

2 KELMSCOTT ROAD, Oyama, ARMADALE

History

1854

At the Crown land sales on 23 February 1854, James Gill purchased Crown Portion 24(a), consisting of 11 acres, 3 roods, 35 perches, for £405.¹ The allotment was then sold to Frederick and Henry Howells in April 1855, to John William Crawley in January 1858 and to Arthur Wolfe Chomley on 3 July 1869 for £1,450.²

1875

Chomley brought the land under the Transfer of Land Act in 1875.³ Arthur Wolfe Chomley (1837-1914) arrived in Melbourne from Ireland with his six brothers and his widowed mother, Mrs Mary Chomley, in 1849. The Chomley family settled in Orrong Road Prahran. Arthur Chomley was admitted to the Victorian Bar in 1863. He was Crown Prosecutor from 1870-1885, Chairman Board of Examiners, Public Service and Reclassification Board; County Court Judge 1885-1911 and Judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria in 1906.⁴

1882

In 1882, Harry Cattanach sold Portion 24(a) to Robert Kerr Smith. Smith's 11 acre allotment included a brick residence of 12 rooms valued at £7000, offices, stables, shrubbery and garden in High Street.⁵ The house was later known as 'Huntingtower'. According to the valuation book for the Shire of Malvern, in 1882-3, 2 acres of Smith's land was transferred to Hussey Malone Chomley, Chief Commissioner of Police and brother of Arthur Chomley.⁶ With the subdivision of 'Huntingtower' in 1883, Huntingtower Road was created, with building allotments lining both sides of the new street.⁷ Hussey Malone's land included the house ('Huntingtower') on lots 5,6,9,10 and 11, on the east side Huntingtower Road at the corner of High Street.⁸

Like his brother, Hussey Malone Chomley (1832-1906) had arrived from Ireland with his family in 1849. Following time spent at the diggings, Hussey Chomley joined the Victoria Police Force as a cadet in September 1852. He was soon promoted to various positions throughout the goldfields before returning to Bendigo in 1862 as a Superintendent. With the death of Police Commissioner Standish in 1880, Chomley was appointed Chief Commissioner of Police and took office in March 1881. He held office until his retirement in June 1902. Hussey and his wife Elizabeth had two sons.⁹

¹ Ian McLaren, *Malvern Crown Land Sales, 1840-1879*, (Melbourne, 1987), p. 9

² Rob Bower, 'Malvern, a history of the subdivision, 1840-1989', plan 3, (unpublished manuscript), Malvern Archives.

³ Bower.

⁴ *Australian dictionary of biography*, 1851 -1890, p. 392; Family history file, Chomley, Malvern Archives.

⁵ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1882, no. 114.

⁶ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1882-3, no.116.

⁷ Lodged Plan 596 1884 and LP 1508, 27 April 1887.

⁸ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1884, no. 123.

⁹ *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol. 3, 1851 -1890, p. 393; Family history file, Chomley, Malvern

Following the subdivision of Portion 24, the allotments in Huntingtower Road were quickly sold and lot 26 on the west side was purchased by architect and house agent C. E. Connop.¹⁰

1886

By 1886 Charles Smith of St. Kilda had purchased lots 25 and 27, and Connop's lot 26. (Smith also owned lots 1-4). In 1887 on the west side at the High Street end of Huntingtower Road, on lots 25-27, a brick house of 14 rooms, with stables and outbuildings was built at a cost of £4000, and immediately sold to Chiselhurst.¹¹ The same year, the house was sold to Miss Bessie Grant and occupied by journalist and politician, David Blair.¹² (Blair had married the sister of J. M. Grant in 1852). Blair was a partner with Henry Parkes (later Sir Henry, the father of Federation) in the establishment of the *Empire* newspaper in Sydney, in the 1850s, then was editor of the *Age*, was a prominent politician and public figure. He was secretary for the 1867 Royal Commission on Education and the 1873 Penal Commission. He wrote the first history of Australia in 1878, and compiled the *Cyclopaedia of Victoria* in 1881.¹³

