

86 NORMANBY ROAD, FORMERLY 'GOLDTHORNS'

Original Use: Residence
Date of Construction: 1892¹
Architect: Unknown

DESIGNATION A
CITATION NO.32



HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

John Moore Griffiths followed the earlier move of his brother James and migrated to Australia from England in 1877². James had already established himself as a tea merchant in Melbourne and after John joined the business they expanded to import tea, coffee and cocoa. They operated from Flinders Lane with outlets in Flinders Street, Sydney and Adelaide³.

In 1891 John married Margaret Wightman Davidson⁴ and the couple moved to their house, 'Goldthorns', a mansion set in extensive grounds at the corner of Normanby and Argyle Roads by 1892. Griffiths was recorded as owning land on this site by 1891 which was first occupied at which date there appears to have been a six-roomed weatherboard house on the property. In 1891 it was given an N.A.V. of £40⁵ and by the following year the N.A.V. had doubled⁶, indicating that a more substantial building had been erected on the site. To accommodate the growing family - which eventually numbered seven children⁷ - rooms appear to have been added and by the turn of the century 'Goldthorns' mansion was recorded as having eleven rooms constructed of brick with an N.A.V. of £75⁸. Although no information has been found to connect the two, J.M.Griffiths built St Hilda's No.1 Clarendon Street East Melbourne, designed by architects Ward and Carleton

The 1930s depression slowed the rate of subdivision in Kew, and it was in the years that followed that new estates began to appear, carving up the older established properties. On Saturday 30 November 1940 Griffiths' land and residence was offered for sale as the Goldthorns Subdivision, being broken into seven new allotments with Goldthorns Avenue cutting through the estate⁹. Advertised as comprising '...eighteen well-planned rooms, spacious verandahs and balconies ... in addition to ... a modern electric lift...'¹⁰ the property was suggested to be ideal for conversion into a hospital¹¹. The purchasers of the building did indeed establish the former mansion as the 'Wondong Private Hospital', which later became known as 'Newhaven'¹². The house remains as a hospital.

- 1 City of Kew, Rate Books 1891-1894
- 2 Rogers, D, *A History of Kew*, p.176
- 3 *Sands and McDougall Melbourne Directories*, 1901
- 4 Rogers, op.cit., p.177
- 5 City of Kew, Rate Books, 1891
- 6 *ibid.*, 1892
- 7 Rogers, loc.cit.
- 8 *ibid.*, 1903
- 9 State Library of Victoria, Map Library, 820 BJE 1880- , Kew East ..
- 10 *ibid.*
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 Rogers, *ibid.*

Although the fabric of this building has undergone unsympathetic superficial alterations, such as the painting of brickwork, it is substantially intact (externally) and of a progressive design for its period. It is recommended for consideration by the Historic Buildings Council.