

Alexa Goyder's House
300 Yarra St., Warrandyte.

This random-rubble sandstone house, rated in the 1939-40 Warrandyte Riding records,⁵³⁶ was designed by Alexa Goyder, builder, as her own home.⁵³⁷ It was a rebuilding of a 1937 or earlier house built on the site for Goyder, damaged in the 1939 bushfires.⁵³⁸ During a 1973 interview, Goyder (then 81) told how the 1939 fire "burnt the entire upper storey" of her house and she had to build again.⁵³⁹

Alexa Gordon-Cumming (her maiden name) first visited Warrandyte in 1919 after arriving in Australia from New Zealand. It was a time when many Melbourne artists were attracted to the Warrandyte district to sketch, paint and settle. Among the painters Goyder remembered living in Warrandyte were Frank Crozier, Jo Sweatman, Adrian Lawler and, "in the very early times," Clara Sothern Flynn.

Alexa worked as a journalist and wrote articles for the *Argus* and the *Palais Picture Magazine*⁵⁴⁰ When she married Guy Goyder, an accountant, in 1925, they continued to visit Warrandyte. Later, they bought land in Yarra and Brackenbury Streets. During the Depression, Alexa and Guy gave up their South Yarra flat and rented a Warrandyte cottage from Dora Sothern, the artist's sister. This was the first Potters Cottage in Research Road.

The Goyders rented this house for 15 shillings a week "while they built a stone house in Yarra Street, which Lex designed." This house (known now as 300 Yarra Street) was of random rubble construction incorporating local sandstone quarried from Victory Gully. The Goyders engaged a local stonemason, Kevin Sloan, "known for his work on various stone buildings in the area- including the war memorial- to help them."⁵⁴¹ Sloan was also responsible for the stone retaining wall in Yarra Street in front of the RSL, according to Yvonne Reid, a Warrandyte resident familiar with Sloan's work.

It was one of a number of similar houses designed by Goyder in the 1930s and 1940s, built on allotments owned by Goyder in Yarra and Brackenbury Street.

⁵³⁶ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1939-40 Warrandyte Riding No.193(NAV 20 pounds).

⁵³⁷ *Warrandyte Diary*, 1 June 1973, p.7 (article by Yvonne Reid, "When They Swam Naked in the Yarra.")

⁵³⁸ *Croydon Mail and Mount Dandenong Advertiser*, 19 Jan. 1939.

⁵³⁹ Reid article.

⁵⁴⁰ R. Peterson, "Warrandyte Township Heritage Area."

⁵⁴¹ Reid article.

Titles Office records confirm that Mrs Constance, Alexia Goyder, was the registered... owner of a number of these allotments between 1929 and 1935. The earliest were two adjacent allotments (22 and 23) in Yarra Street- the site of 300 Yarra Street. Later, in 1934, three allotments at the rear in Brackenbury Street (20,21,24) were acquired. In 1935, two more Yarra Street allotments (26 and 31) were owned by Goyder.⁵⁴²

Warrantdyte Riding rate records provide additional information about these and other land purchases by Goyder and of some of the houses subsequently built on the sites. There is information also about other Warrantdyte properties owned or rented by the Goyders during the 1930s and 1940s.

The earliest house rated to the Goyders was a cottage on an acre of land in Russell Road, located on Crown Allotment 6A. This allotment extended back from Russell Road to Mullens Road.⁵⁴³ In 1934, Goyder purchased the modest dwelling on this allotment from Mary Reddie.⁵⁴⁴

The rate records confirmed the Goyder's ownership of the site of 300 Yarra Street by 1937, although no house was listed at this time.⁵⁴⁵ By 1938, the valuation of the Russell Road cottage had doubled.⁵⁴⁶ This suggests an extension or the rebuilding of the original structure. In the same year, Goyder was also rated for a house on an unidentified Warrantdyte site.⁵⁴⁷

By 1939-40, Goyder's house (completed by this time) had a somewhat larger valuation than the Russell Road cottage, twenty pounds. A report in the district press of the disastrous January 1939 fire listed Goyder, and fellow builder, Myrtle Houston, as house owners affected by the "Warrantdyte holocaust."⁵⁴⁸

By 1944, after the rebuilding of the damaged upper storey, Warrantdyte Riding records confirmed an increase in the valuation of Goyder's home.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴² *Townships of Warrantdyte and Warrantdyte North*, Parishes of Warrantdyte and Nillumbik, 1946.

⁵⁴³ Parish Plan.

⁵⁴⁴ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1934-35 Warrantdyte Riding No.475(NAV 7 pounds).

⁵⁴⁵ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1937-38 Warrantdyte Riding No.196 (NAV 3 pounds).

⁵⁴⁶ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1938-39 Warrantdyte Riding No.188 (NAV 14 pounds).

⁵⁴⁷ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1938-39 Warrantdyte Riding No.189(NAV 14 pounds).

