

Name: HO178 Airlie Avenue Precinct

Street addresses: 1-51 & 2-44 Airlie Avenue, 74-100A Chomley Street, 546-614 High Street, 1-67 & 2-46 Highbury Grove, 27-35 & 30-48 Irving Avenue, 2-18 Kelvin Grove, 1-21 & 2-36 Larnook Street, and 1-5 & 2-28 Willis Street, Prahran

Precinct map



GRADING

- Significant
- Contributory
- Non-contributory
- Precinct Boundary

Locality history

Prahran is located on the country of the Yalukit-willam clan, one of six Boonwurrung clans who occupied the City of Stonnington area as part of the greater Kulin nation of Aboriginal peoples. The northern boundary of the City of Stonnington, the Yarra River and Gardiners Creek, approximate the boundary between the Boonwurrung tribes and their northern neighbour, the Woiwurrung tribes, between which inter-marriage took place (City of Stonnington).

After the settlement of Melbourne was illegally established in 1835, firewood was taken from the South Yarra, Toorak and Prahran areas. At the same time squatters took over vast areas of the Port Phillip District (Victoria) for the grazing of sheep and cattle. In 1836, overlanders John Gardiner, Joseph Hawdon and John Hepburn took up a run on the south of the Yarra River that incorporated the areas of today's Hawthorn, Brighton, St Kilda, Prahran and Bulleen (Tibbits 1983:4, 6).

An 895-acre site for a government Aboriginal mission, supervised by George Langhorne, was put aside in the area in 1837. The reserve was closed in 1839 and Police Magistrate Lonsdale recommended that the reserve be subdivided into suburban allotments (City of Stonnington).

Surveyor Robert Hoddle forwarded his survey of suburban allotments on the south side of the Yarra River to Sydney on 1 February 1840. Twenty-two large narrow allotments of 20-25 acres were surveyed between the proposed government road that followed the stock route from Gardiner's Creek to the Yarra River (now Toorak Road) between today's Punt Road and Kooyong Road. These allotments were surveyed on a portion of the former Aboriginal mission station reserve (Lewis 1992:8; Wilde 2008). The first sale of allotments fronting Gardiner's Creek Road (Toorak Road) in what was to become the municipality of Prahran took place on 10 June 1840 with speculators making of a number of the buyers (Lewis 1992:8; Context 2009:37). It has been noted that subsequent subdivision of land in the area reflected the shape and orientation of these original allotments and the route of today's main east-west and north-south roads are also a legacy of Hoddle's plan (see Figure 1) (Context 2009:41, 58).

In June 1849 the land between Toorak Road and Commercial Road was sold in 50-55-acre blocks, and the remaining Crown land in what was to become the City of Prahran was sold in May 1850 (see Figure 1) (Wilde 2008).

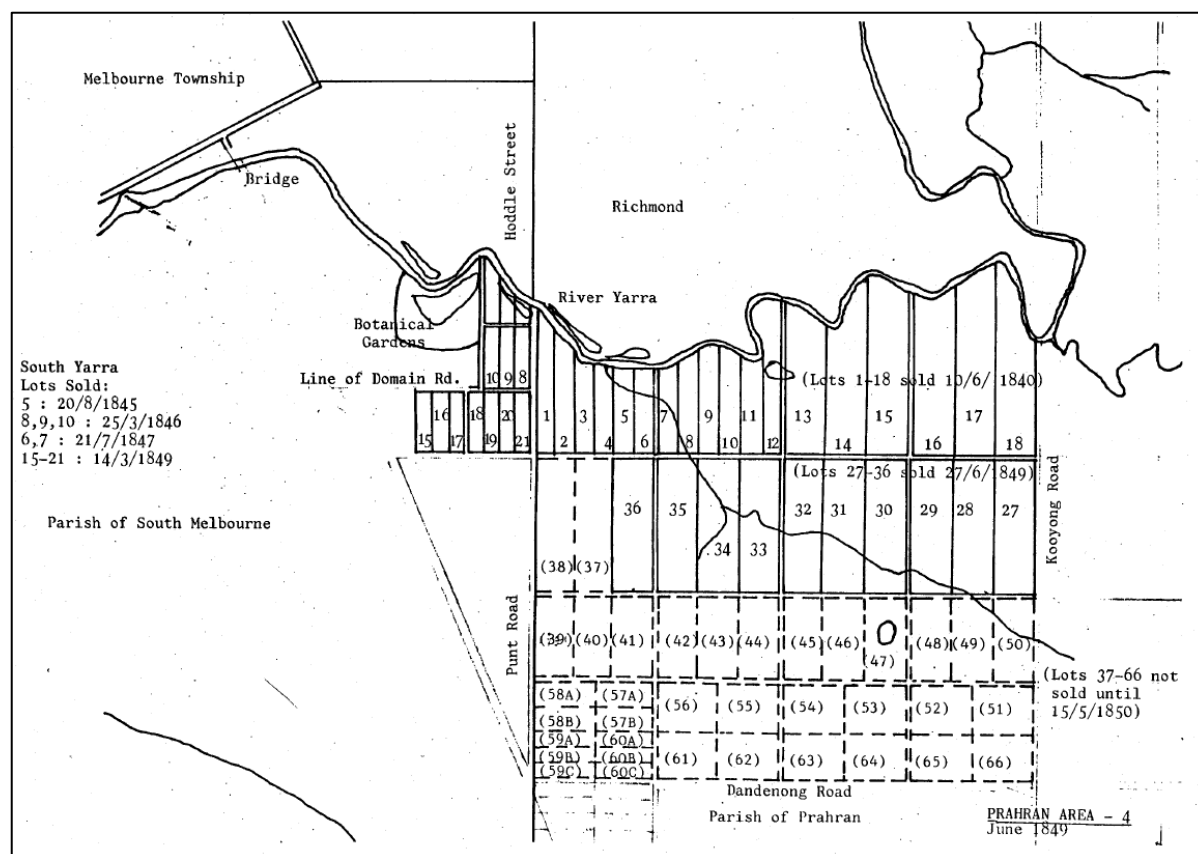


Figure 1. Showing the Prahran area in June 1849. (Source: Tibbets 1983:10-11)

Four denominational schools opened in the Prahran area between 1852 and 1854 (Victorian Places 2015).

