

## ROCKLEY PRECINCT SOUTH YARRA HERITAGE OVERLAY CITATION HO 146

**NAME OF PLACE:** Rockley Precinct, South Yarra Heritage Overlay (HO 146).

**ADDRESS / LOCATION:** Nos 36 – 56 and Nos 49 – 51 Rockley Road and Nos 123 - 131 Alexandra Avenue South Yarra

**EXISTING LISTINGS:** HO 146

**ASSESSED BY:** Nigel Lewis, director Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd  
**ASSESSMENT DATE:** October 2005

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### Summary of Recommendations

That the area as reviewed in the *Conservation Review - Urban Conservation Areas* prepared in 1993 be retained and that the building gradings prepared for inclusion with the *Prahran Character and Conservation Study*, 1992, be revised to conform to the findings of the 1993 study, and as confirmed by this report, to include key interwar building in the vicinity of the walkway. These are scheduled in the appendix to this citation.

### Extent

The Rockley Precinct HO Area extends along the eastern side of Rockley Road and includes the head of the Rockley Road cul de sac and the walkway through to Alexandra Avenue and two properties on Alexandra Avenue which are not visible from Rockley Road itself.

It is shown on the accompanying plan along with contributory elements and all graded properties.

**MAP 1** Shows Rockley Road and Alexandra Avenue (to north) and graded buildings and components in yellow, with allotment numbers.



## Statement of significance

The Rockley Precinct is significant for:

- for the manner in which it illustrates the process of the transformation of the 1840s estates along the river between Chapel Street and Williams Road into a prestigious residential area
- for the topography which inspired the paintings of Charles McCubbin
- for the manner in which the 1937 Como Park Estate responded to Alexandra Avenue and how Melbourne's new attraction to the river created a new urban identity
- the unique subdivision design, especially the linking of Rockley Road with Alexandra Avenue by means of a pedestrian walkway
- the landscaping of the walkway which adopts an approach to urban design that has more in common with harbour-side Sydney suburbs of this era
- the contribution of the landscape of the escarpment to the character of the walkway
- the high quality and diverse architectural character, principally examples of the inter-war and pre-First World War period which reflect the history of the development and subdivision of Little Rockley, both through the consistent residential character dating from the 1908 Howey Estate, and the more diverse character resulting from Como Park Estate
- the contribution of noted designer and landscaper Eric Hammond, architect Verner Fick, architect and developer Howard Lawson, and the influence of Edna Walling
- for the informed patronage of Clara Strang and H. H. Henderson and the occupancy by noted graphic designer Gert Selheim
- the unusual residential character comprising detached houses, semi detached houses and flats set on large garden allotments with mature landscaping, especially those on the on the escarpment
- the enclosing avenue of Planes which links the Toorak Road parkland entry to the significant portion at the northern end of Rockley Road
- the overall scale and width of the street, and the position of the urban conservation area on the crest of a hill.

## History

Little Rockley was one of the four early houses built on elevated sites overlooking the Yarra River. Those properties were located on large allotments stretching back from the river to Toorak Road purchased in the early 1840 sale of Prahran land.<sup>1</sup> The other historic houses in this precinct, bounded on the west by Chapel Street and on the east by Williams Road were Tivoli, Bona Vista and Como.<sup>2</sup> Como was built on two of these allotments. Little Rockley was built in 1840 to the design of architects James and Charles Webb.<sup>3</sup>

Although subdivision of the Bona Vista and Tivoli allotments began in the 1880s,<sup>4</sup> subdivision of the Little Rockley allotment did not occur until after the turn of the century. The old homestead is shown on an 1895 MMBW drainage plan standing within extensive grounds. The scenic qualities of the escarpment became the subject of several paintings by Frederick McCubbin, who lived in the adjacent original Bona Vista house at the turn of the century.

The Rockley Precinct Heritage Overlay represents the two distinct redevelopment patterns of the original Little Rockley estate. The first stage was the sale of the grounds of Little Rockley towards Toorak Road in 1908.

An auction plan dated 11 April 1908 shows the subdivision of the Howey Estate, named after the Howey family who owned the property from the 1840s.<sup>5</sup> Rockley Road was created to provide access to the allotments from Toorak Road. The subdivision created a prestigious residential area, with public gardens on either side of the entrance from Toorak Road a

<sup>1</sup> George Tibbits, *History of Prahran*, pp. 25, 26

<sup>2</sup> James Kearney, 'Map of Melbourne and Its Suburbs', 1855

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, Miles, *Melbourne Mansions Database*, University of Melbourne, 1999- (online), Record 526.

