HO113 – Bridge Hotel, 197 Watton Street, Werribee

Heritage Place: Bridge Hotel	**HO Reference:** HO113 **Date updated:** 15 October 2026
Address: 197 Watton Street, Werribee	



Figure 1. The Bridge Hotel at 197 Watton Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

Item Group: Commercial **Item Type:** Inn/Tavern	**Key Theme:** Building connections through transport and communication; servicing the community **Key Sub-theme:** early tracks and travel routes; entertainment and leisure activities
Designer: H.V. Gillespie (1925), Robert Henry McIntyre (1960's alterations). **Builder:** unknown	**Construction:** c.1925-6 **Style:** Interwar Art Deco
Significance Level: Local	
Recommendation: Retain solar energy controls. Apply external paint controls.	

Controls:	●	External paint controls	○	Internal alteration controls	○	Tree controls
	○	Included on Victorian Heritage Register	○	Incorporated Plans	○	Outbuildings and fence not exempt
	○	Prohibited uses may be permitted	○	Aboriginal Heritage Place	●	Solar energy system controls

Curtilage

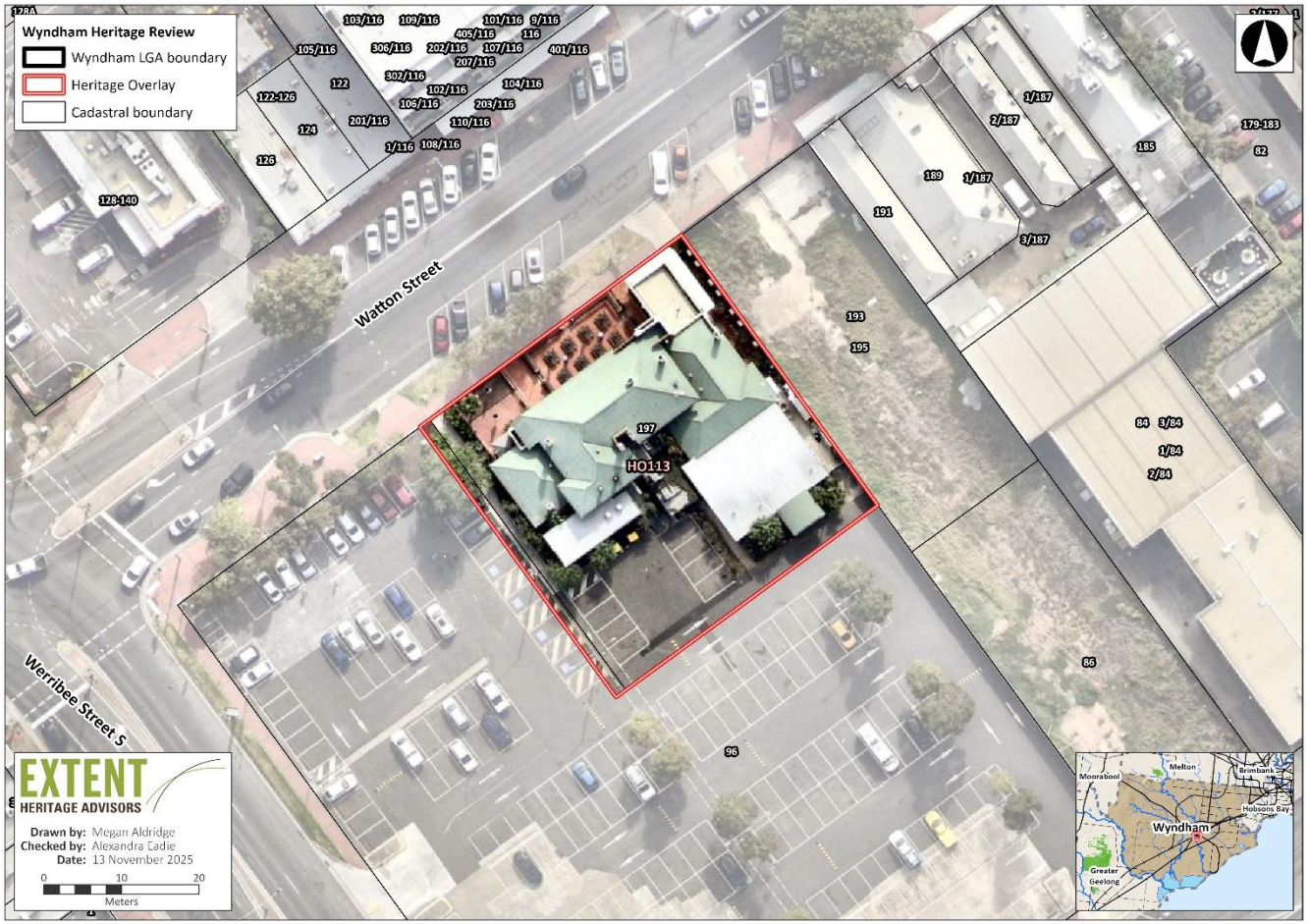


Figure 2. Aerial map showing the curtilage boundary of the Bridge Hotel at 197 Watton Street, Werribee. *Basemap source*: Nearmap. 2025. Spatial data source: VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Bridge Hotel is of historical significance for the longstanding presence of the hotel in this location, for its associations with the early municipal activities and for its connections to horseracing. The site of the current Bridge Hotel has played a pivotal role in the community as a local landmark for over 100 years. The site has featured a hotel from the 1850s onwards, originally the premises of the Camp Hotel which was established on the road between Melbourne and Geelong. Although the early timber hotel was destroyed by fire, the replacement hotel constructed in the 1860s by Patrick Murphy remained a landmark for travellers, particularly for those on the Melbourne-Geelong Road. The hotel is demonstrative of the establishment and growth of the township and the need for public meeting places. The association of the Bridge Hotel to the road between Melbourne and Geelong demonstrates the colonial replacement of traditional Bunurong travel routes which contributed to the displacement of Aboriginal peoples during this period. The original hotel building on the site, the Camp Hotel, was important in municipal activities, used as a place to host township business including the establishment of the Wyndham Shire Ratepayers Association in 1875 who held public meetings in the hotel. The hotel was also the host of balls and auctions which marked it as a contributor to the establishment of entertainment and leisure activities within the municipality. The Camp Hotel played an important role in the business of locals to Werribee, involved in both the livestock and racing industries. Adjacent saleyards were constructed to facilitate the sale and trade of stock while a nearby racecourse played host to many races with patrons frequenting the hotel and ‘Camp Hotel Racecourse’. This marks a key part of the growth of Wyndham reflecting the

