

## 2.0 SIGNIFICANCE

### 2.1 The urban conservation area precinct north of Toorak Road (*Toorak House* Urban Conservation precinct)

#### 2.1.1 History

This urban conservation precinct is important as being a prominent part of the grounds of *Toorak House*. Built as a private residence in the late 1840s, it was leased for use as Government House from 1854 until the current Government House was completed in 1873. *Toorak House* set the social cache of the suburb, and the Italianate tower was widely copied in the colony.<sup>1</sup>

*Toorak House* was originally set on the original Crown Allotments 16 (70 acres), and 17 (78 acres) that ran between Gardiners Creek Road (Toorak Road) and Gardiners Creek. These allotments were surveyed by Robert Hoddle in 1837 and were sold in the first Crown Land Sales in Prahran in 1840.<sup>2</sup> They were repurchased by a successful merchant James Jackson, who built a large mansion designed by important early colonial architect Samuel Jackson, in 1848-50. Charles Jackson named the property *Toorak House* which gave the name to the area.<sup>3</sup>

Initially the elevated undulating topography was apparently landscaped in a park like manner with the retention of much original vegetation including River Red Gums. The use of existing native woodland was a feature of many early pastoral homestead landscapes and was encouraged by Charles La Trobe. The watercourse to the south west of the house formed a critical aspect of the *Toorak House* landscape. It determined the position of the entry gates to the drive on Gardiners Creek Road, which were located immediately to the east of the creek. The original house footprint, wooded landscape, creek and carriage drive are clearly shown in the 1855 Kearney plan (Fig 1).<sup>4</sup> There was a large carriage loop to the west of the house. The original driveway approached the mansion from the south slightly to the east of the lane behind the future allotments of 4-12 Lansell Road and would have looked down to the small creek to the west across the site of these future allotments.

*Toorak House* served as Government House to replace Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe's 1839 pre-fabricated cottage in Jolimont. *Toorak House* represented the dramatic transition of Victoria from a pastoral backwater swept up in the tumultuous events of the gold rush, to the establishment of 'Marvelous Melbourne', as one of the most progressive cities in the world. Sir Charles Hotham, as the first Governor of the Colony of Victoria, occupied *Toorak House* in June 1854. The Eureka uprising in December 1854 and the development of parliamentary democracy after 1856 were two of the most important historical events associated with *Toorak House*. Subsequent vice regal occupants were Sir Henry Barkly, 1856; Sir Charles Darling, 1863; and Sir J.H. Sutton-Manners 1866 -1873.

*Toorak House* was greatly enlarged during this period to serve the vice regal function with a new wing and entry constructed facing Toorak Road. It also appears that the gate lodge, and new carriage loop in front of the new wing dated from this period. These may have been the major works that took place in 1856 under the direction of Public Works architect Charles Maplestone.<sup>5</sup> Gardiners Creek Road was graded and surfaced to become the best road in the district. The name change to Toorak Road indicates the social importance of *Toorak House*.

When the Governor vacated Toorak House to occupy the vastness of the current Government House, solicitor George Klingender (possibly a relative of architect Frederick Louis Klingender the joint architect of 4, 6, 8 and 10 Lansell Road) sold the property to George Lansell, the 'Quartz King' from Bendigo. Lansell is now probably best known as the builder of *Fortuna*, Bendigo's grandest mansion. He subdivided the land in 1874, and his subdivision included a number of wide roads with a number of elegantly curving sections.<sup>6</sup> The estate '... with ten or fourty acres of gardens' was advertised in the *Argus* in 1875.<sup>7</sup> The 'Governor's Park Vice Regal Estate' was aimed 'specially for the gentry of Victoria'.<sup>8</sup> (Fig 2) Lansell Road was one of the most picturesque sections of the estate. This form of subdivision took place in a similar manner to the subdivision of the original allotments to the south of Toorak Road creating large allotments facing Clendon Road. This subdivisional activity was a response to the growing prosperity in the colony which lead to the development of boom era housing and mansions in the 1870s and 1880s.