<sup>4</sup> Betty Malone, *From Como House to Como City*, pp. 4, 8

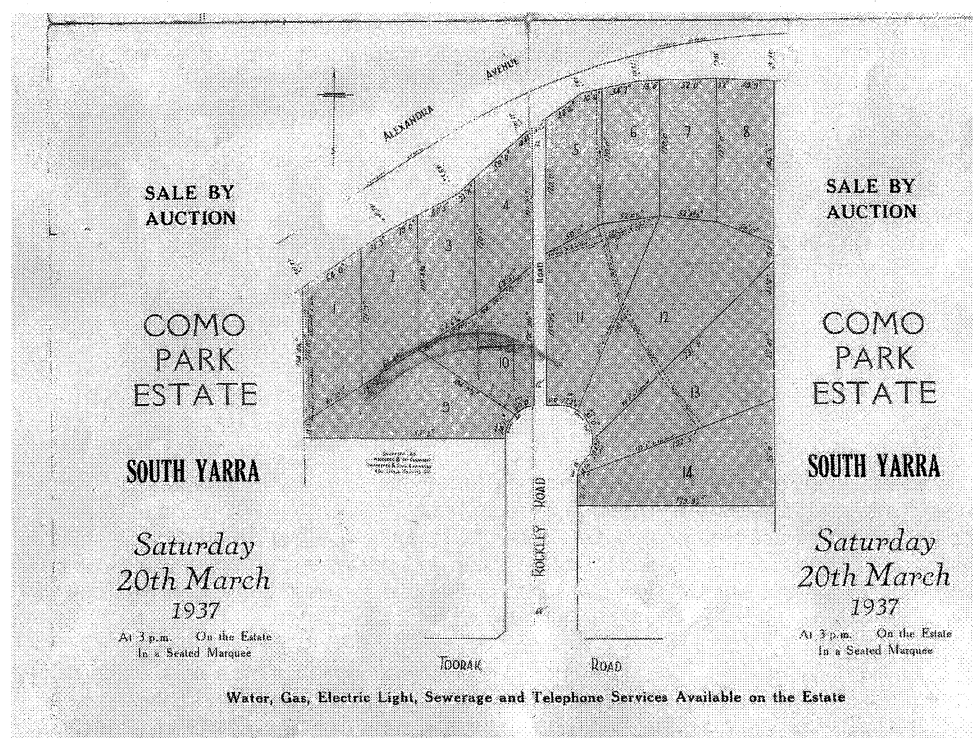
<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p 5

special feature. Allotments advertised at this time were described as 'grand residential sites' with 'Magnificent Views from the Northern Lots'. The area along the river below the steep escarpment was reserved for Alexandra Avenue.<sup>6</sup>

The Howey estate was soon developed with post Federation era houses. The largest remaining coherent streetscape from this 1908 period now is located on the east side within the Rockley Precinct Heritage Overlay.

In 1913, a further subdivision of the Little Rockley allotment provided an extension to Rockey Road by a narrow 'road' on the site of the current walkway, connecting it with Alexandra Avenue.<sup>7</sup> The demolition of the Little Rockley may not have occurred for some time later, however.

The delayed construction of Alexandra Avenue until the mid 1930s led to a completely different and unique development pattern for the second stage of the development of the Little Rockley estate. Titled the Como Park Estate, it was auctioned on 20 March 1937<sup>8</sup> **Map 2.**



The auction brochure, **Figure 1**, shows the site in an aerial photograph as well as the newly constructed Alexandra Avenue and Como Park. The aerial shows the land of the Como Park Estate as completely undeveloped with no trees and the walkway as an unformed pathway, apparently in the process of being constructed. It also shows the adjacent 1840s estates, that originally ran to the river banks, were in the stage of being redeveloped into their current configuration.

The brochure also includes a revealing perspective drawing titled '*An architect's conception of the Como Park Estate of the future*'. It showed large detached houses in the prevailing fashionable designs of the period, ranging from Arts and Crafts to Moderne. It also shows the

<sup>6</sup> 'The Howey Estate, South Yarra', 11 April 1908. Vale Plan Vol. 8 p.51

<sup>7</sup> Lodged Plan 6445. Plan of Subdivision of Part of Crown Portion 9. Parish of Prahran

<sup>8</sup> Como Park Estate, South Yarra K.Gardner & Lang Pty Ltd in conjunction with Geo. M. Hume Pty Ltd auction brochure for Saturday 20 March 1937, from papers held by of the family of H.H Henderson



This Aerial View shows the very excellent position of Como Park Estate.

