Heritage Citation – Precinct

Heritage Place: Royal Terrace Precinct **Address:** 286-292 Williams Road, Toorak	**HO Reference:** HO767 **Citation status:** Final **Date Updated:** 30 March 2022
Designer: Unknown **Builder:** Unknown	**Year of Construction:** 1890



Photograph of Royal Terrace (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



Location map and extent of 286-292 Williams Road, Toorak.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings **Heritage Type:** House	**Key Theme:** Building suburbs **Key Sub-theme:** Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal
Significance Level: Local	
Recommendation: Remove 286-292 Williams Road from the curtilage of HO155 Williams Road Precinct and include on the HO as an individually significant place in its own right.	

Controls:	☐	External paint colours	☐	Internal alterations	☐ Tree controls
	☐	Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐ Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 286-292 Williams Road, Toorak (otherwise known as Royal Terrace) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale, detailing, fenestration and setback of this group of boom era Victorian Italianate terraces, as well as the side and front boundary fences, are of local significance. Later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

Royal Terrace is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Royal Terrace is historically significant in demonstrating the development of late Victorian houses within Toorak during the late 19th century, following the wider subdivision of the Victorian era estates. The house is also of historical significance in demonstrating the residential development in the south-eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthy upper-middle class citizens during the 1880s land boom period. (Criterion A)

Royal Terrace has principal design characteristics associated with boom era Victorian Italianate terrace groups, including matching setbacks, fenestration, decorative elements and fences, stucco walls, a tall shared decorative parapet, arches to windows and doors, intricate iron lacework, moulded ornaments and open upper floor balconies. (Criterion D)

Royal Terrace is aesthetically significant as a fine and intact example of a boom era Victorian Italianate terrace group that have a strong sense of grandeur and cohesiveness. Key characteristics contributing towards its aesthetic significance include the consistency in detailing, mirrored front entrances, the tall detailed parapet ornamentation, intricate iron lacework, expressive arched fenestration, central arched door with hood mouldings, and cast iron palisade and rendered fencing. The aesthetic value of the place is also enhanced by its raised sitting overlooking Como Park, which contributes to the formal setting of the site. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	Royal Terrace is historically significant in demonstrating the development of late Victorian houses within Toorak during the late 19th century, following the wider subdivision of the Victorian era estates. The house is also of historical significance in demonstrating the residential development in the south-eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthy upper-middle class citizens during the 1880s land boom period.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.

C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	Royal Terrace has principal design characteristics associated with boom era Victorian Italianate terrace groups, including matching setbacks, fenestration, decorative elements and fences, stucco walls, a tall shared decorative parapet, arches to windows and doors, intricate iron lacework, moulded ornaments and open upper floor balconies.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	Royal Terrace is aesthetically significant as a fine and intact example of a boom era Victorian Italianate terrace group that have a strong sense of grandeur and cohesiveness. Key characteristics contributing towards its aesthetic significance include the consistency in detailing, mirrored front entrances, the tall detailed parapet ornamentation, intricate iron lacework, expressive arched fenestration, central arched door with hood mouldings, and cast iron palisade and rendered fencing. The aesthetic value of the place is also enhanced by its raised sitting overlooking Como Park, which contributes to the formal setting of the site.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
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 the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- ### Physical Analysis

Royal Terrace is a group of four two-storey terrace houses built in the Victorian Italianate style. The terraces are attached and have matching proportions, form and detailing. The street slopes from north down towards the south, with the northern end of the row sitting to the street than the south. The terraces are constructed of brick with a smooth stucco finish. The hipped roof of each terrace is clad in corrugated sheet metal and is hidden behind a highly decorative shared parapet. Each terrace includes one squat rendered chimney with cornice mouldings. A secondary shared chimney is located to the rear of the terrace.