		expansion and prominence of the racing industry and pastoralism in the district.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	The Bridge Hotel is of local significance as a representative example of an Interwar Hotel. The Art Deco features including the northern corner walls, parapet and chimneys, highlight windows above the glazed entry doors and small balcony above, with geometric relief details, strong rectilinear emphasis and rendered finish, against exposed face red brickwork contribute to the significance of the place.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The place does not meet this criterion.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	The 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*	The 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.*	The place does not meet this criterion.

Statement of Significance - Bridge Hotel, 197 Watton Street, Werribee

Address: 197 Watton Street, Werribee	**PS ref no:** HO113



Figure 3. The Bridge Hotel at 197 Watton Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

What is significant?

The two storey red face brick Bridge Hotel, with a single storey flanking additions and Art Deco northern corner, built in c. 1925-6, is significant. Specifically, the overall form, scale, siting and ornamentation. The 1960s addition to Watton St, later c.1970s rear additions with flat skillion roofs, front setback and landscaping (including all plantings, brick and metal fencing, paving, lighting, furniture, signs), and contemporary alterations including new windows at ground level are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Bridge Hotel is of historical and representative significance to the City of Wyndham.

Why is it significant?

The Bridge Hotel is of historical significance for the longstanding presence of the hotel in this location, for its associations with the early municipal activities and for its connections to horseracing (Criterion A).

The site of the current Bridge Hotel has played a pivotal role in the community as a local landmark for over 100 years. The site has featured a hotel from the 1850s onwards, originally the premises of the Camp Hotel which was established on the road between Melbourne and Geelong. Although the early timber hotel was destroyed by fire, the replacement hotel constructed in the 1860s by Patrick Murphy remained a landmark for

travellers, particularly for those on the Melbourne-Geelong Road. The hotel is demonstrative of the establishment and growth of the township and the need for public meeting places (Criterion A).

