

HO 40 MAP 6

(REFER TO HERITAGE VIC  
REF No H 1608)

NAME OF PLACE

STONNINGTON

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

City of Malvern.

LOCATION/ADDRESS

336 Glenferrie Road, Malvern, 3144.

CADASTRAL INFORMATION

Part Crown Allotment 24, Parish of Prahran, County of Bourke.

TYPE OF PLACE

City Mansion Garden.

EXTENT OF CLASSIFICATION

See attached plan.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Stonnington, the residence erected in 1890 and the present garden laid out at that time, the site used as State Government House 1901-31, and since then used for a variety of institutional purposes, retains a residence of National significance. It is an architecturally important and outstanding work of architect Charles D'Ebro and an excellent example of the late 'Boom Style' classicism in Melbourne. The finely detailed and crafted interiors are notable, especially the great hall, staircase and glazed lantern.

The garden is of State significance:

- as a typical nineteenth century city mansion garden; although now diminished in size and the south and east portions covered with new buildings, sufficient garden survives to appreciate its nineteenth century characteristics;
- as the setting for a residence of outstanding architectural and historical significance;
- as a typical nineteenth century picturesque garden; attributes include the carriage drive, winding gravel paths, decorative outbuildings, mature trees, garden beds and large shrubberies;
- for its retention of buildings and structures typical of nineteenth century city mansion gardens; these include the front fence, gate lodge (of outstanding architectural importance), stables, gravel paths, terrace wall, balustrade, urns and steps;
- historically, for its connections with John Wagner and the land boom period of the late nineteenth century as well as its long period of use as the State Government House.