Although proposed to be subdivided, *Toorak House* retained all the land between Lansell Road and St George's Road.<sup>9</sup> These roads were gazetted in 1885.<sup>10</sup> Their layout was designed to retain the carriage drive and gate lodge of Toorak House as well as a wide frontage to Toorak Road on both sides. The subdivision attracted wealthy pastoralists, merchants, and professionals who chose this area to build their mansions. *Umina*, a large single storey Italianate villa with a tower was constructed at 3 Lansell Road (now the home of the Country Women's Association) near the subject site. Next door, at the corner of Toorak Road, was a large two storey mansion built for M. H. Davies, and *The Towers* was built on the same side of Lansell road further north. *Illawarra* and *Edzell* were built on St George's Road. (Refer 1895 MMBW Plan, Fig 3)

By 1890, the cable tram, which terminated to the east of St George's Road, and the railway station at Heyington had made this area more accessible to the city.<sup>11</sup> The 'Toorak Estate' subdivision of the reduced *Toorak House* allotment took place in 1900, when the estate of Mrs A. Nicholas was auctioned in October of that year. The auctioneer's plan shows *Toorak House*, drive and gate lodge, as well as the current subdivision pattern (Fig 4).<sup>12</sup> This had 24 allotments north of *Toorak House* which still had frontages to both Lansell and St George's Road (on a five acre allotment), and 44 allotments to the south. One of the most distinctive features was the deep blocks in Lansell Road running across the former creek. These allotments were provided with rear access by a lane running off Lansell Road, which then ran north along the rear of 4 - 14 Lansell Road. The lane also served houses in St George's Road and later St George's Court. The section of Lansell road is now named Dalriada Street.

*Darnlee* was built in Lansell Road on the west side for Charles Russell, in 1900-1901<sup>13</sup>, and is shown in the auction plan, presumably just completed or still under construction. The development of this section of the urban conservation precinct took place between 1900 and the 1930s. Only *Umina* at 3 Lansell Road is earlier, possibly dating from the 1870s. This was 'modernized' with square leaded glass casement windows similar to 12 Lansell Road and the original house *Langi*.

The subsequent development sequence of this southern part of the 'Toorak Estate' was as follows:

- 1900-1902 Three of the allotments facing Toorak Road were sold to the Catholic Church and *Kildrum* was built for William Drummond in 1901-1902. This had a coach house and outhouses<sup>14</sup>, and was sited on Lots 43 and 44 (later 7 St George's Road) and possibly Lots 41 and 42 as well. Each lot was 3 rods and 18 perches, almost 1 acre. The formal carriage loop of Toorak House was subdivided but not sold at this time (Fig 5).<sup>15</sup>
- 1911 A red brick chapel and presbytery were built by the Catholic Church.
- 1916 A house called *Langi* was built at the corner of Toorak Road, as well as the house at 12 Lansell Road.
- 1917 Houses built at 4 and 6 Lansell Road, landscape character and some trees retained from the Toorak House grounds.
- 1922 St Peter's Catholic Church was constructed, as were two houses at 8 and 10 Lansell Road, retaining some of the landscape character from the Toorak House grounds.
- 1926 Walter Burley Griffin's masterpiece, *Langi* flats, was built at the corner of Toorak Road (incorporating the house of the same name).
- 1930-39 The flats *Colinton* at No 4 and the house behind were constructed, apparently replacing an earlier house. On the opposite side of Lansell Road on the corner of Toorak Road is the Fenton Bowen House, a striking Moderne style building in manganese bricks built in 1939 and at No 1, *Deauville*, a three storey block of flats, both replacing the Davies mansion.
- St Georges Court was subdivided in 1938 and development began. The southern wing of Toorak House was demolished and the southern formal garden including the carriage loop was sold to create the current 17 St George's Road allotment, which also involved the demolition of *Kildrum*. The construction of a large mansion with extensive grounds took place on this allotment, retaining a number of significant trees from Toorak House, and the coach house and outhouses of *Kildrum*.
- 1965 Flats were constructed at 14 Lansell Road effectively terminating the precinct of significant landscape and buildings that extends to Toorak Road along the former creek gully. This property is outside the Urban Conservation area.

The only non contributory building in the Lansell road section of this urban conservation precinct is 2 Lansell Road, a 1970s single storey house. A permit has been issued following an AAT hearing for a three storey apartment block, but this generally relates to

the scale and massing of the *Langi* flats and the massing and setbacks of the two and three storey buildings opposite. The setbacks were increased by the AAT decision to better reflect this relationship.

