

**476-478 TOORAK ROAD
TOORAK**

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, with Di Foster, historian. It investigates the significance of the property at 476-478 Toorak Road, Toorak, in order to determine the appropriateness of its inclusion within the schedule to the Heritage Overlay within the planning scheme. The report builds on the *Prahran Character and Conservation Study* (1992).

The buildings at 476 and 478 were graded A1 and A2 respectively in the *Prahran Character and 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.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This report finds that 476-478 Toorak Road is of regional and possibly 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

At the auction of Crown land in 1849, lots 31 and 32 were bought by Thomas Colclough who settled at Tintern. Lot 31, which extended from Canterbury Road to Mathoura Road, was divided into two halves. The southern half became a large estate known as Brookville, part of which was leased out for brickmaking. Brookville survived until the 1870s when land was sold for the new railway to Oakleigh. The northern half was subdivided in the early 1850s to form a nest of small streets with working class cottages - Canterbury Road, Ross Street and Carters Avenue and Colclough sold allotments along Gardiner's Creek (Toorak) Road.¹

In 1854 the State Government leased James Jackson's Toorak House for the governor's residence, and Gardiner's Creek Road was transformed from a rough bush track to a made road. A small village with shops spanning both sides of the main road and workers cottages to the south, gradually developed round Notley's Hotel. Built in 1854, the hotel was well placed at the foot of Orrong Hill and William and Charles Notley managed the hotel from 1854 to 1866.² The hotel later became known as the Toorak Hotel.

The directory of 1868 lists a number of traders and businesses which catered to the local community, including a blacksmith, draper, coach builder, cab proprietor, grocer, Post Office and carpenter.³ From the 1870s, development was slow and the building boom in the 1880s had little impact on this quiet local village.⁴ By 1895, Toorak Village as it came to be known, included a Shoeing Forge adjacent to the hotel, a carriage factory and the Toorak Horse Bazaar.⁵ Meanwhile the prestige associated with Toorak House attracted wealthy merchants, pastoralists and politicians to the area, and the village, with its workers' cottages to the south, was encircled by the mansions and villas of the gentry.

By 1888 a chemist, Mrs S Obbinson, was located on the south side of Toorak Road, between Canterbury Road and Ross Street. The following year, chemist William Ford & Co. incorporating George Swift, took over the business. In 1894 William Woodhouse occupied the property to the west of Ford's chemist and three years later Woodhouse's business was incorporated as part of Ford's

-
- 1 Betty Malone, section 10, unpublished manuscript, Prahran Archives.
 - 2 Betty Malone, *Prahran's Pubs*, Prahran, 1988, p. 14.
 - 3 *Sands & McDougall directory, 1868*, as cited in Bill Dane, *The Toorak Village - Past, Present & Future*, Prahran Heritage Series, no. 6. p. 4.
 - 4 Bill Dane, *The Toorak Village - Past, Present & Future*, Prahran Heritage Series, no. 6. p. 5.
 - 5 MMBW plan, 1895.

chemist.⁶ William Woodhouse owned the 9 roomed brick building,⁷ which was renumbered 476 Toorak Road in 1909. By this time the village shops included a jeweller, dairy, picture framer, greengrocer, livery stables, confectioner, draper, grocer, bakery and cake shop.⁸

