



fripp avenue 9 fripp avenue  
front view aug1990



P1210116



P1210115



P1210120



P1210118



P1210119



P1210122



Diagram 821

**Location**

20 RUSHALL CRESCENT FITZROY NORTH, YARRA CITY

**Municipality**

YARRA CITY

**Level of significance**

Registered

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H0821

**Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO218

**VHR Registration**

September 26, 1990

**Amendment to Registration**

December 19, 2024

**Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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**Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - December 18, 2024

## What is significant?

The Old Colonists Homes complex of 142 self-contained homes and ancillary buildings, established by actor, philanthropist, and entrepreneur George Coppin in 1870 to provide accommodation for elderly colonists. The village is comprised of an assortment of homes, built in a variety of styles between the 1870s and the present, arranged in a picturesque garden setting. The place continues to be managed for its original purpose by the Old Colonists Association, and the complex remains a remarkable example of 19th century charitable provision of housing for the elderly.

## How is it significant?

The Old Colonists Homes is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

**Criterion A**

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

**Criterion D**

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

## Why is it significant?

The Old Colonists Homes is historically significant as an early and intact example of the provision of housing for the aged poor in Victoria, their association with George Coppin and other notable Victorians, and their links with Victoria's early colonists. The Old Colonists Homes are an important example of the development of philanthropic welfare facilities at a time when governments provided few or no such services. They betray the influence of similar philanthropic ventures in the USA and Britain. The unique layout of the complex appears to derive from early 19th century English experiments in housing the aged poor such as the Quaker cottages at Blaise Hamlet, near Bristol. The Rushall Park cottages feature variety in design and the provision of individual garden settings. As well as fitting within the long tradition of almshouses, the cottages also parallel the utopian model of such company towns as Saltaire and Bourneville in England and planned communities such as Riverside in the USA. (Criterion A)

The Old Colonists Homes is architecturally significant for its exceptional number of intact buildings that provide examples of a great variety of building styles and materials, developed over a period of more than 120 years. The homes show a spectrum of picturesque taste in Victoria, highlighted by the personal domestic scale and the delightful gardens. The Old Colonists Homes are also significant for their association with a number of important Victorian architects. The first stone cottages were designed by George Johnson, and the Jubilee Cottages, Sumner Hall and the caretaker's residence, designed by Joseph Crook. Other significant architects to have left their mark on the homes include George Wharton and James Wood. (Criterion D)

## 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:**

### **Building maintenance**

1. Re-oiling or varnishing of already oiled/varnished surfaces with a like for like product. No use of any polyurethane product is allowed.

### **Ramps and paths**

2. Minor alterations of nonoriginal or modern ramps, concrete bridges and external access paths, including alteration of gradients to meet compliance obligations, for the purpose of providing universal access where this:

- does not require removal of early or original fabric or the introduction of incompatible materials; and
- does not result in a significant change in scale, footprint or location of ramps, bridges or paths; and
- the design of any new installation is appropriate, sympathetic and consistent with the existing palette of materials and finishes.

### **Grab and handrail permit exemptions**

3. In previously altered interiors and the rear elevations of buildings, the installation of new grab and handrails is exempt, provided they are reversible, do not harm any early or original fabric, and adopt a neutral finish.

### **Services and utilities**

4. The installation of new or altered services and utilities, limited to fire detection and prevention, surveillance, communication or alarm systems aimed at resident safety and security provided that:

- New fittings are only exempt for non-original elements/structures, limited to smooth render or plaster, painted timber boarding, mortar or grout joints, using smallest available nonexpanding nails/screw. Any penetrations must be discretely located and be minimal in number.

### **Electrical infrastructure**

5. New trenches and bores for the provision of services and utilities, provided there is no impact on early or original fabric, or Tree Protection Zones. Must not remove or disturb ground-surface masonry associated with the registered place.

### **Blinds and shading**

6. Maintenance and like for like repair of existing surface mounted blinds or shading devices.

### **Landscape and garden structures.**

7. Maintenance and like for like repair of sheds, washing lines, and raised garden beds.

8. Demolition of any non-original or modern garden structures including sheds, greenhouses, washing lines, water tanks and contemporary raised garden beds.