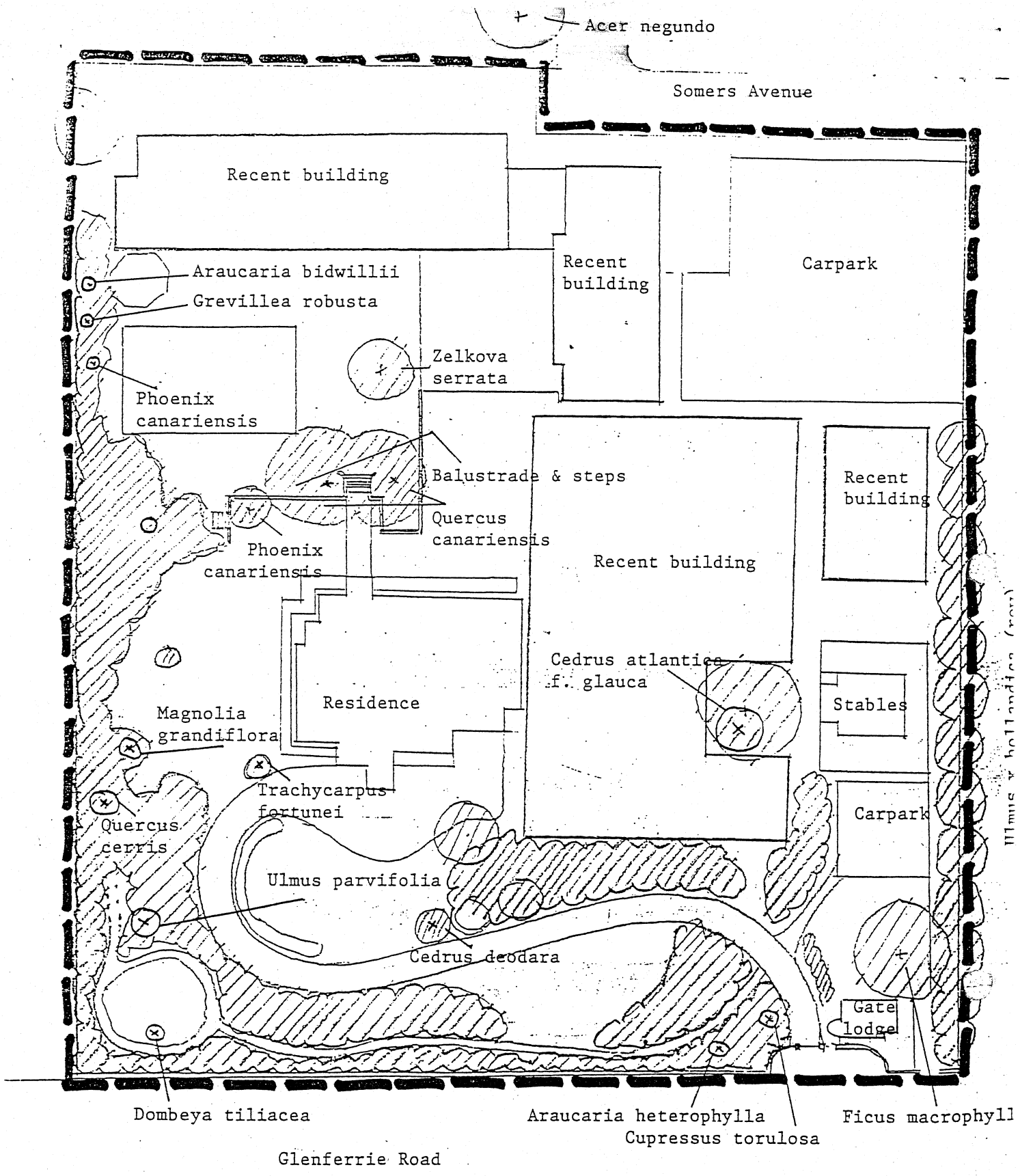
## HISTORY

The land on which Stonnington was erected was purchased by John Wagner in 1886. Wagner was a prominent Melbourne businessman with interests in mining, manufacturing and real estate and had been a founding partner in the Victorian Branch of Cobb & Co, operating passenger coach and mail services throughout the State.(1) Wagner's business partner was Alexander Robertson, owner and builder of Labassa in Caulfield. In 1890 Wagner erected the present large mansion to the design of the distinguished Melbourne architect Charles D'Ebro, where Wagner lived with his wife and five children.(2) Shortly after its erection, Stonnington was depicted by artist William Tibbits and his watercolour shows the transformation of this site into a city mansion complete with gate lodge, mansion, stables and extensive garden.(3) Wagner died in January 1901 and from 1901 to 1931 Stonnington was leased for occupancy by the State as Government House.(4) (It was during this period that the Governor-General occupied Government House in The Domain prior to relocation of the Federal seat of government to Canberra.) During the incumbency of Sir George Sydenham Clarke, Stonnington was the subject of a feature by Lauderdale in the Melbourne Punch and the accompanying photograph showed the developing garden.(5) The property was well documented during the period 1910-30s. The entire property was shown in an oblique aerial photograph in 1926 (6) and in that year a lengthy article on Stonnington appeared in Australian Home Beautiful.(7) These depictions are complemented by the MMBW detail plan of 1933.(8) Describing the garden, the Australian Home Beautiful commented:

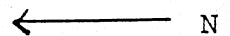
Broadly lawned and sheltered by numerous trees and shrubs, the grounds of Stonnington derive much of their charm from the terracing of a sloping site ... Suggestive of old-world romance is the walled terrace, pillared, balustraded and ornamented in cement, which, with its three graceful flights of steps, is built some little distance from the house. As a background for clinging foliage and brilliant flowers, the cool grey line of the balustrade leaves little to be desired. The central steps [are] flanked on either side by sheltering Oaks ... Below the terrace, and built against its wall, are aviaries of Australian birds. From this onward, velvety sward studded with beds of brilliant flowers and accommodating the tennis court and pavilion stretches away until the lower level of the kitchen garden is reached, and this, in turn, gives place to broad pastures wherein sleek Jersey cows browse contentedly.(9)