SATURDAY, 20th MARCH, 1937

At 3 p.m. On the Estate, in a Sealed Marquee.

## COMO PARK ESTATE SOUTH YARRA

Alexandra Avenue **13** UNIQUE ALLOTMENTS **13** Close to Como Park

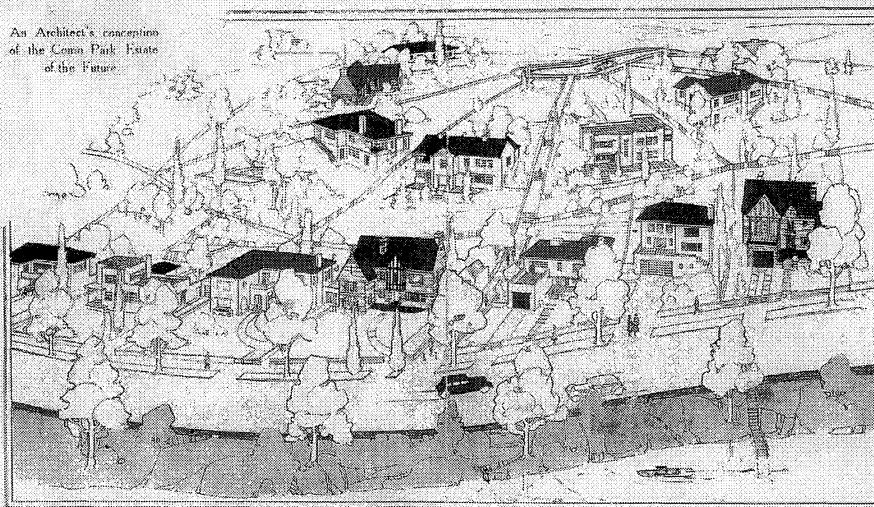
Unique is the only word that can be used to describe these Allotments as it is practically impossible to purchase high-class residential land in such a handy position to the City. Adjacent to Como Park, the South Yarra Tennis Courts and Williams Road, and on the direct City to Toorak Boulevard Drive, the Como Park Estate is in the centre of an area on which thousands of pounds have been and will be spent in beautifying, Garden Island and the River Banks are being planted with lawns and

trees... a project that, when completed, will add considerably to the value of the land we are offering. Gas, Water, Electric Light, Sewerage and Telephone facilities are all available on the Estate and purchasers will have no additional cost for Roads or Footpaths. Because of the many attractive features, the Allotments on Como Park Estate should be of great interest to Investors and Home Buyers.

TITLE CERTIFICATE

TERMS: One-Fifth Cash, Balance in Half-Yearly Payments over 3 Years, Interest at 5 per cent.

An Architect's conception of the Como Park Estate of the Future.



Auctioneers in Conjunction

**K. GARDNER & LANG PTY. LTD.**

80 SWANSTON STREET, MELBOURNE, C.1

**GEO. M. HUME PTY. LTD.**

M.U. BUILDING, C. COLLINS & SWANSTON STS. C.1

Figure 1 1937 Como Park Estate Auction brochure, including 'An architect's conception of the Como Park Estate of the future'.



walkway and steps, and a ferry jetty and boat on the Yarra, as well as cars on Alexandra Avenue. This perspective reveals the ambitious aspirations for this area, a dramatic change from existing character of the area and Melbourne in general. It is of interest to see that this architectural mixture was adopted, but with four Rockley Road allotments developed with multi unit housing.

The first buildings were on Nos 52 and 56 Rockley Road as investment properties for the Strang family in 1937-38.<sup>9</sup> They comprised three and two semi-detached houses respectively, and shared many design features based on Arts and Crafts idioms. No 56 abutted the new walkway.

Later in 1938, or early 1939, a striking large new single house was commenced for H.H. Henderson to the design of architect Verner Fick in a combination of Arts and Crafts and Moderne styles.<sup>10</sup> It used a number of unique design expressions previously used on Nos 52 and 56, and it seems likely that had also designed them.

