

# GREY SISTERS PROPERTY (O'CONNELL FAMILY CENTRE), 6 MONT ALBERT ROAD, CANTERBURY: HERITAGE APPRAISAL & RECOMMENDATIONS

---

## 1. Introduction

This report has been prepared for the City of Boroondara and relates to the property at 6 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury (Figure 1). The site is currently occupied by the Family Care Sisters (also known as the Grey Sisters), who operate the O'Connell Family Centre; the Sisters also reside in convent buildings on the site. An application has been lodged with the City of Boroondara to subdivide the site into three lots. The historic residence known as Mountfield (see Figure 2 & Figure 3), which dates from c.1865, is located on the site (within the proposed Lot 1). A number of other buildings, constructed after 1945 and associated with the Grey Sisters, are also located on the property.

### *Current Uses of the Site*

It is understood that the property at 6 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury, currently accommodates the following uses:

- O'Connell Family Centre (Early Parenting Centre) which provides a range of services for families experiencing difficulties in the early stages of parenting, including:
  - residential programmes;
  - day stay programmes;
  - parent educations programmes;
  - fathering skills;
  - counselling services;
  - transitional support for women with post-natal depression;
- pastoral and seminar activities;
- the administrative centre for the Family Care Sisters order;
- temporary accommodation for families associated with pastoral/seminar/O'Connell Family Centre activities.

### *Purpose and Content of Report*

The purpose of this report is to examine and analyse the cultural heritage significance of the subject property, including all the buildings and structures (Mountfield, the O'Connell Family Centre, the convent buildings and other associated structures), and the landscape elements (grounds, vegetation, driveways, entrances, etc). The findings of this assessment will assist Council with making a determination on the appropriate heritage controls and inform the current subdivision application (and any future subdivision applications), together with any future applications for new buildings and works.

The report comprises:

- an overview of existing heritage controls;
- a brief history of the property;
- a description of the subject property (buildings and landscape elements); and
- a brief comparative analysis of other similar properties in the municipality (largely based on the citations from the relevant municipal heritage studies).



*Figure 1      Heritage Overlay map, with subject site indicated.*



*Figure 2      Mountfield, north and west elevations (gable roof of chapel is visible on left of picture).*



Figure 3 Mountfield, west elevation.

- an assessment of heritage significance, which addresses the buildings, structures and landscape elements, together with a succinct statement of significance for the property overall;
- comments on subdivision of the property;
- recommendations on future development; and
- an assessment of whether the site, in part or in full, is of sufficient heritage significance to justify a site-specific Heritage Overlay.

The landscape assessment has been undertaken by MDG Landscape Architects.<sup>1</sup>

The photographs included in the report were taken in March and April 2004.

Reference is also made to a survey plan showing existing conditions (including trees and structures), as prepared by Hellier McFarland, reference number 5306/10, dated October 2003. This plan was lodged with Council in November 2003 with the application for the three lot subdivision (application number PP03/01207). The plan is also reproduced as an attachment to this report.

## 2. Heritage Controls

No heritage controls currently apply to the subject property. Mountfield is not individually listed in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme, nor is it located within a Heritage Overlay precinct (see Figure 1). Mountfield was, however, identified as a 'B' grade building in the *Camberwell Conservation Study* (1991).

### 3. History

#### 3.1 Mountfield 1850s-1940s

##### *George Henry Taylor*

The site of the future Mountfield residence is believed to have been acquired by solicitor George Henry Taylor in the early 1860s, as part of a subdivision relating back to the earlier Elgar Special Survey.<sup>2</sup> Henry Elgar originally purchased approximately eight square miles of the future Camberwell area in 1841, which he started selling from the mid-1840s as large subdivided blocks (some up to 200 acres in size); by the 1850s many of these blocks had been reduced to 'farmlets' of 10 acres or thereabouts (establishing a pattern of subdivision and re-subdivision in Camberwell).<sup>3</sup>

The property was owned by the Manton family prior to Taylor's purchase; the Mantons reputedly constructed a small timber house on the site (which for a time may have formed 'the rear portion of the present house' at Mountfield).<sup>4</sup> Mont Albert Road (originally known as Survey Road) was also newly created in the 1860s, with the original Mountfield property address on Survey Road. In later years the property's address was given as Burke Road, then Oak Street after a subdivision in the late 1880s. The O'Connell Family Centre address is now 6 Mont Albert Road.<sup>5</sup>

Camberwell, in the period before the railway and subdivision boom of the 1880s, was semi-rural in character, and on the boundary of the metropolitan area. It attracted 'gentlemen' buyers from the city (businessmen, lawyers and other professionals) who wanted to live in a semi-rural environment, in substantial houses on large landholdings, often with their own property work forces, gardens, orchards and livestock.<sup>6</sup>

The Mountfield house, which was built by Taylor in c.1865<sup>7</sup>, was oriented to face west on its site and reputedly had a view towards the city (looking down in the vicinity of Barkers Road).<sup>8</sup> The picturesque Tudor 'cottage orne' architectural style of the house was popular at the time amongst Victoria's wealthy middle classes, particularly for suburban or rural villas.<sup>9</sup> At the time of the construction of Mountfield, Taylor was a Councillor on the Boroondara District Road Board<sup>10</sup>; he was also later Chairman of the Road Board, in the early 1870s, when it became the Shire of Boroondara.<sup>11</sup> Taylor's sons, Herbert, Arthur and Charles, were variously involved in education, law, local and State politics, and land speculation.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1870s, the property was described in the rate books as a 'house and ten acres'.<sup>13</sup> In this period, Mountfield extended from Mont Albert Road in the north, Burke Road in the west, to Woodstock Street on the south and Burnham Street (now Parlington Street) on the east.<sup>14</sup> George Taylor died in October 1886, after which the property was subdivided by his widow, Maria, and sons. Maria purchased two of the subdivided allotments in the south of the original landholding, and son Charles Taylor retained the main three and half acre allotment associated with the house (Charles also initially acquired other allotments from the subdivision).<sup>15</sup> At the time of his death, George Taylor also owned a sheep farm in Yea (2063 acres), as well as other land in Hawthorn and Camberwell.<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that the advertisement for the Mountfield subdivision described the estate as 'commanding the most magnificent views within six miles of Melbourne', and having 'the finest Oak and Elm trees in the colony'.<sup>17</sup>

##### *John Francis Keep*

For a brief period in the early 1890s, metallurgist Herman Schlapp is believed to have resided at Mountfield, and was followed by merchant and poultry farmer, Adam Wilkinson.<sup>18</sup> Wilkinson's name also appears at later dates in the rate books, as the owner of one of the subdivided Mountfield allotments.<sup>19</sup> An 1894 watercolour painting of 'Mountfield' shows the original building with its verandah open at both ends, and a formal garden setting with clipped hedges, etc.<sup>20</sup> From the late 1890s to 1945, John Francis Keep (ironmonger and coachbuilder<sup>21</sup>) is listed

in the directories as residing at Mountfield.<sup>22</sup> The property, under the ownership of Keep, incorporated the ten-roomed house on approximately three and a half acres.<sup>23</sup> The extent of the property in this period is also evident in the 1904 MMBW plan reproduced at Figure 4. A series of outbuildings are located to the rear (east) of the main house, very likely including stables. The ballroom is evident as a rectilinear north wing, while a long wing is located beneath this, extending to the east. This element, which was presumably a service wing, is also evident on a 1907 MMBW property service plan<sup>24</sup> but had been demolished by 1945, as it does not appear on the aerial photograph of that period (and nor is it apparent on property service plans from the mid-twentieth century).

Keep, who was known as Francis Keep, was a member of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce from 1905 to 1928, and a committeeman of the Eye and Ear Hospital for 32 years, as well as honorary treasurer of the hospital from 1908 to 1934.<sup>25</sup> He was a nature lover and amateur botanist, and during his long period of ownership of Mountfield (nearly 50 years) he reputedly transformed the property into a nature retreat and bird sanctuary. He collected and planted trees and shrubs from all over Australia, making Mountfield a 'veritable forest, traversed only by narrow tracks'. He also pressed, carded and titled his botanical specimens, and built up an index of plants on the property. Edna Walling was familiar with Mountfield during Keep's ownership, and noted the 'natural woodland effects' of the Mountfield landscape.<sup>26</sup> Keep also reputedly maintained the main building in its largely original state, and at the time of his death at Mountfield at the age of 90 in January 1945<sup>27</sup>, electricity had still not been connected.<sup>28</sup> By this time the property was described as having an 'expanse of dense bushland' and a secluded 'bush setting'. A 'magnificent row of pines' (planted by Keep) screened the property from Mont Albert Road.<sup>29</sup>

The Grey Sisters acquired the property after Keep's death. The advertisement for the sale (on 24 March 1945) noted that there were 'many magnificent trees and shrubs' on the property, as well as an 'old two-storied brick residence with timber annexes'. The subdivision potential of the property was also emphasised, with a suggested subdivision plan included in the advertisement (the landholding could accommodate '16 excellent building allotments'); the site was also described as being 'eminently suitable...for development for institutional purposes'.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.2 Grey Sisters<sup>31</sup>

Maude O'Connell founded the Family Care Sisters at Daylesford, in Victoria, in 1930, during the Great Depression. She had been born in Beaufort in 1884, and in the years before 1930 was active in social welfare and Labor Party circles, including an involvement in the trade union movement (she was elected the Women's Representative of the Trades Hall Council). Maude O'Connell believed in the sanctity and importance of the family unit, and recognised a great need for support services for new mothers with children, particularly in their homes. She also recognised that marriages were often under stress when new babies arrived.