In 1855 the Prahran municipal district was created, becoming a borough on 1 October 1863 (Victorian Places 2015).

A punt operated across the Yarra River between today's Richmond and South Yarra as early as March 1838 (Lewis 1992:8). The first road bridge across the Yarra opened in 1857, connecting Chapel Street with Church Street in Richmond (Lewis 1992:8). In 1859-60 a railway line was constructed through Prahran from Melbourne to Brighton. By 1879, the Gippsland to Melbourne line traversed the northern localities of Prahran (Victorian Places 2015). These lines stimulated development, particularly in the area south of Domain Road (Lewis 1992:8)

The Prahran Mechanics' Institute (forerunner of a technical college) was opened in 1864, and the Prahran market in 1875. In the same year the first State primary school, at Hawksburn, was opened. During the 1870s Prahran municipality's population grew by 50 per cent and Prahran was proclaimed a city in 1879 (Victorian Places 2015).

The Prahran area is hilly and the lower lying areas were notoriously swampy. Purchasers of allotments built large houses for themselves on the hills in the areas of South Yarra and Toorak, leaving the lower lying flood prone areas of Prahran, including the site of the Prahran Town Hall, which was a swamp, for working-class housing. The slightly higher land to the southwest became the suburban area of Windsor and the South Yarra end of Chapel Street began as an area of brickworks and swamps. As the brickmakers levelled the hills, factories were built. Further south, Prahran was a

centre for the rag trade, furniture-making, brewing, baking and jam-making (Wilde 2008). Coach makers also proliferated in Prahran's industrial district before World War I (Context 2009:61).

From the early twentieth century several food processing and textile industries developed in the western part of Prahran. The best known were the Australian Jam Company (later the Jam Factory shops, 1979) and Kia-ora soups and cordials (Victorian Places 2015).

These patterns of settlement created an area of considerable social diversity, which has remained an important characteristic of Prahran (Wilde 2008; Tibbets 1983:1).

The land boom years of the 1880s witnessed an almost doubling of population, with Prahran's resident numbers increasing from 21,268 in 1881 to 39,703 in 1891 (Victorian Places 2015). As a consequence, subdivision of large estates took place. Land in Prahran east of Chapel Street was intensively developed in the 1880s and 1890s (Tibbets 1983:34).

A web of public transport routes through Prahran facilitated population growth with cable trams opening in Toorak Road and Chapel Street in 1888 and 1891, along which major shopping strips developed where leading chain stores opened businesses. Chapel Street grew as a sub-metropolitan shopping centre in the 1880s and again after the 1890s Depression (Victorian Places 2015).

Development slowed during the economic depression of the 1890s.

In 1903, the Australian Municipal Handbook described Prahran as

an important metropolitan suburban city...It is a distinct municipality...The city area is 2,320 acres, with 8,854 dwellings, 9,118 ratepayers, and rateable property of net annual value of £343,482 1s 7d rate. The main roads to Dandenong, Gippsland, and Western Port pass through Prahran, and a good road with...an iron girder bridge over the Yarra connects it with Melbourne. There is railway communication by the Melbourne and Brighton Railway; also by the Oakleigh and Frankston lines. [There is also a] cable tramcar system...A line of buses also runs to Malvern Shire Hall from the Prahran Town Hall...The local town-hall is a commanding building, and has a good free library...There are numerous other public buildings of a charitable, educational, and ecclesiastical character...There are five State schools, handsome recreation grounds have been laid out ...[in] High Street and in Greville Street...A large area of ground close to Toorak Station has been purchased and reserved by the Corporation for a recreation reserve. Many of the streets are lined with handsome trees, such as elms, oaks, and silver poplars...The outskirts of the municipality are adorned by very many elegant private houses, the residences of merchants and others in business in Melbourne. Banks: Saving, National, Australasia, Victoria, and Commercial. Population, 41,161. The Prahran Telegraph and the Chronicle...are the local papers (cited in Victorian Places 2015).

Further development occurred in the first two decades of the twentieth century as the economy recovered, with the population of the Prahran municipality increasing from 39,703 in 1891 to 50,290 in 1921 (Victorian Places 2015).

Precinct history

The Airlie Avenue Precinct, located on a part of Crown Portions 53 and 54 in the Parish of Prahran (*Prahran Parish Plan 1856*), is the result of successive subdivisions of the Merville Estate and Victoria Estate. The precinct evidences the major phases of development which took place in the Prahran municipality during the land boom of the 1880s and in the first decades of the twentieth century as the economy recovered after the 1890s depression.

The block bounded by High Street, Williams Road, Dandenong Road and Orrong Road was first sold at the auction of Crown land in May 1850 as four allotments (Lots 53, 54, 63 and 64) (Raworth 2009).

Crown Portion 54 (ten acres) of the Prahran Parish was purchased by Robert Pohlman. The land was subdivided and sold not long after the purchase, with the western section, bordering Williams Road, sold to Ben Chamberlain, who built the Mt Eric Hotel on the corner block in 1853 (Raworth 2009).

Crown Portion 53 (seven acres) of the Prahran Parish was purchased by Mary Chomley. Mary Elizabeth Chomley was the widow of Francis Chomley an Anglo-Irish parson, who arrived in Melbourne with her seven young sons in 1849, two years after the death of her husband (Raworth 1999:4).

From the 1870s through to the early 1900s the area was referred to variously as Highbury, Armadale, Windsor and East Prahran.

Airlie Avenue developed in two distinct eras: houses at the north end were built in the 1880s-90s and those at the south end in 1910-12 (Raworth 1999:4). The northern section of Chomley Street was established c1880 and named after the Chomley family. The southern section, connecting Chomley Street to Dandenong Road, appears to have been laid out shortly afterwards (Raworth 2009). The western branch of Highbury Grove was renamed Willis Grove by 1885 and Willis Street in 1907 (CT:V01675 F916; *Malvern Standard* 14 December 1907:3).