The association of the Bridge Hotel to the road between Melbourne and Geelong demonstrates the colonial replacement of traditional Bunurong travel routes which contributed to the displacement of Aboriginal peoples during this period. (Criterion A)

The original hotel building on the site, the Camp Hotel, was important in municipal activities, used as a place to host township business including the establishment of the Wyndham Shire Ratepayers Association in 1875 who held public meetings in the hotel. The hotel was also the host of balls and auctions which marked it as a contributor to the establishment of entertainment and leisure activities within the municipality (Criterion A).

The Camp Hotel played an important role in the business of locals to Werribee, involved in both the livestock and racing industries. Adjacent saleyards were constructed to facilitate the sale and trade of stock while a nearby racecourse played host to many races with patrons frequenting the hotel and 'Camp Hotel Racecourse'. This marks a key part of the growth of Wyndham reflecting the expansion and prominence of the racing industry and pastoralism in the district (Criterion A).

The Bridge Hotel is of local significance as a representative example of an Interwar Hotel. The Art Deco features including the northern corner walls, parapet and chimneys, highlight windows above the glazed entry doors and small balcony above, with geometric relief details, strong rectilinear emphasis and rendered finish, against exposed face red brickwork contribute to the significance of the place (Criterion D).

Source: Bridge Hotel citation, Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2026.

Description

Bunurong Country

The Bridge Hotel is situated on the lands of the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of Country. Despite the effects of colonisation, including dispossession of land, the Traditional Custodians have maintained a continuing connection to land, waters and culture within the City of Wyndham.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Bunurong peoples had easy access to significant and diverse resources by following well-worn routes along coastlines, watercourses and elevated landforms to their camping places. These regular routes through Country were also used by Bunurong peoples to fulfil their various social, political and religious obligations (BLCAC, 2026, 15).

The proximity of the Commercial Hotel to the Geelong-Melbourne Railway Line exemplifies the colonial replacement of traditional Bunurong routes with new routes that prioritised straight-line distance over all other factors. These new routes were guided by economic expediency and facilitated further colonial development, as well as the displacement of Aboriginal peoples (BLCAC, 2026, 15).

Physical Analysis

The Bridge Hotel at 197 Watton Street, Werribee is a grand two storey Federation Arts and Crafts building with Interwar Art Deco elements and details. The hotel occupies a large allotment to the corner of Watton Street and Werribee Street, located to the northeastern corner of the site. The hotel is distinguished by its overall asymmetrical appearance, large, hipped roof with tall chimneys, flanking side additions, red brick and white render materiality, and unique Art Deco features. The hotel presents a moderate setback from the street along its primary north elevation, excluding the later c.1960s addition, with the frontage used as a contemporary outdoor seating area. The west and rear extent of the site contains a large public carpark with some later plantings.

The primary two storey northern elevation fronts Watton Street with an irregular arrangement. At the upper storey the façade contains a mixture of single, paired and triplet double hung sash windows. The lower ground features new multipaned timber windows as well as a contemporary timber entry doorway. Other features of the façade include a projecting wide arched entryway to the western corner with the name “Bridge Hotel” above in raised lettering. The red arch bricks are highlighted against surrounding white paintworks, reflecting the broader façade articulation of exposed brick and white render.

Interwar Art Deco features are predominantly located to the two-storey northern corner walls, parapet and chimneys. At ground level, the northern corner includes a partially glazed double door entrance with highlight window, with a small balcony above. The section is emphasised against the broader elevation by its bulk form sitting forward of the broader hotel elevation, white painting/render, and its geometric relief details with strong rectilinear emphasis. Similar relief patterns are applied to the tops of the simple form chimneys, with vertical elements added to the northern primary faces. The corner and chimneys are painted white with some exposed red brickwork at the upper level.

The later c.1960s addition is located to the northern corner of the site, directly fronting Watton Street. The structure is a single storey simple box-like form, with a flat skillion roof hidden behind a squared parapet. The front façade abuts the footpath with no setback and includes a lower red bricked wall with white rendered upper to match the broader Hotel façade. The front elevation includes contemporary timber multipaned windows and a curved corner awning, also painted white. The chimney of the original northeastern flanking side structure can be seen behind the 1960s addition from Watton Street.

The front setback is contemporary and includes new bricked half-walls encompassing a central outdoor seating area, as well as all modern lighting, paving, metal fencing and gates, plantings and furniture.