At about this time, other institutions in Victoria also began offering similar services, including the Queen Elizabeth Centre in Carlton, which had evolved from a refuge for 'fallen women' in the nineteenth century, into a centre offering residential support services for single and married women with babies. The Queen Elizabeth Centre also began offering mothercraft training in this period (the centre closed in 1950).<sup>32</sup>

Sister O'Connell named the congregation the 'Company of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament' (the Sisters were popularly known as the 'Grey Sisters'), and at first resisted the notion that the Sisters should become a religious order, although this eventually happened in 1949 with the Grey Sisters becoming the first Catholic order to be founded from Victoria.<sup>33</sup>

In 1934, the 'Company of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament' established a facility in Surrey Hills, to train Sisters in the provision of 'personal service' to families. The 'personal service' was in fact at home support for mothers with new babies, particularly mothers with other small



children and no other form of assistance.<sup>34</sup> The Surrey Hills centre also offered training in mothercraft (mothercraft certificate training was later offered at Mountfield, see below).

In 1940, the Sisters opened a new facility at Croydon, to operate as a rest home for mothers, known as 'Kewn Kreestha'.<sup>35</sup> After Mountfield was purchased in the late 1940s, the Surrey Hills facility was closed down and sold. In the post-WWII period, with the boom in the birth rate, the services offered at Surrey Hills were not sufficient to cope with the demand.<sup>36</sup>

Between 1969 and 1983, the Sisters also operated a welfare centre on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of a 20 storey high rise Housing Commission building in Flemington. Another mothers' rest home was opened at Bendigo ('Ain Karim') in 1987. A holiday home was also purchased at Rye, to provide holiday accommodation for families in need.

In 1986, the Sisters' name was formalised as the 'Family Care Sisters'. Sister Maude O'Connell died in Melbourne in December 1964.

### 3.3 The Grey Sisters at Mountfield

The Grey Sisters purchased the Mountfield property in c.1945, for the sum of 12,000 pounds.<sup>37</sup> They immediately launched into extensive changes and additions to the site, including converting the Mountfield residence into a convent and administrative centre (a use that the building retained for many years, but is no longer used for), and adapting the timber ballroom (which was attached to the house) as a chapel. The construction of the new south wing appears to have gotten underway almost immediately, as the works are evident in the 1945 aerial photograph (Figure 5). A timber billiard room, which was also reputedly attached to the house, was relocated on the site for use as a kindergarten (this building is also evident in Figure 5).<sup>38</sup> It was not in fact used for these purposes, but became a meeting room and occasionally a lecture room for mothercraft training (the Sisters ran a Mothercraft Training School at Mountfield in the years 1949-1978.).<sup>39</sup> [Works to the property, including changes to the main house, and the construction of additional buildings, are also outlined below in Section 4 'Description'].

The Grey Sisters were generally trained as mothercraft nurses, and in some cases as nurses, kindergarten teachers or midwives. Lay women also worked at the centre as nurses, and either a lay nurse or a Sister trained as a nurse was appointed as Matron in charge of the centre.<sup>40</sup> Nurses' quarters were constructed on site in 1951 (see Figure 37, the former nurse's home).<sup>41</sup>

The foundation stone for the O'Connell Family Centre, which was originally known as the Mother and Child Care Centre, was laid in 1947.<sup>42</sup> The architect of the building was S Moran.<sup>43</sup> In the early years, children resided at the centre while their mothers went to the rest home at Croydon, or stayed at Mountfield under the care of the Sisters, following childbirth. The centre also had kindergarten facilities.<sup>44</sup> In that period, the post-natal care provided at maternity hospitals often involved keeping mothers separated from their babies, except at rigid feeding times, a situation which sometimes resulted in mothers not being confident or prepared for caring for new babies, upon release from hospital. The Mother and Child Care Centre at Mountfield aimed to rectify this situation, by providing facilities for mothers to spend time with new babies in a supportive environment. Where the mothers already had other children, the emphasis was on rest, with the siblings cared for by the Sisters. Mothers and babies were also attended by young women doing mothercraft training at Mountfield.<sup>45</sup>

In 1954, the Sisters acquired an adjoining property, in Mountfield Street, for use as a novitiate (novices' quarters). The property was named 'Nazareth' (this has since been sold).<sup>46</sup>

The Mother and Child Care Centre was registered as a public hospital in 1975, and in 1990 was incorporated and renamed the 'O'Connell Family Centre (Grey Sisters) Inc'. In 1998, management of the centre was transferred to Mercy Health & Aged Care. The O'Connell Family Centre now principally operates as an Early Parenting Centre, which provides education, support and assistance for parents of young children,

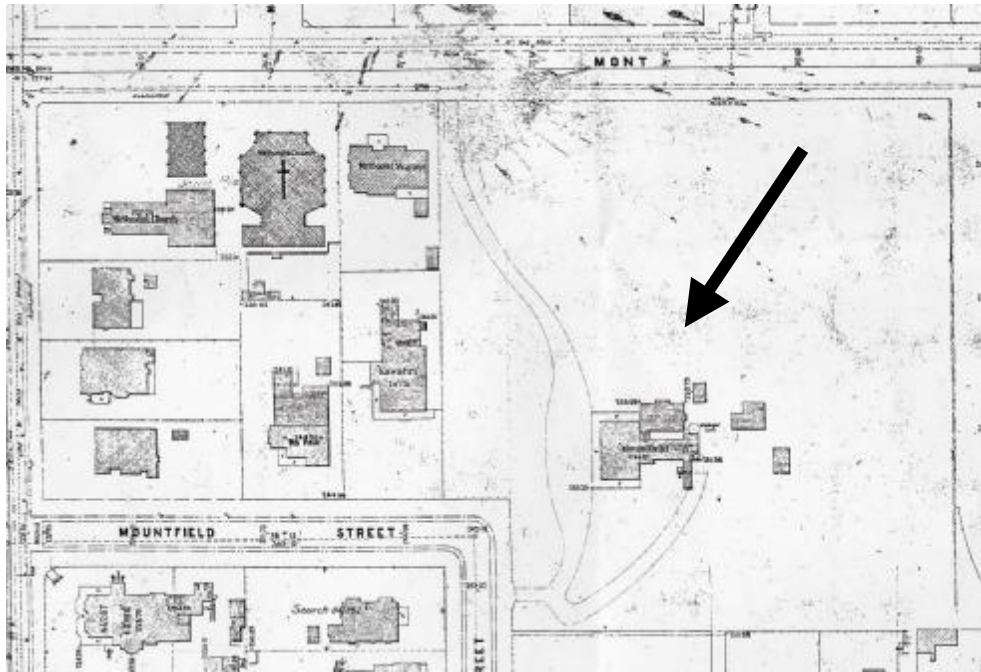


Figure 4 1904 MMBW plan, with Mountfield indicated. Note entrances to the property off both Oak Street and Mont Albert Road.



Figure 5 1945 aerial photo of the subject site, with Mountfield in centre left of picture, and entrance and driveway off Oak Street at bottom left of picture. Note the footings of the new south wing to Mountfield, under construction.  
Source: Land Victoria



*Figure 6*      *1960 aerial of subject site, with Mountfield in centre left, and O'Connell Family Centre on right.*  
 Source: Land Victoria



*Figure 7*      *1963 aerial photo of subject site.*  
 Source: Land Victoria





*Figure 8*            *2002 aerial photograph of subject site.*  
Source: Webmap

particularly children experiencing problems with feeding and sleeping. Women suffering from post-natal depression are also treated at the centre.<sup>47</sup> Residential programmes are still offered; the Family Care Sisters also still reside on site.

### **3.4 Evolution of the Landscape**

The layout of the Mountfield grounds appears to have been defined by the siting of the original residence in 1865, and the subsequent subdivision of the ten acre land holding in the late 1880s. The siting of the house on a low rise facing west towards the city determined the orientation of a carriage drive, which is shown with an entrance off Oak Street, on the 1904 MMBW plan (Figure 4). However, the location of the drive may also have been influenced by subdivision of land to the west, and is not necessarily the original main driveway, as the Mountfield landholding of the mid-nineteenth century extended further west to Burke Road (with an entrance to the property presumably located in this area). As shown on the MMBW plan, the main carriageway has a typical Victorian alignment, including an offset entry to conceal the house from immediate view. The drive divides at a bend inside the entry with a southern branch leading to the service area or stables at the rear of the house. The main drive turns north and widens in front of the house before continuing in a double curve to Mont Albert Road, at the north-west corner of the property, which appears to be the exit to the property. The gates here (as indicated on the MMBW plan) are not set back from the fence line, whereas those on Oak Street are clearly recessed from the property boundary, indicating a more formal approach.

