

RESEARCH INTO "WHERNSIDE", 2A WHERNSIDE AVE., TOORAK

Ref. No. 1281

Built in 1876 by Sir James Lorimer, M.L.C., merchant,⁽¹⁾ when it was known as "Belcroft",⁽²⁾ the two-storeyed, 20-roomed brick mansion now known as "Whernside" at 2A Whernside Avenue, Toorak,⁽³⁾ was owned from the 1890s by a number of men prominent in Melbourne's business world. More recently, since the late 1940s, it has been owned by G.M.H. Ltd., Myer Emporium Ltd. and Dowd Associates P/L.

During the 1890s and until the first World War "Whernside" was owned by Albert Miller, well-known in Melbourne racing circles. At this time the building stood on about 10 acres of land. Between 1918 and 1927 Anthony Lucas, Greek Consul-General and owner/proprietor of 'The Australia' in Collins Street, was owner. Sir Colin Fraser, managing director of B.H.P. Associated Smelters P/L and other mining firms, was owner from 1928 to 1948.⁽⁴⁾

After a subdivision in the 1940s, which reduced the size of "Whernside's" grounds, G.M.H. Ltd. became the owner of the mansion. Myer Emporium Ltd. was owner briefly from 1954 to 1957.⁽⁵⁾

In 1957 "Whernside" on Lot 2 and vacant land, Lot 5, were purchased by Bernard Dowd. Since 1962 the mansion has been the property of Dowd Associates P/L. An auction in June 1976, following a fresh subdivision which further whittled away "Whernside's" grounds, resulted in the sale of brick buildings and land, Lots 1 and 4, and vacant land, Lot 5. However, Lot 2, site of the main building, was passed in at \$415,000 and vacant land, Lot 3, was passed in at \$101,000.⁽⁶⁾

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- (1) Shire of Malvern RB 1877, RB 306.
 - (2) Melb. Dir.
 - (3) See below.
 - (4) Ibid.
 - (5) Ibid.
 - (6) Ibid. See 1976 auction brochure.

LIST OF OWNERS OF "WHERNSIDE", 1876 - 1976 -

1876. Sir James Lorimer, merchant, politician. "Belcroft".
Lady Lorimer, widow.

1891. Albert Miller, gent. "Whernside".

(1918. Miss E. Lucas C/O Anthony Lucas.

(1923. Anthony Lucas, Cafe proprietor.

1928. Sir Colin Fraser, Mgr. Dir. B.H.P. etc.

1949. G.M.H. Ltd. (owner) H. Bettle, manager. (Occ.)

1954. Myer Emporium Ltd.

1957. Bernard Dowd. O/O.

1962. Dowd Associates P/L⁽⁷⁾

EARLY HISTORY OF THE BUILDING, 1876 - 1890 -

Malvern General District Rate Book 1868-1876 shows James Lorimer, merchant, as owner of vacant land in part of section 26, West Riding, valued at £68.⁽⁸⁾ A mansion etc. on part of section 26, West Riding, valued at £425 is recorded for the first time in 1876.⁽⁹⁾

Sir James Lorimer, M.L.C., is referred to in Victoria and its Metropolis, vol. 2. Born in 1831 in Scotland, Lorimer was articled to the firm of W. A. and G. Maxwell, Liverpool, a house doing a large business in the American and African trades. He arrived in Victoria in 1853 and founded the house of Lorimer, Mackie and Co., agents for White Star line of ships. The firm was known later as Lorimer, Marwood and Rome and then Lorimer, Rome and Co. Sir James, who was senior partner, also took an active part in politics and was one of the founders of the Free Trade League. Lorimer was M.L.C. for Central Province in 1878 and was returned again in 1884.

(7) Malvern rate books.

(8) Malvern Gen. District RB 1868-1876, 1875, RB 294.

(9) Shire of Malvern RB 1877-1881, 1877, RB 306.

