

Tongaboo, 6 Stonnington Place
Architects: Klingender & Alsop

1916: A.H. Outhwaite O & O. Agent, Klingender and Alsop (MMBW Drainage Plan No 84203)

1916: Photograph showing side open first floor balcony and projecting porch and original front elevation (*Real Property Annual*, 1916, p.51)

1924: Outhwaite (Sands and McDougall Directory)

1924: 'H McL Duigan Esq. Alterations to Tongaboo, Stonnington Place, Malvern A & K Henderson, Alsop & Martin Architects' - for a projecting single storey front gable and new single storey bays to the east elevation (Malvern Building Plan 5033)

1929: Duigan, H.

1947-59: Middows, L.A.

(Sands and McDougall Directory)

Renowned architect Rodney Alsop designed and built a unique precinct in this section of Stonnington Place (see also area description). The cottages included:

The Croft, 4 Stonnington Place (1913) Alsop's own house, now demolished

8 Stonnington Place (1914)

Tongaboo, 6 Stonnington Place (1916)

Crumpford, 2 Stonnington Place (1918)

This property at 6 Stonnington Place was possibly the residence of well known children's illustrator Ida Rentoul Outhwaite as A.H. Outhwaite was listed as owner and occupier in 1916. A long time resident of Stonnington Place recalled that Rentoul's colleague May Gibbs reputedly sketched in the garden of Tongaboo. (1)

Clare has described this residence as:

Typical Craftsman single ridged box form with dormer and window attic. The rough casted walls and bordered gables are Craftsman elements, however, elements such as the steep pitched roof, the tall chimney place in picturesque conjunction with a



narrow, single windowed dormer, the bay under a low projecting eave and the timber balcony instead of a verandah give the house more an English cottage than an American character. (2)

This property once included No 6a, the allotment to the west, and this still contains a large attic style timber barn or stable type structure. 6 Stonnington Place is of note for the steep gabled roof, prominent chimneys, flat decked dormer, multi-paned windows and vertical timber planking to gable ends, heavily textured rough cast walls to ground level and detailed items such as the latticed enclosed porch to the front entry. The barn at 6a Stonnington Place is clad with timber planking with the same narrow timber cover straps used on the gables of the main house and provides an essential continuum between the two properties. The house is substantially intact other than the full length French doors on the front gable extension, alterations to the rear windows on the first floor level and to the east elevation. This house has an extremely picturesque character enhanced by a mature garden and massive trees as well as the apparent remnants of the original lattice fencing now clad with an ivy hedge. The narrow street and small allotments lend themselves to this cottage form.

John Clare in his study of Post-Federation houses in Melbourne (3) has indicated how Alsop's Stonnington Place houses expressed a concern for a simple, unornamental and functional architecture. This was quite advanced for contemporary practice. The use of stained timber cladding which was shared by Nos 4, 6 and 8 was based on the American Craftsman style however the vertical boarded gables frequently used by Alsop at this period (e.g. 30 Alban Road) provided an Australian character to this idiom. The houses and gardens were designed to be of a complementary character. This group pre-empted Edna Walling's famous cottages at Bickleigh Vale of the 1920s and 1930s.

Refer to Appendix One for biographical notes on architect.

Tongaboo is of state significance as an important example of the modest cottage style favoured by Alsop for his own use and for like minded clients for whom he designed a several houses near his own in Stonnington Place. The possible association with Ida Rentoul adds considerable historical significance to this property.

- 1 Nancy Shaw to Mayor and Councillors, City of Malvern, 12 October 1989.
- 2 John Clare 'The post-Federation house in Melbourne: Bungalow and Vernacular Revival styles 1900-1930', unpublished thesis, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, University of Melbourne, 1984.
- 3 *ibid.*



OUTHWAITE, IDA SHERBOURNE (1888-1960), illustrator, was born on 9 June 1888 at Carlton, Melbourne, second surviving child of Rev. John Laurence Rentoul [q.v.] and his wife Annie Isobel, née Rattray. Encouraged by her gifted literary and artistic family Ida drew prolifically from childhood, snatching time from her formal education at Presbyterian Ladies' College to contribute to magazines produced in the family home at Ormond [q.v.5] College, University of Melbourne. Her talents complemented the literary ability of her elder sister, ANNIE RATTRAY (1882-1978) who was born on 22 September 1882. After a brilliant career at P.L.C., culminating in the classics exhibition, Annie took a first-class honours degree at the University of Melbourne (B.A., 1905), where she won the Wyselaskie [q.v.6] scholarship in classics and shared the Higgins [q.v.9] poetry prize.

