

Former Stables

14 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern



Heritage Assessment

September 2011

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1.0 Introduction

This report was commissioned by the City of Stonnington. It provides an assessment of the cultural heritage significance of the former Stables at the rear of 14 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern, and provides comment on the appropriateness of the existing grading and heritage control.

2.0 Sources of Information

The analysis below draws upon an external inspection of the building and historical research using the Stonnington Local History Catalogue and MMBW plans. The report also relies on secondary historical sources including the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006) and the *Sorrett Avenue Precinct – Heritage Citation Report* (Context Pty Ltd, 2010).



Figure 1 Map showing the location of 14 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern. Source: Land Victoria Interactive Maps.

3.0 Listings and Controls

City of Stonnington

The former stables the rear of 14 Sorrett Avenue is presently subject to an interim heritage overlay control as part of the Sorrett Avenue Precinct (HO396). HO396 was included on the heritage overlay schedule by virtue of Amendment C116 to the Stonnington Planning Scheme. The schedule of gradings prepared in support of the Amendment listed the stables a B grade building.

The site was included in the Sorrett Avenue Area in the *City of Malvern Heritage Study* (Nigel Lewis and Associates, 1992), and was identified as a 'C-D' grade place in the earlier *Malvern Urban Character Study – Appendix B* (Graeme Butler/Laceworks Collaborative, 1989).

The *City of Stonnington Heritage Review* (Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 1996) identified the stables as a building of 'regional significance'. Sorrett Avenue was investigated in further detail as part of the *Stonnington Heritage Overlay Gap Study – Heritage Overlay Precincts Final Report* (Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, March 2009). In that study, the stables were identified as being contributory to the heritage values of the precinct.

Heritage Victoria

The site is not included on the Victorian Heritage Register.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

The National Trust maintains a file on this building (B6350) but it has not been classified.

Australian Heritage Council

The site is not included on the Register of the National Estate as administered by the Australian Heritage Council.

4.0 History

Contextual History

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, horses were essential for transport of people and goods as well as providing the horsepower for much other heavy work. Households and businesses relied on the horse and cart for deliveries of milk meat and other necessities. The ownership of a horse drawn carriage was particular good indication of wealth and status. Carriage houses and stables associated with large houses and mansions of the wealthy were often elaborate masonry structures, second only in architectural importance to the main residence itself.

Horses were valuable animals, and were generally well cared for, and their stables were usually well-constructed and maintained. Stables were generally of two storeys, with the horse stalls on the ground floor and a hay loft above, with access via large openings in the walls and with chutes conveying the feed to the feed bins in the stalls below.

Although motorised vehicles began to replace horses in the early twentieth century, this was a gradual rather than an abrupt transition. Horses were used for waste collection and earth moving by some Council after World War II, and the horse drawn milk cart persisted into the 1960s.

14 Sorrett Avenue

Sorrett Avenue originally formed part of the Nerrena Estate (later Sorrett Estate), and followed the alignment of a carriage drive created in 1868 by then owner of Nerrena, Charles Umphelby.¹ The Sorret Estate was subdivided in 1886, creating residential allotments on the north and south sides of Sorrett Avenue (originally known as The Avenue). The original 1850s mansion at the eastern end of the avenue was retained on a reduced allotment.

In 1888, Alfred Mayor had a brick house erected on the property now known 16 Sorrett Avenue. City of Malvern Rate books for 1889 note the presence of outbuildings on the property. A 1902 MMBW Detail Plan shows the house at 16 Sorrett Avenue occupying a wide block of land with stables in the south west corner.