During the late 1880s he was Minister for Defence. Lorimer went to England with Hon. Alfred Deakin in 1887 to attend the Colonial Conference.⁽¹⁰⁾

Melb. Dir. 1888 lists the firm of Lorimer, Rome and Co. as merchants, commission agents and shipping agents for White Star, Dale, Kangaroo and New York and Australian Lines of Clipper Packets and agents for British and Foreign Marine Insurance Co. and China Steam Navigation Co. Sir James' private residence is listed as "Belcroft", Toorak.⁽¹¹⁾

The description of Lorimer's building in Albany Road, Toorak, remains brick mansion and land. Valuation is £470 by 1887⁽¹²⁾ and £570 in 1888. It stands on eight acres of land.⁽¹³⁾ By 1889, when Lady Lorimer, widow, is shown as owner/occupier, NAV has risen to £800. It is described at this time as a brick house of twenty rooms on eight acres of land.⁽¹⁴⁾

ALBERT MILLER'S OWNERSHIP, 1891 - 1917 -

Albert Miller, gentleman, becomes owner/occupier in 1891 of the Lorimer mansion, described in the rate books as a brick house of twenty rooms on 10½ acres of land in Albany Road, East Side. Valuation is £1030.⁽¹⁵⁾ Lady Lorimer, widow, retains 2 3/4 acres of vacant land adjacent valued at £184.⁽¹⁶⁾

Valuation of "Whernside" goes down to £1000 in 1893⁽¹⁷⁾ and £800 in 1895.⁽¹⁸⁾ By 1914, after Miller's death, when "Whernside" is described still as a brick house of 20 rooms, valuation drops to

(10) Victoria & its Metropolis, vol. 2, p. 484.

(11) Melb. Dir. 1888.

(12) Shire of Malvern, West Riding, RB 1888, RB 27.

(13) Ibid 1889, RB 26.

(14) Ibid 1890, RB 524.

(15) Ibid 1892, RB 579. See M. Cannon, Land Boom & Bust, p. 10. Cannon assumes Miller built "Whernside".

(16) Ibid, RB 580.

(17) Ibid 1894, RB 421.

(18) Ibid 1896, RB 419.

(19) £230. Mrs. Mary Miller is owner/occupier in 1917. (20) Adjacent vacant land Lots 2 and 3 is owned by Miss Eirese Lucas, C/O Anthony J. J. Lucas, Australian Cafe, Collins Street. (21)

LUCAS OWNERSHIP OF "WHERNSIDE", 1918 - 1927 -

As we have seen, the Lucas family becomes owner of "Whernside" in 1918. City of Malvern rate book of that year for North Ward shows Miss E. Lucas as owner of brick house of 20 rooms, NAV £300, in Albany Road, East Side, and of adjacent land. (22) By the early 1920s Anthony Lucas, cafe proprietor, is shown as owner/occupier of "Whernside" at 20 Albany Road, a brick house of 17 rooms. (23)

According to 1927 Who's Who in Australia Anthony J. J. Lucas was one of the founders and president of the Greek Church in Melbourne in 1887 and president of the Ulysses Philanthropic Society of Melbourne. Born in Ithaca, Lucas arrived in Melbourne in 1887 and opened a retail confectionery store. In 1894 he opened the Town Hall Cafe in Swanston Street and Paris Cafe in Collins Street. In 1915 he purchased the Vienna Cafe and Glen's Music Warehouse and converted the two premises into 'The Australia'. Lucas married Margaret Wilson, daughter of Robert Wilson of Melbourne. By 1927 Lucas is listed as Greek Consul-General for Australia, proprietor and owner of 'The Australia', Collins Street, chairman of directors Central Theatre and Town Hall P/L, director of Prestige Silk Mills. His home address is "Whernside", Albany Road, Toorak and country residence 'Yantala', Frankston. (24)

By 1925 Anthony Lucas, cafe proprietor, is still owner/occupier of 20 Albany Road, East Side, a brick house of 17 rooms, Lots 1 and 2, NAV £350. (25) Miss E. Lucas is O/O of 18 Albany Road, vacant land next door, Lot 3 valued at £75. (26)

(19) City of Malvern, North Ward RB 1914/15, RB 414. The name of Whernside Ave. dates from 1916.

(20) Ibid 1917/18, RB 431. (21) Ibid, RB 430.

(22) Ibid 1918/19, RB 480, 481. (23) Ibid 1923/24, RB 596.

(24) Who's Who in Australia, 1927, p. 733.

(25) City of Malvern, North Ward, RB 1925/26, RB 653.

(26) Ibid, RB 654.