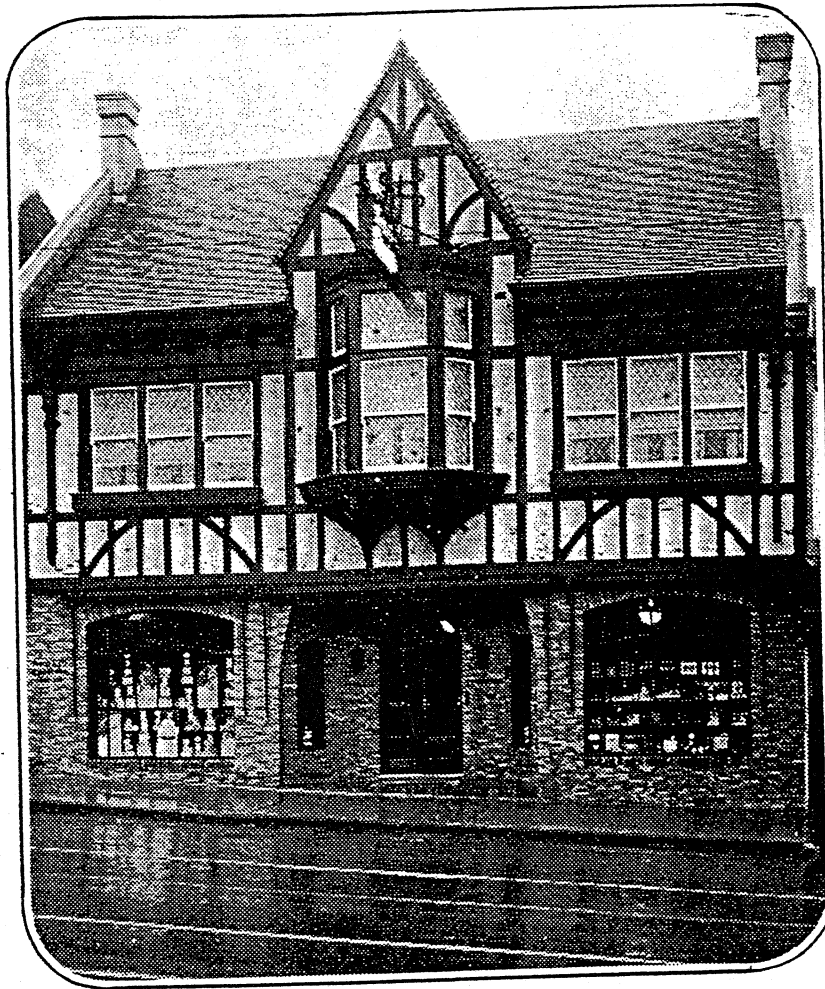


Photo. by Courtesy of the "Argus."

SHOPFRONT REMODELLED TO OLD ENGLISH DESIGN,
TOORAK ROAD.

By Cr. R. B. HAMILTON, F.R.V.I.A.

Illustration 1

476-478 Toorak Road, 1931.

Source: Prahran City Council Annual Report, 1931/32

6 *Sands & McDougall directories, 1888-1940.*

7 MMBW drainage plan 476 Toorak Road, 1900 & City of Prahran rate books, South Yarra Ward, 1920s.

8 *Sands & McDougall directories, 1909.*

Around 1929 architect Robert Hamilton designed a new two storey double fronted shopfront in the Old English style for chemists Ford and Woodhouse.⁹ Ford and Woodhouse were in business at this location until the 1980s. Architect Robert Hamilton was a Prahran Councillor from 1930-1936.

DESCRIPTION

The two storey shopfront at 476-478 Toorak Road is chiefly of note for its Old English character and the fine detailing of its materials. This is particularly evident in the timber framed oriel to the first floor, with its leadlight windows, and the carefully executed tapestry brickwork to the ground floor. The rather stylised symmetry of the composition is typical for commercial premises in the mode, as opposed to the studied asymmetry mandatory for residential work. The half timbering of the first floor, the terracotta shingle roof and the central gable with weathervane are all emblematic of the Old English and its Arts and Crafts, vernacular influences. The facade remains substantially intact.