Later rear additions c.1960-1979 are distinguished by their low skillion roofs and wall treatments. The easternmost addition includes a projecting arched portico with 'Bridge Hotel' lettering above. The addition had previously functioned as an alternative entrance to the venue, accessed from the rear carpark. Some additions have undergone later works including new paintworks and cladding to the southwest building.

Alterations and Additions

- External additions include a c1960s single storey addition to the northern corner with awning, as well as further later single storey additions to the rear. *
- Alterations to the primary façade include new fenestration at both levels (including the replacement of upper balcony doors with matching sash windows, as well as the introduction of new leadlight panes. All physical remnants of original balconies are removed) *, new corrugated sheet metal roof and new render paintworks.
- Alterations to the surrounding landscaping include new bricked front courtyard to Watton Street, new fencing and plantings, as well as rear asphalted carpark.

The Bridge Hotel is in good condition and is of moderate integrity.

**** Denotes element that does not contribute to the cultural significance of the place.***



Figure 4. Construction date map of the Bridge Hotel. *Basemap source:* Nearmap. 2025. *Spatial data source:* VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning.

History

The Bridge Hotel is situated on the lands of the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of Country. Despite the effects of colonisation, including dispossession of land, the Traditional Custodians have maintained a continuing connection to land, waters and culture within the City of Wyndham.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Bunurong peoples had enjoyed easy access to significant and diverse resources by following well-worn routes along coastlines, watercourses and elevated landforms to their camping places. These regular routes through Country were also used by Bunurong peoples to fulfil their various social, political and religious obligations (BLCAC 2026, 15).

The proximity of the Bridge Hotel to the old Melbourne-Geelong Road exemplifiesthe colonial replacement of traditional Bunurong routes with new routes that prioritised straight-line distance over all other factors. These new routes were guided by economic expediency and facilitated further colonial development, as well as the displacement of Aboriginal peoples (BLCAC 2026, 15).

From 1835, the volcanic plains north and west of the fledgling city of Melbourne were the first to be occupied by squatter pastoralists, the landscape of open grassy plains and light vegetation provided favourable conditions for movement of livestock over land (Vines 1993, 9; Broome 1984, 23). This rapid domination by squatters commenced the forced dislocation of First Nations peoples from their traditional lands.

Place History

Settlements within the Wyndham area initially developed as stopping points along the early tracks between Geelong and Melbourne. Werribee River proved a suitable place to rest and water horses and became the location for the settlement of Werribee and the subsequent development of transport infrastructure and hotels for travellers (Lovell Chen 2023, 51).

The establishment of colonial settlements and infrastructure fundamentally altered the landscape of Bunurong Country, impeding access to and use of traditional trade and travel routes. The proximity of the Bridge Hotel and its earlier iterations to the old Melbourne-Geelong Road exemplifies the colonial replacement of Bunurong routes with new routes that prioritised straight-line distance. These new routes were guided by economic expediency and facilitated further colonial development, as well as the displacement of Aboriginal peoples (BLCAC 2026, 15).

Camp Hotel, early nineteenth century

The earliest known iteration of a hotel on the corner site was a wooden building which burnt down in the early to mid-1800s (Werribee Shire Banner 1932, 5). The construction date and name of the establishment is unknown. The building succumbed to fire in the mid 1800s and was replaced in 1863 with the Camp Hotel, which was built in an Old Colonial Georgian style. The single storey stone building had a large, hipped roof with two corbelled chimneys, and also included a partially enclosed surrounding verandah (Figure 6). The hotel was owned and occupied by Patrick Murphy (The Argus 1863, 5), and was associated with the Murphy family

until the late 1880s when Michael Balfour became hotelkeeper (The Argus 1887, 12). The location of the hotel was then a prominent site within Wyndham's early township; its placement at the southern side of the Werribee Bridge ensured the hotel was a landmark for road travellers.

In the 1880s, the Camp Hotel was let to Terry's West End Brewery Company (an amalgamation of Carlton and West End Breweries Limited) and subsequently sold as part of a larger allotment which included Lots 2 & 3 of Section 6. The property was described in advertisements for the sale as 'Camp Hotel' with a rental of £120 per annum (The Age 1889, 2). A 1951 Parish Plan, likely adapted from a c.1900 Parish Plan, shows T. Stephens as the owner of Lot 2 (Figure 5). It is unclear when the lot was purchased by Patrick Murphy.