SIR COLIN FRASER AND "WHERNSIDE", 1928 - 1949 -

New owners, Colin⁽²⁷⁾ and Mrs. Fraser, C/O Broken Hill Associated Smelters, Collins House, Melbourne, are recorded in 1928. "Whernside" is described as a brick house of 17 rooms at 20 Albany Road on Lots 1 and 2, NAV £450.⁽²⁸⁾ The Frasers also purchase 18 Albany Road, vacant land valued at £100.⁽²⁹⁾

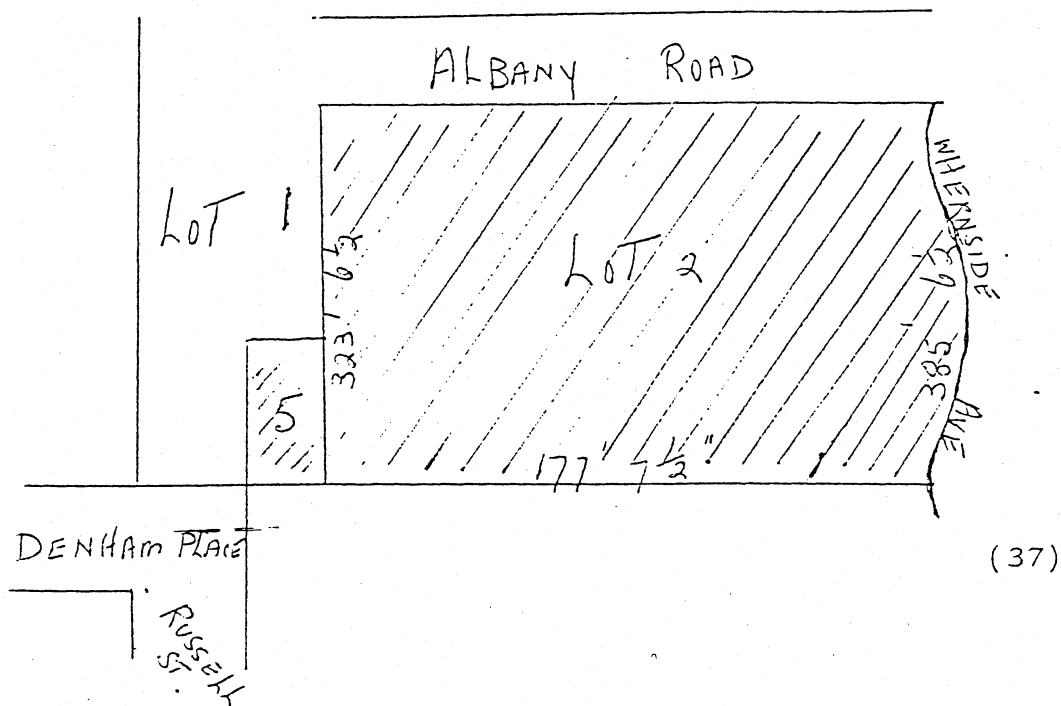
Colin Fraser is described in 1927 Who's Who in Australia as a mining engineer, Australian managing director of Electrolytic Zinc Co. of Australasia P/L established 1915, Broken Hill South P/L and British-Australian Lead Manufacturers P/L., Melb.⁽³⁰⁾ By the late 1930s, when he has become Sir Colin Fraser, Who's Who in Australia describes him as director of Broken Hill Mining companies etc. Born 14 May 1875 Sir Colin was the son of John Cameron Fraser of New Zealand. His business interests of 1938 included director of North Broken Hill Zinc Corporation Ltd., New Broken Hill Consolidated Ltd., Commonwealth Aircraft Corp. Ltd. and Associated Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd. His private address is given as "Whernside", 24 Albany Road, Toorak.⁽³¹⁾ By 1929 Lady Mary Fraser C/O Broken Hill Associated Smelters, Collins House, is shown as owner/occupier of "Whernside", brick house, Lots 1 and 2, NAV £600,⁽³²⁾ and of 18 Albany Road, Lot 3.⁽³³⁾

HISTORY OF "WHERNSIDE", 1943 - 1976 -

An examination of City of Malvern, North Ward, rate books of the 1940s shows the results of a subdivision of "Whernside" lands carried out at that time. In 1943 Lady Fraser and Est. Colin Fraser are shown as owners of 20-24 Albany Road, brick house of 20 rooms and Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.⁽³⁴⁾

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- (27) Later, Sir Colin. See below.
(28) City of Malvern, N. Ward, RB 1928/29, RB 734.
(29) Ibid, RB 735.
(30) Who's Who in Australia, 1927, p. 65.
(31) Who's Who in Australia, 1938, p. 311.
(32) City of Malvern, N. Ward RB 1929/30, RB 742.
(33) Ibid, RB 743.
(34) Ibid 1943-1949, Book N5, Assess. No. 1084.