In 1903 six fairy stories written by Annie and illustrated by Ida were published in the *New Idea*. Next year the sisters collaborated on *Mollie's bunyip* which delighted the public with its representations of fairies and elves in a recognizably Australian setting. *Mollie's staircase*, with text by Mrs Rentoul, appeared in 1906. At the Australian Exhibition of Women's Work in 1907 the Rentoul sisters displayed their *Australian songs for young and old*, with music by Georgette, wife of Franklin Peterson [q.v.]. With its sequels of 1910 and 1913 it was 'the most Australian of all the Outhwaite publications'. That year Ida illustrated Tarella Quin's *Gum tree brownie*, using pen and ink, as in all her previous work, to depict her own stylized fairyland. In 1908 the Rentoul sisters published their first substantial story book, *The lady of the blue beads*.

On 9 December 1909 Ida married Arthur Grenbry Outhwaite (1875-1938). He had been admitted as barrister and solicitor in 1899 but in 1904 became manager of the Perpetual Executors and Trustees Association of Australia Ltd; in 1915-22 he was managing director.

Ida Rentoul Outhwaite, as she was now known, published little in the decade following her marriage; during those years four children were born. But in 1916 she brought out her first coloured work, *Elves and fairies, a deluxe edition* produced entirely in Australia by Thomas Lothian [q.v.10]. The success of the book, with its delicate water-colour plates, was due both to Ida's artistic talent and to the business acumen of her husband, who provided a £400 subsidy to ensure a high-quality production and consigned royalties to the Red Cross, thereby encouraging vice-regal patronage. Journalists who interviewed the now-famous illustrator were charmed to find her small, whimsical and piquant, like her creations.

Visiting Europe in 1920, Ida exhibited with great success in Paris and London. Critics discerned the technical influence of Beardsley, Rackham, Dulac and Greenaway but affirmed the originality of her vision. She signed a contract with A. & C. Black who published five books for her over the next decade, including *The enchanted forest* (1921), with text by her husband, and, probably the most popular of all the Rentoul sisters' collaborations, *The little green road to fairyland* (1922). *The fairyland of Ida Rentoul Outhwaite* (1926), another sumptuous volume, with text by her husband and sister, was less successful. In 1930 came the last of her books published by A. & C. Black. Angus [q.v.7] & Robertson [q.v.] brought out two more books in 1933 and 1935 but they received relatively little atten-

Outhwaite

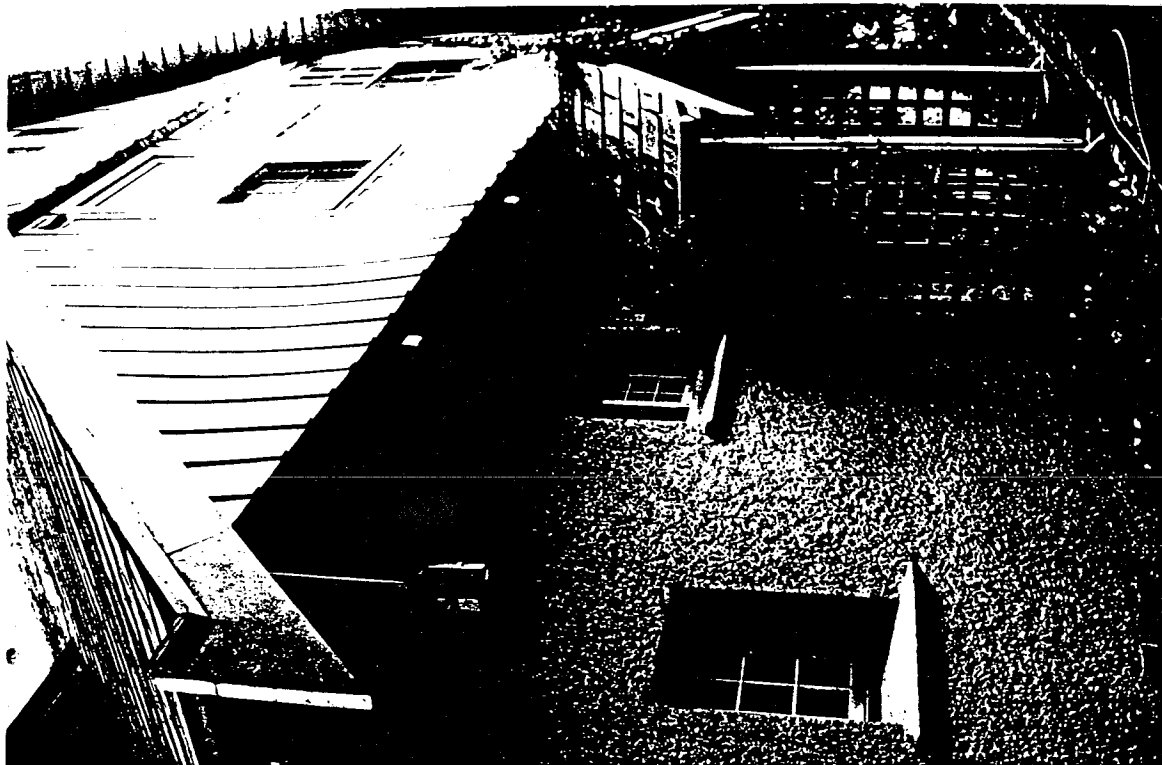
tion. Her last two exhibitions, which in 1916-28 were almost annual events, were held in 1933.