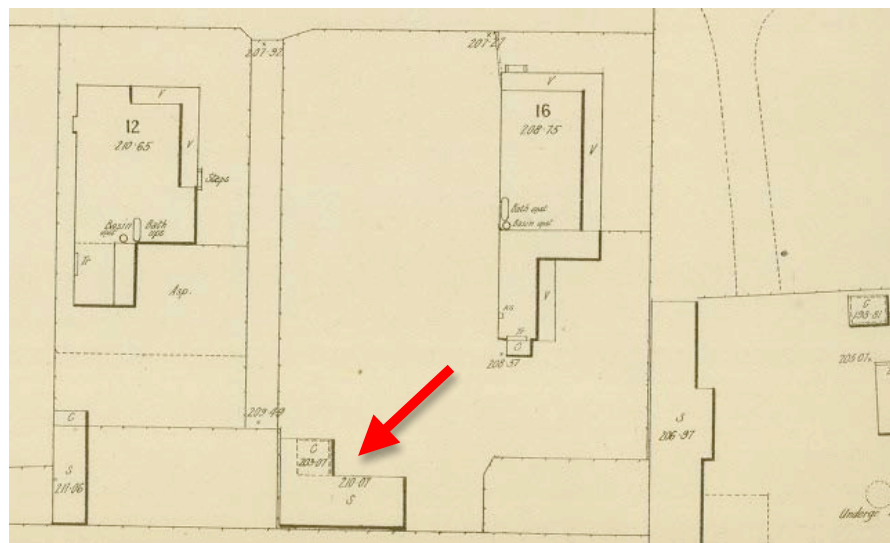


Figure 2 Part of a 1902 MMBW Detail Plan showing the Sorrett Avenue stables (then belonging to the house at 16 Sorrett Avenue). Source: State Library of Victoria.

The house at 16 Sorrett Avenue was purchased by Captain James Elliot Jenkins in 1912. It is thought that Jenkins allowed the 1st Malvern Scouts to use his stable loft as a meeting hall from 1914. In 1923, Jenkins built the present house at 14 Sorrett Avenue. The stables associated with 16 Sorrett Avenue were retained at the rear of No.14.

It had been suggested that the stables had once part of the complex of outbuildings associated with the Sorrett/Nerrena mansion, however, research

¹ The site history is drawn from research by Di Foster, (Stonnington Local History Catalogue, Reg. No., MP 13825),

undertaken by local historian, Di Foster, confirms that the land where the stables are situated did not form part of the original Nerrena estate. Rate book research by Foster shows that in 1881 and 1884 the original Sorrett/Nerrena property, comprising 6-7 acres (i.e. excluding the 1868 carriage drive addition), is described as containing stables. This larger complex of buildings can be also be seen in the 1902 MMBW Detail Plan along the west boundary of the Sorrett mansion allotment. The stables at No.14 are also shown on this plan. On this basis, Foster concludes that the stables could not have formed part of the original 1856 Nerrena estate. It seems more likely that they were built for the house constructed at 16 Sorrett Avenue in 1887-8.

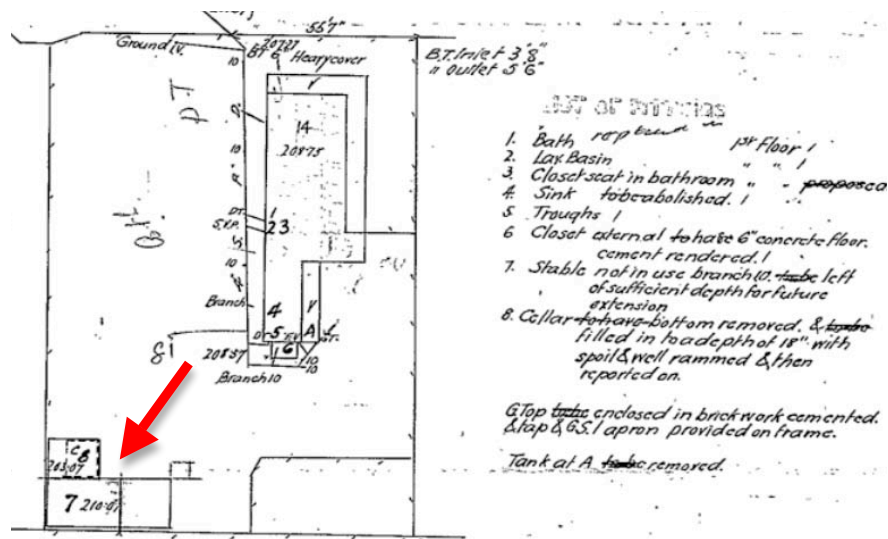


Figure 3 A 1912 MMBW Plan of drainage for the house presently numbered 16 Sorrett Avenue. The stables are in the bottom left corner of the plan (labelled '7'). Source: Yarra Valley Water.



