

**Register of the National Estate Database
Place Report****Identification**

Name of Place: Northbrook House
Other Names:
Database No: 014954
File No: 2/17/032/0010
Principal Group: Residential Buildings

Status

Legal Status: 04/11/1985 — Indicative Place
Admin Status: 19/06/1991 — Under assessment

Location

Nearest Town: Malvern
Distance (km):
Direction from town:
Area (ha):
Address: 1257 High St, Malvern VIC 3144
Local authorities: Malvern C (Now 217071)
Stonnington City

Property Information**Location/Boundaries**

1257 High Street, Malvern.

AHC Official Statement of Significance**Description**

History: Northbrook House was built on about one hectare of land for owner Donald Munro in 1889, though Munro never lived in it. Donald Munro was the son of James Munro, businessman, temperance leader and politician, who in the 1880s established the Federal Bank and the Federal Building Society and became Premier and Treasurer of Victoria in 1890. His business concerns were seriously affected by the economic disasters of 1893-94. His son Donald became prominent in the Victorian land boom as a partner of W L Baillieu in a successful auctioneering business. Donald, like his father, was affected by the failure of the land boom. The Munro-Baillieu partnership ended and Munro retired to the suburbs with his father, became a local councillor and later a member of the Board of Works. He was a Shire Councillor during 1890-93 and 1895-1902 and President of the Shire of Malvern for the term 1895-96. It would appear from early Council records that the house was occupied during the early 1890s by Robert Sellar, who is described in the rate book as a merchant and member of the firm McCulloch, Sellars and Company, wool and commission merchants. In 1893 the house was of ten rooms and stables etc had been added. It is thought that the ballroom of 160 square metres was added in 1897 when Michael J Daley purchased the property. His ownership lasted until 1929 when Robert Young purchased the property and

Description (continued)

adjoining land and subdivided off the land fronting Northbrook Avenue. At this time Northbrook House, then known as 247 High Street, passed to Mr T Llewellyn, Mr Robert K Edwards and Miss Florence Jean Edwards, Tea Merchants, in 1931. The property was purchased by the City of Malvern in 1945 and in the 1950s it built the Malvern Library on the High Street frontage. The ballroom at the rear of the main mansion has been converted and extended to accommodate the Headquarters staff and to house activities of the Caulfield Regional Library. In 1979 this use was extended into the former servants' quarters and kitchens of the main Northbrook House, leaving seven main rooms, foyer, kitchen and storeroom to be restored for other uses.

Description: Northbrook House is a single storey Victorian Italianate villa of 1889, unusually planned about a square top-lit hall at the centre and an axial through corridor. Internally there are particularly fine stencilled and gilded ceilings and a dining room specially complete in its timberwork, including a panelled ceiling, cornice like picture rail and supporting pilasters, window cases, chimney piece, dado and sideboards built in against the wall with continuous skirting. Externally, the building is asymmetrical and has an arched and rusticated entrance porch with a balustraded balcony above. There are paired brackets to eaves (with festoons between pairs; these brackets and the asymmetry particularly reflect the Italianate styling), pediment-style decorations to tall chimneys, and vermiculated quoins. The slate roof is hipped in form. It would appear that the verandahs which originally encircled the main rooms were removed by the council in the early days of its ownership. Finishes and materials originally used throughout the building were of the highest order. Several vaulted ceilings have recently been uncovered and two of these are magnificently adorned with what appear to be finished wall papers. Several cherubic figures are portrayed on the ceiling in the foyer outside the dining room. Other rooms are large and well proportioned with tiled fireplaces and handsomely fitted mantelpieces. A large central foyer or atrium is panelled in imported timber. The entrance foyer has marble paving and crystal door knobs are fitted to the front entrance door.

Condition

The building is in an excellent state of repair, and is gradually being fully restored by the Malvern council. It is currently being used by the Caulfield/Malvern Regional Library and it is proposed that this will be extended to also include cultural and community activities and events. Finishes and materials originally used throughout the building were of the highest order and the dining room is as originally fitted out with magnificent panelled ceiling and built-in furnishings maintained in superb condition. (1991)

Generally in fairly good condition with some maintenance. Currently the building is used as a community centre. The roof is a mixture of slate and galvanised iron. Some losses and old repairs are visible on the slate roof while the galvanised sections appear to be new. The rainwater goods are corroding (<10%) and some sections have been replaced. The rendered and painted chimneys are intact but there is some organic growth (>20%) and cracking. The rendered, ruled and painted walls are intact, although the appearance is disfigured by service piping and airconditioning units on the exterior and there is minor damage to the paintwork. Decorative elements appear to be intact. The cornice has some organic growth and dirt present (<20%). Verandahs originally present on the left hand and right hand facades have been removed and old repairs to the render at the original verandah roof line are apparent. The painted timber doors and window frames are intact but aged and the paint flaking. Glazing in and around the front door has been altered. The front entrance porch has a new tiled floor. The steps and low walls either side of the steps are intact. There are newly laid out garden beds, formal in style, at the front and side of the building. (1996)

Bibliographic references

National Trust of Australia (Victoria) FN 4989.

Kellaway, C., 1982, 'Research into Northbrook House, 1257 High Street, Malvern'. National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

City of Malvern 150th Birthday Celebrations, Submission for a Grant for Northbrook House, Malvern. Apperly, Richard, et al, 1989, A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Sydney.

Pike, Douglas, ed, 1974, Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol.5. Melbourne.

••• End Of Report •••