The front façades are mirrored with each pair of terraces. The raised main entrances are accessible via a concrete path and set of steps leading to a front patio, two of which are enclosed by a balustraded retaining wall which is a later addition (286 and 288 Williams Road). The main entrance door features an arched fanlight, side lights and rounded hood mould. The ground level fenestration consists of a pair of arched timber sash windows with timber louvred shutters. The main entrance is protected from the elements by the upper-level verandah. A single thin cast iron post supports the verandah and defines the location of the front door. The post extends further up to the upper-floor roof awning. The verandah is detailed with a highly ornate cast iron lacework, valance, frieze, and balustrade. The awning over the verandah consists of a bullnosed roof clad with corrugated sheet metal, interspersed with party walls. Each party wall features a fluted finish, precast console brackets and a precast ball finial.

The upper-level fenestration consists of three arched windows mirroring the location of the door and fenestration on the ground level. The party walls on the end terraces (286 and 292 Williams Road) includes an arched window opening as well. The bullnosed roof sits under the bracketed cornice supporting the flat parapet. The parapet features a centred raised arch form flanked by precast ball finials. Each terrace house parapet is defined by the expressed party walls and console bracket capped with an urn finial. The centre of the parapet includes the name of the group in expressed font, being ROYAL TERRACE.

The remaining elevations of the terrace row are simplistically detailed compared to the front façade. Side windows consist of rectangular sash windows with an expressed architrave and sill. The rear of the houses include garages of varying sizes.

The terrace group has a deep setback from Williams Road and holds a prominent position at the street corner. The street front boundary is demarcated by a cast iron palisade fence supported on a bluestone base. The front fence is intercepted by tall, rendered brick posts featuring a moulded cap in a form that is typical of the Italianate style. Rendered boundary walls with cavetto curves extend from the party walls to the front fence posts to demarcate each front setback.

Royal Terrace is located on Williams Road at the junctions with Lechlade Avenue and Rathmines Street which also forms its south boundary. The group of terraces have a shared rear lane where the garages are directly accessible from Rathmines Street. Royal Terrace remains in use for a residential purpose. The individual houses and group as a whole are considered to be in good condition. Although the houses have large garage and rear extensions, and the front façades have been slightly altered between properties, they maintain a strong sense of cohesiveness and their overall integrity is high.

- Alterations and Additions

286 Williams Road

- Two skylights added to the roof.
- Ground level louvred shutters removed.
- Rear extension added.
- Conduits added to the south, side street facing elevation.
- Mediterranean style balustrade added to the front porch.

288 Williams Road

- Two skylights added to the roof.
- Services added to the roof.
- Rear extension added.
- Contemporary garage added.
- Fountain added to the front yard.
- Mediterranean style balustrade added to the front porch.

290 Williams Road

- Services added to the roof.
- Chimney form altered with the cornices removed.
- Contemporary garage with connection to the residence added.

292 Williams Road

- Services added to the roof.
- Solar panels added to the roof.
- Contemporary garage with connection to the residence added.

History

- Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

Following the establishment of Melbourne in 1835, squatter John Gardiner and many others like him sought out land in what would become present day Toorak and surrounds on account of its densely timbered landscape, undulating terrain and proximity to water. By 1840, crown land sales marked the area's transition to pastoral settlement, and later in 1851, with the purchase of land in Hawthorn by Thomas Herbert Power, the surrounding environments gradually became a place where the early merchant and squatter elite of Melbourne built their homesteads. In Toorak, this is best represented by

the purchase of lot 26 by James Jackson, associate in Jackson, Rae & Co. soap and candle merchants. Jackson was described by politician William Westgarth as 'Melbourne's greatest merchant of this early time' (Forster 1999, 10). It is only fitting that his house, called Toorak House, would be the namesake of what would become arguably the most affluent suburb in Melbourne. Following the discovery of gold in the 1850s and the wealth this produced for ancillary trades, the Toorak area drew in Melbourne's newly wealthy. Today, over a century later, Toorak still has connotations of wealth and prestige as best represented in its history and built environment (Forster 1999, 5–26).