The 1945 aerial photograph (Figure 5), provides clues to the garden's early development. Formal planting with a dense, dark tree canopy, indicating exotic trees, is concentrated around the house to the northern and western portion of the property. A tree with a huge canopy is immediately adjacent to the north-west corner of the house. A band of vegetation to the southern side of Mountfield would have concealed the service access from the garden near the house. To the northern side of the property, there is a dense screen of pines parallel to Mont Albert Road. The

north-eastern portion is more open with scattered tree canopies typical of native vegetation such as eucalypts. The south-eastern corner of the property appears to contain small garden plots such as fruit trees, vegetable gardens or flower gardens of a utilitarian nature. Trees to the eastern boundary provide an informal screen. The photograph also shows that the main driveway has been modified from the 1904 layout, with the removal of the section connecting to Mont Albert Road (and the exit). The earlier alignment is traced, in 1945, by a pathway leading to a gazebo on the western boundary. A carriage loop has been added to the widened section of the drive north-west of the house, and planted centrally with shrubs.

The 1960 aerial photograph (Figure 6) shows changes made in the first 15 years of the Grey Sisters ownership. The Mother and Child Centre has been constructed on the eastern side of the property where vegetation was relatively sparse. A tear-drop shaped playground is sited to the north-east of the centre. A new entrance and driveway has been created from Mont Albert Road, with a turning circle to the front (north) of the new Mother and Child Centre. Dense planting still remains around Mountfield, although a small building (possibly a carport) has been constructed on the western boundary and is accessed from the carriage loop. The service drive has been partly built over by the erection of a convent building against the southern boundary. Various pathways are evident across the property, particularly in the south, including a circular path (possibly with garden bed) associated with the meeting room building on the south of the site.

Further changes to the garden shown on the most recent aerial photograph (Figure 8) include the removal of the northern row of pines, an access off the northern drive to the convent building north of Mountfield, and a tennis court to the north-west (which is partially sited over the alignment of the old driveway to Mont Albert Road). The carriage-loop bed to the west of Mountfield is now circular. The turning circle to the front (north) of the new Mother and Child Centre has been largely built over by a north extension to the centre.

## **4. Description**

### **4.1 Subject Property**

The subject property is bounded by Mont Albert Road to the north (Figure 11) and Parlington Street to the east (Figure 13). The site is currently accessed from three points, with the main entrance to the O'Connell Family Centre on Mont Albert Road (Figure 12), a secondary entrance on the east of the site on Parlington Street (Figure 14), and an entrance on Oak Street (Figure 16).

Residential and ecclesiastical development is located on the west property boundary, as is a portion of Oak Street, with residential development bordering the south of the site. The landholding has been developed with a number of buildings, including the historic Mountfield residence (which is accessed off Oak Street), the O'Connell Family Centre and associated children's playground, three separate convent buildings, a meeting room building, and several smaller utility structures. The buildings are set in extensive grounds, with mature plantings, as well as a tennis court, several driveways, entrances and internal roads, carparking areas, pathways, a grotto, sculpture and garden gazebo.

In the surrounding area, Parlington, a large Victorian Italianate mansion set in generous mature landscaped grounds, is located at 46 Parlington Street, Canterbury, immediately to the east of the subject site (Figure 9). The property is included in the *Victorian Heritage Register* (VHR 731). Frognall, at 54 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury, is also included in the *Victorian Heritage Register*, and is located to the east of the subject site (Figure 10).



*Figure 9          Parlington, Parlington Street, Canterbury.*



*Figure 10          Frognall, Mont Albert Road, Canterbury.*

## 4.2 Buildings

### *Mountfield*

The original component of the Mountfield building was constructed of brick in the mid-1860s in a picturesque Tudor ‘cottage orne’ style, with a high pitched slate-clad attic roof (with brick gable ends) and a two-storeyed entrance porch (see Figure 2 & Figure 3). Pairs of French doors open onto a verandah (which has fine timber posts and brackets), windows have mouldings, and grouped chimney stacks are prominent on the roof. The house addresses a gravelled driveway and turning circle (former carriage loop) with a central garden bed. The 1904 MMBW plan (Figure 4) shows the form of the building in the early twentieth century, with a verandah on three sides of the western-most component, together with two wings to the east. The northern of these two wings was the timber ballroom (now used as a chapel, see Figure 21), while the southern of the east wings appears to have been removed. The date of the removal of this element is not known.

MMBW property service plans from the mid-twentieth century (after the Grey Sisters acquired the site) reveal a series of changes to the building, including the construction of the double-storey brick south wing (for convent accommodation) in the 1940s (see Figure 18 & Figure 19).<sup>48</sup> The 1945 aerial photograph at Figure 5 also shows the south wing under construction. The property service plans additionally indicate later (possibly 1950s) works including a small extension to the north side of the original western component and abutting the west end of the ballroom/chapel (to provide a separate entrance to the chapel, see Figure 20), and works/infill to the verandah in the south-west corner of the building. The various additions and extensions were generally executed in a sympathetic manner to the original structure. The form of the original westernmost component of the building is also still readable, as is the form of the original principal west façade.

Internally, the original 1860s component of Mountfield has a series of principal rooms (which retain their original timber mantels, see Figure 23), accessed from a central entrance hall with staircase and timber panelling (Figure 22), together with service spaces at ground floor level, and bedrooms upstairs. The timber-lined ballroom/chapel (Figure 24) is accessed from the north of the building. The 1940s south wing contains accommodation and common spaces, and is largely intact internally to its period of construction (Figure 25).

### *O’Connell Family Centre*

The O’Connell Family Centre (Figure 26, Figure 27, Figure 29) is a large cream brick building constructed in the late 1940s<sup>49</sup>, with tiled hipped and pitched roof forms (and some skillion roofs). It has had a number of extensions and additions, including a large extension to the north, additions to the wing in the south-west corner, and the introduction of a covered entrance on the west side. The building has also been altered internally, with contemporary fitouts of many rooms and service spaces, although some original or early fabric is still evident in places. The centre originally contained facilities for mothers, babies and older children, including nurseries, lounges, dining areas and bedrooms, as well as toilets and bathrooms, and some accommodation for the Sisters and attending nurses. Kitchen, food storage and preparation areas, together with ‘sun bays’, terraces, covered walkways and verandahs, and central open courts, were incorporated into the original plan.<sup>50</sup> The current configuration of the building retains many of these uses, although office and administration areas have taken over the former bedroom accommodation in the south-west wing, other spaces have been partitioned, and additional lounges and accommodation have been introduced in the north wing addition. An associated laundry building (also in cream brick with a tiled hipped roof) abuts the south of the building (Figure 30 & Figure 34). A children’s playground area (Figure 28), now covered with a large awning, is located adjacent to the north-east corner of the building.

### *Other Convent Buildings*

With regard to the various convent buildings (which are used as accommodation for the Sisters, or occasionally for visiting families), the convent building in the south-west of the property (off Oak Street) dates from the late 1940s<sup>51</sup>, and is of clinker brick, with a steep pitched tiled roof, and brick gable ends (Figure 38 & Figure 39). Another building in the south-east corner of property (adjacent to Parlington Street) was constructed in c.1951, originally as a nurses' home.<sup>52</sup> It has a T-shaped plan form, is also of clinker brick, and has a tiled hipped roof (Figure 37). The remaining brick building in the north-west of the property (visible from Mont Albert Road) dates from the c.1986, and is rectilinear in plan form, with a tiled hipped roof and covered carport (Figure 35 & Figure 36).

### *Meeting Room Building*

The meeting room building (Figure 40, Figure 41, Figure 42) incorporates an earlier gabled timber structure, which is believed to have been the former billiard room associated with the main house, and which was relocated to this site.<sup>53</sup> The building has been altered with a brick and glazed extension, and the addition of a timber pergola over the entrance. It has also been partially clad in brick externally, to the eaves line. The roof is clad in corrugated iron. Internally, the main space is timber lined (Figure 43), with a timber parquet floor (reputedly laid in the 1960s<sup>54</sup>); service areas (kitchenette, etc) are located off the main room.

### *Utility Buildings*

Utility buildings located on the south of the property include a simple timber structure with an iron clad pitched roof of indeterminate age (Figure 44), and a more contemporary small clinker brick building with a skillion roof (Figure 45). A carport is also located on the west property boundary (Figure 46). The date of construction of these structures is unknown.

## **4.3 Landscape**

### *Description*

On entering the property from Oak Street, the immediate view (looking east) is of the late 1940s convent building on the south of the property. The Mountfield building is screened from this initial view, by dark and dense shrubbery to the left of the entry. This also alludes to the character of the original Victorian design. Mature trees (English Oak and English Elm) provide a canopy over the drive, with the latter widened to the south for parking around the oak. A group of trees with remnant gardens to their bases suggests the location of the screen planting to the original service drive (southern branch of the main carriageway) to the rear of the main house. The tree group in this location includes a low Flowering Gum at the western end, a Liquidambar and two large olive trees. The service drive would have passed between the two olives.

The main drive from Oak Street sweeps to the north around a carriage loop with a central rose bed in front of Mountfield. The garden to the west is dominated by an Atlantic Cedar with two smaller versions further north. A short pathway from the drive leads west to a grotto against the trunk of the large cedar. To the left is an excellent specimen of an Irish Strawberry Tree. The garden space created by the drive and carriage loop relates well to the residence. Trees against the western boundary are over-mature and no longer provide proper screening of adjacent development. Encroachments for carports (Figure 46) also disfigure the appearance of the driveway. Dense tree planting and rambling undergrowth fill the space between the tennis court fence (to the north-west) and the northern wing of the Mountfield building. Trees in this area include a Turkey Oak and a large Cluster Pine as well as English Elms and Pittosporums. The two Liquidambars to each side of Mountfield and the one to the rear are later plantings of the early- to mid-twentieth century.