Stonnington was sold to the State Government in 1928 for £35,000 by the Wagner estate.(10) In 1935 the eastern portion of Stonnington (comprising rural paddocks) was subdivided into 26 allotments known as the Stonnington Fields Estate.(11)

Following the State Governor's move back to The Domain in 1931, Stonnington was used for a variety of other uses, including St Margaret's Girls School (1931-38), Red Cross Convalescent Hospital (1939-53), Victorian Health Department Administrative Centre (1953-57), and Toorak Teachers' School, forerunner of the present Victoria College, from 1957.(12) The next major



SKETCH PLAN OF STONNINGTON, MALVERN



## DESCRIPTION

The main drive at Stonnington enters from Glenferrie Road through the original entry gates. These are made of cast and wrought iron and the entry is accentuated by curved brick wing walls and an elaborate gate lodge (stylistically similar to the mansion). A secondary service drive runs parallel to the southern boundary and although the original brick fence fronting Glenferrie Road survives, the timber gates (shown in the Tibbits painting) have been removed. This drive is flanked by a row of Ulmus x hollandica (Dutch Elm) although the dividing fence between the Stonnington property and Somers Avenue is no longer extant. This area is now used for carparking and contains two old Schinus molle var. areira at the eastern end. The frontage along Glenferrie Road (north of the entry gates) is fenced with iron palisades set on a brick base and hedged with Lilly Pilly. The main drive curves in a large loop to the porte cochere of the residence where it bulges to form a turning circle (the former driveway extension to the coach house and stables was obliterated in 1976 by the construction of a large new building). The impressive stables and coach house survive however as does a large Cedrus atlantica f. glauca (Blue Atlas Cedar) around which the 1976 building now wraps. Contained within the alignment of the drive is a large lawn and this is edged in part by beds of standard roses. On the outer side of the drive is a bank of shrubbery and many specimen trees. This shrubbery is divided by a winding gravel path edged with terracotta spoon drains. This path leads to a small circular lawn at the north-west corner of the property which contains a planting of the uncommon shrub Dombeya tiliacea. To the east is a fine example of Ulmus parvifolia (Chinese Elm). The principal trees along this western (Glenferrie Road) boundary of Stonnington include Grevillea robusta, Quercus robur, Quercus sp. (possibly rare) and four Eucalyptus botryoides (Southern Mahogany Gum). Shrubs along this border include Tecomera capensis. The northern boundary of Stonnington is also clothed in shrubbery and mature trees including Quercus cerris, Ulmus x hollandica, Fraxinus angustifolia ssp. angustifolia and a large specimen of Eucalyptus sideroxylon (Red Ironbark). The residence is set on a elevated earthen podium and the area between the northern facade and the northern boundary is a large undulating lawn. Although this no longer edged by paths a large Trachycarpus fortunei (Chinese Fan Palm) marks the former intersection of the path and the main drive. To the east of the residence is the remnant of a large balustraded terrace wall. This dramatic change in level at the terrace wall is traversed by a broad sweeping flight of stairs. The balustrading is intact (although recently repaired and partially reconstructed) north of the stairs; to the south the walling has been totally rebuilt on a different alignment using the early balustrading. Flanking the stairs on the lower side of the terrace is a pair of large Quercus canariensis and on the upper side of the terrace (at the northern end) is a large Phoenix canariensis. The shrubbery of the northern boundary widens to extend as far as the terrace; this shrubbery contains several notable plants including Sophora microphylla, Acca and Nissa. North-east of the terrace wall is a tennis court presumably constructed when the former tennis court was destroyed by building work in 1976.

incursion into the garden following the 1935 subdivision occurred in 1968 when a large eastern wing of the Teachers' College was erected along the eastern boundary. This was followed in 1974-5 by the major wing south of the residence and a new art building (c.1985) on the southern boundary. Landscaping around the new buildings was supervised by landscape architect Grace Fraser. (13)