In 1942 architect and developer Howard Lawson built a block of flats at No 54,<sup>11</sup> adopting the design of some of his flats from his Alexandra Avenue development grouped around Caroline Street. Other houses were built in Como Park Estate the estate along the Alexandra Avenue about this time. However, the estate was not fully developed until the early 1950s, when restrictions of new buildings introduced during the war were lifted.

## Description

Rockley Road is a residential locality characterised by the street plantings of large Plane trees which integrate the diverse elements within the whole streetscape from Toorak Road. The road dates from the subdivision of the Little Rockley Estate in 1908, which created Rockley Road. It is defined by housing from two distinct phases, post 1908 and post 1937, as well as by the redevelopment for flats in the post 1960 era in much of the street. The entry to Rockley Road from Toorak Road is flanked by two parks associated with the 1908 subdivision and overlain with subsequent plantings more typical of the post second World War period.

However, a coherent sequence of post Federation and inter-war houses and flats remain at the northern end of Rockley Road, and extending back a short distance along the eastern side. These create an interesting grouping that reflects the architectural styles and taste of the post 1908 and post 1937 phases of subdivision, and are now included in the Rockley Precinct Heritage Overlay. The precinct commences on the crest of the hill and slopes gently to the north, and includes the steep escarpment above the river.

The dominant character of the Rockley Precinct is created by the dramatic escarpment and its mature landscape character, the walkway, the architectural qualities of the building stock and associated landscaping, and the enclosing avenue of Plane trees within Rockley Road. The houses and flats within the HO area are all visually separated on large allotments with mature trees creating a garden suburb character. The diverse architectural styles range from buildings that characterise the post Federation period, the Arts and Crafts cum English Domestic Revival styles and Moderne styles. The area serves to illustrate and demonstrate the diversity of architecture that was popular during the early twentieth century period.

The houses that remain from the 1908 Howey Estate subdivision are Nos 36, 38, 40, 42, and 44 all contribute to the significant character of the Rockley Precinct. These were mainly built as detached brick villas of a style common throughout the eastern suburbs in a post

<sup>9</sup> MMBW Plan of Drainage dated 24.1.38, and 4.2.38 respectively show Annie Clara Strang as the owner; Allom Lovell and Associates Pty Ltd, '56 Rockley Road Submission on the Heritage Impacts of the Proposed Development of the Site' April 2004 refers to council rate records listing Roderick and Donald Strang as owners, see also footnote 20

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Henderson, pers.comm. April 2005, *The Herald* 12 April 1939

<sup>11</sup> MMBW Drainage Plan 10.3.42

Federation style. One is from the interwar period, while another modernist house is from the Post World War II period.

The walkway, most of the houses, and all the semi-detached houses and flats of the 1937 Como Park Estate provide key components of the significant character of the Rockley Precinct, and are in a relatively intact condition.

The public walkway comprises a series of concrete steps that links the northern end of Rockley Road to Alexandra Avenue. The walkway has the most distinctive landscape character where it climbs the escarpment adjacent to the two flanking Rockley Road properties, the semi-detached pair at No 56, and the house at No 51. Their entrances face the walkway and have their main pedestrian entrances off it. This makes the walkway the principal street frontage for these properties, and these houses are designed to face the walkway and not Rockley Road. This relationship is reinforced by the related design of the terraced landscaping of these properties, as well as their fences and mature trees. This provides a rich landscape character to the escarpment adjacent to the walkway.

There is a sequence of concrete steps and landings, with raised planting beds on the west side, occupying the western half of the 3.6 metre wide walkway reservation. These are mainly constructed with Lilydale brown stone retaining walls which link with the design and materials of the terraced landscaping of No 51. By contrast, the almost level lower section mainly derives its character from views along it. The lower section of the walkway adjacent to the Alexandra Avenue houses has now been reduced in width when the planting beds were incorporated into the adjacent property to the west. It is now only the 1.8 metre width of the pavement, and is faced by paling fences.

No 49 Rockley Road is a block of modest clinker brick and tiled roof flats of an interwar design character but few features of individual significance.

No 51 Rockley Road, *La Falaise*, is a large house of a very high quality picturesque English Domestic Revival design, unusual for its combined Arts and Crafts and Moderne influences. The key features of No 51 house are the asymmetrical building form, steep hipped roof with terra cotta shingles, massive chimneys, richly detailed clinker and manganese brickwork and surprisingly, steel framed windows. It also had some unusual and distinctive detailing. The massive roof is a local landmark visible from Alexandra Avenue and from across the Yarra River. Its terraced garden with mature trees provides a strong linkage with the walkway landscape, and has the character of the work of Edna Walling.