- Place History

This group of four two-storey brick terraces was erected between 1889-1890 as an investment for custom clerk Daniel McAuslan (National Trust 1966). It was subsequently named Royal Terrace and leased out to a range of tenants. Constructed during Melbourne's 1880s land boom period, its erection took place in the years following the 1881 subdivision of land between Bruce Street and the 1869 Greenmount mansion situated on the corner of Williams Road and Toorak Road, which created thirty-eight building allotments fronting Rathmines Street and Williams Road (Foster n.d.). Its construction was a direct outcome of rapid population growth, boom prosperity and development that saw a rising demand for housing in Toorak. A MMBW map from 1898 reveals a group of four two-storey Victorian terraces on the north corner of Rathmines Street.

The earliest known occupants include Mrs H. Stevens at 292 Williams Road, Miss E. E. Weeks at 290 Williams Road, Ludwing Lang at 288 Williams Road and James F. Crane at 286 Williams Road (Sands & McDougall 1895). On account of the lack of archival material, it has been difficult to determine if these individuals were tenants or if they had purchased the property from McAuslan themselves. Given their relatively short duration of stay, the former is more likely (Sands & McDougall 1900, 1910).

Occupants continued to change hands over the next few decades, and by the mid 20th century, the dwellings at 290 and 292 Williams Road appear to have been in use as apartments (Sands & McDougall 1955, 1960). This would have resulted in several internal alterations, although their precise nature has not been ascertained as these dwellings have since been altered back into family residences. Today, each of these dwellings are privately owned and continue to remain in use as residential dwellings.

Comparative Analysis

Designed in a late Victorian Italianate style as an investment for Daniel McAuslan, this group of two-storey terraces is directly comparable to several semi-detached Victorian Italianate terrace groups that were also constructed in the municipality as investments during the boom era. Popularised following the development of Toorak House in 1850 and its subsequent use as the Governor's residence in 1854, the use of Italianate derived elements in domestic architecture was particularly prevalent in the Victorian colony. Its connotations with the social and political elite was integral to its success, and the style grew in popularity during Melbourne's 1880s boom period as a result of rapid population growth, prosperity and development.

Key comparative examples include:

- **4-8 Evelina Road, Toorak (Individually significant in the Bush Inn Estate Precinct HO380).** This group of late Victorian Terraces is directly comparable as a highly intact, two-storey terrace group

constructed during Melbourne's 1880s boom era. As with Royal Terrace, they present with an highly ornate appearance and incorporate elements of the Italinate style that were gaining popularity during this period of residential development. Comparable features include ornamented parapets with urn finials, a detailed verandah with ornate cast iron lace, and hipped roofs concealed behind a decorative parapet. Compared to Royal Terrace, it is a slightly more restrained example of the idiom, owing to the absence of a matching front fence and garden, moulded ornamentation, arched windows and raised position on the street.

- **66-74 Wilson Street, South Yarra (Individually significant in Wilson Street Precinct HO379).** Also constructed during the late 19th century, this highly intact, two-storey terrace group is comparable to Royal Terrace in terms of general style, built form, cast iron lacework detailing, matching front fences and visual cohesiveness. It is noticeably more modest than the Royal Terrace by virtue of its restrained ornamentation and narrower setback. However, it is distinguished by its prominent front facing chimneys.
- **Grandview and Devon (45 & 47 Darling Street, South Yarra) (HO560).** Although this pair of 1892-93 Italianate terraces are freestanding as opposed to attached in a group, its compares well to Royal Terrace in terms of its high degree of Italianate style ornamentation and detailing. Comparable features of note include its ornamented parapets with precast urn finials, use of hood moulds, as well as friezes and balustrade defined by elaborate cast iron lacework. As with the Royal Terrace, it is distinguished by a formality stemming from its raised main entrance. However, it is less intact than Royal Terrace and features several noticeable alterations across the façade.