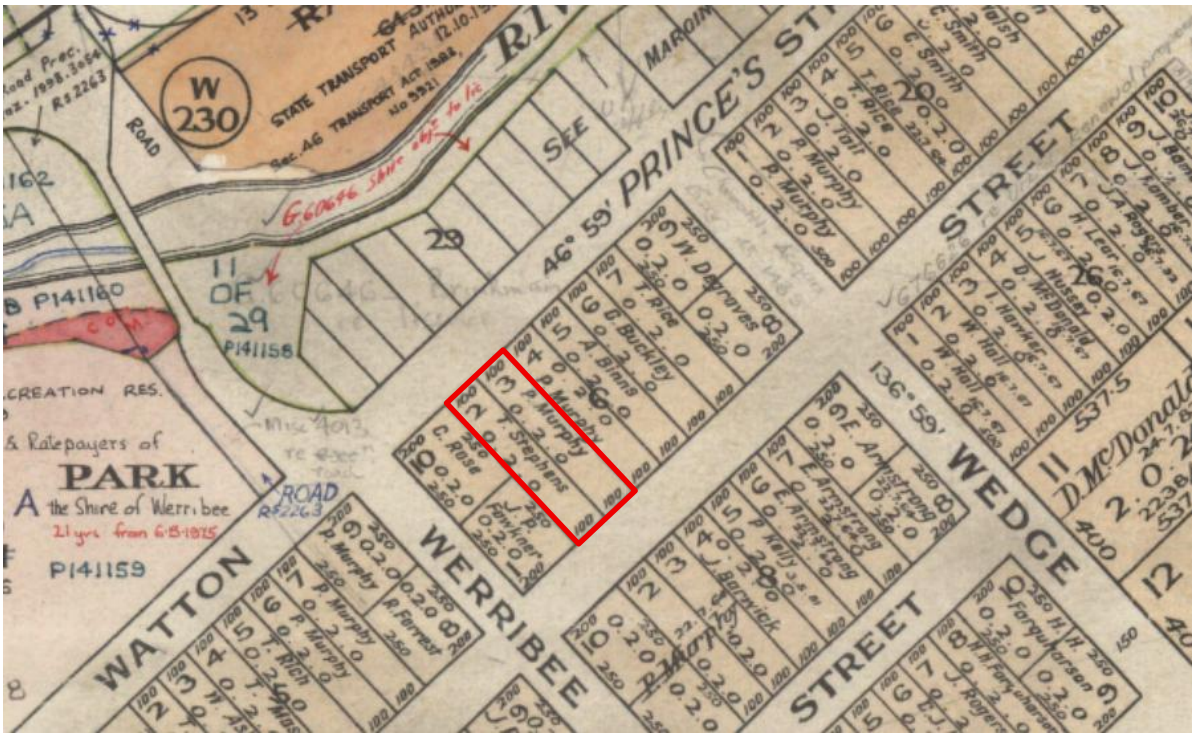


Figure 5. Extract from 1954 Parish Plan, showing the subdivided allotments of Section 6*:* The plans show T. Stephens as owner of Lot 2, and P. Murphy as owner of Lot 3, which encompass the site of the Bridge Hotel, outlined in red. *Source:* Department of Lands and Survey. 1954. *Deutgam – 2 Parish Plan.* Digitised cartographic material. Public Record Office Victoria (online database). https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/06B4EA92-F442-11EA-BE8C-890B1FA715B8.

The Camp Hotel was central in Werribee's early society. During the mid-1800's, the hotel had associations with the nearby racecourse, with advertising in 1864 announcing races will take place at the "Camp Hotel Racecourse" (The Argus 1864, 8). Within the same period the hotel was part of a larger enterprise incorporating an adjoining livestock saleyard; with the hotel used as an extension of the yards, functioning as a primary place for auction business within Wyndham (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1881, 3). The yards were demolished in 1935 (Shepparton Advertiser 1935, 3).



Figure 6. Photograph of the Camp Hotel c. 1863-1926. *Source:* Werribee District Historical Society. n.d. *The Camp Hotel*. Digitised photograph. Wyndham City Libraries. In Collection: Werribee District Historical Society Photograph Collection. https://catalogue.wyndham.vic.gov.au/client/en_AU/search/asset/301967/0.

