

‘The Pottery’ (formerly ‘Hybla’)

18 Wallace Avenue, Toorak

Place type: Residential Buildings (private), Villa

Significance level: Local



Recommended protection: Planning Scheme

Architectural style: Victorian period (1851-1901) Neo-Greek

Locality history

Toorak has long been recognised as Melbourne’s most affluent suburb. It has played a key role in Melbourne’s social and cultural history, and is perceived Australia-wide as a symbol of wealth and influence. Toorak is situated on the elevated south side of the Yarra River, with views across the river to the city of Melbourne. Although it was elevation and topography that established Toorak as a fashionable address, its name originates from an Aboriginal word for ‘reedy swamp’. The first Crown land sales took place in the 1840s and 1850s. ‘Toorak House’, built by merchant James Jackson, along with its extensive grounds, was acquired by the newly established Victorian government in 1851 as Victoria’s first Government House. The creation of a vice-regal seat in 1851 set the tone for social exclusivity and was the foundation for Toorak’s development as a desirable and sought-after address.

As Melbourne developed and industrialised, the wealthy middle-class sought to escape the bustle of the city and to settle in a quieter, more spacious environment. Paddocks and native bush gave way to large estates and substantial homes. The approach to Toorak was via the Gardiners Creek Road (later Toorak Road), which was the chief east–west route; the drive along it was described as ‘very pleasant’ in 1879. (Whitworth 1879: 390) Toorak was also accessed from the private punt that linked the two sides of the Yarra and via the Oakleigh railway line that opened in 1879.

During the 1870s and 1880s, many large mansions were erected, typically with a large complex of outbuildings so that each one effectively constituted a self-contained entity. These included servants’ quarters (for laundrywomen, cook, housemaids, nursemaid, etc.); a laundry; accommodation for gardeners and grooms, as well as toolsheds for their equipment; and stables and carriage house. Toorak in its heyday appeared as an impressive collection of large

country estates within relative close proximity in a suburban setting. Many adopted the Italianate style of architecture and like ‘Toorak House’, were surmounted with a decorative square tower. The scale and extravagances of these residences reached a peak during the land boom of c.1888-1891. The homes of the wealthy in Toorak were often sumptuously and exquisitely decorated in the latest styles. Owners could afford to ‘go home’ and bring back art and other decorative pieces not easily obtainable in the colonies. Large estates also allowed for the establishment of impressive gardens and these were often in keeping with prevailing good taste and in sympathy with the design of the house. In many cases affluent property owners commissioned landscape designers.

Toorak society at its height, from the 1870s and up until the dawn of the First World War, represented an unusually high concentration of wealth, power and influence not seen elsewhere in Australia. This was home to many of Melbourne’s wealthiest and most influential families, including the Baillieu, Clarke, Grimwade, Fairburn, Fink, Miller and Myer families. The salubrious environs of Toorak provided a seasonal Melbourne base for many landed families (mostly from the Western District), but was also a sought-after address for the professional classes and the merchants and others of Melbourne’s expanding *nouveaux riches* who had ‘made it’, and then often subsequently lost it, through over-investing during the boom years of the late 1880s. The population of Toorak suburb was dominantly British and overwhelmingly Protestant. St John’s Church of England was a lynchpin of Toorak social life in the Victorian era and has become a symbol of social aspiration. Other ‘English’ influences in the development of Toorak can be seen in the Tudor Revival style of a number of the interwar-era shopfronts along Toorak Road.

Other parts of Toorak were developed with more typical middle-class homes of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. There was very minimal, if any, industry in Toorak proper, although many of its elevated homes had clear views across the Yarra of the factories with their chimney smoke that were concentrated on the Richmond flats.

In the 1920s and 1930s the fashion for flats saw mansion houses converted into multiple self-contained dwellings or demolished to allow subdivision. In the 1950s and 1960s many more of Toorak’s mansions were demolished owing to the high cost of maintenance and changing lifestyles, including ‘Heathmont’, ‘Nareeb’, and ‘Ellerslie’. Large blocks of flats were constructed amidst considerable outcry in the 1960s and 1970s in the case of the Domain Flats and Lansell Road. Many new subdivisions, through their layout and street-naming, reflected the earlier period of the ‘big house’, for example Montalto Avenue, Tintern Avenue and Brookfield Road, which were named after the mansions they replaced.

Place history

This site forms part of Crown portions 13 and 14 in the Parish of Prahran (Parish plan 1860). This site was vacant in 1888 and owned by Mary Hastie (c1849–1894), a single woman of independent means (RB). Mary Hastie was the daughter of Robert and Jane Hastie of Scotland. Her brother was the benefactor John Hastie of ‘Leslie Manor’, Camperdown, an unmarried grazier who had died in 1866, leaving a large fortune to his next of kin, and to various Protestant churches (Anglican and Presbyterian) and sections of the University (the Hastie Bequest). In 1887, after the permitted 21-year period after the testator’s death that income could be accumulated from the estate, his fortune amounted to £144,000 and Mary Hastie became entitled to inherit a one-quarter share of £50,000 with her sister and two nieces, as well as £5500 cash (*Argus* 30 November 1887). The settlement of John Hastie’s estate in 1887 became something of a legal *cause célèbre*.