Victoria Park Estate subdivision 1879

Victoria Park Estate, which adjoined Merville Estate (see below), was developed on land on the eastern corner of High Street and Chomley Street. In January 1879, 'splendid building sites' planted with the 'choicest shrubs' were advertised on the Victoria Park Estate, Highbury (*Argus* 14 January 1879:3; *Telegraph, St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian* 1 February 1879:2).

In March of the same year 50 lots in Highbury Grove were auctioned. They included 33 lots in the Mount Grandview Estate, and the balance of the Victoria Park Estate of 23 lots (*Age* 8 February 1879:2; *Age* 27 February 1879: 4).

Sales of land in the Victoria Park Estate continued throughout 1879, with the advertising of 24 allotments in March (*Herald* 26 March 1879:3); 24 lots in High Street, Chomley Street and Highbury Grove in October; and 15 lots in the same streets in November (*Argus* 16 October 1879:2; *Argus* 7 November 1879:2).

In 1880, an advertisement announced the auction of:

TWENTY CHOICE VILLA ALLOTMENTS, Being the Unsold Portion of the Victoria Park Estate. This is fast Becoming one of the Best Districts out of Melbourne, and the Character of the Surrounding Buildings (many being in course of erection) is a Sufficient Guarantee as to the Estimation in which it is held by all who have already purchased (Age 9 March 1880:4).

However, in February 1881 a mortgagee auction of 20 allotments, which fronted Highbury Grove (including what is now Willis Street) and Chomley Street on Victoria Park Estate, was conducted (see Figure 2) (*Argus* 2 February 1881:2).

Twenty-four allotments were sold on the estate in 1883, and only a few remained by 1884 (*Telegraph, St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian* 15 September 1883:5).

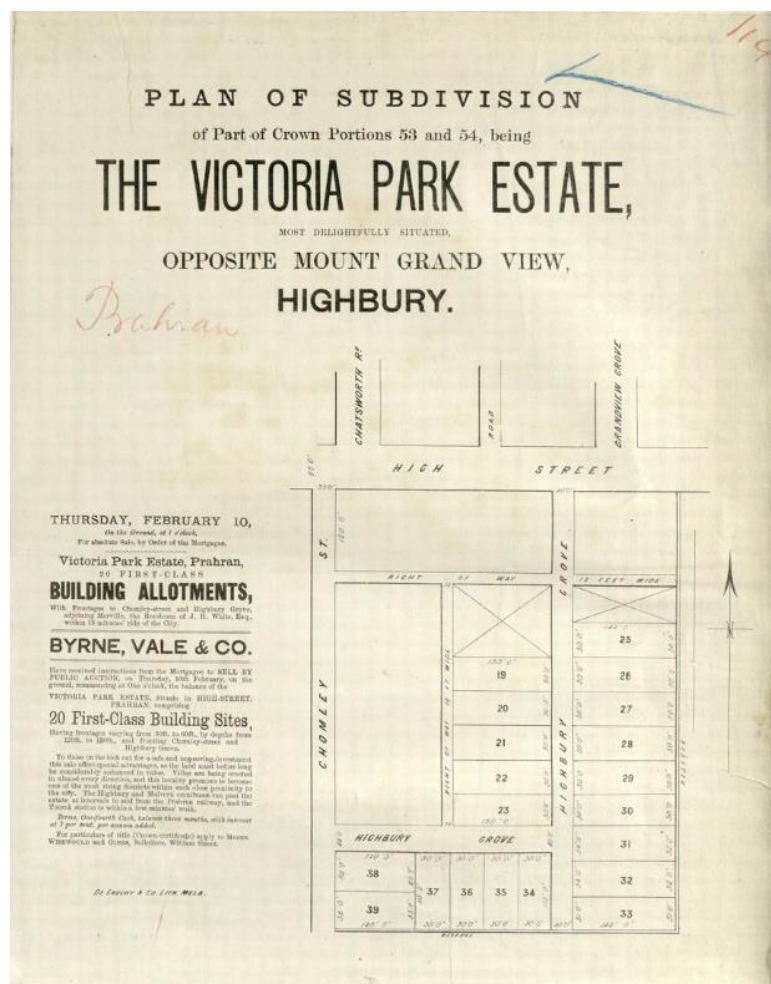


Figure 2. Plan of 20 allotments for sale in Victoria Park Estate, 1881, as part of a mortgagee auction (Source: 'Plan of subdivision of part of Crown portions 53 and 54' 1860-80, SLV)

One of the first houses to be built in the estate was 'Cathcart', at 568 High Street, constructed by 1880 for the Greer family (*Argus* 7 September 1880:1). After the death of James Greer in 1909, the eight-room brick residence and next door vacant 'business site' were advertised for sale in 1923 (*Argus* 14 April 1923:2).

Over the period 1882-1885 carpenter William Shepherd Gray, who lived at today's 19 Highbury Grove, Prahran, advertised a number of three-six roomed wooden houses for sale (*Age* 15 February 1882:8; *Age* 18 July 1885:11; *Age* 9 February 1884:1; *Telegraph, St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian* 26 March 1887:4). It is likely that some of these houses were built in Willis Street as Gray and builder Joseph Hewitt owned the land on which residences at today's 14-20 Willis Street stand. Gray and Hewitt subdivided the land into four allotments in 1884 and in December 1884 through to October 1885 transferred ownership of each allotment, likely with a house on each, to various

building societies (CT: V01608 F505). All residences in today's Willis Street were built by 1890 (S&Mc 1890).

As evidenced by an application in 1892 by Jesse Urquhart to transfer his wine and spirit grocer's licence for the house and premises situated at 546 High Street to Frederick Jackson, a grocery store was in operation at that address in that year (*Argus* 1 March 1892:10). The property, housing wines, spirits, groceries and oilmen's stores, was still owned by Urquhart on his death in 1893 (*Age* 22 May 1893:2).