No 52 is a block of three semi-detached clinker brick tiled houses of an English Domestic Revival cum Arts and Crafts style. It has many similarities with No 56, but because it is on level ground, it has a more regular configuration and a less exciting landscape character.

No 54 is a block of flats in red brickwork and, render and concrete, with the trademark rounded corner windows found in Stratton Heights and other flats by Howard Lawson of his later Moderne period. The principal side elevation faces toward the walkway over No 56. It also has the roof top terrace and perforated baluster design of Lawson's other flat projects.

No 56 comprises two semi-detached houses, each facing the walkway and set on different levels as the site plunges steeply. It is built of matching materials and shares many common design details with No 52. Both also share several unusual brickwork details with No 51, built the following year. The large northern chimney provides a landmark to the escarpment. Both Nos 52 and 56 have wide eaves, hipped terra cotta roofs, and simple but well proportioned fenestration. The building demonstrates English Domestic Revival characteristics with Arts and Crafts influences.

The two houses in Alexandra Avenue within the precinct have been subject to alterations, but still contribute to the interwar residential character of the walkway.

## Analysis

It is useful to commence with the following extract from the analysis of the 1993 Conservation Review:

*The extent of the area to the south appears inappropriate. The strongest grouping is to No. 36 and the area appears to include 28, 30 and 32 as well as flats at 34. Certainly 28 and 30 do not contribute except in overall form and scale. These properties may have been seen by the previous consultants as a small 'buffer'. No 'buffer' is provided on the west side of the street. Both properties on Alexandra Avenue are of no apparent significance but have been included presumably to provide a 'buffer' to the walkway.*

*By contrast the properties abutting the walkway off Rockley Road are important contributors. The Prahran Character Area included some portions of Rockley Road south and the two parks. Certainly the parks, the trees, and the view south to the library are important elements in the experience of visiting this street. However, extending the UCI Area to Toorak Road would be inappropriate.*

The extent of the area defined in 1993 is not in question. However a review of the significance the evolved nature of the Precinct, and its landscape character is required.

The development of the Como Park Estate in 1937 on the escarpment section of the Little Rockley estate created one of the most distinctive and significant riverside residential precincts in Melbourne from the 1930s. It demonstrates the impact of the newly completed section of Alexandra Avenue in the late 1930s. This boulevard provided a new riverside identity to South Yarra from St Kilda Road to the Grange Road bridge, and helped change the urban image of Melbourne. Alexandra Avenue was built in stages over more than 30 years. This last stage extended between the elegant Desbrowe Annear designed Monier concrete Church Street bridge, built in 1923-4 and the Grange Road bridge. The latter was a gift to Victorians by confectionery magnate and benefactor McPherson Robertson to commemorate the centenary of the settlement of Victoria in 1935. One of the first welded steel truss bridges in the world, it connected Alexandra Avenue with the Richmond Boulevard funded, to create a continuous riverside drive. The creation of Como Park by the draining of the Como billabong was the other feature of this new section. The annual City of Prahran Mayor's Reports featured glowing accounts of these improvements as they occurred.

Alexandra Avenue was soon regarded as Melbourne's premier scenic drive, and described in many contemporary books and articles. This new focus on the river may have reflected a desire to establish some of waterfront character of Sydney Harbour, and Alexandra Avenue provided a magnet for stylish new developments. The entrepreneur architect, Howard Lawson, developed most of the steeply sloping land above it between Punt Road and Darling Street between 1923 and 1940. He purchased all of the 1923 Alexandra Estate, presumably inspired by the auction brochure '*People are beginning to realise that the Drive can be made as notable as St Kilda Road itself. Certainly, with a tree-lined avenue, broad motorway, and lines of palatial flats and villas, the Yarra Drive can be made a source of civic pride*'. At that stage St Kilda Road was Melbourne's premiere residential boulevard. Lawson's developments introduced a unique architectural character to Melbourne with the Bungalow and exotic Hollywood styles of architecture, including Spanish Mission Revival, and an eclectic form of modernism.

The escarpment from Punt Road to Darling Street has a distinctive landscape character with extensive pedestrian precincts and stairways. These include the access to 'Stratton Heights' and 'Beverley Hills'.