The garden immediately to the east of Mountfield is dominated by several English Elms that were likely to have screened the utility garden area from the house. The northern drive from Mont Albert Road leads into the space between Mountfield and the O'Connell Family Centre. There are parking areas off the drive, and the scattered planting of native trees. A reasonable specimen of Smooth-barked Apple-myrtle (*Angophora costata*) is located to the west of the drive. The small wattle trees to the east of the drive (and one to the west, not shown on the tree survey plan<sup>55</sup>) have been misidentified in a recent arboricultural report.<sup>56</sup> These are in fact specimens of Maiden's Wattle (*Acacia maidenii*), not Early-flowering Black-wattle (*Acacia leiocalyx* ssp. *herveyensis*). The Mont Albert Road entrance is also flanked by two Pencil Pines (*Cupressus sempervirens* 'Stricta'), which are not shown on the survey plan.<sup>57</sup>

The north-western corner of the property is open lawn with a few small trees and shrubs along the fence lines. Piles of sawdust indicate where up to six large pine trees have been removed. The gazebo in this area is framed against the western fence by Cape Honeysuckle (*Tecomaria capensis*), Mirror Bush (*Coprosma repens*) and elm sucker growth. The north-eastern corner contains a very large Sugar Gum (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) with smaller native trees below its canopy. A struggling specimen of Queensland Firewheel Tree (*Stenocarpus sinuatus*) is one of these, but is not shown on the survey plan.

The south-eastern area has some large Pepper Trees on the eastern boundary that may date back to the late nineteenth century. The large Golden Elm on the southern boundary is a mid-twentieth century planting. Other small trees in this area would have been planted in the 1950s.

### *Analysis*

The development of the garden can be described in three separate stages as follows:

- (a) pre-1900 late Victorian Gardenesque style associated with the residence, Mountfield;
- (b) 1900-1945 phase associated with the occupation by John Francis Keep; and
- (c) post-1945 phase associated with the Grey Sisters.

Tree planting associated with each of these stages is described below. The tree numbers cited are those included in the Hellier McFarland survey plan, which is reproduced as an attachment to this report.

### **Pre-1900**

The Victorian era made extensive use of conifers (cypress, cedar, pine, araucaria) and native rainforest species with dark green foliage, such as Moreton Bay Fig, Sweet Pittosporum and Lilly Pilly. Deciduous trees such as oaks and elms became popular from the 1880s. Irish Strawberry, ferns and cabbage palms were commonly used smaller trees. The Gardenesque style of planting ensured that plants were set apart without touching canopies; in subsequent periods other trees have been planted in the in-between spaces, or are a result of sucker growth, resulting in overcrowding. Trees in the garden that may have survived from this era usually have large trunks, and to a lesser extent, large spreading canopies. Canopy development is influenced by overcrowding or reduction with age. Examples of this period at Mountfield may include the large Atlantic Cedar, Elms, English Oak, Turkey Oak, Cluster Pine and Pepper Trees; smaller trees include the Irish Strawberry and Red-leaf Photinia (Tree nos. 1, 4, 6, 7, 22, 25, 65, 66, 68, 75, 77, 80, 81 and 83).

### **1900-1945**

Native trees and small deciduous or evergreen exotic trees were used extensively in the first half of the twentieth century. Trees with colourful foliage such as Liquidambar and Golden Elm also became popular. Trees in the garden that relate to this era include Sugar Gum, Liquidambar, Prickly Paperbark, Sweet Pittosporum and Flowering Gum. It is possible that the Flowering Gum was planted pre-1900, as it is relatively slow-growing; its current condition makes age difficult to determine. Some of the smaller cedars would also have been planted at this time and

several of the elms may have grown from suckers. (Tree nos. 3, 9, 14, 17, 19, 26, 42, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 60, 62, 67, 78, 84 and 85.)

### **Post-1945**

Trees dating from 1945 to the present include most of the smaller natives, small exotic flowering trees, Smooth-bark Apple Myrtle, Claret Ash and possibly the large Golden Elm. The Golden Elm has been included in this era as it is difficult to determine if it is present as a young tree in the 1945 aerial photograph. The Maiden's Wattles also relate to this era. (Tree nos. 2, 38, 43, 45, 52, 54, 57, 58, 63, 64, 72 and 76.)

### *Other Landscape Elements*

A timber paling boundary fence, of recent construction, is located on the property boundaries.

The main entrance on Mont Albert Road is marked by double iron gates, flanked by splayed walls and piers of random coursed stone (Figure 12). As noted above, this entrance is also flanked by two Pencil Pines (*Cupressus sempervirens* 'Stricta'). The entrance was created after the Grey Sisters acquired the property; the date of construction of the gates and walls/piers is not known. The secondary entrance on Parlington Street is not gated (Figure 14); it also dates from the period of Grey Sisters occupation. The entrance on Oak Street is an early property entrance (it dates from at least the late 1880s, when the property was reduced from 10 to three and a half acres) and has double iron gates and flanking brick piers. The gates and piers are of relatively recent origin.

The changes to the driveways and internal access roads are described above in Section 3.4 'Evolution of the Landscape'.

A number of pathways (mostly bitumen or concrete surfaced) currently cross the site and provide access to and between buildings. Many of these were added during the Grey Sisters occupation. Others, such as the pathway to the gazebo in the north-west corner, were added during John Francis Keep's ownership of 'Mountfield', but have fallen into disuse or have been built over.

A grassed tennis court, with fencing of cyclone wire and steel posts, is located in the north-west of the property (Figure 51). It was added after 1963 (the court is not evident in the 1963 aerial photograph, see Figure 7).

The principal (public) carparking area is located on the north-east of the property (Figure 52), with additional parking spaces (including staff carparking) provided elsewhere around the site. The carparking area is another element introduced during the Grey Sisters occupation.

A grotto (with religious statuary) is located on the west of the property, at the base of a large cedar, within the Mountfield house garden area (see Figure 47 & Figure 48). The date of this feature is unknown, but is also believed to have been added in the period after 1945.

A small rustic octagonal gazebo, built of timber with corrugated iron roof sheeting (with timber lining), is located in the north-west corner of the property (Figure 50). The date of construction is unknown, although the structure is evident in the 1945 aerial photograph. The structure is sited in the area where the early property entrance/exit to Mont Albert Road was located.

A bronze sculpture on a plinth, by artist Lenore Boyd, is located on the north side of the O'Connell Family Centre (Figure 54). The sculpture, which was recently relocated within the site, was created in 1995, and has the following inscription:

Mother and Child

Donated in honour of

Jed Roby Bellman

15 11 76 – 7 11 95

## 5. Assessment of Significance

### 5.1 Brief Comparative Analysis<sup>58</sup>

Mountfield is one of a large number of extant residences of note in the municipality, which were constructed in the period from the late 1850s through to the early 1870s. Many of these residences share a common history of having originally been constructed on very large landholdings in the pre-railway and pre-1880s subdivision boom, and were in fact working farms owned by members of Melbourne's wealthy middle and professional classes. The residences have survived on much reduced acreages, although some, as is the case with Mountfield, have retained part or all of their immediate house settings and in some cases their original carriageways and entrances (although this is rare). Several of the buildings of this period are also large two-storeyed stuccoed structures in the Italianate or Renaissance Revival style, which in the 1880s were altered from their original form and extended.

Other buildings in the municipality of a comparative age to Mountfield were constructed as suburban villas, on more modest landholdings. This was the case with areas of Hawthorn in the 1850s and 1860s, when large-scale subdivisions took place. Due to its proximity to the Burwood Road bridge (built over the Yarra River in the 1850s) Hawthorn in this period was 'at the frontline of suburban development and the garden suburb ideal'.<sup>59</sup>

Mountfield, of those residences in the municipality that were associated with large landholdings and working farms in the mid-nineteenth century, is distinguished through largely retaining its domestic scale (despite extensions to the 1860s building), in its house garden setting, with an associated early entrance and driveway off Oak Street. Notwithstanding the institutional development of the broader landholding, Mountfield also retains some of the character of its 'farmlet' origins, with the earliest building and its garden clearly discernible from the remainder of the developed property. Mountfield is also distinguished by its picturesque Tudor 'cottage orne' style, which was a popular choice for suburban and rural villas in the mid-nineteenth century in Victoria.