During the economic depression of the 1890s, liquidators of the Federal Building Society issued instructions in 1894 to sell 32 Highbury Grove (today's 6 Willis Street), a weatherboard cottage of four rooms; 38 Highbury Grove (today's 12 Willis Street), a weatherboard cottage of four rooms; and 106 Chomley Street (today's 98 Chomley Street), a brick cottage of four rooms (*Age* 18 August 1894:2). Another five-room weatherboard house at 30 Highbury Grove (today's 4 Willis Street) was auctioned by order of the liquidators of the Federal Building Society in 1896 (*Age* 21 November 1896:2).

By 1900, all buildings in the subject precinct in Willis Street and Chomley Street had been constructed, as well as nearly all dwellings on the northern halves of Highbury Grove and Airlie Avenue (see Figure 3).

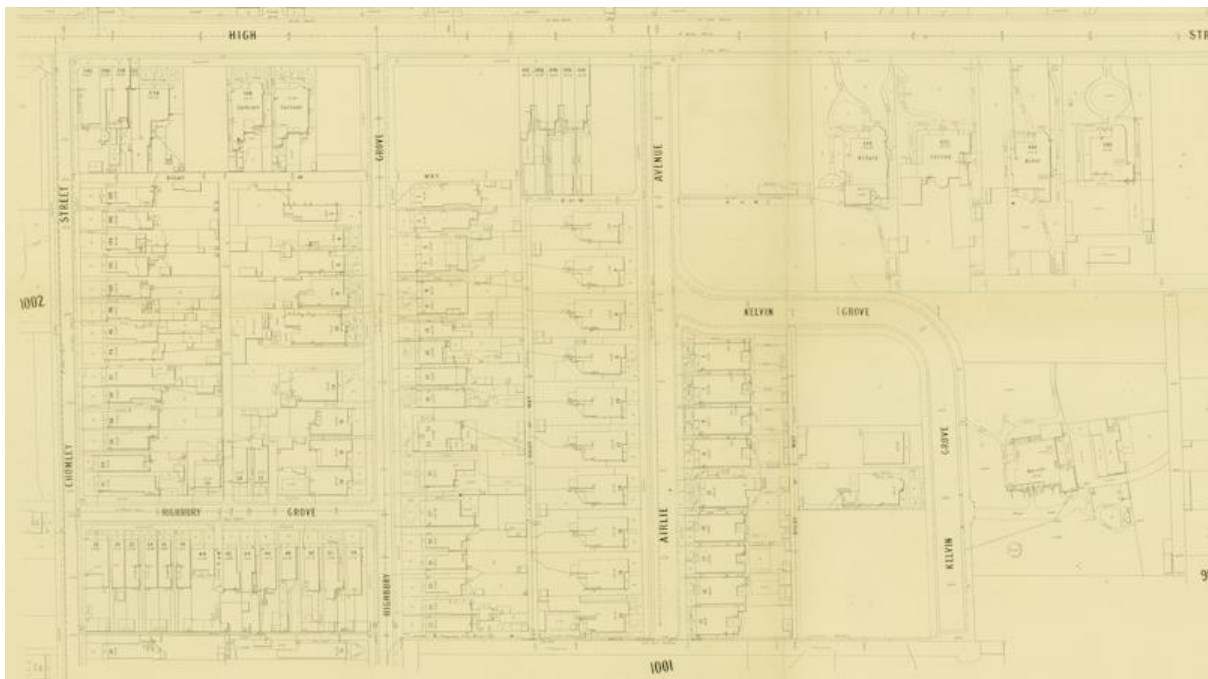


Figure 3. Showing a plan of the subject precinct area in 1900. (Source: MMBW Detail Plan no 1000, 1900)

In 1902, architect Richard B Whitaker called for tenders for drainage and sewerage connections for 104 Chomley Street (today's 96 Chomley Street), 554 High Street, and 42 Highbury Grove (today's 16 Willis Street) (*Age* 17 February 1902:10). As these residences were already built it is not known if Whitaker had had any earlier relationship with these properties.

Merville Estate subdivision 1879

'Merville', a three-storey mansion facing High Street, was built in 1850 for the Chomley family. The property incorporated land bounded by Orrong Road, High Street, present day Highbury Grove and present day Larnook Street (Raworth 1999:4).

In March 1867, Mrs Chomley gave instructions to auction the stone and brick Merville, a 'very pretty three floored chateau situated between Williams and Orrong Roads' (*Argus* 16 March 1867:2, cited in Raworth 1999:4). It appears the property did not sell, however.

After Mrs Chomley died in 1868, the mansion and six-acre grounds of Merville were sold, along with a further 15 acres considered suitable for villa lots (Raworth 1999:4).

Then owner of Merville in the 1870s, J W White, developed the property as the Merville Estate, with lots sold from June 1879 (*Age* 31 May 1879:2) (see Figure 4). In that year eleven 'elegant villa sites' were advertised for sale along High Street and Orrong Road. A sale notice showed Merville facing west, with its extensive formal gardens and sweeping carriage drive accessing High Street. A large portion remained undeveloped at the western end of the property (see Figure 4) (Raworth 1999:4).

In 1881, Charles Martin and George Taylor, manager of the Land Credit Bank, purchased the estate, and by 1887 George Hammond owned the property (*Argus* 27 February 1892:13; Raworth 1999:4).