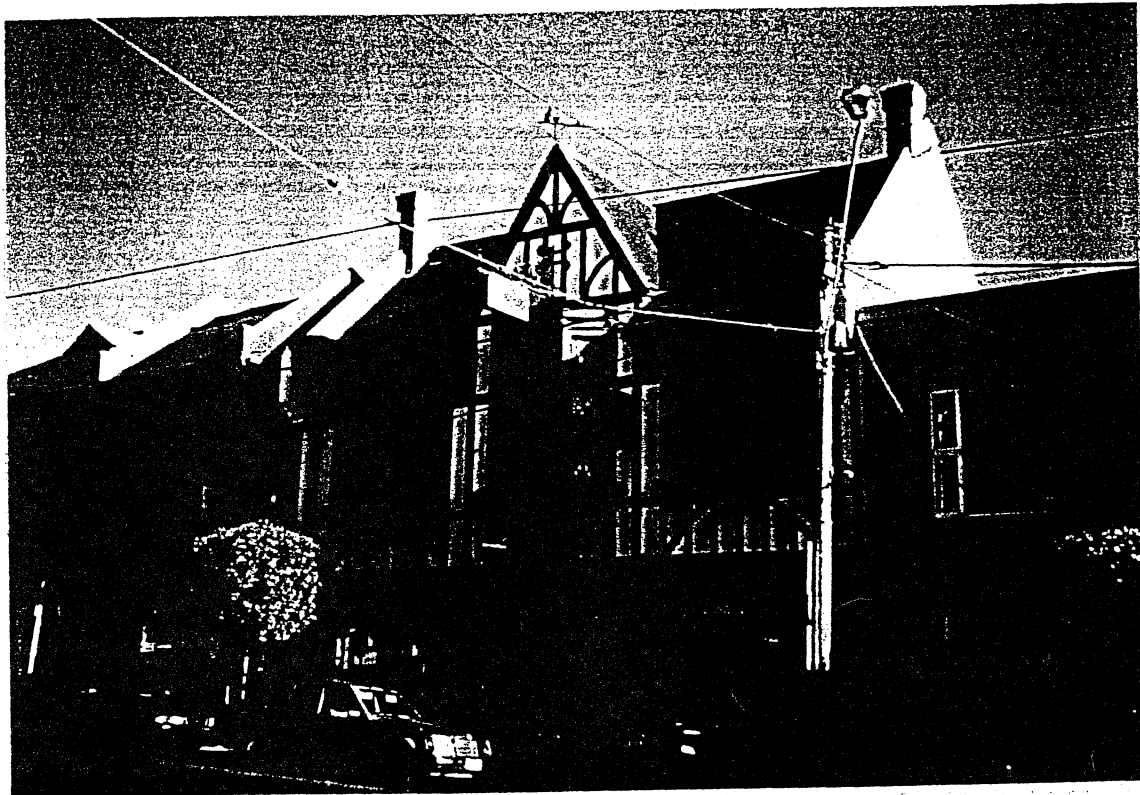


Illustration 1 476-478 Toorak Road, 1998.

9 Photograph of shopfront, designed by Cr. R.B. Hamilton, in City of Prahran Annual Report, 1931-2.

ARCHITECT

The architect of 476-478 Toorak Road was R B Hamilton.

Robert Bell Hamilton was born in 1892.¹⁰ He was educated at Scotch College and served in the 14th Battalion of the AIF during WWI. After the armistice he studied in London to become an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects. After his graduation, Hamilton remained in London where he designed a housing scheme for the Slough City Council before securing a position as the assistant to the government architect in Bombay, India in 1920.¹¹

In Melbourne in the same year, Rodney Alsop's continued ill health brought an end to his successful architectural partnership with F L Klingender. Two years later, Klingender formed a new partnership with the recently-returned Hamilton, who became the designing partner. Initially, Hamilton positioned himself within the Arts and Crafts vernacular vocabulary that had characterised Alsop's work throughout the previous decade, but in the subsequent years, Hamilton gradually eradicated the American influence from his work and by the late 1920s had become the foremost exponent of Tudor Revival styling in Melbourne. Hamilton's design approach drew upon Arts and Crafts principles, in particular the idea that architectural expression should extend beyond the built fabric and into individual components such as leadlight, fittings and furniture.