In 1891, Miss Bessie Grant, now Mrs Crosbie Graves, was living at Mt Battery at Mansfield. Hussey Malone Chomley sold 'Huntingtower' to William Sayers, and moved from the east to the west side of Huntingtower Road where he leased Mrs Graves' house.¹⁴ Chomley's rent was sent to David Blair of 'Oyama', Sutherland Road Armadale.¹⁵ At this time the house included 15 rooms with a Net Annual Value of £260.¹⁶ The NAV was later reduced on appeal from £260 to £200 then to £175.¹⁷ The 1892 rate book indicates that Hussey Chomley purchased Graves' house, although Bessie Graves owned the property until 1922.¹⁸

By 1888 the house had been named 'Oyama', also the name of David Blair's house in Sutherland Road.¹⁹ The 1902 MMBW plan shows the principal section house with the return verandah and enclosing wings being constructed of brick. The back section, facing west, was built from timber. There was a circular entrance drive from Huntingtower Road and a tennis court at the front. The footprint of 'Oyama' is almost identical to the neighbouring property 'Weroona', and would appear to have been built as part of the same speculative venture.²⁰

Hussey Chomley occupied 'Oyama' until his death in 1906, except for 1896 when Salis Fischer occupied the property.²¹ 'Oyama' was occupied by Chomley's widow, Aubrey Emma Elizabeth Chomley, until 1909 when it was then leased to various tenants including manager

Archives.

¹⁰ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1883, no. 125 & 1884, no. 131.

¹¹ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1887, no. 257.

¹² Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1887, no. 257; *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol. 3, 1851-1890, p. 179.

¹³ Alexander Sutherland, et al, *Victoria and its Metropolis*, Mc Carron Bird and Co, Melbourne, 1888, Vol II, p.463.

¹⁴ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1887, no. 257.

¹⁵ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1887, no. 257.

¹⁶ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1891, no. 718.

¹⁷ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1893, no. 659.

¹⁸ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western riding 1892, no. 774 & 1893 no. 659.

¹⁹ Shire of Malvern rate book, Western riding 1898-9, no. 614.

²⁰ MMBW plan, 1902.

²¹ *Sands and McDougall's Directory*, 1896.

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Robert McKay; manager, Mark Macrae (1911); William Robertson (1922); Charles Campbell (1922) and Richard Colclough (1924).²² During this time the house was rated at various times as having between 11 and 15 rooms, with the NAV gradually increasing from £160 in 1910 to £250 in 1924. In that year Mrs Graves sold the property to Dr. Leon Jona.²³

Dr. Jona subdivided the property in several stages between 1939 and 1951, when Kelmscott Road was created, leaving the house on a reduced allotment at the top end of the new road.²⁴ Jona was still living in the property, which was numbered 2 Kelmscott Road, in 1960.

REFERENCES:

Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 3, 1851 -1890.

Bower, Rob, 'Malvern, a history of the subdivision, 1840-1989', plan 3, (unpublished manuscript), Malvern Archives.

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McLaren, Ian, *Malvern Crown Land Sales, 1840-1879*, University of Melbourne, 1987.

MMBW plan, 1902.

Sands and McDougall's Directory, 1896.

Shire of Malvern valuation and rates books.

Alexander Sutherland, et al, *Victoria and its Metropolis*, Mc Carron Bird and Co, Melbourne, 1888

Description

Oyama is an imposing two storey Italianate mansion which is dominated by the two storey cast iron verandah. This returns from a projecting semi-octagonal bay to a rectangular wing of the same width. There is an unusual continuation of the same design beyond, giving the impression of a terrace house abutting the main building. In fact, this western section is a masonry replacement of the original timber section. The main original masonry section has a hipped slate roof, relatively plain stucco walls with tripartite windows separately expressed by the arched architraves. The entry is through an arched opening with console brackets on the side projecting wing.

The house is situated on a large allotment with mature trees. Kelmscott Road terminates at the property, thus extending the vista of the garden from Huntingtower Road.

²² City of Malvern rate book, North ward 1909-10, no. 564; 1911-12, no. 623; 1920-21, no. 1042; 1922, no. 1091.

²³ City of Malvern rate book, North ward 1924-25, no. 1176.

