

NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)

CLASSIFICATION REPORT

1. NAME OF PLACE

Stokell

2. OTHER/CURRENT NAME

Nil

3. LOCATION

49-51 Adelaide Street, Malvern

4. DATE

1889

5. TYPE OF PLACE

House

6. LISTING DETAILS

Classified at regional level

7. EXTENT OF DESIGNATION

The whole building

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Stokell, constructed in 1889 by the builder Stephen Armstrong, is of regional significance as a house either designed by or copied from the architect John Beswicke, as evidenced by the combination of semicircular and stilted segmental arches, especially characteristic of his work.

## 9. HISTORY

The rate book of 1889 reveals that the construction of Stokell, which had a 325 foot frontage, was in progress. Stephen Armstrong was the owner and builder. The house was named after his wife's maiden name. Other buildings constructed by the Stephen Armstrong Building Company are Stonnington, Cliveden Mansions, the Ball and Welch store and ice works for W. Woodmason at Oakleigh and Malvern.

By 1894 the brick house had 15 rooms. In 1905 Armstrong was still the owner, and the house had 18 rooms with a 150 foot frontage to Malvern Road. James Ormond, a merchant, was the occupier. An MMBW Detail Plan of c 1910 shows large gates, a sweeping drive from Malvern Road, a separate service entry from Adelaide Street, stables and other outbuildings. In 1911 Armstrong sold the house to Mrs L.G. Laycock. In 1914 Mrs Mary Winter-Irving, a member of the prominent Western District grazing family, was the owner and occupier. By 1923 Charles de Plan Lloyd, a broker, was the owner and occupier of the house which measured 160 feet by 520 feet. It was named Ambo. In 1938 the building became a private hospital It was known as St. Ronan's Rest Home and was conducted by Dougald McCormick. By 1970 the name had changed to St. Ronan's Private Hospital. The hospital closed in 1990.(1)

## 10. DESCRIPTION

Stokell is a large stuccoed Italianate mansion with a prominent arcaded verandah on two sides between projecting bay windows and a hipped slate roof with imposing windows. Details include bracketed eaves, architraves and impost mouldings, Corinthian capitals and balcony balustrades. The building is generally intact although its land holding has been dramatically reduced and it has lost the frontage to Malvern Road. The external painting of cement render and sundry minor modifications for institutional purposes have reduced the impact of this otherwise imposing mansion.

The original external wash house survives. The association with a notable builder, Stephen Armstrong, whose company built two of Melbourne's most notable mansions, Stonnington and Cliveden

is reflected by the elaborate nature of this house. Builders' houses of the nineteenth century often were enriched by the nature of the projects which they had undertaken. The building is able to demonstrate the wealth of leading building contractors of the 1880s. Externally its grand scale remains although its impact is much reduced by the subdivision of the land around, especially the front garden.(2)

## 11. EVALUATION & COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The two storey villa with an L-shaped loggia/balcony along two sides, flanked by bays at the diagonally opposite corners is a characteristic form of the 1880s (for example, Ontario [Labassa], and Overton, 3 Pakington Street, Kew). Stilted segmental arcading is an unusual feature, but appears in the designs of Lloyd Tayler, eg. 5-7 Collins Street, 1884.

The combination of forms found at Stokell, however, is characteristic of only one architect, John Beswicke, later Beswicke and Coote. Stilted segmental arcading above a level of semicircular arcading is not known in the work of any other designer. There are two Beswicke and Coote houses and one John Beswicke house which has this combination, and which also have the L-shaped verandah and flanking bays, but the four houses are not identical. There is one probable Beswicke house with the same combination of arcading but only a front verandah and bay.

1. T.J. Davies House, 180 Power Street, Hawthorn, 1888.  
(demolished), unattributed, but there is a consistent John Beswicke tender notice.<sup>1</sup>

One facade: canted bay and three arches.  
Single columns.

2. La Verna, 39 Sackville Street, Kew, by John Beswicke, 1888.  
Facades (a) square bay and four arches, (b) canted bay and 3 arches.  
Single columns.

3. Stokell, 51 Adelaide Street, Malvern, 1889.

---

<sup>1</sup> Beswicke calls tenders in the *Argus*, 26 March 1887, p 15, for a villa at Hawthorn.

Facades (a) square bay and 4 arches, (b) canted bay and 4 arches.  
Single columns.

4. 3 Molesworth Street, Kew, by Beswicke and Coote, 1891.

Facades (a) square bay and 4 arches, (b) above.

Double columns ground floor, single above.

5. Warrington (later Kawarau, now Stephanie's Restaurant), 405  
Tooronga Road, Hawthorn, by Beswicke and Coote, 1891 (partly  
remodelled by Ussher and Kemp, 1904).

Facades (a) canted bay, square bay and four arches, (b) canted bay,  
square bay and four arches.

Single arches.

It would appear from the above that John Beswicke introduced the  
mode, and continued it after his partnership with Coote. However,  
the oral history connected with Warrington named Frank Coote as  
the architect who actually supervised the work.

No tender notice has been found for Stokell, but this would not be  
expected, as the owner was a builder. It cannot be asserted that  
Beswicke was the designer, for it is just as likely that Armstrong,  
having built a Beswicke house (perhaps La Verna) then simply used  
it as the basis for his own, with or without the concurrence of the  
architect.

## 12. REFERENCES

Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken, *Malvern Heritage Study*, 1992

Notes by Miles Lewis

## 13. APPENDICES

Nil