The partnership with F L Klingender lasted until 1925 when Hamilton established his own practice. Hamilton was active in Melbourne until WWII and worked alone and in partnership with other architects such as Marcus Norris to produce a large number of residences in a variety of styles throughout the inner eastern suburbs of Melbourne. These include, *Landale* a substantial villa in a restrained Georgian mode in Landale Road, Toorak completed in the early 1930s, and houses at 8 and 12 Macquarie Road in 1929 and 1930 respectively.

Although Hamilton designed a number of large and impeccably detailed houses in the Tudor Revival mode, he is best remembered for his Tudor Revival flats, including *Burnham* in Grange Road, Toorak (1933), *Moore Abbey* in Marne Street, South Yarra (1934), *Denby Dale* in Glenferrie Road, Kooyong (1938), *Park Manor* in Williams Road (1930s) and for a number of shops throughout Prahran and Malvern in the same mode. The group of shops in Toorak Village are particularly well known, and are commonly understood to set the character of this small shopping strip.

10 Wilson & Sands, *Building a City*, Melbourne, 1981. p187.

11 For a detailed analysis of the life and work of Robert Bell Hamilton refer, Peter Cuffley, *Houses of the 20s and 30s*, p. 114-118. Unless noted otherwise, biographical details are drawn from that source.

Robert Hamilton was elected MLA for Toorak in November 1945. He was both a parliamentarian and a councillor for Mornington Shire when he died on 15 May 1948.¹²

While perhaps not a key architect in Melbourne in terms of leading the profession in any new directions, he was of considerable influence as a leading protagonist working in the revival styles important to the interwar era, producing a large number of impressive representative houses and commercial premises, amongst which must be included 476-478 Toorak Road.

ANALYSIS

The shops at 476-478 Toorak Road are fine and substantially intact examples of the smaller commercial work of Robert Bell Hamilton, and are amongst the most dominant of the Old English shopfronts within the well known Toorak Village group.

The Old English was a popular style during the 1920s and 1930s, but more so in relation to domestic work than commercial premises. A stronger Gothic revivalism was more common for the larger commercial work of the central city, generally executed in stone or synthetic stone. The key exception to this was the reworking in this period of the Mitre Tavern, Bank Place. The vernacular based, Arts and Crafts influenced Old English of these smaller buildings in Toorak village is more directly related to the domestic scale, character and detailing of the larger houses in Toorak and South Yarra, such as Burnham in Grange Road, or Denby Dale in Glenferrie Road, than it is to typical CBD work of the period.

While isolated examples of a similar Old English commercial mode are scattered throughout Melbourne's middle ring suburbs, few exhibit the quality of design and detailing, or the intactness to their original appearance, of 476-478 Toorak Road. No ensemble of Old English shopfronts comparable to the several surviving shops at Toorak Village is known to the present author.

The shopfronts at 476-478 Toorak Road are important for their position within the oeuvre of Hamilton, for their visual importance in the Toorak Village group, and, as a part of that group, as a contributory element within a stylistic group which is relatively rare within the greater metropolitan area.

12 Ibid.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The shops at 476-478 Toorak Road are of regional and possibly state significance as a fine and substantially intact example of the Old English commercial mode of the interwar period, and for their role within the important Toorak village group of Old English shops. They are of additional significance as a fine example of the commercial work of Robert Bell Hamilton, a prominent commercial and domestic architect in this period and a leader in the use of Old English modes in the interwar years.

REFERENCES

- Context Pty Ltd, City of Prahran Conservation Review, 1993
City of Prahran annual report, 1931-2.
City of Prahran rate books, Toorak Ward, 1930s
Dane Bill, *The Toorak Village - Past, Present & Future*, Prahran Heritage Series, no. 6.
Malone Betty, Prahran series, Section 10, unpublished manuscript, Prahran Archives.
Malone Betty, *Prahran's Pubs*, Prahran, 1988.
MMBW plan, 1895.
Paxton James, *Toorak as I knew it, 1900-1930*, Prahran Historical Series, no. 2.
MMBW drainage plan 476 Toorak Road, 1900.
Sands & McDougall directories 1888-1974.