Compared to the examples above, Royal Terrace is a high quality and notable example of the late Victorian Italianate style terrace in the City of Stonnington. It is highly intact and is defined by a grand appearance by virtue of its ornamentation, raised sitting overlooking Como Park, arched fenestration and uniform original fences. It is more striking in appearance than similar examples within the municipality, and is considered to be an important example of the municipality's wider collection of semi-detached two-storey late Victorian villas.

Precinct Map



Grading Table

* S: Significant

C: Contributory

NC: Non-contributory

Refer to Heritage Victoria's Model brief for consultants (p.6) for explanation of designations.

Note: the Style/era column follows the architectural style categories set out in Heritage Victoria's HERMES Orion heritage database and does not necessarily reflect the date of construction. For details on construction era(s) where available, refer to the Place History section.

Street address	*Place type*	*Style/era*	*Grading*
286 Williams Road	House	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
288 Williams Road	House	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
290 Williams Road	House	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
292 Williams Road	House	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C

References

Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, and Foster, D. 1998. 'Williams Road Proposed Conservation Area.' Unpublished report prepared for City of Stonnington. PDF file.

Collins, John T. 1967. Toorak. Royal Terrace, 286-292 Williams Road. Photograph. J.T. Collins collection, accession no. H98.251/2020. State Library of Victoria.

Context Pty Ltd. 2009. 'Stonnington Thematic Environmental History.' Unpublished report prepared for City of Stonnington. PDF file.

Foster, D. 1999. 'Melbourne's Most Fashionable Suburb: A History of Toorak, East of Kooyong Road 1840–1998.' Unpublished Masters diss., Monash University.

State Library of Victoria, Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, detail plan No. 939, dated 1898.

State Library of Victoria, Sands & McDougall Street Directories of Victoria, 1890-1974 ed.

Stonington City Council. 2013. Heritage Citation Report: Bush Inn Estate, Toorak. Hermes ID 104285. Unpublished report. PDF file.

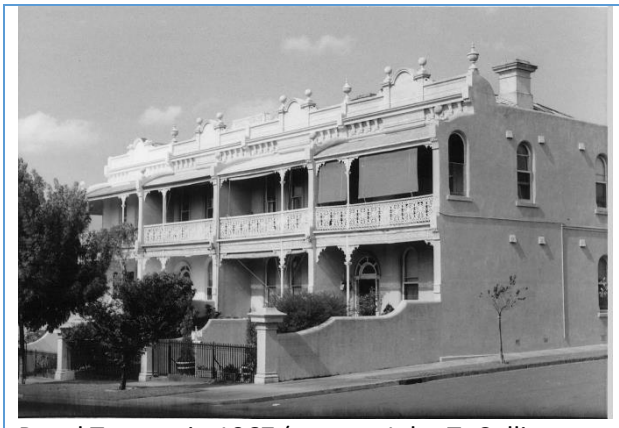
Stonington City Council. 2013. Heritage Citation Report: Wilson Street Precinct, South Yarra. Hermes ID 104947. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonington City Council. 2018. Heritage Citation Report: Grandview and Devon, 45 & 47 Darling Street, South Yarra. Hermes ID 200117. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images



Royal Terrace in 1967 (source: John T. Collins, State Library of Victoria, 1967).



View of Royal Terrace from Williams Road, facing east (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



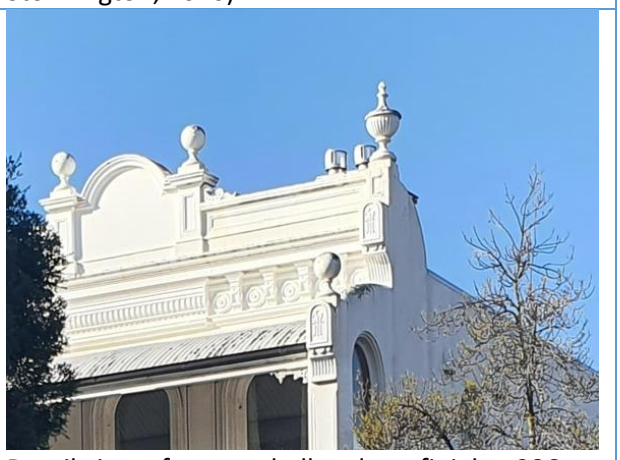
Oblique view of 286 Williams Road, facing north-east (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