### 5.2 Assessment of Individual Buildings and Structures

<i>Structure</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Mountfield (1860s)	High historical, social, and architectural significance.	This building should be retained (see comments on building below in 'Statement of Significance').
O'Connell Family Centre (1940s)	Medium historical and social significance. Not of architectural significance.	It is desirable but not essential that this building be retained on heritage grounds. The historical and social significance of this building derives from its continuous use by the Grey Sisters, and the ongoing provision of family care services. The building was also purpose-designed as a Mother and Child Centre, has been the focus of Grey Sisters activities on the site since the late 1940s, and the principal building within the complex since this time. However, it is otherwise a fairly standard institutional building of the post-WWII era, which has been modified and extended in line with the evolution and growth of services offered by the Centre. It is not a building of architectural merit or distinguishing physical features. In recognition of its historical and social significance, replacement of the building would also be appropriate, as a means of maintaining these

		aspects of significance.
Convent buildings (1940s-80s)	Low historical and social significance. Not of architectural significance.	The buildings need not be retained on heritage grounds. The various brick convent buildings are of a low level of historical and social significance for their association with the Grey Sisters and their activities on the property. Unlike the O'Connell Family Centre, the buildings have always been secondary structures in terms of the operation of the property. They are also conventional in terms of form and construction.
Meeting room (19 <sup>th</sup> century, modified)	Low historical and social significance; also low architectural significance.	The building need not be retained on heritage grounds. With regard to historical and social significance, see above comments for convent buildings. The original nineteenth century form of the building has been modified (it has also reputedly been relocated from its original site); the architectural significance has therefore been diminished.
Utility buildings (various)	N/A	The buildings need not be retained on heritage grounds. These buildings are utilitarian structures, and are not of heritage significance.
<b><i>Landscape elements</i></b>	<b><i>Significance</i></b>	<b><i>Comments</i></b>
Boundary fence	N/A	This element is not of heritage significance and need not be retained on heritage grounds.
Oak Street entrance (19 <sup>th</sup> century)	High historical and social significance.	The entrance should be retained in this location. This is the oldest remaining entrance to the property (believed to date back to the 1880s) when the current landholding was created. The fabric of the entrance gates and piers is not of heritage significance.
Mont Albert Road entrance (post-1940s)	Medium historical and social significance.	It is desirable but not essential that the entrance be retained on heritage grounds. This has been the principal public (and most visible) entrance to the property from the period after the Grey Sisters assumed ownership in the mid-1940s. The fabric of the entrance gates and piers is not significant.
Parlington Street entrance (post-1940s)	Low historical and social significance.	The entrance need not be retained on heritage grounds. This has been a secondary entrance in the period of Grey Sisters' ownership.
Driveway off Oak Street	High historical and social significance.	Although the alignment has been altered, and the driveway truncated at its northern end, this is the oldest remaining section of driveway (original carriageway) at Mountfield, and should be retained. The fabric of the driveway is not significant.
Driveway off Mont Albert	Medium historical and social significance.	It is desirable but not essential that the driveway be retained on heritage grounds. This has been the

Road	significance.	principal public driveway and approach into the property from Mont Albert Road during the period of Grey Sisters' ownership and occupation. The fabric of the driveway is not significant.
Driveway off Parlington Street	Low historical and social significance.	The driveway need not be retained on heritage grounds. This has been a secondary driveway in the period of Grey Sisters' ownership.
Pathways (various)	Low historical and social significance.	None of the existing pathways need to be retained on heritage grounds. Pathways have been introduced, altered and removed throughout the history of the property.
Grotto	Low historical and social significance.	The grotto need not be retained on heritage grounds.
Gazebo	Low historical and social significance.	The gazebo need not be retained on heritage grounds.
Tennis court	N/A	This is a utilitarian element, without heritage significance.
Carparking areas	N/A	These are utilitarian elements, without heritage significance.
Bronze sculpture	N/A	This is a contemporary element. No assessment has been made of its heritage significance.

### 5.3 Assessment of Landscape

#### *Grounds (full extent)*

The grounds, not including the Mountfield building and its immediate setting, have historical interest as a large landholding that dates from a subdivision of the 1880s, although the landholding has been substantially developed since the mid-twentieth century. Individual trees, and groups of trees, are of heritage significance.

#### *Immediate Setting of Mountfield*

The setting of the 1860s house is of significance for retaining elements of the Victorian Gardenesque style, with some typical nineteenth century planting enhanced by additional twentieth century planting. The garden around Mountfield screens the house, both from the approach from Oak Street, and from the original service areas to the east. The setting also helps to distinguish the house from the adjacent and later institutional development, and contains individual, and groups of trees of significance. The early driveway and entrance off Oak Street (not the fabric of these elements) are also significant.

#### *Setting for Other Buildings*

The broader landscape of the subject property provides an aesthetic setting for the other buildings, with some individual trees of significance, and groups of trees, contributing to the setting.

#### *Streetscape*

The Mountfield property abuts three streets: Mont Albert Road, Parlington Street and Oak Street (part Mountfield Street). None of these streets in the vicinity of the subject site are included within a Heritage Overlay precinct.



With regard to Mont Albert Road, it is considered that the northern part of the site currently makes a limited contribution, in terms of heritage, to the character of the street. Most of the vegetation that covered the north of the site in the twentieth century has been removed, including the row of pines along the Mountfield property boundary. The large Sugar Gum in the north-east corner of the property is of note, and the post-1945 plantings along the driveway off Mont Albert Road have some visibility from the road, and help to mark and define the entrance to the site. The Mont Albert Road fence is a recent element of utilitarian character, while the buildings visible from the road are not buildings of architectural significance.

The contribution of the property to the character of Parlington Street is also limited, save for the contribution of the Pepper Trees to the east of the O'Connell Family Centre. The areas of the property that are visible from Parlington Street do not contain buildings of architectural significance.

The property makes a greater contribution to the character of Oak Street. This area of the property retains more mature vegetation than elsewhere on the property, and a concentration of trees of significance, which provide the corner of Oak and Mountfield Streets with a treed character. The historic 1860s building is not visible from this street.

#### *Trees*

Individual trees of significance associated with the 1860s house and its setting are as follows (see attached table at Appendix A for details):

- 1 (English Oak south of entry gate)
- 4, 6, 7, 17, 19, 23, 25 (group of trees west, south-west and north-west of house, incorporating the area near the entrance and driveway off Oak Street, and including cedars)
- 42, 44 (group of trees, north of house)
- 75, 77, 78, 80 (group of elm trees east of house)
- 81, 83, 84 (trees south of house, including olive trees)

For the remainder of the site, the trees of significance are considered to be:

- 49 (paperbark abutting the Mont Albert Road driveway)
- 60 (Sugar Gum, north-east corner of property)
- 65, 66, 68 (group of Pepper Trees on the east of the property)
- 72 (Golden Elm on south property boundary)

## **5.4 Assessment Against Criteria**

The following is an assessment of the subject property against the criteria adopted for the Register of the National Estate. Comments (in italics) follow each criteria.

### **IMPORTANCE IN THE COURSE, OR PATTERN, OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY**

A.1 Importance in the evolution of Australian flora, fauna, landscapes or climate.

*N/A*

A.2 Importance in maintaining existing processes or natural systems at the regional or national scale.

*N/A*

A.3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscapes or cultural features.

N/A

A.4 Importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, State, region or community.

*Mountfield is important for its association with the mid-nineteenth century settlement of the Camberwell area, when farmlets were taken up by 'gentlemen' farmers from the city, who established English-style residences and grounds. After this period (from the 1880s), the semi-rural character of the area was transformed through the subdivision of the large landholdings, and the development of suburban residential estates.*

#### CRITERION B:

##### ITS POSSESSION OF UNCOMMON, RARE OR ENDANGERED ASPECTS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

B.1 Importance for rare, endangered or uncommon flora, fauna, communities, ecosystems, natural landscapes or phenomena, or as a wilderness.

N/A

B.2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

*Mountfield (to the extent of the 1860s residence and associated house garden) is important for demonstrating aspects of the mid-nineteenth century way of life in the Camberwell area, particularly the way of life associated with the establishment of English-style properties and farmlets (on large landholdings) by the professional middle classes.*

#### CRITERION C:

##### ITS POTENTIAL TO YIELD INFORMATION THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

C.1 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of Australian natural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality, reference or benchmark site.

N/A

C.2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.

N/A

#### CRITERION D:

##### ITS IMPORTANCE IN DEMONSTRATING THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF: (I) A CLASS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL PLACES; OR (II) A CLASS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS

D.1 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of landscapes, environments or ecosystems, the attributes of which identify them as being characteristic of their class.

N/A

D.2 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, philosophy, custom, process, land use, function, design or technique).

N/A

CRITERION E:

ITS IMPORTANCE IN EXHIBITING PARTICULAR AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS VALUED BY A COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP

E.1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.

*Mountfield (to the extent of the 1860s residence and associated house garden) is important as a mid-nineteenth century example of a residence in the picturesque Tudor 'cottage orne' style, a style which was popular at the time with Victoria's wealthy middle classes. The current setting of the house also retains elements of the Victorian Gardenesque style, with some typical nineteenth century planting enhanced by additional twentieth century planting.*

CRITERION F:

ITS IMPORTANCE IN DEMONSTRATING A HIGH DEGREE OF CREATIVE OR TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT AT A PARTICULAR PERIOD

F.1 Importance for its technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

N/A

CRITERION G:

ITS STRONG OR SPECIAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP FOR SOCIAL, CULTURAL OR SPIRITUAL REASONS

G.1 Importance as a place highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational, or social associations.

*Mountfield is important for its association, since 1945, with the Grey Sisters who were founded at Daylesford in 1930 by Maude O'Connell, with the focus of their activities on supporting mothers and babies. The Sisters are believed to be the first Catholic order of nuns founded from Victoria, with their services principally provided from Mountfield after the mid-1940s. The O'Connell Family Centre continues to operate as an Early Parenting Centre, providing education, support and assistance for parents of young children, particularly children experiencing problems with feeding and sleeping.*

CRITERION H:

ITS SPECIAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE LIFE OR WORKS OF A PERSON, OR GROUP OF PERSONS, OF IMPORTANCE IN AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

H.1 Importance for close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, State or region.

*Mountfield is important for its associations with George Henry Taylor, solicitor and prominent Camberwell politician and landowner of the nineteenth century; with John Francis Keep, a botanist and naturalist who transformed the property into a bushland retreat in the first half of the twentieth century; and with the Grey Sisters, the first Catholic order of nuns founded from Victoria, whose activities are focussed on the support and care of parents and babies*

## 5.5 Statement of Significance

The Mountfield property is of historical, social and architectural significance, to the City of Boroondara.