## ANALYSIS

Stonnington is typical of nineteenth century city mansion gardens and in this respect is comparable to Ripponlea, Como, Kamesburgh, Government House and Raheen.(14) Other nineteenth century examples such as Carn Brea and Miegunyah have had their residences greatly altered in the twentieth century. There is probably not a nineteenth century city mansion in Melbourne that has not been reduced in size by subdivision although other comparable properties such as Ripponlea and Government House retain far more extensive gardens. Stonnington is comparable in size and complexity to both Como and Kamesburgh and retains a gatehouse, stables, entry drive, terrace, an impressive fence, large collection of mature trees, shrubberies and garden beds which all combine to form an appropriate setting for the mansion. The loss of the rural paddocks is hardly surprising given the urban setting of Malvern and no city mansion is known to survive with its original land intact. The residence forms an interesting complement with Labassa, as both mansions were erected by fellow partners whose fortunes were based on the Cobb & Co Coach Line.

Stonnington is an important remnant of the late nineteenth century boom period in Melbourne. It was created by wealth generated from the well-known Cobb & Co coachline as well as financial interests in mining, manufacturing and real estate. The flamboyant architecture is a powerful expression of the period prior to the 1890s depression. Stonnington is also of outstanding historical significance as the residence of Victoria's governors for three decades. This made the property a hub of Melbourne's social life although in this respect it was eclipsed by Federal Government House in the Domain. Nevertheless, Stonnington is well documented during this period of vice-regal occupancy.

The layout of the garden at Stonnington dates from the 1890s as shown in the Tibbits watercolour and confirmed by the MMBW detail plan of 1933. The layout contains several formal elements (such as the terrace and balustrade - albeit now truncated) but is dominated by picturesque elements including the curved entry drive and irregular clumps of trees and shrubs. The terrace concept is similar to examples found in many mid to late nineteenth century gardens (such as Glenara, Bulla; Raheen, Kew and Government House) and matches the formality of the architectural expression of the residence. Such terraces were popularised in British gardens by Charles Barry and others who created formal Italianate terraces (often incorporating parterres) in grounds that were otherwise designed as 'natural' or informal picturesque gardens. Beyond the formal terrace, the garden adopts more picturesque elements such as the carriage drive (which doubles back on itself to make best use of the relatively small setback) with a strategically placed clump of trees (Araucaria spp.) to screen the residence from the entry gates.

On the north side is a fine example of Magnolia grandiflora as well as Pinus canariensis, Grevillea robusta and an Araucaria bidwillii. The remainder of the site (approximately 50% of the site coverage) has been totally altered by the erection of new buildings. A large Acer negundo, thought to be a remnant of the original Stonnington garden, survives in the yard of a property on the corner of Wilks & Somers Avenues (on land subdivided in 1935).

#### REFERENCES

- (1) Australian Heritage Commission citation, M/03/04; Morna Sturrock, Stonnington: A Centenary History, Victoria College Press, 1990.
- (2) Australasian Builder & Contractors News, 11 January 1890, p.666 (quoted in Australian Heritage Commission citation); Sturrock, op.cit.; Stonnington is discussed in the B.Arch. thesis on D'Ebro by M Boyd & F Nash (University of Melbourne, 1968).
- (3) Watercolour (provenance and current location unknown), reproduced on Victoria College Christmas card, 1981 and on the back cover of Sturrock, op.cit.
- (4) Wilson, op.cit.
- (5) Victoria's Representative Men at Home (facsimile edition, pp.9-10); there are many later photographs in the Hood albums (La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria); there are also several framed photographs hung within the Stonnington residence.
- (6) Oblique aerial photograph held by Malvern Historical Society.
- (7) R Chandler, 'How Australia Houses its Governors, Stonnington - The Governor of Victoria's Town Residence', Australian Home Beautiful, 12 January 1926, pp.39-42.
- (8) MMBW detail plan No.59, 160' = 1", 25 May 1933.
- (9) Australian Home Beautiful, op.cit., p.42; this article also includes five photographs of the garden.
- (10) Sturrock, op.cit.
- (11) Auction poster held by Malvern Historical Society (copy held on National Trust F.N.569).
- (12) Sturrock, op.cit.; Victoria College was amalgamated with Deakin University in December 1991.
- (13) *ibid.*
- (14) The attribution of the current layout to Wagner's ownership is confirmed by the MMBW detail plan No.59, lithographed April 1902.