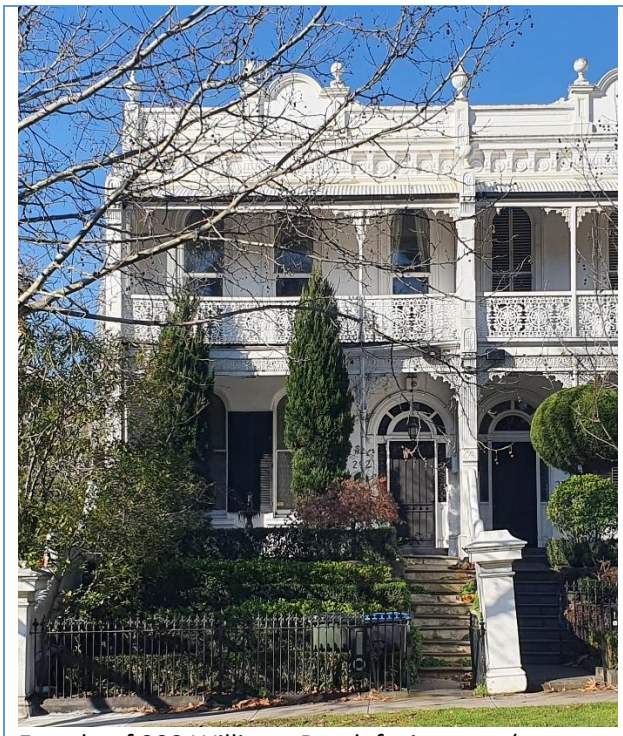
Detail view of ornamented parapet between 288 and 290 Williams Road (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



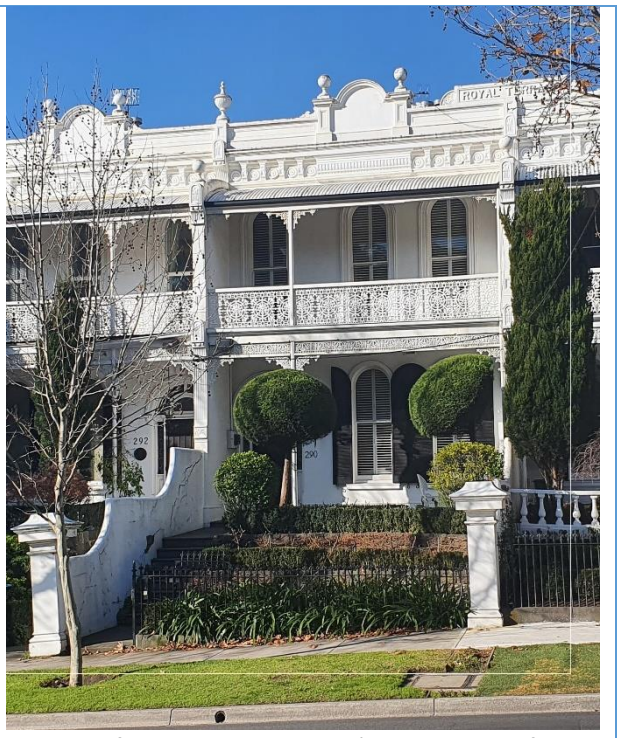
Detail view of upper level fenestration and verandah at 290 Williams Road (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



Detail view of precast ball and urn finial at 286 Williams Road (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



Façade of 292 Williams Road, facing east (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



Façade of 290 Williams Road (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 1998. *Note: the building was included in precinct citation for HO155.*
Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022 (Vivian Lu and Reuel Balmadres).
Quality assurance review conducted by: Corinne Softley.