The 1983 *Prahran Conservation Study* identified the Alexandra Avenue Area as one of only three heritage areas in the former City of Prahran to be recommended to the Register of the National Estate.

*The whole development is without equal for the period in Melbourne ... its choice location by the riverside is enhanced by the landscaping along Alexandra Avenue. In*



*particular the special landscaping of Lawson's flats which often combined mature planting from earlier estates with planting from the 1930s and 40s coupled with dramatic changes in level around the flats give a distinctly exotic feel to the locality, not found elsewhere in Melbourne.<sup>12</sup>*

Both the Como Park Estates (which forms part of the Rockley Road Heritage Overlay) and Alexandra Estate are located on the steep riverside escarpment. This runs along much of the south bank of the Yarra from the Royal Botanic Gardens to Gardiners Creek. Both estates had a similar three dimensional character that influenced the unique siting and massing of the flats and houses, as well as the steps and terraced gardens.

Their inter-war period of development is still strongly reflected in building styles, forms and landscaping. Both have spectacular landscape characters, with terraced gardens that plunge down the escarpment. They commanded expansive views, and present remarkable vistas from the opposite banks of the Yarra.

Both precincts reflect the creation of Alexandra Avenue as an alternative to Toorak Road as *'the direct City to Toorak Boulevard drive'*,<sup>13</sup> and the development of high density precincts of flats and housing in a striking topographical location. A new bus route was introduced along Alexandra Avenue, and ferry landings were built for commuter ferries. These two heritage overlay precincts now reflect the new highly urbanised and fashionable lifestyle of Melbourne in the interwar period.

While the Como Park Estate escarpment precinct was built for a more affluent group, it still reflected similar tastes to the Alexandra Estate. The public landscaping was a key feature, with many elements that still survive.

It is interesting to reflect on how atypical these the Rockley Precinct and Lawson's development of the Alexandra Estate are for Melbourne. Comparisons can be made with high density residential precincts in Sydney of the same period. An example is the developments around the Sydney Harbour foreshore such as Cremorne Point and the ferry wharfs of Mosman Bay. These are linked to by small pedestrian walkways with similar raised planter beds as in the Rockley Road walkway. The walkway and steps from Rockley Road down the escarpment to Alexandra Avenue remains one of the most interesting pedestrian links in a residential area in Melbourne, especially among those near the Yarra River.

The walkway, and Nos 51 and 56 are the key features of the Heritage Overlay. The people associated with the key buildings on the escarpment near the walkway demonstrate the design consciousness and desirability behind the creation of this small enclave.

In particular, the landscape character has been enhanced by the contribution of the noted landscape designer and contractor Eric Hammond, who also undertook most of Edna Walling's projects. He constructed the spectacular landscape of No 51 and apparently of No 56. The Lilydale stone fence and fence capping of No 56 matched the retaining walls of the raised beds in the walkway on the opposite side, and the garden of No 51 beyond. Originally a low wall, it was raised to its current height at an early date.

No 51 is the architectural highlight of this precinct. It was designed by Verner Fick, for Hans Herman Henderson. Formely Hans Hebenstreit, he was a prominent and successful agronomist. Fick and Henderson had changed their German names as a consequence of the strident anti German sentiments during the First World War.<sup>14</sup> Fick also undertook alterations to the house in 1955 after H.H Henderson's death, to create a separate flat over the garage.<sup>15</sup> The house is an unusual combination of Arts and Crafts architecture, with some Moderne elements, such as the steel framed windows. Fick also designed the large house in Punt

<sup>12</sup> Nigel Lewis & Associates, *Prahran Conservation Study*, 1983, Alexandra Avenue Area.