²⁴ Lodged plan 14929, 9 January 1939 and Lodged plan 27036 19 June 1951. Bower, plan 3, p. 41.

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Integrity

The c1900 photograph and MMBW plans clearly indicate the original design (refer Attachments 2 and 3). The building was once set on a large allotment with a tennis court in the front garden area, and the layout was similar for Weerona to the north. This latter property has now vanished altogether, and Kelmscott Road has been created out of the eastern section of the garden, however the western section has been retained along with some large trees from the original garden.

The original section of the house is relatively intact, including render and cast iron detailing, although successive alterations have introduced a number of new structures. The only minor change has been the removal of decorative timber blind pelmets on the projecting bay, and the use of a single colour scheme.

Major works were approved in 1982, 1987, 1988, 1989 and presumably these were still being carried out in 1992. Alterations and additions presumably included the new west wing, or at least the southern masonry verandah, and hard landscaping elements that do not have the original nineteenth century character, these included new iron fence, gates and hard paving near the house. A new garage was constructed in a discrete location.

Notwithstanding the impact of these works, the house still retains the essential elements of the design of the main section, as well as a generous garden setting with early trees.

Analysis

2 Kelmscott Road is a substantial Italianate two storey mansion with a return verandah, of an asymmetrical design with a cantered projecting projecting bay. It is characteristic of the boom era Italianate gentleman's residence built by speculative ventures at this period, with expansive gardens. The adjacent property Weerona exemplifies this practice, in this most desirable location, being near the Armadale train station, and in the proximity of the grander estates of Toorak and Caulfield. The property retains many of the features that defined its status, the principal section of the original handsome intact Italianate mansion and the expansive garden with mature trees.

It has historical significance for its association with David Blair, prominent politician and journalist who occupied the house from the year it was constructed in 1887 until 1889, at the end of his illustrious career. He is of importance for his early association with Sir Henry Parkes in the establishment of the *Empire* newspaper in Sydney, in the 1850s, editorship of the *Age* during the Eureka disturbances, as a prominent politician in the 1850s–60s, public figure and writer.

It is also of significance for its association with Hussey Chomley, the Chief Commissioner of Police, who resided in the house from 1891 until his death in 1906, and his brother Arthur, who had owned this allotment before subdivision. Arthur was a prominent member of the legal profession.

The careers of these men spanned from the goldrush period to early this century. This building demonstrates the social status, power and wealth of these people of influence in the

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colony at this period. It is of interest that many such grand houses were rented and not owned, despite the wealth of the occupants, as in the case of David Blair and Hussey Chomley who had land holdings in the proximity of the house.

Statement of significance

Oyama, is of major significance as a substantial Italianate two storey mansion with a return verandah, of an asymmetrical design with a cantered projecting bay. It characterises the boom era Italianate gentleman's residence built by speculative ventures at this period, with expansive gardens, in the proximity of the grander estates of Toorak and Caulfield. The property retains many of the features that defined its status, the principal section of the original handsome intact Italianate mansion and the expansive garden with mature trees.

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The careers of these men spanned from the goldrush period to early this century. This building demonstrates the social status, power and wealth of these people of influence in the colony at this period.

Significant attributes are:

- the two storey cast iron verandah
- projecting semi-octagonal bay and rectangular wing of the same width
- hipped slate roof
- relatively plain intact stucco walls
- tripartite windows separately expressed by the arched architraves
- entry through an arched opening with console brackets on the side projecting wing
- situation on a large allotment with mature trees
- original section of the house being relatively intact
- historical significance for its association with David Blair and Hussey Chomley

Criteria

The building easily meets the criteria for local significance as required by state government guidelines. This is defined by the *Local Government Heritage Guidelines*, Department of Planning and Housing, 1991, (p6)

Places of local significance are of particular importance to a local community, or part of a community, which is usually defined by a local government area (this was pre amalgamation). The majority of places which are determined to be of cultural value will be of local significance. Relatively fewer places will be determined to be of state or national significance.

The normal means of management for places of local significance is inclusion ... in the local planning scheme.

More recently, the Practice Notes to the Victorian Planning Provisions included *Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Infrastructure, February 1999, confirm the 1991 criteria and also recommend the use of the AHC criteria.