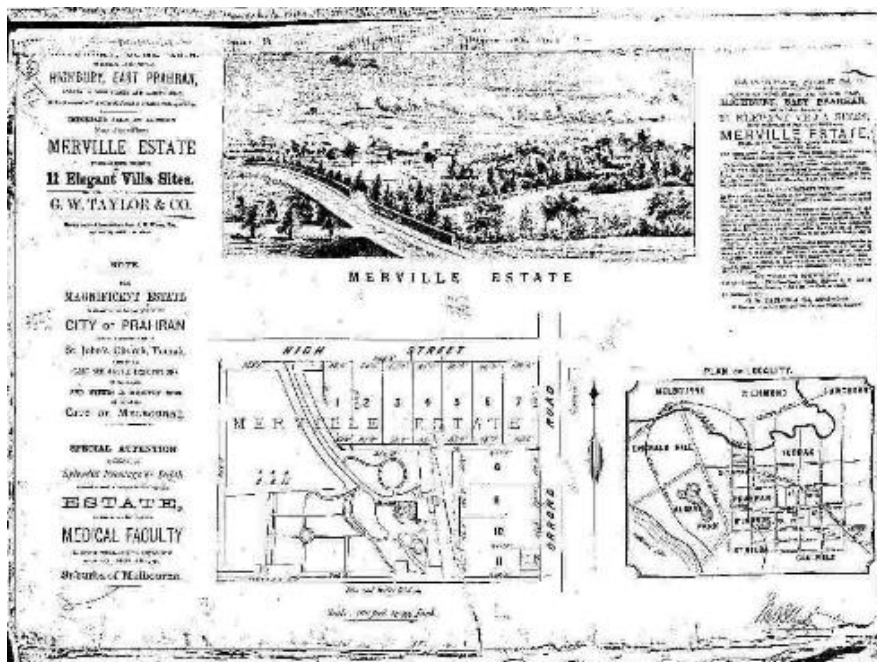


Figure 4. Plan of Merville Estate, High Street, c1879. (Source: Stonnington History Centre 2018)

In January 1888, a further subdivision of the Merville Estate created the north end of today's Airlie Avenue and Kelvin Grove, with 19 building allotments created in Airlie Avenue. By 1890 ten identical brick houses had been built on the west side of Airlie Avenue and eight timber residences and one brick house (number 21) had been erected on the east side (Raworth 1999:5).

It appears that these houses were built by speculative builders hoping to take advantage of the inflated prices at the end of the boom years. 'Chilwell' at number 13 Airlie Avenue was built with a greater set-back than its neighbours and is reported to have been built by owner/builder, William

Samuel Lyon. Lyon was in trade with his brother Edwin as 'carpenters, joiners and general builders' at 10 Highbury Grove over the period 1898-1910 (Raworth 1999:5; Lewis 2013).

In 1909 Airlie Avenue was extended to meet the rear boundaries of the properties in Larnook Street, and eight allotments, each with a frontage of 46 feet, were created on both the west side of Airlie Avenue and the east side of Highbury Grove. In 1910 a subdivision of the south end of Kelvin Grove created building allotments on the east side of Airlie Avenue and the west side of Kelvin Grove (Raworth 1999:6).

With the establishment of the new electric tram service along High Street, development of the area was immediate. In Airlie Avenue a row of brick semi-detached houses were the first to be built in the new subdivision. By 1912, houses lined both sides of the street (Raworth 1999:6).

The Merville villa was demolished with the subdivision of Kelvin Court (Raworth 1999:6).

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Description

HO178 Airlie Avenue Precinct, as extended in 2020, comprises an area of primarily residential development of the Victorian and Federation era, as well as adjacent groups of shops and houses along High Street. There is a smaller number of early interwar dwellings scattered across these two areas.

In keeping with pre-WWI suburban subdivisions, many of the dwellings have bluestone-pitched laneways to the rear, though their distribution – and the layout of the streets in general – is not regular reflecting its incremental subdivision.

Airlie Avenue is a gently sloping cul-de-sac, located on the south side of High Street in Prahran. Kelvin Grove branches from Airlie Avenue near the intersection with High Street curving to trace a parallel course to Airlie Avenue. The south end of Kelvin Grove ends in a T-junction with Larnook Street, and it in turn ends in a T-junction with Irving Street. There is a transition to a more regular street grid on the west side of the precinct, with Highbury Grove and Chomley Street extending south from High Street. They are connected about halfway down Highbury Grove (which is a cul-de-sac) by Willis Street. The unusually high number of cul-de-sacs in the area has led to the creation of pedestrian lanes and walkways which run westward from the south end of Airlie Avenue to the north end of Irving Avenue, then the south end of Highbury Grove, ending at Chomley Street. Raworth (1999) speculated that they were constructed as much for drainage control as for property access. As all but Chomley Street is not a through-route, the streets are lightly trafficked with a variety of mature trees and more recent plantings. Within the precinct, Larnook Street is notable for its avenue of mature Plane trees along the north side. The south side has a mix of mostly native trees of a smaller size.

In keeping with the development of the housing stock between the 1880s and the 1920s, there are three main stylistic groups of houses in the precinct. These are Victorian Italianate villas of the 1880s and 1890s, Federation Queen Anne villas and semi-detached pairs of c1900-15, and small interwar bungalows of c1916-30.

Victorian Italianate dwellings predominate in the northern half of the precinct, which was largely developed by 1900, as seen on MMBW plans from that date. These range from stately brick double-fronted villas, such as the polychrome brick 'Cathcart' at 568 High Street, to many single-fronted timber houses on Highbury Grove, Willis Street and Chomley Street. There are two groups of identical double-fronted villas along Airlie Avenue. On the west side is a series of similar asymmetric villas at nos. 2, 10/10A, 14, 16, 20. These are of rendered brick construction with decorative quoins and mostly slate roofs and are typical of much of the contemporary, speculative construction found throughout Prahran and Windsor. Numbers 2 and 20 are notable for their cast-cement ornament including label moulds to arched windows and vermiculated panels between them.



Figure 1. 20 Airlie Street. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd, 2020)

A group of Victorian timber villas, on the east side of Airlie Street at nos. 5-9 & 15, were also constructed as a group. While these houses also draw their inspiration from Renaissance Revival sources, they are less typical and feature ashlar boarding with unusual timber window surrounds that recall the pedimented temple fronts found in Roman or Renaissance architecture (5 and 7 Airlie Avenue).