The Mountfield property is of historical significance for its associations with solicitor George Henry Taylor, and his family, who purchased Mountfield in the early 1860s and constructed the surviving main residence in 1865. Mountfield at that time was a ten-acre farmlet, with Taylor in the role of 'gentleman' farmer (a characteristic of development in the Camberwell area in the pre-1880s period). Taylor was also a Councillor on the Boroondara District Road Board, and later Chairman of the Road Board when it became the Shire of Boroondara. Mountfield additionally had associations (during the first half of the twentieth century) with John Francis Keep, an amateur botanist and naturalist, who was renowned for collecting and planting trees and shrubs on his property, and transforming Mountfield into a bushland retreat and bird sanctuary.

Mountfield is additionally of historical and social significance due to its association, since 1945, with the Grey Sisters (formally known as the Family Care Sisters). The Sisters were founded at Daylesford in 1930 by Maude O'Connell, a social activist, with the focus of their activities on supporting mothers and babies. The Sisters officially became a religious order in 1949, and are believed to be the first Catholic order of nuns founded from Victoria. Their services have been provided at a number of small centres around Victoria, but principally from Mountfield from the mid-1940s, where they adapted the original 1860s Mountfield residence and transformed the broader property through an extensive building programme. The O'Connell Family Centre (constructed in 1947) continues to operate as an Early Parenting Centre, providing education, support and assistance for parents of young children, particularly children experiencing feeding and sleeping problems.

Architecturally, Mountfield is of significance as a surviving 1860s residence in the picturesque Tudor 'cottage orne' style. The main house has been altered and extended, but the works have generally been executed in a sympathetic manner, with the form of the original westernmost component of the building being still readable, as is the form of the original principal west façade. The building is additionally notable for its two-storeyed entrance porch, steeply pitched slate-clad attic roof, multiple pairs of French doors opening onto a verandah with fine timber posts and brackets, and prominent grouped chimney stacks. None of the post-1945 Grey Sisters' buildings are considered to be of architectural significance.

The landscape overall is an evolved form, with no known designer or strong design theme. Its evolution can be traced to three main stages: the pre-1900 late Victorian Gardenesque style associated with the 1860s residence; the 1900–1945 phase associated with the occupation by John Francis Keep; and the post-1945 phase associated with the Grey Sisters. The current setting of the house is of significance for retaining elements of the Victorian Gardenesque style, with some typical nineteenth century planting enhanced by additional twentieth century planting. The garden around Mountfield screens the house, both from the approach from Oak Street, and from the original service areas to the east. The setting also helps to distinguish the house from the adjacent and later institutional development, and thereby retain some of its original 'farmlet' character; it also contains individual trees, and groups of trees, of significance. The early driveway and entrance off Oak Street (not the fabric of these elements) are also significant.

The broader property landscape has been heavily modified since 1945, through the removal of trees, the truncation, removal and alteration of driveways and pathways, and the introduction of buildings and structures, including the tennis court. In addition to removing nineteenth century elements, these works have also erased much of the 'bush' like character established by Keep. The broader grounds have also not been well maintained, and have large numbers of weed species and sucker growth. The landscape, beyond the area of grounds associated with the 1860s house, is therefore considered to be overall of a lower level of significance, but has some individual trees, and groups of trees, of significance.

## **6. Comments on Heritage Overlay**

The area of greatest heritage significance is principally focused on the south-west of the site, and incorporates the 1860s building, the Oak Street entrance and driveway, a garden area associated with the house, and a larger landscape area that includes trees that form part of the nineteenth

century or early planting associated with the house. The garden area around the house includes individual trees, and groups of trees that are of heritage significance, provide a setting for (and have a visual relationship with) the 1860s building, and serve to screen and distinguish the 1860s building from the institutional development elsewhere on the property. In other parts of the site, trees and groups of trees are of significance for being remnants (and providing evidence) of the three phases of landscape evolution (as described above).

It is recommended that the whole of the property be included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay. Within the overlay, heritage controls should only apply to those structures and elements of a high level of significance. It is also recommended that an Incorporated Document be attached to the site, and included in the planning scheme. The development guidelines and landscape management recommendations, as set out below, should also be used as a guide for new development on the site.

The recommended elements of a high level of significance which should be subject to heritage controls within the Heritage Overlay area are:

- 1860s Mountfield residence (including additions).
- Oak Street entrance and driveway (the alignment and form, but not the fabric of these elements).
- The garden setting associated with the 1860s house, including the trees of significance associated with the house.
- The trees of significance included within the broader landscape (beyond the house garden and setting).

## **7. Comments on Subdivision**

### *Introductory Comments*

The concept of subdivision of a heritage property is one that can be contemplated, provided impacts on the heritage significance of the property are minimised. The subdivision of large estates in the City of Boroondara also has a long history in the city, and is consistent with the traditional pattern of development in the municipality. It is, however, acknowledged that subdivision, with the ensuing individual titles and ownership of lots, is likely to lead to new development, some of which can impact on the heritage values of a property.

Heritage Victoria has prepared a policy on subdivision of registered properties and landscapes. *Guidelines for the Assessment of Heritage Planning Applications*<sup>60</sup> also provide guidance on the subdivision of heritage places. The key points of these documents are summarised (and paraphrased) below:

- The visual impact of subdivision on significant buildings and elements should always be considered, when deciding on a subdivision application. It is important to maintain an appropriate curtilage and setting for a heritage place. The significance of a heritage place is also often reliant upon being seen in its original setting or context, including gardens, trees, outbuildings, driveways, pathways, etc. Important views of properties (to and from the place) should also not be impacted by subdivision.
- For larger properties, such as homesteads, it would normally be expected that all the main structures associated with the property would be retained in single ownership. This may also include parts of the site that are of a more archaeological nature, such as the sites of earlier houses, graves and underground water-storage cisterns.
- Plantings - such as driveway avenues, an important garden associated with the place, walled gardens and hedges - should also be retained in the same ownership as the main building with which they are associated.



- Where subdivision involves the creation of new lots that will need to be separated by fences, and the construction of new buildings, etc, then design guidelines should be prepared that set out recommended future building envelopes, materials and fences.
- The history of the property's boundaries should be respected. If, for example, the original property was quite small and had increased in size over time, it may be appropriate to subdivide along original lines and return the property to its original size.

### *The Proposed Three Lot Subdivision*

The proposed three lot subdivision, which has recently been the subject of an application to Council (see the attached plan), is not unreasonable with regard to maintaining the heritage significance of the site, as identified in this report.

Lot 1 incorporates much of the area of greatest heritage significance in the south-west of the site, and includes the 1860s residence, the Oak Street entrance and driveway, and most of the significant vegetation associated with the 1860s house, save for some vegetation to the east of the house (specifically trees 75, 77, 78 and 80, which are all English Elms, the trunks of which are currently located to the east of the subdivision line). Moving the east boundary of Lot 1 further east to capture these trees would appear to be difficult, given the proximity to the O'Connell Family Centre building. The canopies of the trees also extend over the subdivision line.

This vegetation has historically served to screen the Mountfield building from the service areas/grounds on the east of the site (in the post-1945 period the trees also helped to screen Mountfield from the institutional development). The trees were not planted as part of the principal address of the house, or as part of the formal garden presentation on the west of the house. In this context, separating the trees from the house would appear to have less of an impact than would isolating the house from important trees in its formal garden presentation to the west. If the whole of the existing property is included in the heritage overlay, then protection would still be afforded to the subject trees. While it is anticipated that a fence will very likely be constructed along the subdivision line between Lots 1 and 2 (and care should be taken to ensure the survival of the trees in this instance), that will physically separate the trees from the Mountfield landholding, the visual relationship (i.e. the visibility of the canopies) will largely be retained.

Lots 2 and 3 contain no buildings and elements of a high level of significance, other than individual and groups of trees. The lots do, however, contain buildings and elements of medium and low levels of significance, principally associated with the Grey Sisters use and development of the property. The subdivision proposal in its entirety will in fact isolate and separate these buildings and elements across the whole of the site. In commenting on this, the buildings added (or relocated) by the sisters after 1945, were placed as pavilions in the landscape, and apparently demonstrated a desire to locate the various Sisters' or nurses' accommodation away from the main O'Connell Family Centre, and near to the existing or introduced entries and exits to the property. When looking at the 1945 aerial photograph (Figure 5) it also appears to be the case that the Sisters additionally made some attempt to locate their new buildings in areas of the site which were less heavily treed (although the removal of some vegetation occurred, and continued to occur subsequently). Other than these aspects of the development of the property post-1945 being of interest, but there is no particular heritage significance associated with the Sisters' planning of the site, or with the inter-relationship and connection between the buildings. In this context, the proposed subdivision is still considered to be a reasonable outcome for the site.

### *Possible Future Subdivision*

Possible further (or alternative) subdivision (including the additional subdivision of the three lots proposed above) is a possibility for this property. In the event of this being proposed, the issues identified above should be taken into consideration when assessing such an application.

The proposed Lots 2 and 3 could be further subdivided, with little or no impact on the significance of the property, provided that the trees of heritage significance are protected (including through the use of tree protection zones, in the event of subsequent development, see below).

