

**REDCOURT
506 ORRONG ROAD
ARMADALE**

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd with Di Foster, historian, to investigate the significance of the property at 506 Orrong Road, Toorak, and to determine the appropriateness of its inclusion within the schedule to the Heritage Overlay within the planning scheme.

The building was graded A1 in the *Prahran Conservation Study*. It is not presently listed on the Victorian Heritage Register or the Register of the National Estate, nor is it classified by the National Trust, however the gardens were described as being of local significance in the *City of Prahran Significant Tree & Garden Study*, 1991.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This report finds that 506 Orrong Road is of state significance and should be added to the schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the local section of the Stonnington Planning Scheme and nominated to the Australian Heritage Commission for inclusion in the register of the National Estate.

HISTORY

The four allotments bounded by Dandenong Road, Kooyong Road, High Street and Orrong Road were sold at the Crown Land Sale in 1850. Lot 65 at the corner of Dandenong Road and Orrong Road extended to south of the present day Barnato Grove and east to Denbigh Road. Consisting of more than 30 acres, lot 65 was purchased by James Jackson of Toorak House¹ The allotment was soon subdivided and by 1855 Namerong, facing Dandenong Road, was located near the corner of Dandenong Road.²

In 1887 William Miller owned 6 acres of land in Dandenong Road on the east corner of Orrong Road.³ Merchant Edward Yencken purchased 5 acres of Miller's land and in 1887-88 built a substantial brick house, with a NAV of £750.⁴ The architects for this new house were Reed Henderson & Smart,⁵ Melbourne's pre-eminent architectural firm of the nineteenth century.

Edward Lowenstein Yencken (1854-1932) had joined the company of Brooks, Robinson & Co., wholesale oil, colour and glass merchants and importers of painters and decorators' supplies, in 1872. Ten years later he decided to found his own business and in January 1893 E. L. Yencken & Co., wholesale importers and general indent merchants, opened for business. By the time Yencken built his new house in Dandenong Road (1888), the firm had two adjoining city warehouses and a large store by the Yarra River. Yencken gradually absorbed the business of his main competitors, including that of Brooks Robinson.⁶

Edward Yencken's house was occupied by squatter John Turnbull in 1892⁷ and by the following year Yencken's Trustees had ownership of the property, which was described as a brick house of fifteen rooms in Dandenong Road.⁸ By 1895 the property was sold to Mrs E. J. Robinson,⁹ who may have had a connection with the Brooks Robinson company.

By 1900 the net annual value of Robinson's property had dropped to £500 and merchant Ernest Connell was the occupier.¹⁰ Around this time the house was named Redcourt.¹¹ With its entrance and gatehouse at the corner of Orrong Road and Dandenong Road, the property occupied the entire corner block

1 Betty Malone, Prahran Heritage Series, No. 16, The South East corner of Armadale, p.10.

2 Kearney Plan, 1855.

3 City of Prahran rate book, Windsor Ward, 1887, no. 9809.

4 Ibid. 1888, no. 2553.

5 *Building, Engineering & Mining Journal*, 21.7.87, Reed Henderson & Smart called tenders for residence, Prahran for ES Zenecken (sic); the same architects had called tenders for wood stables for E L Yencken in Windsor in August 1886 (*Argus*, 25.8.1886), and the reference to Zenecken seems to be a misprint of Yencken; see Miles Lewis *Australian Architectural Index*, University of Melbourne.

6 *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1891-1939*. vol. 12, p.594.

7 City of Prahran rate book, Windsor Ward, 1892, no. 10320.

8 Ibid. 1893, no. 10531.

9 Ibid. 1895, no. 10541.

10 Ibid. 1900, no. 10538.

11 *Sands & McDougall directory*, 1901.

between Sebrof, the grand mansion facing Orrong Road and Namarong in Dandenong Road. The sweeping carriage-drive led to the front of the house and around to the stables at the rear of the property. A conservatory was located on the northern boundary and gravel paths encircled formal gardens.¹²

In 1905 Redcourt was owned by Theresa Wallace and occupied by Ada Wallace.¹³ Redcourt was numbered 347 Dandenong Road in 1915, when it was owned and occupied by Mary Falkiner.¹⁴ By 1930 Redcourt had been purchased by agent Thomas M. Burke. Burke was responsible for several large subdivisions of land in the Gardiners Creek Valley at East Malvern, including the land for the East Malvern Golf Course. At this time, Redcourt was described as having 30 rooms and a NAV of £1000.¹⁵

Thomas Burke subdivided Redcourt's estate around 1936 and Redcourt Avenue was created.¹⁶ Redcourt was now numbered 6 Orrong Road and Mabel Irvine ran the property as Redcourt Guesthouse.¹⁷



Illustration 1 506 Orrong Road, 1997.