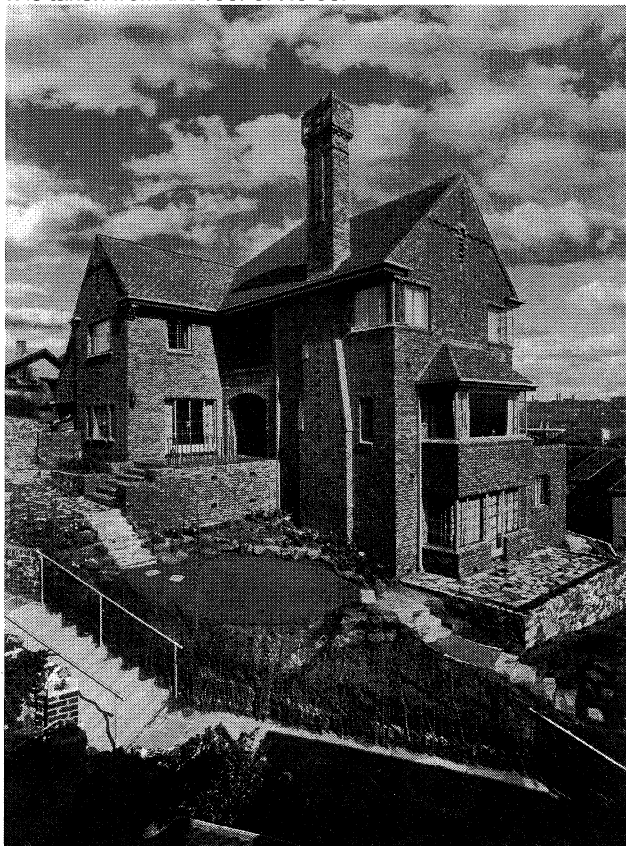
<sup>13</sup> 'Como Park Estate' South Yarra auction brochure 20 March 1937, K. Gardner Lang Pty Ltd in conjunction with Geo. M. Hume Pty Ltd.

<sup>14</sup> Raymond Henderson, pers.comm. April 2005. His father's name was previously Hans Herman Hebenstreit

<sup>15</sup> Plans prepared by Fick, held by Henderson family

Road on the east side near Toorak Road for owner of the famous Ogg pharmacies in Collins Street and South Yarra. This large house has many obvious similarities to No 51.

At the time of its construction in 1939, the house was noted for '*Distinctive planning on steep site*'<sup>16</sup>. Even ten or fifteen years later in Melbourne, steeply sloping sites were still largely the domain of more innovative architects, such as Robin Boyd and Roy Grounds. The manner in which house is sited and landscaped is a key attribute. The terraced garden and entrance face the walkway, and provide much of its character. It combines rounded volcanic tufa and Lilydale rockwork with Castlemaine slate paving, and low brick walls and wrought iron to match the house. The garden built by Eric Hammond<sup>17</sup> was possibly designed by Edna Walling. Hammond began building gardens for Walling from 1924 and retained a very close working arrangement from then on. He constructed some of her most important gardens, such as *Mawarra* in the Dandenongs. He also designed gardens himself.<sup>18</sup> Even if Hammond designed this garden, it has to be seen as being heavily influenced by Walling. She was a very influential designer and writer, and her Bickleigh Vale development was copied widely. Among other matters, she promoted harmoniously designed buildings set in a continuous landscape design, such as Bickleigh Vale. The siting of No 51 looking towards the descending roof forms of No 56, built a year earlier, provides an important backdrop to the house and landscape design, and follows Walling's dictums. The garden of No 51 represents an important example of Hammond's surviving work. Henderson's son Raymond, helped construct the garden with Hammond when he was 17. **Figure 2** shows the completed house with landscaping almost finished, taken by a professional photographer, presumably for Fick. It is taken from the roof of No 56.



**Figure 2** No 51 Rockley Road, *La Falaise*.

<sup>16</sup> *The Herald* 12 April 1939

<sup>17</sup> Raymond Henderson, pers.comm.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Aitken and Michael Looker *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, Melbourne 2002, p. 287, entry for Eric Hammond by Anne Latreille

The semi-detached pair of houses at No 56 and the three attached houses No 52 were built by Annie Clara Strang in 1937-38<sup>19</sup>. These were the only properties she is known to have built. She had artistic inclinations and was involved in the construction of several Christian Scientist Churches, including the important Camberwell church designed by Bates Smart and McCutcheon.<sup>20</sup> Osborne McCutcheon stated that *'the project offered an opportunity to work with clients who wanted good modern architecture'*. The finished project won the RVIA Street Architecture Medal in 1938.<sup>21</sup> A number of distinctive brickwork design details were repeated in a more elaborate manner in No 51, built about a year later, indicating that Fick was the architect for Nos 52 and 56.