Lot 1 could also be further subdivided, although the potential for impacts on the significance of the property are greater. For instance, the northern portion of the lot could be subdivided, provided the significant area of the house garden was retained within the 1860s house lot (the Oak Street entrance and driveway would be retained). Although a subdivision in this area would separate the gazebo from the house and garden, this element has been identified as being of low heritage significance, and is therefore not an element that is required to be retained. It has also already been isolated from the original house through intervening development and clearance of vegetation (the pathway also no longer runs from the house garden to the gazebo). A subdivision of the southern portion of the proposed Lot 1 (incorporating the late 1940s convent in this area) would need to be carefully considered, to ensure the Oak Street entrance and driveway were maintained with the 1860s house lot, together with the significant trees associated with the house and setting in this area (including the trees to the south and south-west of the house). Again, tree protection zones should be used to ensure the retention of trees of heritage significance. Sharing of the driveway would also not be inconsistent with the heritage values of the property, as the entrance has provided access to other areas of the site (in addition to access to the 1860s building).

## **8. Additional Recommendations on Future Development**

### *Works to the 1860s Building*

The 1860s building has been altered and extended in the past, albeit in a sympathetic manner. Future works to this structure can therefore be contemplated, and should be guided by existing Council policies and guidelines on works to significant buildings.<sup>61</sup> It is also recommended that, should substantial works be proposed, a Conservation Management Plan be prepared for the building, to guide such works.

### *Views & Vistas*

This is a property where there are currently little or no important heritage views or vistas from the public domain (other than the views of mature vegetation on the site). As noted above in Section 5.3 ('Streetscape') there is nothing in the way of views or vistas of significant buildings from Mont Albert Road or Parlington Street. The 1860s house is also not visible from Oak Street.

Within the site, no new development should impact on the western side of the 1860s house, where the visual relationship between the building and its house garden is an important one to retain. Views of the house when turning to the north, from the Oak Street entrance, are also important and should not be impacted by new works.

### *New Works & Building Envelopes*

With regard to possible future development of the property, new development should not encroach into the important heritage area (curtilage or setting) associated with the house and garden, and presentation of these elements. The siting of new buildings and structures should not require the removal of trees of high significance; the Oak Street driveway should also not be built over.

With regard to setbacks from the Mountfield building, the key consideration here is to ensure that new development does not intrude into the visual relationship between the house and its significant garden and associated trees. To the west of the house, no new development should

occur between the house and west property boundary. To the south of the 1860s building, new development should be setback by at least a nominal 15 metres<sup>62</sup> from the south façade of the building (plus an area to be determined with regard to an adequate tree protection zone), to retain the association between the house and the significant trees in this area (the olives and Liquidambar, with the latter being the most southerly of this group). On the north of the house the trees of highest significance are a Sweet Gum and pittosporum. A setback of a nominal minimum of 5 metres from the north façade of the building (plus a tree protection zone) would be required here, in order to protect the visual relationship between the house and the trees. The remnant northern portion of the Oak Street driveway is also located in this area, and should be taken into consideration. On the east, a nominal minimal setback of 12-15 metres (plus tree protection zone) would be required for new development. As acknowledged above, however, the vegetation in this area has historically screened Mountfield from the service areas on the east of the site, and the trees do not form part of the principal address of the house (this is clearly the rear of the building). In this context, the introduction of a fence into the east setback area can be considered reasonable.

Development could be considered for the northern portion of the site (including the northern parts of the proposed Lots 1 and 2).

#### *New Access Points*

With regard to the introduction of new access points, crossovers, etc, into the property, these can be considered for the Mont Albert Road and Parlington Street boundaries, as entrances and exits have been added and removed on these property boundaries in the past. Oak Street is more sensitive, and it is desirable that no new vehicle entrances or access points be introduced in this area, in order to ensure that the primacy of the early entrance is retained.

#### *Landscape & Trees*

With regard to landscape character, and future planting or replanting programmes, it is recommended that consideration be given to reflecting the character of the late Victorian Gardenesque garden associated with the significant setting of the 1860s house. For the broader landscape, where the evolved nature of the landscape is more evident, the character of the grounds as established in 1900–1945 (by John Francis Keep), or that associated with the post-1945 era (Grey Sisters), could also be used as a guide to future plantings.

With regard to the ongoing management and maintenance of existing significant trees, recommended works include watering (refer also to irrigation below), canopy reduction and formative pruning, dead-wooding or removal of unsafe branches, mulching of the root zone and pest control (e.g. control of elm leaf beetle, possums, etc). Any pruning work, or works to improve stability of trees, should be carried out by a competent arborist. Reference should also be made to Australian Standard AS 4373-1996 'Pruning of Amenity Trees'.

For non-significant vegetation, trees or shrubs competing for space, sunlight and moisture with significant trees can be removed, particularly where the trees have been self-sown or have grown from suckers (e.g. elms). Species that are inappropriate to the character of the landscape, or are in a deteriorating condition, should also be removed.

Consideration should be given to long-term replacement to maintain the significant tree species on the property, with preference given to replacing trees with similar species, or in the case of the significant setting and garden associated with the 1860s house, with species known to be used in the pre-1900 era.<sup>63</sup>

On the matter of the management of the existing trees and gardens during development, as noted above, it is essential that tree protection measures be put in place to protect the trees of heritage significance during any development that may occur on the site, either in its current configuration, or subsequent to subdivision, should that occur. During redevelopment, it should be recognised that older trees have lesser tolerance to disturbance and have lesser ability to

recover from stress than younger trees. Care must be taken with cultivation activity or soil level changes within the root zones of significant trees. Maintenance during redevelopment works should also include watering, weed control, cultivation, topsoiling, fertilising, mulching and garden edge construction.

Where development is within the vicinity of significant trees<sup>64</sup>, an arborist should be retained to supervise any works within the vicinity of the trees and should be involved in discussions regarding protection and planning before any works commence. Protective fences must be constructed to preserve the root zones and protect canopies of significant trees before any demolition or construction works commence. No excavation for footings, pathways or roads, or trenching for services (including irrigation) should be permitted within Critical Root Zones and only within Optimal Tree Protection Zones by prior agreement. Any services that cannot be re-routed must be bored beneath the root zone.

### *Fences*

Guidelines relating to fences for new infill development, as contained in Council guidelines, can be used as a guide in this instance, where they generally recommend that fences should maintain the scale and approach used in traditional fencing in the area, and should allow some visual penetration, in preference to solid fencing.<sup>65</sup> Should subdivision occur, with fences along allotment boundaries, standard fencing could be used in this case.

It is also recommended that, as a means of retaining some evidence of the current extent of the property, the north and east boundary treatments for any future lots should desirably be consistent.



*Figure 11 Subject site, Mont Albert Road boundary, with main entrance at centre right.*



*Figure 12 Main entrance, Mont Albert Road.*





*Figure 13      South-east corner of property, with Parlinton Street on left of picture.*



*Figure 14      Parlinton Street entrance, with convent building on south-east of property at left of picture.*



*Figure 15      Parlington Street entrance, viewed from within the property, with convent building on south-east of property at right of picture.*



*Figure 16      Oak Street entrance.*





*Figure 17      Looking north along the main entrance drive (off Mont Albert Road), towards the O'Connell Family Centre.*



*Figure 18      Mountfield, south elevation (and south wing additions).*



*Figure 19      Mountfield, east elevation (south wing).*



*Figure 20      Mountfield, with small north addition on left of picture.*





*Figure 21      Mountfield, north elevation of chapel.*



*Figure 22      Mountfield, entrance hall, with staircase behind timber panel.*



*Figure 23      Mountfield, timber mantel, ground floor.*



*Figure 24      Mountfield, chapel interior.*



*Figure 25      Mountfield, first floor interior, 1940s south wing.*



*Figure 26      Northern approach, O'Connell Family Centre.*





*Figure 27      Entrance, west side, O'Connell Family Centre.*



*Figure 28      Children's play area, east side, O'Connell Family Centre.*



*Figure 29 Lounge off children's play area, O'Connell Family Centre.*



*Figure 30 Rear (south side) of O'Connell Family Centre (with laundry building on left).*



*Figure 31 Interior, reception area, O'Connell Family Centre.*



*Figure 32 Interior, O'Connell Family Centre.*





*Figure 33 Interior, O'Connell Family Centre.*



*Figure 34 South elevations of laundry building (right of picture) and south-west wing of O'Connell Family Centre (centre picture).*



*Figure 35      Convent building, north-west area of property (visible from Mont Albert Road).*



*Figure 36      Interior, convent building, north-west area of property.*

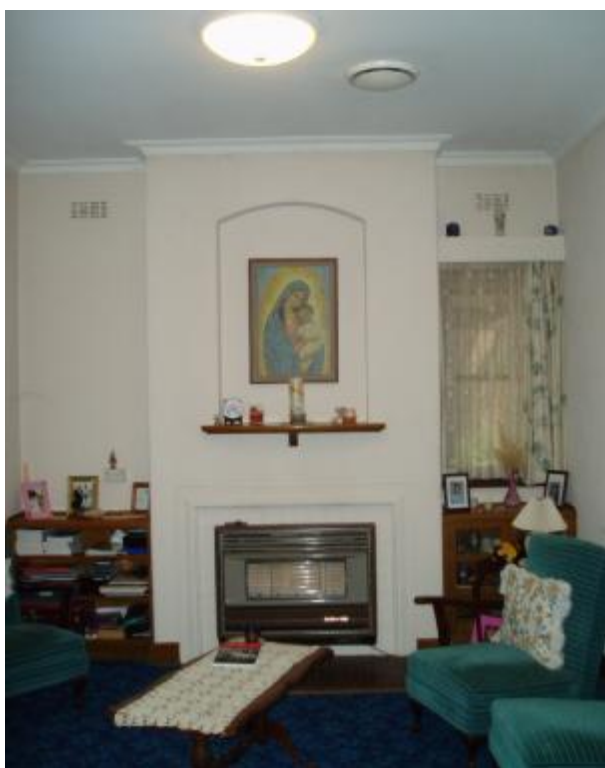




*Figure 37      Convent, south-east corner of property (off Parlington Street).*



*Figure 38      Convent building, south-west corner of property, off Oak Street.*



