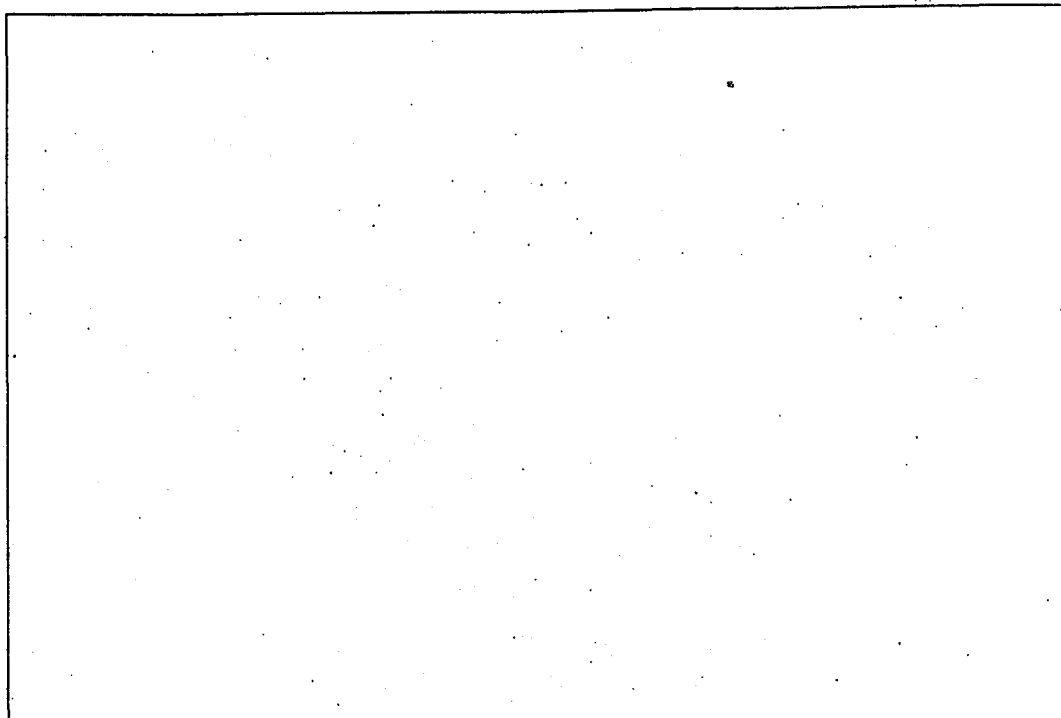


## Miegunyah, 641 Orrong Road, Toorak



[No Photo - Property not visible from street.]

### History and Description

Some portions of the mansion Miegunyah may date from the 1850s during the ownership of a six-roomed house on the site by the squatter, John Goodman. An early 1850s map of the area shows a main building facing Orrong road with outbuildings.<sup>297</sup> Elements of Goodman's garden, described in 1856, may also survive.<sup>298</sup> There may also be some surviving fabric from the 1880s and 1890s when J. J. Smart was owner of the house.<sup>299</sup> An 1896 drainage plan shows the house at this time.<sup>300</sup> An architectural assessment of the building made in 1986 by Dr Miles Lewis, describes aspects of the north side of the house such as the three sided bay (single storey) and triangular vent in the roof which date from the ownership prior to Grimwade, designed by an unknown architect.<sup>301</sup>

However, the major part of the present structure appears to date from the period 1910 to 1973 when Sir Russell and Lady Grimwade owned and occupied the property.<sup>302</sup> In the early years of the Grimwade ownership, the building was extended on the north-west corner, possibly designed by M. Shields, a little known architect, who lodged a drainage plan for stable alterations in 1910. However, according to Dr Lewis, Klingender and Alsop may also have been the architects, as

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- 297. James Kearney Map of Melbourne and its Suburbs, 1855; National Trust File No. 3689.
  - 298. J. Sinclair, 'Beauties of Victoria in 1856'.
  - 299. National Trust File No. 3689.
  - 300. MMBW Detail Plan No. 44.
  - 301. M. Lewis 'Miegunyah, 641 Orrong Road' for Prahran Council, 1986.
  - 302. J. R. Poynter, *Russell Grimwade*.

described in the *Real Property Annual* of 1914.<sup>303</sup> The additions described as 'white stucco or roughcast with vertical slabs of imitation half-timbering in the gables' are considered to be consistent with the work of Alsop at this time, and although also 'trademarks' of Harold Desbrowe Annear, there is no evidence that this prominent architect worked on this site at this early date.<sup>304</sup> A 1913 photograph shows Miegunyah still as a single storey building with a curving drive.<sup>305</sup> In 1919-20, the old timber stable and coach-house noted in 1896 were converted into two flats from the designs of the architects Philip B. Hudson and Wardrop.<sup>306</sup> This firm gained prominence as designers of the Shrine of Remembrance.<sup>307</sup>

