

Tsoshaan Flats, 777 Malvern Road, Toorak.



History and Description

The Tsoshaan Flats, one of the earliest purpose-built blocks of flats surviving in Melbourne, was built in stages between 1918 and 1922. The first four six-roomed brick flats were rated first in 1918.²⁵⁶ Previously the site was vacant land owned by the well known architect, Arthur W. Purnell who was the first owner of the flats and was also the designer, working at the time in the partnership Beaver and Purnell.²⁵⁷

The design has strong Eastern influence in its pagoda roof form and other bungalow features such as pergolas and deep balconies. The pilasters, moulded eaves brackets and urns mounted against the walls contribute to the palatial character of the building. The house is surrounded by large plantings of cedar and camphor laurel. A driveway enters from the corner through a pagoda roofed gate flanked by large *Cypressus torulosa*. Garden beds are constructed of volcanic boulders lining the driveway and paths.

The first tenants included Cedric Ballantyne, another distinguished architect (Flat 1), Purnell and James Bruce, manager, occupied Flat 2. Other tenants were James Montgomery, merchant (Flat 3) and Frederick Hentze, buyer. In 1919 the flats were acquired by Doctor Webb, a Collins Street physician.²⁵⁸ Flats 1 and 2, occupied by architects Purnell and Ballantyne, had higher valuations than the others).

By May 1922 three additional six-roomed flats had been added, the architect Purnell moving into Flat 7. The newer flats had lower valuations than the original four and

256. City of Prahran Rate Book 1918-19 Toorak Ward Nos. 1386, 1387, 1388, 1389.

257. *Real Property Annual*, 1918, p. 58 illustration.

258. City of Prahran Rate Book 1919-20 Toorak Ward Nos. 1422, 1423, 1424, 1425.

are situated to the east of the original building which faced Irving Street. Other tenants in this year were Fred Hentze, merchant; William Hansen, gentleman; Mrs Jessie Anderson; Fred Hill, woolbuyer; Edward Duckett and May E. Stirling.²⁵⁹

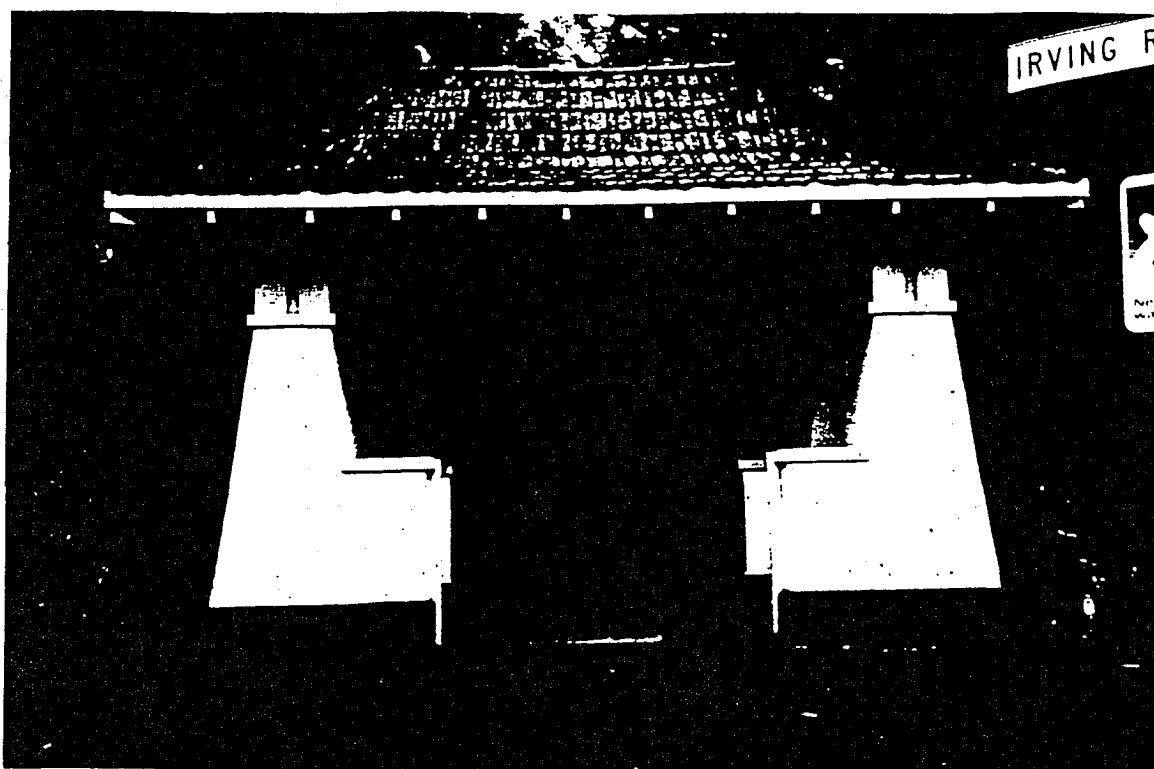
The following year the property passed into the hands of the National Mutual Life Association of Australasia²⁶⁰ and then, in 1923, to George McAlpin.²⁶¹ Some tenants remained but the architect Purnell vacated Flat 7.

Tsoshaan is also notable for its garden setting, which reflects the building's Eastern style of architecture. The gate, serpentine drive and plantings in the wall at first floor level are of particular note. Arthur Purnell used the same exotic combination for his own house at 490 Punt Road, South Yarra, in 1926.²⁶²

Purnell, who is presumed to have been the dominant partner in the firm of Beaver and Purnell, spent a number of years working in China early this century. A number of his buildings, including Tsoshaan, show an oriental influence relating to those China years. This influence was also shown in his own house, Shameen, at 1050 Malvern Road, (c1916) and his later residence at 490 Punt Road, South Yarra (c1926). Purnell's long career extended into the 1930s and during the post-war period.²⁶³



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259. City of Prahran Rate Book 1921-22 Toorak Ward Nos. 1504-10.
260. City of Prahran Rate Book 1922-23 Toorak Ward Nos. 1551-1557.
261. City of Prahran Rate Book 1923-24 Toorak Ward Nos. 1697-1703.
262. City of Prahran, *Significant Tree and Garden Study* p.26.
263. National Trust File No. 6263).



Significance

Tsoshaan has State significance as one of the earliest and most interesting examples of custom-built blocks of flats surviving in Melbourne. Built in stages between 1918 and 1922, to the design of a leading domestic architect, Arthur W. Purnell, Tsoshaan is an important example of his work and of early flat development in Toorak. Its significance is enhanced by a complementary garden setting which reflects the building's distinctive Eastern style of architecture. Garden features include a driveway through a Pagoda-roofed gate and garden beds with volcanic boulders lining the driveway and paths.

Sources

City of Prahran Rate Books, Windsor Ward.

City of Prahran, *Significant Tree and Gardens Study*.

Clare, John. *The Post-Federation House in Melbourne*.

John Curtis Pty Ltd., *Toorak Residential Character Study*.

National Trust of Australia (Vic.) File No. 6263.

Real Property Annual, 1918, illustration.

Sawyer, Terry. 'Residential Flats in Melbourne', Research Report, University of Melbourne, 1982.

Analysis & Recommendations

It is recommended that this property be retained at A1 level.