12 MMBW plan, 1895.

13 City of Prahran rate book, Windsor Ward, 1905, no. 10543.

14 Ibid. 1915, no. 12836.

15 Ibid. 1930, no. 14764.

16 Redcourt Avenue was proclaimed on 4.12.1939. Government gazette, p.4111.

17 City of Prahran rate book, Windsor Ward, 1935, no. 11907, and *Sands & McDougall Directory*, 1940.

DESCRIPTION

506 Orrong Road, Armadale, known as Redcourt, is located in a prestigious and exclusively residential section of Armadale northeast of the intersection of Orrong and Dandenong Roads. The house occupies an elevated site overlooking the intersection from which it presents a long frontage to Orrong Road. In this area, Orrong Road is a tree-lined avenue, constructed in modern materials with concrete gutters and bitumen surfacing to the road and footpaths and well-maintained nature strips. The landscape elements combine to create an air of quiet refinement.

Even by local standards, Redcourt is a large residence. The high fence in red face brick and extensive tennis courts at the front of the property fail to obscure the structure beyond. The house extends over two storeys built on a number of different levels. It is constructed in red face brick with a tiled roof and simple white painted joinery. Stylistically, the building draws upon medieval precedents evident in its cantilevering gables supported on ornate, timber brackets, its half timbering in the gable ends and buttressed chimney elements which extend high above the roofline. A minor tiled gable, supported on elaborately carved brackets, covers the entry and segmental arched windows and a large oriel bay window are other features of the facade.

A number of outbuildings in a similar style are also present on the site.

ANALYSIS

Redcourt is notable as a fine and very early example of the influence of the British Queen Anne Revival, exemplified by the contemporary work of Richard Norman Shaw in London, and of Oakden, Addison & Kemp, of Walter Butler and of Ussher & Kemp in Melbourne. While Reed Henderson & Smart are not well known for such work, they are well known as innovators in style in the nineteenth century, and were no doubt well abreast of the latest stylistic developments in Britain and Australia.

Redcourt needs to be compared with such well known two storey examples of the so-called Queen Anne Revival in Melbourne as the former North Park, 69 Woodland Street, Essendon, now St Columban's Catholic Mission (1888-89), and Campion College, Studley Park Road, Kew (formerly Dalswraith) (1900). These examples are recognised as being of state significance for their architectural merit and influence and their historical associations, including their associations with the significant architects Ussher & Kemp and Oakden Addison & Kemp respectively. They are directly indebted to the Queen Anne Revival sponsored by Richard Norman Shaw, Philip Webb and other architects in England from the 1870s. Their style is not to be confused with Melbourne's more typical 'Queen Anne', which is

most often single storey and sprawled across the site in a manner quite alien to English prototypes. The two idioms are clearly related, but the latter is a local derivative responding to the Australian topography and climate.¹⁸

Redcourt is clearly one of the earliest examples of the mode for a substantial house in the metropolitan area, and while not as grand as Dalswraith in terms of materials or as large as North Park, is clearly of a similar scale, integrity and degree of innovation. Redcourt may well have just preceded North Park in design and construction, and thus may be the earliest major example in Melbourne. It has been referred to as the first house with a tiled roof in Melbourne,¹⁹ but the veracity of this cannot readily be tested.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Redcourt is of state significance as one of the very earliest manifestations of a domestic, Queen Anne Revival influenced mode in Melbourne. A very grand and modern house for its time, it remains substantially externally intact and retains some of its original grounds, which reinforce the original design intent of its architects, the notable firm Reed Henderson & Smart.

REFERENCES

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18 Tibbits 'So-called Melbourne Domestic Queen Anne', *Historic Environment II*, nos 2 & 3, 1982.

19 Pamela Burkitt, 'History of Larnook', unpublished local history paper???