Figure 2. 9 Airlie Avenue. (Source: www.realestate.com.au, 2008)

Among these timber villas, 'Chilwell' at 13 Airlie Avenue is of particular note. It was constructed as the home of builder William Lyons and features a far higher level of ornament than any other house on the street. This includes an unusual broken-pediment form of the front gable, a shallow hipped hood over the gable window supported on decorative timber brackets and trimmed with fretwork, and the verandah features not only posts and identical timber brackets but also unusual fretwork to the verandah fascia. The house appears to be highly intact. Reportedly the garden was highly intact in 1999 (Raworth, 1999), retaining an original fernery at the side of the house. It is not known if this, or any other part of the garden hard or soft landscaping survives.



Figure 3. 'Chilwell' at 13 Airlie Avenue. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd, 2020)

Another striking Victorian-era house is at 84 Chomley Street. It is a single-fronted house of rendered brick with a notable parapet. The parapet is ornamented with moulded panels, piers topped with cast-cement urns, an arched pediment at the centre with bas-relief ornament, a Greek-key moulded cornice below the pediment, and further cast-cement ornament to the chimney and quoins.



Figure 4. 84 Chomley Street. (Source: www.realestate.com.au, 2019)

These larger and more highly ornamented Victorian houses are surrounded by more typical single and double-fronted Italianate houses. These typically have walls of ashlar boarding, weatherboards or rendered brick, a hipped (or less commonly gabled) roof with bichrome brick or rendered and corniced chimney, convex front verandah with Corinthian columns or stop-chamfered posts, and cast-iron verandah ornament. A smaller number have bichrome brick walls (90-96 Chomley Street, 5-7 & 19 Highbury Grove). The small timber houses along the south side of Willis Street are unified by the consistent use of weatherboard cladding with bichrome brick chimneys. There is also a small number of semi-detached Italianate houses, with shared hipped roofs (no party wall), at 5-7 and 9-11 Highbury Grove, and more typical examples with separate hipped roofs at 4-6 & 8-10 Willis Street.



Figure 5. Shops at 602-610 High Street. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd, 2020)

From this same, late Victorian period are two terraces of shops on High Street. There is a row of five two-storey shops at Nos. 602-610 which are distinguished by the retention of their timber shopfronts. Each shop also retains an identical parapet with an arched pediment and urns. Reportedly the shared posted verandah is a reproduction. Further west is a single-storey block of shops at 546-552 High Street. They have a triangular pediment to each shop parapet, as well as a scrolled detail to the splayed corner. The shops at Nos. 546-550 retain what appears to be an original posted verandah. The shopfronts of the entire group appear to date from about 1910 and feature battered (sloping) stallboards, drawn-metal window framing (with a Brooks & Robinson shopfitters tag), and Art Nouveau influenced leadlight highlights. At No. 546 the name 'A.C. & W. Pinkerton' is imprinted in the rendered stallboard in an Art Deco style font, which appears to post-date the remainder of the shopfronts (a grocer by the name of Pinkerton was listed at No. 546 in the 1935 Sands & McDougall's street directory).



Figure 6. Shops at 546-552 High Street. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd, 2020)

The southern half of the precinct is dominated by a cohesive group of red-brick Federation era residences, with single examples scattered along High Street and the north end of Airlie Avenue. The largest examples are double-fronted villas with complex, Marseilles-tiled roofs above red brick walls and ornate, timber verandahs. Notable examples include 1, 3, 34, 42, 44 Airlie Avenue, 27 Irving Avenue, and 2 & 18 Kelvin Grove. The most interesting examples among them used pronounced diagonal axes, such as 27 Irving Avenue with a front door, gablet and three-sided front verandah all addressing the corner. The villa at 1 Airlie Avenue has a similar plan form, though it is not on a corner site, and it is distinguished by its retention of a high level of timber and cast-iron verandah ornament as well as leadlight windows.



Figure 7. 27 Irving Avenue. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd, 2020)

The majority of Federation houses in the precinct are single-fronted, most of which were built as semi-detached pairs. They continue the use of red face brick, half-timbered gables and timber verandah detail from the larger villas. Some are the most common type of Federation semi-detached houses, where each front façade is identical with repeated gable-fronted roofs and clear differentiation between dwellings, for example a row at 22-32 Airlie Street, a pair at 612-614 High Street, and the entire south side of Larnook Street (Nos. 2-36). A single version of this type is seen at 566 High Street. A two-storey version stands next door at 554A High Street. Like the single-storey dwellings it has a half-timbered gable front and red facebrick walls. A two-storey masonry front porch sits below the front gable, with heavy brick piers to the first floor and brick arcading to the ground floor. This fine house is difficult to see, due to a detached single-storey shop constructed in front of it and a timber screen concealing the first-floor porch, but it appears to be externally intact.



Figure 8. 30-36 Larnook Street. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd, 2020)

Another type of semi-detached pair is the distinctive asymmetrical type which approximate the scale and appearance of nearby villas. To do this, there is usually one gable-fronted dwelling and one with a hipped roof and front verandah. This type of semi-detached pair predominates along the southern half of Airlie Avenue at Nos. 22-24, 35-37 & 39-41, as well as fine examples at 29-31 & 38-40 Irving Avenue.



Figure 9. Semi-detached pair at 29-31 Irving Avenue. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd)

The gable-fronted semi-detached typology continued from the Federation era into the early interwar years (generally between 1920 and 1925). A group of semi-detached pairs at 45-51 Airlie Avenue, for example, are mostly distinguished from Federation examples by their California bungalow porches. The same can be said for a row of single-fronted brick houses at 578-588 High Street. A more distinctively interwar semi-detached pair of the 1930s is seen at 26-26A Highbury Grove, where two dwellings are massed to appear like a single hipped-roof brick and rendered Art Deco dwelling.



Figure 10. 578 High Street. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd)

There is a fine row of early California Bungalows at 11-17 and 19 & 21 Larnook Street. Nos. 11-17 (1920-25) were built as identical villas transitioning between Federation and interwar forms and details, while Nos. 19 & 21 of 1925 are classic double-fronted California Bungalows with wide spreading gable-fronted roofs. All feature red and clinker patterned brickwork.