⁵⁴⁸ *Croydon Mail and Mount Dandenong Advertiser*, 19 Jan. 1939.

⁵⁴⁹ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1944-45 Warrantdyte Riding No.196(NAV 30 pounds).

By this date, two cottages were recorded on her Russell Road property. In addition, the Goyders' owned a house occupied by J. Dolman and some new allotments, three in the Pigtail Estate.⁵⁵⁰ Later, in 1948, the two houses in Russell Road were let to Alan Carter, a clerk, and Frank Rowan, a journalist⁵⁵¹

More than twenty years later, in 1970, C. A. Goyder was still rated as the owner of a house (now 300 Yarra Street) in Allotments 22 and 23.⁵⁵² By 1973, she was reported to be, at 81, still as alert and mentally active as ever, but suffering from arthritis and failing sight. She had a "devoted family of cats" and still enjoyed entertaining her friends in "the charming living room of the stone house she built so long ago."⁵⁵³ She died in 1975.⁵⁵⁴

Other Goyder houses

Titles Office and district rate records confirmed Goyder's ownership of, and association with, the sites of a number of other houses reputedly designed by her in Yarra and Brackenbury Streets.⁵⁵⁵ With the absence of Council building permit records, it has been difficult to confirm the dates of construction of these houses. Further detailed examination of these structures and a comparison with 300 Yarra Street is recommended. They include:

- 1.32 Mullens Road. This appears to be on the site of the cottage in CA 6A purchased by Goyder in 1934, extended and rebuilt in 1938.
- 2.119 and 139 Brackenbury Street. On allotments owned by Kevin Sloan, the stonemason who helped Goyder build 300 Yarra Street.
- 3.151 Brackenbury Street. The site in Allotments 20 was owned by Goyder in 1934. No house was rated there in 1944-45.
- 4.306 Yarra Street. On Allotment 31 owned by Goyder in 1935.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁰ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1944-45 Warrantdyte Riding Nos.197,198,199,200.

⁵⁵¹ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe General and Water RB 1948 Warrantdyte Riding No.2811(NAV 42 pounds).

⁵⁵² City of Doncaster and Templestowe Property Record Card Yarra Street No.22585(NAV 590 dollars).

⁵⁵³ Reid article.

⁵⁵⁴ T.Hart,"Warrantdyte Place Study,"RMIT,1987.

⁵⁵⁵ Peterson.

⁵⁵⁶ Parish Plan.

Myrtle Houston houses.

An interesting comparison might be made with houses designed by another female Warrandyte builder operating in the area in the post-1939 period. Titles Office records confirmed that Houston owned the sites of a number of buildings attributed to her.⁵⁵⁷ These houses stood on large allotments (34,35,36) stretching between Yarra and Brackenbury Streets, as shown on the Parish Plan. Houses on these sites attributed to Houston are 318 Yarra Street and 161 and 165 Brackenbury Street. Rate records confirmed that in 1947-48 there were houses on Allotments 34 and 36.⁵⁵⁸

A detailed architectural investigation of the Goyder and Houston houses in Yarra and Brackenbury Streets would allow the work of these female builders to be placed in context.

The house at 300 Yarra Street has *regional historical significance* as the home designed by Alexa Goyder, builder, where she lived from the late 1930s until her death in 1975. It is an example of her creative contribution to the innovative building, design and construction traditions in the Warrandyte district. *Of local historical significance* for its associations with the Warrandyte stonemason, Kevin Sloan.

**Nilja
Alexander Road
Warrandyte.**

Dr. James Booth, North Melbourne medical practitioner, and his wife, Angela E.J. Booth, were rated first in the 1921-22 Shire of Doncaster rate records for a cottage and shed on their 16 acres of land in Alexander Road, Warrandyte.⁵⁵⁹ This cottage reputedly came from Port Melbourne. However, no confirmation of this has been found.

The Booths at first used Nilja as their holiday home.⁵⁶⁰ By 1926, they were listed as owner and occupiers.⁵⁶¹ In that year, Angela successfully stood as a candidate for Warrandyte Riding in the newly-created Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe. She was the first woman councillor in the municipality and the third to be elected in Victoria. Angela was first president of the Women's Citizens Movement and was on the executive of the National Congress of Women.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁷ Peterson.

⁵⁵⁸ Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1947-48 Warrandyte Riding Nos.2803-2805.

⁵⁵⁹ Shire of Doncaster RB 1921-22 Templestowe Ward No.757 (NAV 45 pounds).

⁵⁶⁰ Muriel Green, *Our First Woman Councillor-Mrs Angela Booth*, Doncaster Templestowe Historical Society Newsletter Nov.1973.

⁵⁶¹ Shire of Doncaster RB 1926-27 Warrandyte Riding No.59 (NAV 55 pounds).

⁵⁶² Muriel Green.