After World War II Ida said that 'the war stopped the taste for fairies—in parents anyhow—and the fairies fled, appalled at the bomb'. But in fact her popularity had waned steadily over the previous decade. Her early work, with its successful marriage of the then popular European fairy tradition with an Australian context, had delighted generations of readers. But her illustrations, finely executed, decorative and whimsical, had developed little over time. The spontaneity, grace and creativity of her earlier work had rigidified in images which had become over-worked and banal. Moreover most of her books had suffered from having texts devised to fit the illustrations, and although those written by Annie had charmed an earlier generation, by the 1930s they appeared sentimental and old-fashioned.

Grenbry Outhwaite died on 16 June 1938 and both their sons died in action in World War II, during which Ida worked in censorship. Annie Rentoul had retired from P.L.C., where she had taught Greek, Latin and ancient history since 1913. 'Tiny, with grey hair and great luminous brown eyes', she had encouraged and inspired generations of schoolgirls. Ida shared her last years with her sister in a flat at Caulfield, where, survived by her two daughters, she died on 25 June 1960; she was cremated. A portrait by Amalie Colquhoun is in the National Library of Australia. Annie Rentoul died unmarried on 24 July 1978.

K. Fitzpatrick, *PLC Melbourne* (Melb, 1975); F. Taylor, *Time recalled* (Syd, 1978); M. Muir, *A history of Australian children's book illustration* (Melb, 1982); B. Niall, *Australia through the looking glass* (Melb, 1984); M. Muir and R. Holden, *The fairy world of Ida Rentoul Outhwaite* (Syd, 1985) and for bibliog; *Triad* (Syd), 10 May 1921; *Woman's World*, 1 Dec 1923; *Argus*, 4 Sept 1916, 10 July 1920, 16 Dec 1925; *Punch* (Melb), 10 Feb 1921; *Age*, 4 Apr 1921, 30 Oct 1923; *Australasian*, 9 Apr 1921; *Herald* (Melb), 27 Oct 1923, 17 June 1938, 25 June 1960; *Bulletin*, 8 Nov 1923; biog cuttings file (NL).

DIANE LANGMORE



6 S T O H N I N G T O N P L A C E

6a Stonnington Place (outbuildings only)

Architect: Rodney Alsop

(refer also to 6 Stonnington Place)

This property was once part of 6 Stonnington Place, the allotment to the east. While there is a modern house on this property, it still contains a large attic style timber barn or stable structure, which originally formed part of No 6. The barn is clad with timber planking with the same narrow timber cover straps used on the gables of the main house and provides an essential continuum between the two properties. The barn remains totally intact.

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The barn at 6a Stonnington Place is of state significance as an integral part of Tongaboo, 6 Stonnington Place (also of state significance). The barn is of the same architectural detail and styling at 6 Stonnington Place, the gardens and landscaping were designed as a whole, the picturesque character of the barn extended the cottage character of the house to form a unified ensemble.

