

10110

HEADMASTER'S HOUSE (former) & IN-GROUND WATER TANK, KOORNONG

NAME: HEADMASTER'S HOUSE (former) & IN-GROUND WATER TANK,

TYPE: HOUSE

SITE NUMBER: 131

ADDRESS: END KOORNONG NORTH WARRANDYTE
CRESCENT
(WEST)

MELWAY MAP: 23 J7 **DATE:** 1939-

PLANNING SCHEME OVERLAY: External paint controls
Tree control Outbuilding control Internal alteration control

HERITAGE VALUE: SHIRE

STUDY CRITERIA:

HISTORY, THEME(S), ARCHITECTURE

STUDY THEMES:

TOWNSHIP DEVELOPMENT

ASSOCIATIONS:

Clive and Janet Neild; Acheson Best Overend; Koornong Experimental School

HISTORY:

- Original Use: Headmaster's house { 1 }
- Later Use: Private residence (after 1946) { 4 }
- Original Owners: Clive and Janet Neild { 1 }
- Architect: Acheson Best Overend { 1 }

The notable early Modernist architect, Acheson Best Overend, was recorded as the designing architect in April 1939 for a "proposed new private school on the north side of the Yarra and east of Dingley Dell, Warrandyte". An article in 'The Herald' described the new school and included a perspective drawing. { 1 } Later, in November 1939, it was reported that Best Overend would be responsible for the design of three new buildings at Koornong School, Warrandyte. { 2 } The main building has been described by a former Koornong pupil and one of the first boarders as a two-storeyed timber house with a flat roof on which students could practise folk dancing. { 4 }

The natural and artistic climate of the North Warrandyte area was influential in Clive and Janet Neild's decision to establish the Koornong School there in 1939. Neild described the concept behind the school as an attempt to develop a self-governing community of children and adults with individual guidance in an Australian setting. He was keen to develop the educational techniques and philosophies he had seen in the United States and Europe. The school was well ahead of its time. The curriculum was based on self awareness and integrated learning of subjects. { 3 }

Clive Neild had an orthodox educational background, first at Sydney University and later M.A.Hons. at Oxford. After Koornong closed, Neild became Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Sydney. Bill Oates, another staff member, was at the International School in Geneva where the Neilds met him. He was later head of the Friends School at Hobart. { 1 }

The artist, painter and sculptor, Danila Vassilieff was art teacher at Koornong. { 1 } Vassilieff's own house, Stonygrad, a remarkable creation carved out of the side of the hill, and made of

HEADMASTER'S HOUSE (former) & IN-GROUND WATER TANK, KOORNONG

mudstone and local timber, still stands. Vassilieff had a great influence on a number of Australian artists including Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd and John Percival. { 3 } Local professional craftspeople who taught at the school included Kate Janeba, potter and Betty Smith, hand-blocker of fabrics. { 1 }

Students were actively involved in the construction of an art studio, swimming pool and dining room out of local stone. { 3 } A former Koornong pupil has a number of photos showing these buildings under construction and completed. { 4 } Though some local children attended the school, most were boarders from other areas. Despite rumours that students were allowed too much freedom, the school was generally well accepted by the community. { 3 }

Neild was an idealist with little knowledge of financial management. Financial difficulties combined with preoccupation with the war effort caused the school to close in 1946. Many of the buildings were destroyed in the 1950s bushfires, { 2 } but fortunately this building and the remains of another survived.

DESCRIPTON:

Style 1930s Modern.

Design unique.

Plan rectangular.

Single storeyed.

Walls timber stud construction, shiplap vertical and weatherboard clad.

Roof lean-to with exposed framed eaves.

Features are the design with its lean-to roofs, projecting living room, timber wall cladding, windows including a picture window and internally the Caneite type lining and simple lining materials.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The former headmaster's house as the only major survivor of the innovative Koornong Experimental School, is significant to the Nillumbik Shire:

- for its associations with the development of education, (an important aspect of the history of the Shire of Eltham) by its introduction of a different concept of education concerned with enrichment of the curriculum, development of a self-governing community of children and adults, and individual guidance within an Australian setting;
- for its associations with notable figures such as the founder Clive Neild who was keen to develop the educational techniques and philosophies he had seen in the United States and Europe { 3 }, its designer, the much publicised Modernist theorist, Best Overend, and the artist, painter and sculptor, Danila Vassilieff, as well as other lesser known artists; and
- for its simple but innovative form, illustrative of early Modernist designs of the time.

EXTENT OF DESIGNATION:

BUILDING AND SITE

SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES:

General guidelines apply: conserve designated elements, including maintaining and preserving significant parts, restoring missing significant elements where evidence allows

REFERENCES:

1. 'The Herald' 26 April 1939; Alan Marshall, *Pioneers and Painters*, p.101.
2. 'The Herald' 23 Nov. 1939; from Miles Lewis, "Australian Architectural Index".
3. Tim Hart, "Warrandyte "Place" Study", Final Project, Landscape Architecture, RMIT, 1987, p.26 (with illustrations of Koornong School, Danila Vassilieff and Art Class, Vassilieff building Stonygrad.

HEADMASTER'S HOUSE (former) & IN-GROUND WATER TANK, KOORNONG

(SEE ALSO {SOEHS} p756 FOR THE EVALUATION OF DANILA VASSILIEFF'S HOUSE, STONYGRAD, IN HAMILTON ROAD AND p1130 FOR THE LOCAL STONE REMAINS OF WHAT IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN THE MAIN SCHOOL BUILDING IN KOORNONG CRESCENT (EAST).)