### 2.1.2 Description

The curved alignments of Lansell Road and St George's Road helped create the distinctive landscape and streetscape character of the 'Governor's Park Estate'. The manner in which the curvature of Lansell Road occurs where the former watercourse crossed the road reserve is especially picturesque, especially as it is enhanced by the deep garden allotments on the *Toorak House* side to the east. By avoiding the problems associated with building on the former watercourse, the deep setbacks help preserve some of the early landscape character of this former Vice Regal estate. The establishment of avenues of elms and plane trees within wide nature strips was a further response to the picturesque nature of this land. This subdivision pattern contrasts with the more formal grid planning that characterised Melbourne's town planing up to this period.

The construction of the lane behind St Peter's and 4 – 14 Lansell Road created a further distinctive aspect to the significant character of this urban conservation precinct. It enables views to be had of the rear of St Peter's Church and Presbytery, and the generous grounds of the church, as well as the outstanding landscape along the gully towards Lansell Road. Where it runs north, close to the alignment of the original carriage drive of *Toorak House*, it also provides views of the rear of the Lansell Road and St George's Road properties. This section assists with the understanding of the linkages of the historic landscape of the *Toorak House* estate, especially with the connection to *Toorak House* and the adjacent large property at 17 St George's Road, both properties graded A1. 17 St George's Road has a major access to the lane at the rear of 12 Lansell Road. St George's Court is an adjacent Urban Conservation precinct

The generous gardens of 6, 8, 10, and 12 Lansell Road, and the grounds of St Peter's create a landscape type that is probably unrivalled in Toorak with views of separate houses set in vast gardens with mature trees as well as the rear of St Peter's. This landscape is linked historically and physically with the gardens of *Toorak House* and 17 St George's Road. It is a landscape type now more commonly associated with the hill station properties at Mt Dandenong and Mt Macedon.

### 2.1.3 Significance of the *Toorak House Urban Conservation precinct*

The *Toorak House* section of the Toorak Urban Conservation precinct provides a crucial link with the establishment of Toorak as one of Australia's premier residential suburbs. *Toorak House* served as Government House during the crucial years of Victoria's development during the gold rush era, the growth of prosperity and the development of parliamentary democracy.

*Toorak House* influenced the development pattern of the whole of Toorak, and in particular the subdivision and development of its former grounds. It strongly influenced the layout of Lansell and St George's Roads, and the 1900 subdivision of the reduced *Toorak House* grounds.

The gully that once formed a prominent part of part of the *Toorak House* landscape was developed into an Arcadian residential enclave in the inter war period with houses set in spacious grounds. This now survives as one of the best sequences in the metropolitan area where impressive houses designed by prominent architects are set behind deep front gardens with mature trees. The interrelationship between the adjacent gardens and houses provides a significant value of this precinct.

The UC precinct contains a number of highly graded buildings, the Fenton Bowen house at 577 Toorak Road - A1, *Langi* flats 579 Toorak Road - A1, *Umina* 3 Lansell Road - A1, and 6,8 & 10 Lansell Road - A2. 12 Lansell Road possess A2 heritage values. At the rear of the subject site are two adjacent properties - 17 St George's Road - A1 and *Toorak House* - A1. Although they are outside the UC area they are contiguous with it. Similarly the newly designated St George's Court UC precinct is adjacent to both the original UC area and 17 St George's Road.

*NB These gradings are the original and current gradings, not those deriving from the Toorak Residential Character Study.*

(Refer Fig 7 for gradings plan.)

## 2.3 Other components of the Toorak House Urban Conservation precinct

### 2.3.1 8 & Westford, 10 Lansell Road

Existing building gradings – A2 (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area); note No 8 – graded B; No 10 – graded A2 by Toorak Residential Character Study

1922 Lot 29 and part lot 30, to the south of 'Halstead', was divided into two allotments. 'Westford' at number 10 Lansell Road, and its neighbour at number 8 were built to the design of architects Klingender & Hamilton for accountant, Harry L. Ford (No. 8) and optician Eric Barraclough (No. 10).<sup>24</sup>

No 8 was designed in the Old English style with clinker brick and half timbering of a medieval character. It is an important early example of this oeuvre which Robert Hamilton was later to use for many important residential projects in the area. It is unusually articulated and provides a dominant character to the significant landscape. It is relatively intact except for the enclosing of the sleeping porch above the front entry.