Under the Australian Heritage Commission's eight broad criteria, a place may possess significance or other special value for future generations as well as the present community.

This property has been considered to meet the following AHC criteria:

or cultural history

Criterion D: its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:

i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or

ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments

An excellent example of the speculative Boom era Italianate mansion

Criterion E: its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

The house represents very widely recognised aesthetic qualities, complemented by the attractive setting with mature trees

Criterion H: its special associations with the life or works of a person, a group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history

Important for it first being occupied by David Blair and then by Hussey Chomley, both prominent public figures

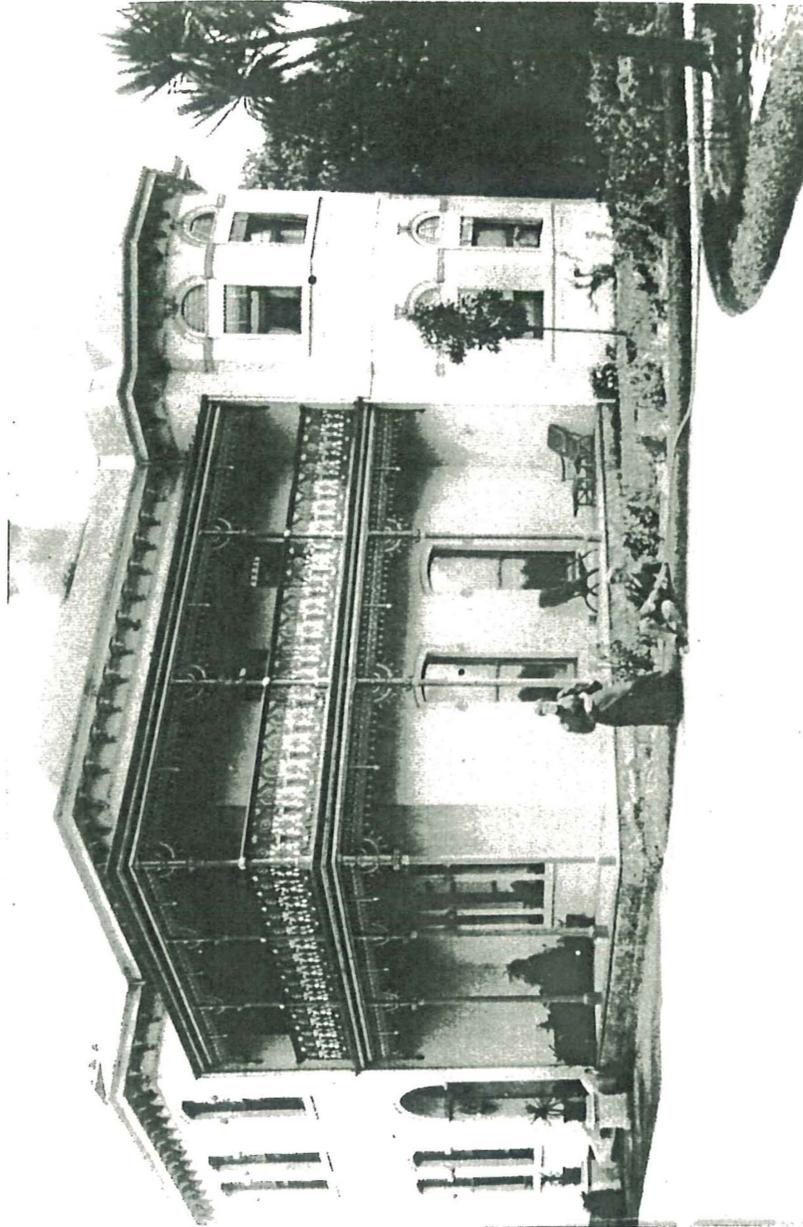
ATTACHMENTS
1 CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHS



1 View of original masonry section of house (compare with 1900s photograph)



2 Recent verandah on west wing, and modern gates and fence



3 EARLY PHOTOGRAPH c1900

Note external timber pelmets and louvres for bay window, and colour scheme for verandah decorative iron work