- H 1677 Brooks Store (former Co-operative Store) (1866)**  
6 Templeton Street, Maldon

To the extent of all of the building known as Brooks Store, including the verandah on Templeton Street and the stable; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.



*Brooks Store*

- H 823 Quartz Roasting Kilns (demolished) (1860)**  
Union Hill, Maldon

To the extent of the whole of the buildings; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.

### Malmsbury

(Macedon Ranges Shire)

- H 1434 Rail Bridge (1859)**  
over Coliban River, Malmsbury

- H 1574 Malmsbury Railway Station (1862)**  
Malmsbury-Daylesford Road, Malmsbury

### Malvern

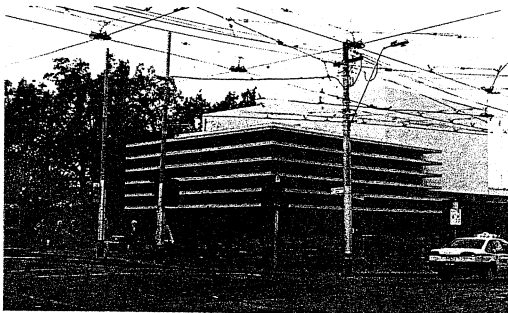
(Stonnington City)

- H 910 Tram Depot (1910-30)**  
Coldblo Road, Malvern

To the extent of all the following buildings: administration block; car shed number 1 and substation; car shed number 2; tower wagon shed; bicycle shed; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.

- H 1691 Former ES&A Bank (1959)**  
corner Glenferrie Road and High Street, Malvern

To the extent of all of the building including eaves and overhangs; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.



*Former ES&A Bank*



- H 1608 Stonnington (1890)**  
336 Glenferrie Road, Malvern

- H 935 Katanga (1931)**  
372 Glenferrie Road, Malvern

To the extent of all the buildings, works and structures known as Katanga; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.

- H 1575 Malvern Railway Station (1912)**  
Station Street, Malvern

- H 1710 Former Primary School No. 2586 (1886)**  
15-27 Toorong Road, Malvern

To the extent of the buildings known as the Infant Building, the Main School Building and the former Domestic Arts Building; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.

- H 908 Central Park Conservatory (1927)**  
corner Wattletree and Burke Roads, Malvern

To the extent of the whole of the building known as the Central Park Conservatory and associated boiler house; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.

### Manangatang

(Swan Hill Rural City)

- H 1576 Manangatang Railway Station Complex (1916)**  
Wattle Street, Manangatang

### Manifold Heights

(Greater Geelong City)

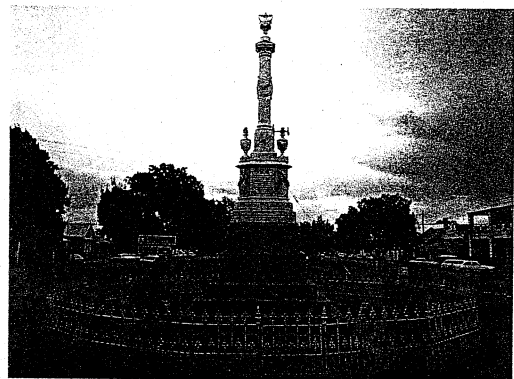
- H 1110 Holy Spirit Church (1932)**  
25-31 Bostock Avenue, Manifold Heights

To the extent of all the building known as the Holy Spirit Church, Manifold Heights; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.

### Mansfield

(Delatite Shire)

- H 1538 Police Memorial (1880)**  
corner High and Highett Streets, Mansfield



*Police Memorial*