*Westford*, No 10 was designed in a Mediterranean derived style using the simple massings and design elements used in houses in the south of France and the adjacent Ligurian coast of Italy. It also makes some reference to Georgian Revival detailing with Bungalow influence to the entry. It has had a single storey extension and carport added to the north west corner but has retained the main front elevation visible from the drive.

Both houses have motor garages built like pavilions to match the main houses located in the front garden area. They have gardens with significant features. The houses have the same setback as *Halstead* at No 12 and this provides an intact sequence of architecturally distinguished buildings. The garden at 10 Lansell Road has been listed in Timothy Hubbard & Michael Looker, *City of Prahran Significant Tree & Garden Study*, vol. 3 as being 'of local significance as, in part, an example of the work of Edna Walling, as a representative design from the Interwar period and of this subdivision.'

### 2.3.2 6 Lansell Road

Existing building grading - A2 (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area); note ungraded by the Toorak Residential Character Study)

1916-17 House completed to the design of Architects Klingender and Alsop<sup>25</sup> This was completed at the same time as the house at Dalriada Street at the rear of the flats at No 4, also by the same practice. The footprint coincides with the current house, although it has the later architectural character of the 1930s. Both houses were angled and set back on the rear lane.

A striking house from the distinguished partnership of Klingender and Alsop. A massive high gabled building with attic dormers rooms elegant fenestration and wrought iron

balustrading to the west terrace. It is set on an angle to provide the main rooms with views down the long garden to Lansell road. It has a dramatic character resulting from the raised position and the strong architectural modelling. The garden has the same significant character as the others to the north and includes several significant trees

### 2.3.3 Colinton flats, 4 Lansell Road

Existing building grading – B (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area); note ungraded by the Toorak Residential Character Study

*Colinton* comprises two blocks of flats of the neo Georgian style apparently dating from the 1930s. They have a simple architectural character that contributes to the significance of the area. The heights and setbacks reflect the development pattern established by Griffin's *Langi* flats.

### 2.3.4 House Dalriada Street (rear No 4)

Ungraded, but should be B (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area)

This house appears to date from the 1930s but appears to be a remodelling of the 1917 Klingender and Alsop house built at the same time as No 6. It has a tennis court in the gully that allows the views to extend across the gully from the grounds of St Peter's towards Lansell Road. This house is a stylish late Arts and Crafts design with terra cotta shingles and a turret that is a landmark from the gardens to the north.

### 2.3.5 14 Lansell Road

Outside Urban Conservation area

1962 Demolition of single storey house

1965 Permit issued for 26 brick flats to the design of Sol. Sapir.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.3.6 Other building gradings in precinct:

Fenton Bowen house 577 Toorak Road - A1 (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area)

*Langi* flats 579 Toorak Road – A1 (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area)

St Peter's church and presbytery Toorak Road- A2 (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area)

*Deauville* flats 1 Lansell Road – B (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area)

2 Lansell Road – C amenity value only due to scale and setback (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area)

*Umina* 3 Lansell Road – A1 (located within an Urban Conservation UC1 Area)

## 2.4 Related buildings in Toorak House precinct but outside urban conservation area

### 2.4.1 17 St George's Road

Existing building grading – A1

1900 'Toorak Estate' subdivision of the reduced *Toorak House* allotment.

1902 *Kildrum* was built for William Drummond in 1901-1902. This had a coach house and outhouses<sup>27</sup>, and was sited on Lots 43 and 44 (later 7 St George's Road) and possibly Lots 41 and 42 as well. Each lot was 3 rods and 18 perches, almost 1 acre. The formal carriage loop of Toorak House was subdivided but not sold at this time (Fig 5).<sup>28</sup>

1938 St Georges Court was subdivided and development began.

1938-9 The southern wing of *Toorak House* was demolished and the southern formal garden including the carriage loop was sold to create the current 17 St George's Road allotment, which required the demolition of *Kildrum*. A large mansion constructed to the design of architects Hughes and Orme, who worked in the Old English style with cottage influences.

This is one of the most significant Toorak mansion properties with respect to the combination of house and landscape design. It is an important example of the practice of Hughes and Orme who worked in the Old English style with cottage influences. The extensive grounds retain a number of significant trees from Toorak House (*Toona australis*, *Quercus canariensis*, and *Brachychiton sp* and *Araucaria hetrophylla*). The coach house and outhouses of *Kildrum*, including a glasshouse have been retained. The northern tennis court site was formerly the location of the carriage drive of *Toorak House*. The formal driveway is one of the most impressive characteristics. The whole property is relatively intact.