No 56 was the most impressive due to the articulated building form and the siting on the escarpment next to the walkway. The first occupants highlight the desirability and associational context of this innovative development. They were wool broker Reginald James Armitage, (a member of the prominent pioneering pastoralist family), and commercial artist Gert Sellheim (sic).<sup>22</sup> They may have also been owners as this information comes from the *Prahran Rate Books*. Gert Sellheim trained as an architect in Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Graz and Paris. He worked on the University of Western Australia with Rodney Alsop and F.J. Glennon in 1929. He turned to commercial art in 1931 in Melbourne. Gert Sellheim moved into Rockley Road the year of his marriage in January 1938. He had pioneered modernism in commercial art and was considered to uphold *'the best trends in modern design'*. He designed the sundial for Frederick Romberg for his Newburn flats in Queens Road in 1941.<sup>23</sup> However his design of the Qantas flying kangaroo logo in 1947 is probably his most lasting achievement. He is described by Professor Peter Spearritt as *'One of the country's most influential graphic designers in the twentieth century, he produced work that continues to influence the way artists imagine and depict the continent and its people'* in his ADB entry<sup>24</sup>. He was included in a discussion of a select list of notable creative European émigrés in Peter Conrad's 2004 ABC Boyer Lectures, along with Helmut Newton, Edouard Borovansky, and Claudio Ascorso.<sup>25</sup> Newton and Sellheim were both interned together at Tatura during the war.

One cannot but reflect on the association of this precinct with German émigrés of influence Fick, Henderson (formely Hebenstreit) and Selheim, and their extended network.

This Moderne flat roofed block of flats at No 54 built and designed by Howard Lawson in 1942 provides an interesting thematic linkage with his extraordinary Alexandra Estate.<sup>26</sup> The design with balconies overlooking the river and the roof top terrace makes the most of this extraordinary site overlooking the plunging garden of No 56.

The properties of the Como Park Estate along Alexandra Avenue lack the architectural and landscape distinction, and integrity, of those on Rockley Road allotments, and are not recommended for inclusion within the Heritage Overlay, other than the two that flank the walkway. These two houses provide an historical and architectural linkage with the HO, despite alterations.

<sup>19</sup> MMBW Plan of Drainage dated 24.1.38, and 4.2.38 respectively

<sup>20</sup> Jenny Strang, Annie Strang's grand daughter, pers. comm. April 2005

<sup>21</sup> Philip Goad, *Bates Smart 150 Years of Australian Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, 2004, from Chapter 3, 1981 – 1945 by Julie Willis, p137

<sup>22</sup> Allom Lovell and Associates Pty Ltd, April 2004, '56 Rockley Road Submission on the Heritage Impacts of the Proposed Development of the Site' April 2004.

<sup>23</sup> *Australian Dictionary of Biography* 1940-1980, Sellheim entry by Professor Peter Spearritt, p. 209.

<sup>24</sup> *Australian Dictionary of Biography - 1940 – 1986*, pp 209-210

<sup>25</sup> 2004 ABC Boyer Lectures, Lecture No 3

<sup>26</sup> MMBW Drainage Plan 10.3.42

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## APPENDIX

### SCHEDULE OF BUILDINGS, WORKS AND GRADINGS

#### *Walkway from Rockley Road to Alexandra Avenue*

Walkway and steps - full length

Level 2 streetscape      A2 graded

interwar design and landscape possibly designed by Eric Hammond,  
including remnant sections adjacent to No 123-5 Alexandra Avenue

#### *Rockley Road*

( Level 2 streetscape)

##### *East side*

No 36    B graded

Interwar two storey house

No 38    B graded

post Federation single storey house

No 40    B graded

post Federation single storey house

No 42    B graded

post Federation single storey house

No 44    B graded

post Federation single storey house

No 46    B graded

1950s modernist house reputedly architect designed, requires further  
research

No 48    ungraded

1950s house, single storey with roof form sympathetic to Interwar era

No 50    ungraded

1950s house, single storey with roof form sympathetic to Interwar era

No 52    B graded

three inter-war two storey semi detached houses designed by Verner

Fick

No 54    B graded

inter-war design two storey flats designed by Howard Lawson

No 56    B graded

two inter-war two storey semi-detached houses designed by Verner

Fick, flanking building to walkway and steps, and landscaping possibly designed by Eric  
Hammond

walkway

##### *West side*

No 49    C graded

inter-war two storey style flats

No 51    A2 graded

inter-war two storey house designed by Verner Fick, flanking house

to walkway and steps, also landscaping designed and constructed by Eric Hammond

walkway

#### *Alexandra Avenue*

(Level 3 streetscape)

No 123-5 C graded

interwar design house flanking walkway and steps

walkway

No 131    C graded

interwar design house flanking walkway and steps