In 1949 General Motors-Holdens Ltd. of Port Melbourne becomes new owner of "Whernside", brick house of 20 rooms, Lot 2, Whernside Avenue and vacant land, Lot 5, Denham Place.⁽³⁵⁾ Robert Southey, wool merchant, of 14 Hopetoun Road, SE 2, becomes owner of Lot 1.⁽³⁶⁾



(37)

(38)

From this date "Whernside" is listed in Whernside Avenue.

Myer Emporium Ltd. becomes owner in 1954 of "Whernside" on Lot 2 and vacant land on Lot 5 in Denham Place. Alterations/additions are made at this time costing about £5869. Purchase price is recorded as £36,239.⁽³⁹⁾

DOWD OWNERSHIP, 1957 - 1976 -

Bernard James Dowd is shown as owner/occupier in Sept. 1957 of "Whernside", Whernside Ave., brick house, 20 rooms, Lot 2.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Dowd also owns vacant land in Lot 5.⁽⁴¹⁾ In 1962 Dowd Associates P/L become

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- (35) Ibid 1949-1954, Book N6, Assess. No. 1196. See Sketch.
(36) Who's Who in Australia, 1927, p. 65. (37) Ibid, Assess. No. 1196A.
(38) See below.
(39) City of Malvern. N. Ward, RB 1954-1959, Book N6, Assess. Nos. 1265, 1307.
(40) Ibid, Assess. No. 1265. (41) Ibid, Assess. No. 1245.

owner/occupier of brick house on Lot 2. Address of "Whernside" is given as 2A Whernside Avenue.⁽⁴²⁾

Alterations/additions 1958 to 1967, during Dowd ownership, include £5,869 in 1958, swimming pool etc. £9,250 and additions to garden, store, washroom, garage etc. in 1967.⁽⁴³⁾

A further subdivision of "Whernside" land precedes the June 1976 auction. Auction brochure lists the main building as a "two storey gracious mansion" in a garden setting of one acre with a circular driveway access from Whernside Ave. There are detailed descriptions of rooms upstairs/downstairs.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Plan of subdivision included in Malvern rate of office records shows that main house on Lot 2 was passed in at \$415,000 and Lot 3 passed in at \$101,000. Brick buildings of two storey and one storey on Lots 1 and 4 were sold for \$78,000 and \$72,000 and vacant land, Lot 5, was sold for \$8.67 per sq. ft.⁽⁴⁵⁾

(42) Ibid 1959-1962, Book N7.

(43) Malv. rate office records.

(44) See 1976 auction brochure.

(45) Ibid.

LIST OF SOURCES:

Cannon, M., Land Boom and Bust, Melb. 1972.

Malvern rate books, 1868-1976. (Held at Malv. T. Hall)

Malvern rate office records, 1975/76.

Melbourne/Vic. directories.

Victoria and its Metropolis, vol. 2. (1888)

Who's Who in Australia, Melb., 1927, 1938.

C. KELLAWAY.

27 Aug. 1976.

NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)

FURTHER RESEARCH INTO "WHERNSIDE", 2A WHERNSIDE AVE., TOORAK

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"WHERNSIDE" IN THE 1920s.

A threat of demolition in the 1920s is recorded in two articles on the Toorak mansion, "Whernside", in the Argus of 15 Nov. 1928 and 19 Jan. 1929. After a subdivision in 1928 into five allotments the auctioneer, acting under instructions from the owner, Anthony J. J. Lucas, refused the highest bid of £14,750 for "Whernside". The writer of the article explains that the land alone was worth at least £19,000 and that the old house contained "many valuable fittings, including a beautiful pipe organ in the ballroom". He reports that building wreckers are already offering to tender for the mansion.⁽¹⁾

Two months later, in Jan. 1929, another article headed "Restoration of Whernside", tells how the building seemed likely to be demolished "like Maritino" and other old Toorak mansions". The property had been offered at auction "as a subdivisioinal investment but did not find a purchaser". However, the property has come under the notice of Mrs. Colin Fraser, who has decided to purchase and restore it as a family residence. The article refers to "Whernside's" fine ballroom, statuary, charming old garden and grounds covering 3½ acres. Mrs. Fraser will have "The whole building renovated" and "architectural features to be added will make it one of the finest homes in Australia".⁽²⁾

(1) Argus 15 Nov. 1928 (5)

(2) Argus 19 Jan. 1929 (22)

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1 Sept. 1976