Figure 4 A c1989 photograph of the stables. Source: Stonnington Local History Catalogue.

5.0 Description

The former stables at the rear of 14 Sorrett Avenue is a Victorian double-storey bichrome brick building with a gabled slate roof. External walls are constructed of red brick with darker contrasting Hawthorn brick quoins and arched lintels. The roof has ornamental bargeboards and turned timber finials.

The building was not inspected in detail as part of this assessment, although recent photographs suggest that it remains substantially intact externally. Part of the north elevation is obscured by a modern addition to the house and some of the original door and window joinery was replaced in recent decades, albeit using reproduction joinery sympathetic to the early character of the building.



Figure 5 The north elevation of the stables.

6.0 Comparative Analysis

Structures associated with horse transport were once extremely common, but are becoming increasingly rare in metropolitan Melbourne. A municipal wide survey of stables undertaken as part of stage 1 of the Stonnington Stables and Dairies in the City of Stonnington Heritage Project (John Statham Urban Conservation, 2011), and further refined during stage 2 investigations (Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, May 2011), suggests that approximately 16 domestic stables survive in varying degrees of intactness. Only a small number of these are currently protected by a heritage overlay control. These were generally built on a grand scale to serve nineteenth century mansion estates, and include stables at Mandeville Hall (HO80), Stonington (HO40), Northbrook (HO59) and Avoca (within the Alexandra Avenue precinct, HO122). Stables associated with the former Eilyer mansion are also protected by a heritage overlay (HO241), but this building was

substantially altered when it was converted into a residence in the twentieth century.

More modest stables associated with closer middle and upper middle class suburban development in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century are not as well represented on the Stonnington heritage overlay schedule. These were typically double-storey brick or timber buildings with the horse stalls on the ground floor and a hay loft above. Stylistically, relatively simple picturesque Gothick designs with gable roofs were favoured for stables, even though the associated house was more often than not built in an entirely different Victorian Italianate style. Examples of this type of stable can be found at 14 Sorrett Avenue, 1A Hawksburn Road, South Yarra, 28 Northcote Road, Armadale, and 64 Rose Street, Armadale. The stables at 14 Sorrett Avenue are distinguished from these other examples by the quality of its bichrome brickwork and relatively high degree of integrity.

7.0 Significance

The former stables at 14 Sorrett Avenue are historically and architecturally significant at a local level. The building is very rare example of its type and is built to a higher architectural standard than other more typically utilitarian stables of comparable size.

The stables at 14 Sorrett Avenue are presently graded B. The current assessment finds that the building demonstrates significance at an A2 level.

8.0 Thematic Environmental History

The former stables at 14 Sorrett Avenue illustrate the following theme as explained in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006):

4.3.2 Changing Modes of Transport – from horses to motor vehicles.

9.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that former stables at 14 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern, be retained in the schedule of the Heritage Overlay as part of the Sorrett Avenue Precinct. External paint controls, tree controls and internal alteration controls are not recommended for this site. The stables should be listed in the heritage overlay schedule under 'Outbuildings or fences which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4'. It is further recommended that the building's grading be changed from B to A2.

10.0 References

Context Pty Ltd, *Sorrett Avenue Precinct – Heritage Citation Report*, 2010.

Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, 2006.

MMBW Plan of Drainage No. 134745. Yarra Valley Water.

MMBW Detail Plan No.1760. State Library of Victoria map collection.

Stonnington Local History Catalogue, Reg. No. 13825.