It has a rear access onto Dalriada Street opposite the subject site, providing a landscape connection with the landscape of the Lansell road properties described above. Dalriada Street closely corresponds to the former alignment of the *Toorak House* drive.



**2.4.2 Toorak House 21 St George's Road**

Existing building grading – A1

See Section 2.1 and refer to citation in the *Prahran Conservation Study*

**2.5 St George's Court Conservation Area**

Refer to *St George's Court Proposed Conservation Area*, report prepared jointly by Bryce Raworth and the City of Stonnington, September 1997

## SCHEDULE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1 1854 sketch of Toorak House
- Figure 2 1855 Kearney plan
- Figure 3 Subdivision plan, Governor's Park Viceregal Estate, Toorak, 1874
- Figure 4 MMBW plan 1895
- Figure 5 Subdivision Plan and Auction Notice, Toorak Estate 27 October 1900
- Figure 6 MMBW plan working copy annotated 1900- 1938
- Figure 7 Existing building gradings and urban conservation areas plan
- Figure 8 Contract drawing, Walter Butler collection, University of Melbourne  
Architectural Drawing Collection, State Library of Victoria, WD HO. 130
- Figures 9-14 Photographs of subject site

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- City of Prahan rate books.  
Kearney map 1855  
Malone, Betty. *Section 13, North East Toorak*, unpublished essay, Prahan Archives.  
MMBW plan 1895  
MMBW drainage plan, 12 Lansell Road, 102966  
National Estate citation, Toorak House  
Prahan Council Building Permit records  
*Sands & McDougall directories*. 1910-1940  
Subdivision plan, Governor's Park Viceregal Estate, Toorak, 1874  
Subdivision Plan and Auction Notice, Toorak Estate 27 October 1900.  
St George's Court Proposed Conservation Area, report prepared jointly by Bryce Raworth and the City of Stonnington, September 1997

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Nigel Lewis, *Prahan Character and Conservation Study*, 1992
- <sup>2</sup> Betty Malone, *Section 13, North East Toorak*, unpublished essay, Prahan Archives
- <sup>3</sup> National Estate citation, Toorak House
- <sup>4</sup> Kearney map 1855
- <sup>5</sup> Maplestone Letter Book
- <sup>6</sup> Subdivision and sale notice, Governor's Park Viceregal Estate, Toorak, 1874, Prahan Archives, 1874
- <sup>7</sup> *Argus*, 7 October 1875, p.8 Miles Lewis Australian Architects' Index, Melbourne University 1977
- <sup>8</sup> Subdivision and sale notice, Governor's Park Viceregal Estate Toorak, 1874, Prahan Archives
- <sup>9</sup> MMBW plan 1895
- <sup>10</sup> Lansell Road, gazettel, 20 November 1885
- <sup>11</sup> Malone, p.8
- <sup>12</sup> Toorak Estate Subdivision Plan and Auction Notice, 27<sup>th</sup> October 1900, Prahan Archives
- <sup>13</sup> City of Prahan Rate Books, 1901, No 857
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 1902
- <sup>15</sup> MMBW plan working copy annotated with *Kildrum* shown and St George's Court subdivision shown, not dated
- <sup>16</sup> State Library of Victoria
- <sup>17</sup> City of Prahan rate book, Toorak Ward, 1916-17, no. 1097
- <sup>18</sup> MMBW drainage plan 12 Lansell Road, 102966. Walter Butler, residence Lansell Road, Toorak for Clements, F.W Builder, Bailey Bros. November 1915. Builder: Ellis Bright Jnr
- <sup>19</sup> Contract drawing, Walter Butler collection, University of Melbourne Architectural Drawing collection, state Library of Victoria, WD HO. 130
- <sup>20</sup> Prahan Council rate books
- <sup>21</sup> *Sands & McDougall directories* 1930-40
- <sup>22</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>23</sup> Diane Langmore, *Australian dictionary of biography 1891-1939*, p. 336-7
- <sup>24</sup> MMBW plan of drainage, 8 & 10 Lansell Road
- <sup>25</sup> MMBW plan of drainage, 4 & 6 Lansell Road
- <sup>26</sup> Prahan Council building permit records
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 1902
- <sup>28</sup> MMBW plan working copy annotated with *Kildrum* shown and St George's Court subdivision shown, not dated