*Figure 39 Interior, convent building, south-west corner of property.*



*Figure 40 Meeting room, south side of property.*





*Figure 41 Meeting room.*



*Figure 42 Meeting room, west elevation.*



*Figure 43      Meeting room, interior.*



*Figure 44      Utility shed, south side of property.*





*Figure 45      Utility shed, south side of property.*



*Figure 46      Carport, western property boundary.*



*Figure 47      Garden (with grotto in centre picture), to front (west side) of Mountfield.*



*Figure 48      Grotto.*





*Figure 49      Large olive tree, south side of Mountfield.*



*Figure 50      Gazebo, north-west corner of property.*



*Figure 51      Tennis court, north-west side of property.*



*Figure 52      Carpark, north-east corner of property.*





*Figure 53 View looking east, towards carpark.*



*Figure 54 Sculpture, north side of O'Connell Family Centre.*



Sources used in the landscape assessment are as follows: J Patrick, 'Practical management of culturally significant landscapes', in J Hitchmough, *Urban Landscape Management*, 1994, pps. 484-488; P Jones, *Planting c. 1850-1900: A Guide to the Restoration and Rehabilitation of Early Style Australian Gardens and Man-made Landscapes*, ACNT Technical Bulletin 41, 1982; City of Boroondara Significant Tree Study (2001); A & R Tree Surgeons, *Arboricultural Inspection & Report: 6 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury*, October 2003; A&R Tree Surgeons: *Arboricultural Inspection & Report - New Convent*, November 2003; John Patrick Pty Ltd, *6 Mont Albert Road*, draft report, March 2004; See Hellier McFarland survey plan, ref. 5306/10, October 2003; *Plants Listed in Nursery Catalogues in Victoria 1855-1889*.

Notes on Mountfield, City of Camberwell Historical Society, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library

Chris McConville & Associates, *Camberwell Conservation Study*, Vol. 2, 'Environmental History', p. 1.

Donald Maclean, *Balwyn 1841-1941*, Melbourne, 1942, pp. 14-5.

See Sands & McDougall municipal directories.

Chris McConville & Associates, *Camberwell Conservation Study*, Vol. 2, 'Environmental History', p. IX, & p. 17.

See Camberwell rate books from 1865, where Taylor is listed as the owner of the property, which includes a house and land. Prior to this, in 1863 and 1864, the rate books refer to land only.

Notes on Mountfield, City of Camberwell Historical Society, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.

Butler, G. *Camberwell Conservation Study*, Vol. 4 'Significant Sites', City of Camberwell, 1991, p. 187.

Notes on Mountfield, City of Camberwell Historical Society, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.

Sister R E Shanly (Grey Sisters) notes on Mountfield, undated, City of Camberwell Historical Society, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.

Notes on Mountfield, City of Camberwell Historical Society, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.

See Camberwell rate books, 1875 and 1876.

See advertisement for the Mountfield estate subdivision, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.

Butler, G. *Camberwell Conservation Study*, Vol. 4 'Significant Sites', City of Camberwell, 1991, p. 187. See also Camberwell rate books, 1887-9, and Sands & McDougall municipal directories 1890s.

PRO Will & Probate records, VPRS 7591/P/0002, Unit 0001117, no. 33/72.

See advertisement for the Mountfield estate, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.

Notes on Mountfield, City of Camberwell Historical Society, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.

See Camberwell rate books, 1910s.

The painting is in the possession of the Grey Sisters.

Notes on Mountfield, City of Camberwell Historical Society, Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.

Sands & McDougall municipal directories.

Butler, G. *Camberwell Conservation Study*, Vol. 4 'Significant Sites', City of Camberwell, 1991, p. 187. See also Camberwell rate books, and advertisement for the sale of the property in March 1945 (copy held in the Grey Sisters archives).

See MMBW property service plan, Drainage Plan no. 47768, no. 07/6043.

Anon, 'The March of Time: Overtakes on an Old and Interesting Landmark', extract from *SEC Magazine*, 31 August 1945 (copy held in the Grey Sisters archives).

- 26 Anon, 'The March of Time: Overtakes on an Old and Interesting Landmark', extract from *SEC Magazine*,  
31 August 1945 (copy held in the Grey Sisters archives).
- 27 PRO Will & Probate records, VPRS 7591/P/0002, Unit 001277, no. 363/909.
- 28 Sister R E Shanly (Grey Sisters) notes on Mountfield, undated, City of Camberwell Historical Society,  
Camberwell Local History Collection, Boroondara Library.
- 29 Anon, 'The March of Time: Overtakes on an Old and Interesting Landmark', extract from *SEC Magazine*,  
31 August 1945 (copy held in the Grey Sisters archives).
- 30 See advertisement for the sale of the property in March 1945 (copy held in the Grey Sisters archives).
- 31 Much of the following information was taken from the Family Care Sisters website,  
[www.users.bigpond.com/familycaresrs](http://www.users.bigpond.com/familycaresrs). See also [www.ozvocations.catholic.org.au/directory/religious](http://www.ozvocations.catholic.org.au/directory/religious).
- 32 Allom Lovell & Associates, *Former Carlton Refuge: Conservation Analysis and Comment on Proposed  
Registration*, for Department of Treasury and Finance, August 1999.
- 33 See [www.ozvocations.catholic.org.au/directory/religious](http://www.ozvocations.catholic.org.au/directory/religious).
- 34 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 94.
- 35 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 77 & p.  
94.
- 36 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 91 & p.  
94.
- 37 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 91.
- 38 The structure is annotated as a kindergarten on a 1947 MMBW property service plan, application no.  
47768.
- 39 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, pp. 75-8 &  
pp. 92-4.
- 40 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980.
- 41 Butler, G. *Camberwell Conservation Study*, Vol. 4 'Significant Sites', City of Camberwell, 1991, p. 187.
- 42 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 92.
- 43 Pers. comm. Sister Anne, Grey Sisters, although this has not been confirmed through documentary  
evidence. S Moran may have been Stanislaus Joseph Moran, who submitted an application for registration  
with the Architects Registration Board in June 1923, when he was 21 years of age. Moran practiced in  
Melbourne over the following decades, including working on residential commissions. See PRO records,  
VPRS 08838/P0001, Unit 10.
- 44 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 90.
- 45 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 119 & p.  
124.
- 46 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, pp. 134-7.  
Pers. comm. Sister Anne, Grey Sisters.
- 47 See Family Care Sisters website, [www.users.bigpond.com/familycaresrs](http://www.users.bigpond.com/familycaresrs). See also  
[www.ozvocations.catholic.org.au/directory/religious](http://www.ozvocations.catholic.org.au/directory/religious).
- 48 See various MMBW property service plans, application no. 47768.
- 49 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 92.
- 50 See building plan reproduced in Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*,  
Armadale, Victoria, 1980, pp. 120-1.
- 51 See MMBW property service plan, application no. 47768, 1947.
- 52 See photograph, Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria,  
1980, p. 91.
- 53 Kathleen Dunlop Kane, *The History of the Grey Sisters 1930-1980*, Armadale, Victoria, 1980, p. 78.
- 54 Communication provided by Grey Sisters.
- 55 See Hellier McFarland survey plan, ref. 5306/10, October 2003.
- 56 See A & R Tree Surgeons, *Arboricultural Inspection & Report: 6 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury*, October  
2003.
- 57 See Hellier McFarland survey plan, ref. 5306/10, October 2003.

- 58 The following overview is based on a review of material contained in G Butler, *Camberwell Conservation Study*, 1991; Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, *City of Kew Urban Conservation Study*, 1988; and M Gould, *Hawthorn Heritage Study*, 1993.
- 59 M Gould, *Hawthorn Heritage Study*, Vol. 1A, April 1993, pp. 24-38.
- 60 Heritage Victoria, draft, August 2000.
- 61 See Butler, G. *Camberwell Conservation Study*, Vol. 1 'Recommendations & Guidelines', Appendix 2 'Restoration Guidelines', City of Camberwell, 1991, pp. 2-4.
- 62 The setbacks are indicative, based on scaled measurements taken from the Hellier McFarland survey plan, ref. 5306/10, October 2003.
- 63 Refer to *Plants Listed in Nursery Catalogues in Victoria*, 1855-1889, or P Cuffley, *Traditional Gardens in Australia*, 1991.
- 64 Refer also to notes on pages 38 to 42 of A & R Tree Surgeons, *Arboricultural Inspection & Report: 6 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury*, October 2003.
- 65 Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, *Kew Urban Conservation Study*, Vol. 2, Section 5.2. May 1988.