Figure 11. 17 Larnook Street. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd, 2020)

There is a generally high level of intactness across the precinct. The most common alterations are the painting of face brick, replacement of windows (often in horizontal formats typical of the 1930s onward), and loss of verandah detail. Rear extensions are visible in some places, but are set well back so they have only minimal impact on the streetscape (in rare cases where they are too dominant, such as 1 Willis Street, the property has been graded Non-contributory). In several cases, altered houses have been restored since 1999 (see 14 Airlie Avenue and 25 Highbury Grove). Several multi-storey houses and blocks of flats have been built in the northern half of the precinct, while the streetscapes of the southern half are of unbroken Federation and interwar-era development.

Comparative analysis

HO178 Airlie Avenue Precinct is, in many ways, typical of streetscapes in the Prahran/Windsor area at the end of the early interwar period (c1930). It is unusual in that it has retained a high level of integrity with respect to this early character. The area was the product of speculative development over several decades and it remains legible both as an exemplar of the development mode, namely the construction of long rows of identical villa dwellings and later semi-detached pairs, and as a record of various architectural styles which gained and lost popular favour during the long construction period.

The HO178 precinct has a very distinctive delineation between the northern and southern halves. Between High Street and the south side of Willis Street houses, and shops, of the Victorian era

predominate, with some early interwar-era residential infill primarily along High Street. This contrasts with the southern half, which is almost entirely of the Federation era, again with an admixture from the early interwar period. The southern half is further distinguished by the east-west pedestrian lanes which improve circulation around the ad-hoc street layout.

The primarily Victorian half of the HO178 precinct can be compared to the nearby HO124 Bowen Street Precinct, which comprises mostly single-fronted timber Victorian Italianate cottages. This streetscape is very similar to Willis Street, much of the Chomley Street section, and the northern half of Highbury Grove. There are also polychrome brick houses on Chomley Street and High Street. The more substantial, masonry Victorian Italianate villas which characterise the northern half of Airlie Avenue can be compared favourably to HO131 Fawkner Street, South Yarra, which also includes comparable Victorian-era commercial buildings.

The primarily Federation southern half shares this character with the nearby HO386 Chomley Street Precinct. HO386 contains almost solely modest semi-detached dwellings. As in the Airlie Avenue Precinct some of them are identical gabled-fronted pairs while others have a gabled and hipped element to simulate a detached villa. This same type of development characterises much of the south end of Airlie Avenue and the south side of Larnook Street. In addition, there are many substantial double-fronted villas in the Airlie Avenue Precinct. The double-fronted Federation villas also compare well to the small HO139 Kelvin Grove Precinct which is mostly surrounded by HO178. This land was subdivided in 1910 and double-fronted Federation Queen Anne villas as well as asymmetrical semi-detached pairs were constructed shortly afterward, largely by a single builder. HO152 Vale Street Precinct, just south of HO178 Airlie Avenue Precinct, also has a very similar building stock, primarily asymmetrical Federation semi-detached pairs.

This part of the precinct also compares well with the nearby HO385 Banole Estate Precinct, which contains mostly Federation semi-detached pairs as well as interwar houses. The semi-detached dwellings in HO385 are overall simpler in detail and design than those in HO178 Airlie Avenue Precinct. There is a fine row of interwar bungalows along High Street in HO385, which compare to the row of bungalows at 11-21 Larnook Street.

Statement of significance

What is significant?

The Airlie Avenue Precinct, comprising 1-51 & 2-44 Airlie Avenue, 74-100A Chomley Street, 546-614 High Street, 1-67 & 2-46 Highbury Grove, 27-35 & 30-48 Irving Avenue, 2-18 Kelvin Grove, 1-21 & 2-36 Larnook Street, and 1-5 & 2-28 Willis Street, Prahran, is significant.

Streets and allotments in the precinct were created by successive subdivisions of the Merville Estate and Victoria Estate from 1879 to 1910. The earliest house in the precinct is the bichrome brick villa 'Cathcart' at 568 High Street of 1880. Residential development dating from 1880-90 characterises the northern half of the precinct, as well as two rows of shops of this era on High Street. Federation/Edwardian era residential predominates in the southern half, in keeping with its later subdivision dates.

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The high degree of intactness of the precinct to its c1930 state, due to the low level of later redevelopment;

- The intactness of the buildings to their original state, with buildings typically retaining with their street presentation largely unaltered, apart from some changes to verandahs and windows;
- The single-storey scale of the residential streets, and the mixed single- and double-storey scale of the High Street section;
- The use of hipped roofs, timber, bichrome face brick or cement-render cladding to Victorian-era buildings, with a shift to gable-fronts and red face brick in the Federation and early interwar periods;
- The irregular subdivision pattern which demonstrates the piecemeal creation and extension of streets over a 30 year period, and whose boundaries are often indicated by east-west running laneways;
- The presence of laneways, many of them retaining their bluestone pitches, which not only provided access to nightsoil carts prior to the introduction of sewers c1900, but also provided pedestrian access between the cul-de-sacs;
- Mature street trees, particularly the London Planes in Larnook Street.

How is it significant?

The Airlie Avenue Precinct, Prahran, is of local historical and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The precinct is of historical significance for its illustration of the ad hoc nature of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century subdivisions of large estates into suburban streets and allotments, resulting in an irregular street pattern and a number of cul-de-sacs linked by pedestrian laneways. The successive subdivisions are readily apparent due to the almost complete physical separation of the two principle eras – Victorian and Federation – sometimes at either end of a single street. The relatively modest means of many of Prahran's residents are illustrated by the many timber Victorian single-fronted cottages, as well as semi-detached Federation dwellings. These are interspersed with a number of more substantial, double-fronted houses of both eras. The need for local shops in pre-automobile residential areas is illustrated by two rows of Victorian shops on High Street. (Criterion A)