Major changes were made to Miegunyah for the Grimwades in 1920-21 and 1933-34. The 1920s changes were most probably designed by H. Desbrowe Annear.<sup>308</sup> The alterations from this 1920 period have been described by Dr. M. Lewis as:

Rooms of rather cubical character...thrust northward from the north-west corner of the house. The roof was raised to become an enveloping hipped shape, apparently providing space for attic rooms along the south. The remodelling at the north-west corner continued down the west front to the south-west corner...and on the south front the little entrance porch was replaced by the grand cantilevered porte cochere....<sup>309</sup>

The chimneys protruding from the complex roof form are typical Desbrowe-Annear designs. Other typical elements which have been identified in the building include the windows which rise up into the wall cavity and his patent one-slab door a bathroom.<sup>310</sup> Desbrowe-Annear also designed 'Westerfield' for Grimwade at Frankston, which is a contributing factor in the association of this architect with Miegunyah.<sup>311</sup> Desbrowe-Annear built at least two other houses on Orrong Road around the 1920s, Broceliande at 224 and the house at 203 Orrong Road.<sup>312</sup>

The 1930s alterations and additions were from the designs of the architects Stephenson and Meldrum.<sup>313</sup> The designs by this well-known architectural partnership altered many of the banked windows from the 1920-21 additions in the north-west section of the house.<sup>314</sup> The original structure was heightened by an additional storey, the garden facade made more imposing by two massive columns stretching from terrace to roof, and on the southern side a new entrance opened onto a large panelled hall, two storeys high, with a wide gallery at the east end.<sup>315</sup>

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303. M. Lewis, p.17.

304. M. Lewis, p.18.

305. Poynter, p. 242.

306. Grimwade Papers, Melb. University Archives.

307. M. Lewis, p.18.

308. Grimwade Papers; M. Lewis, p.18.

309. M. Lewis, p.19.

310. M. Lewis, p.20.

311. M. Lewis, p.20.

312. Woodfall, p.224.

313. Grimwade Papers.

314. M. Lewis, p.19.

315. Grimwade Papers. Include Stephenson and Meldrum drawings; MMBW House Cover No. 218661.

The Miegunyah garden continued to be of great importance during the Grimwade ownership. Both Edna Walling and Ellis Stones are thought to have been involved at this time.<sup>316</sup> The garden was dominated by a large sweeping lawn. Three distinctive sections containing a box-hedged rose garden, birch copse and native arboretum formed part of its composition. The arboretum reflected Sir Russell's interest and research into the Eucalyptus genus. The rose garden is thought to be a copy of an unknown garden in England.<sup>317</sup>

Sir William Russell Grimwade (1879-1955), industrialist, inventor, naturalist and benefactor, was the youngest son of F. S. Grimwade, founder with Alfred Felton of Felton and Grimwade, a major pharmaceutical company. By the time of Grimwade's death, the family firms had grown into such giants as Drug Houses of Australia, Commonwealth Industrial Gases and Australian Consolidated Industries. Russell Grimwade was a devoted natural, conservationist and craftsman in wood. Among his many benefactions was the gift in 1917 of the Grimwade family house to Melbourne Grammar School, and the presentation of Captain Cook's Cottage to the people of Victoria as a Centenary gift.<sup>318</sup>

After Grimwade's death in 1955 and Lady Grimwade's in 1973, Miegunyah was bequeathed to the University of Melbourne.<sup>319</sup> It has since been sold and subdivided.

## Significance

Miegunyah has state significance as a twentieth century Toorak mansion house which has retained its garden settings, and contains one of the few remaining large private gardens in Melbourne. Its associations with Sir Russell Grimwade, industrialist, naturalist and benefactor, who was responsible for major changes made to the house in the 1920s and 1930s, and made it his home from 1910 until his death in 1955, contribute to the property's historical importance. The additions, probably by Harold Desbrowe-Annear, are of architectural significance as important examples of his work, and are comparable to his work at Frankston for the same client. The architectural additions and alterations are of architectural importance also, particularly in relation to the modifications to Desbrowe-Annear's work. Further investigation of the physical fabric of the building is desirable, giving the property research significance. The grounds are also of historical and aesthetic significance as they are believed to contain landscaping features by Edna Walling and Ellis Stones and remain one of the largest gardens in the area, with extensive canopy visible from the roadway.

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### **Analysis & Recommendations**

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