9. Maintenance, repair or upgrade of decks to the rear of properties, providing that any works are appropriately and sympathetically designed, do not harm any early or original fabric and are of the same scale and footprint.

### **Roadways and guttering**

10. Maintenance, repair, resurfacing of modern or later addition paths and gutters including installation of new traffic management devices, provided that this does not change the width of the road.

## **Theme**

8. Building community life

Construction dates      1870,

Architect/Designer      Johnson, George R,

Heritage Act Categories   Registered place,

## History

The Old Colonists Homes is located on the traditional land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin nations. The Place is also located within an area of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity for its proximity to the Merri Creek.

### The Old Colonists Association

George Coppin (1819-1906) was a comic actor, theatrical manager, politician, bank director, philanthropist and freemason. His charitable works include, as well as the establishment of the Old Colonists Association, the St John's Ambulance Society, the Royal Humane Society, and the Dramatic and Musical Society.

Reunion dinners of some old colonists had been held annually from the early 1850s. George Coppin was inspired to form a permanent society of the Old Colonists Association after an 1864 trip to the USA when he was inspired by the high esteem of early American pioneers. In 1869, Coppin invited 20 influential gentlemen who had contributed to the development of the colony to dinner where they resolved to provide assistance for early settlers who had, through no fault of their own, fallen on hard times.

### The Old Colonists Homes

In 1869, the association received, upon request, a nine-acre grant in North Fitzroy for use to provide accommodation for elderly colonists of little means. Half of the grant was to be used by George Coppin's Old Actor's Association, later the Australian Dramatic and Musical Association (AD&MA). The first pair of cottages were erected on Coppin Street in 1870 to a design by George Johnson, funded by Coppin himself. Similar arrangements were made for the AD&MA site. The boom of the late 1880s saw further, different buildings being constructed to designs by Joseph Crook. The nine buildings designed by Crook established the informal arrangement of streets and the picturesque character of the site.

By the early 20th century, the Old Colonists Homes numbered 50, and the land grant was being quickly developed. On the adjacent site, the AD&MA retirement village remained largely undeveloped. In 1906, the Old Colonists absorbed the AD&MA, allowing further development of the village to the west. With the architectural character established, the erection of semi-detached residences proliferated with new curved streets formed by the construction of homes and named after prominent early colonists.

There is some evidence to suggest that architect Edith Ingpen was involved in the design of two of the interwar cottages, being numbers 6 and 7 of Henty Avenue, while she worked in the offices of EJ Ruck between 1926 and 1932.\*

In the postwar period, several early dwellings were demolished to provide greater amenity. The older buildings had been designed with consideration of picturesque landscape qualities rather than the provision of natural light internally. Buildings introduced in this period include the Lodge, the Nursing Home, and the simple modern terraces of Pratt Court and the Gutyon and Cowley and Bequest Cottages.

Today, the site retains its original land grant, upon which 142 self-contained homes are sited amongst a picturesque garden landscape. The site has connections to the numerous prominent Victorian donors who funded the building of homes, the many architects responsible for a variety of styles, and the Old Colonists for whom the streets are named. The Old Colonists Home has continuously operated, since the construction of the first cottages in 1870s, as an aged care housing facility.

## References

City of Yarra. *Heritage Strategy 2019-2030*, 2019.

\*Letter from Edith Ingpen to Gwen McWilliams, 20 May 1994 in the Papers of Gwen McWilliam, 1853-1994, Box 4183/9, State Library of Victoria

Lovell Chen. *Old Colonists Home (Rushall Park) Framework for Management of Heritage Fabric and Attributes*. 2024. Prepared for Abound Communities.

Raworth, Bryce. *Old Colonists Homes Rushall Park North Fitzroy Conservation Management Plan*. 2010. Prepared for the Old Colonists Association of Victoria.

Weller, M. *The Old Colonists' Association of Victoria: Eighty years of building*. 1949. University of Melbourne, Faculty of Architecture Undergraduate Thesis.

## Extent of Registration

### Heritage Act 2017

#### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 2017**, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H0821

Category: Registered Place

Place: Old Colonists Homes

Location: 20 Rushall Crescent, Fitzroy North

Municipality: Yarra City

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 821 encompassing all of lots 1 and 2 on Title Plan 85966.

19 December 2024

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director

[Government Gazette G51 19 December 2024]

*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/>*