The precinct is of aesthetic significance due to the regular rhythms created by identical rows of detached houses – for example Victorian timber cottages on Willis Street and rendered and timber villas on Airlie Avenue – and rows of asymmetrical semi-detached and symmetrical Edwardian and early interwar dwellings – for example on Highbury Grove, Airlie Avenue, Larnook Street and Irving Avenue. This rhythm is supported by the very consistent use of red face brick for both the Federation-era and inter-war era dwellings in the precinct. The aesthetic significance of the precinct is further enhanced by dwellings with unusual forms of ornamentation, such as the row of timber Victorian houses with pedimented front windows at 5-9 & 15 Airlie Avenue, and the single-fronted Victorian house at 84 Chomley Street with highly decorative cast-cement enrichments. The two rows of Victorian shops on High Street are enhanced by their shopfronts: with the original timber shopfronts at 602-610 High Street and Federation-era Brooks & Robinson shopfronts with Art Nouveau leadlights at 546-552 High Street. (Criterion E)

Schedule of gradings

Number	Street	Grade	Description
1-1A	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Federation villa.
3	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Federation villa.
5	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian villa.
7	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian villa.
9	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian villa.
11	Airlie Avenue	Non-contributory	Double storey modern villa.
13	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Chilwell. Single storey Victorian villa.
15	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian villa.
17	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Somewhat modified.
19	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
21	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Somewhat modified.
23	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
25	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
27	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
29	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached. Attic additions.
31	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached, somewhat modified upper storey additions.
33	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
35	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
37	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
39	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached. Somewhat modified.
41	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached. Somewhat modified.
43	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation villa. Somewhat modified, with upper storey additions.
45	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation/interwar villa.
47	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation/interwar villa. Somewhat modified.
49	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation/interwar villa.
51	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation/interwar villa. Somewhat modified, with upper storey additions.

	Cramond Lane	Contributory	Bluestone pitched laneway just north of 2 Airlie Ave.
2	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian villa.
1/4	Airlie Avenue	Non-contributory	Double storey modern units.
2/4	Airlie Avenue	Non-contributory	Double storey modern units.
3/4	Airlie Avenue	Non-contributory	Double storey modern units.
6	Airlie Avenue	Non-contributory	Three storey modern flats.
8	Airlie Avenue	Non-contributory	Three storey modern flats.
10-10A	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa, lost verandah.
12-12A	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Federation-era modifications.
14	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Extensively modified, restored since 2008.
16	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian villa.
18	Airlie Avenue	Non-contributory	Barties. Three storey modern flats.
20	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Verandah rebuilt, Colorbond roof
22	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
24	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
26	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
28	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
30	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
32	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached, somewhat modified.
34	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Federation villa.
36	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
38	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached, somewhat modified.
40	Airlie Avenue	Contributory	Single storey Federation villa.
1/42	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Federation villa.
2/42	Airlie Avenue	Non-contributory	Modern unit behind 1/42.
44	Airlie Avenue	Significant (B)	Single storey Federation villa.
74	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa with interwar alterations.
76	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
78	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa, with upper storey additions.
80	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa, with upper storey additions.

82	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa, with upper storey additions.
84	Chomley Street	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian villa with elaborate cement detail, and upper storey additions.
86	Chomley Street	Non-contributory	Double storey modern villa.
88	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
90	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
92	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa, with upper storey additions.
1/92 (rear)	Chomley Street	Non-contributory	Contemporary rear unit
94	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
96	Chomley Street	Non-contributory	Double storey modern villa.
98	Chomley Street	Non-contributory	Extensively modified Victorian house.
100/100A	Chomley Street	Non-contributory	Double storey modern units.
546-550	High Street	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian terrace of four shops, along with No. 552, with Federation era shopfronts and leadlights.
552	High Street	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian terrace of four shops, along with Nos. 546-550, with Federation era shopfronts and leadlights.
552A-554	High Street	Non-contributory	Double storey pair of dwellings hidden behind modern shops.
554A	High Street	Contributory	Double storey Federation villa behind detached shop (NB: shop is non-contributory).
566	High Street	Contributory	Single storey Federation semi-detached house.
568	High Street	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian villa, polychrome brickwork.
574	High Street	Non-contributory	Single storey Victorian villa, very altered.
2/574	High Street	Non-contributory	Contemporary two storey rear unit.
574A	High Street	Non-contributory	Single storey modern semi-detached house.
576	High Street	Contributory	Single storey Federation villa.
578	High Street	Contributory	Single storey interwar villa.
580	High Street	Contributory	Single storey interwar villa. Somewhat modified.
582	High Street	Contributory	Single storey interwar villa.
584	High Street	Contributory	Single storey interwar villa.
586	High Street	Significant (B)	Single storey interwar villa. Unusual brick front fence.
588	High Street	Significant (B)	Single storey interwar villa. Unusual brick front fence.

602	High Street	Significant (B)	Nos. 602-610 are a block of five double storey Victorian shops. All retain timber shopfronts. Verandah is a reproduction.
604	High Street	Significant (B)	Nos. 602-610 are a block of five double storey Victorian shops. All retain timber shopfronts. Verandah is a reproduction.
606	High Street	Significant (B)	Nos. 602-610 are a block of five double storey Victorian shops. All retain timber shopfronts. Verandah is a reproduction.
608	High Street	Significant (B)	Nos. 602-610 are a block of five double storey Victorian shops. All retain timber shopfronts. Verandah is a reproduction.
610	High Street	Significant (B)	Nos. 602-610 are a block of five double storey Victorian shops. All retain timber shopfronts. Verandah is a reproduction.
612	High Street	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
614	High Street	Contributory	Single storey Federation pair. Semi detached.
	North of No. 1	Contributory	Bluestone pitched laneway.
1	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
3	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
5	Highbury Grove	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian pair. Semi detached.
7	Highbury Grove	Significant (B)	Single storey Victorian pair. Semi detached.
9	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian pair. Semi detached.
11	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian pair. Semi detached.
13	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
15	Highbury Grove	Non-contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Extensively modified including roof form, entire front facade.
17	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Some modifications.
19	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
21	Highbury Grove	Non-contributory	Vacant lot.
23	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Federation villa. Extensively modified.
25	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Extensively modified then restored.
27	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
29	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
31	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa. Somewhat modified.

33	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.
35	Highbury Grove	Contributory	Single storey Victorian villa.