During the mid to late nineteenth century, the hotel hosted several local events, including regular meetings for the committee of the Wyndham Shire Ratepayers Association, which had been formed in a meeting at the hotel in 1875 (The Argus 1875, 3), as well as the 'Race Ball', which was associated with local horseracing (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1876, 3). In 1883, it was noted as one of only three hotels within the area (Leader 1883, 30).

Bridge Hotel, 1926

A new hotel was erected on the site in 1925-1926, designed by architect H.V Gillespie (The Argus 1925, 3). The requirement for a new hotel is unknown, however was called the Bridge Hotel at this time. Construction started under the license of Catherine Perry but was transferred to Arthur Fry towards the end of completion (Werribee Shire Banner 1926, 5). The hotel changed hands a number of times during the mid twentieth century, including the sale of the hotel for £16,500 in 1935 (The Argus 1935, 13).



Figure 7. Overview of the Bridge Hotel c.1950s, looking northeast from Watton Street. *Source:* Tony Beyer. n.d. *Bridge Hotel.* Facebook: Lost Werribee (website). https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=3695700217178115&set=pcb.3695719820509488.

Late alterations, 1960s - 2020

Alterations occurred in the 1960s with an addition added to the north elevation for the provision of a new public bar as well as a front portico addition over the central front courtyard, impacting the two timber shingle balconies to the façade. Rear additions evolved over time during the late twentieth century, distinguished by their modern style, smaller scale and low skillion roofs.

The building underwent further alterations in 2020, with the demolition of the front portico and removal of any remaining balcony fabric. The front setback was revised with new matching red bricked walls enclosing a new patio seating area, new fencing and alterations to the primary elevation to the 1960s addition.



Figure 8. Photograph of the Bridge Hotel c.1962, looking south from Watton Street. *Source:* Alison Dew. 1962. *Bridge Hotel.* Facebook: Lost Werribee (website). https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=3695700517178085&set=pcb.3695719820509488.



Figure 9. Photograph of the Bridge Hotel in 2008, with a former front portico and earlier façade arrangement and painted signage to the 1960's addition (left). *Source:* Strong, Bill. 2008. *20080720_0441 Bridge Hotel.* Photograph. Flickr. https://www.flickr.com/photos/87791108@N00/2692631198/in/dateposted/.

Comparative Analysis

The Bridge Hotel is one of a number of hotels within the City of Wyndham developed due to its proximity to major travel routes. It is typical of hotels to undergo remodelling and renaming throughout their history marking changes in travelling routes and ownership. The Bridge Hotel is comparable to the following places:

Commercial Hotel (HO112)

The Commercial Hotel is comparable to the Bridge Hotel as an example of a hotel site that has undergone a number of iterations and evolutions including reconstructions, to support the needs of both the local community and visitors to Werribee. This includes revisions to the name of the hotel. The Bridge Hotel is also demonstrative of a typical architectural style that is consistent with other hotels of similar eras across Victoria. The Bridge Hotel presents as a more intact example when compared to the Commercial Hotel with the interwar presentation more legible when viewed from the street.

Little River Hotel (HO56)

The Little River Hotel is comparable to the Bridge Hotel as an example of a hotel that has had a continued occupancy since the mid nineteenth century, that was notable as a community meeting place and associated with the early township of Little River, as the Bridge Hotel is comparable with the early township of Werribee. The Bridge Hotel, while more significantly altered than the Little River Hotel, demonstrates the evolution of hotels with various additions to support contemporary functions.

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Images



Figure 10. Overview of the Bridge Hotel, looking east from Watton Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 11. The eastern extent of the hotel, including the later 1960s addition facing Watton Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 12. Overview of the 1960's addition, looking east from Watton Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 13. Overview of the north elevation facing Watton Street, including central courtyard. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 15. Detail view of the brick archway to the northwestern corner of the hotel, depicting the contrasting cream rendered finish and exposed face red brickwork. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 14. View of the south elevation of the Bridge Hotel, looking north from the rear carpark. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 16. Overview of the Bridge Hotel with parapet and chimneys visible, looking southeast along Watton Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 17. Detail view of the geometric relief details and highlight windows above the hotel's front entry. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.