Following her inheritance, Mary Hastie purchased land in Wallace Avenue in 1888. In 1889 she was rated £180 for a brick house of 9 rooms with stables, which she leased to Hugh McMeiken, gentleman (RB). The following year, Hastie let the house to Frederick R. Hannay, gentleman (RB).

The house was named ‘Hybla’ – the name of an ancient Hellenic town in Sicily on the slope of Mount Etna.

The designer of the house has not been identified, but it was clearly modelled on Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's Neo-Greek 'Holmwood House' in Glasgow of 1857-58. This is discussed in detail in the Comparative Analysis.

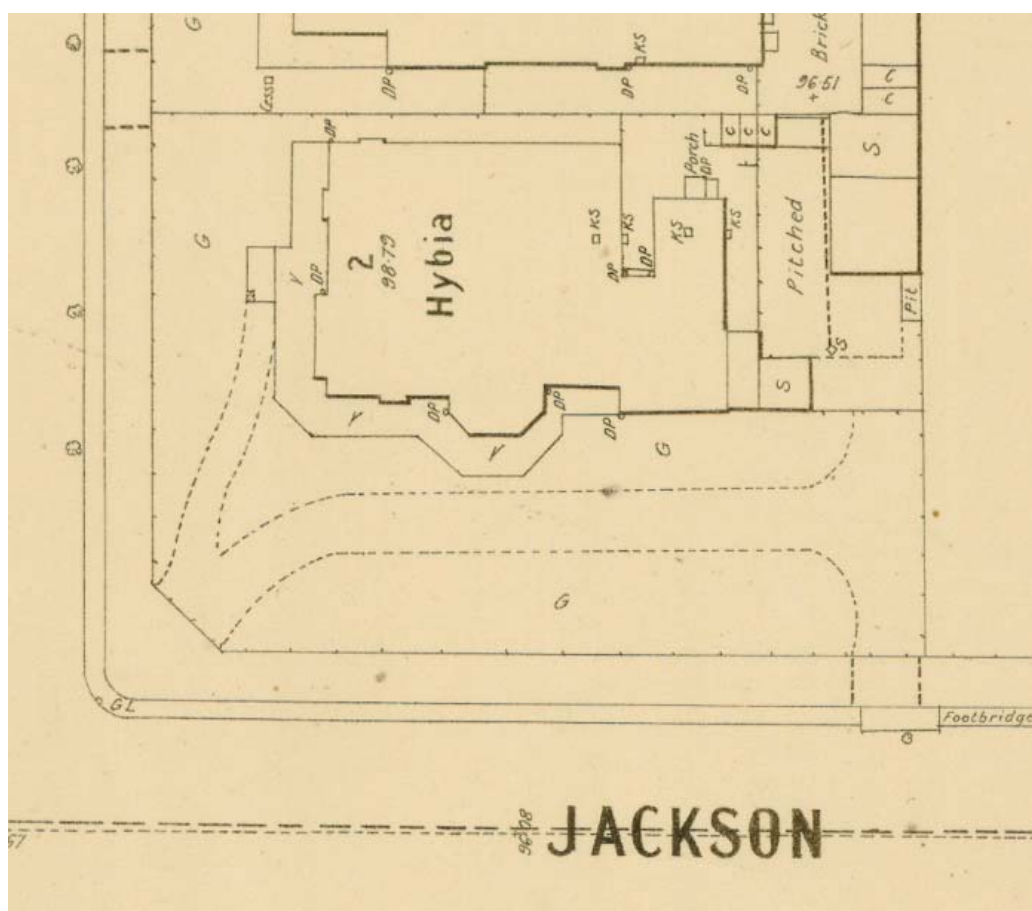


Figure 1. MMBW Detail Plan No. 938, dated 1900 (source: SLV).

The MMBW detail plan of 1900 shows a large villa residence at number 2 Wallace Avenue, 'Hybia' [sic], with a bay window on the south side and a return verandah. The house is sited on a corner block, set in surrounding gardens. A path from the corner entrance leads to the house. From the front entrance there is also a drive to the rear stables and an adjacent building, which was probably a carriage house. A pitched yard area is situated between the rear of the house (and servants' area) and the stables.

Mary Hastie leased the house for the full period of her ownership. She died in 1894, leaving no children. Her next of kin were her two nieces, Mary Hastie and Jane Anderson (nee Hastie), who would have inherited the house. The property 'Hybla' was described in the Probate papers as follows:

Freehold land ... having a frontage of 100 ft to Wallace St and 140 ft to Jackson St upon which land is erected a Brick cemented Villa known as "Hybla" containing 8 rooms, kitchen, pantries, Bathroom & Tower Room, together with Coachhouse & Stables. This property is let to W.P. [illeg] Hannay at an annual rental of 150' (Hastie, Mary, Probate papers, 1894, VPRS 28/P0, Unit 718).

Mary Hastie's tenant Major F. Rainsford Hannay had returned to London in 1894 and a sale of his 'Elegant and Superior Furniture was held at 'Hybla' (*Argus* 16 January 1894). George Higgins, civil engineer, leased the house in c.1901-1902 (RB). The well-known author 'Rolf Boldrwood' (T.A. Browne), the author of *Robbery Under Arms* (1888), stayed at 'Hybla', Toorak, in the period of the c1890s to early 1900s, and penned several letters that described the garden (Boldrwood, c1886-1911, SLV).

In the early 1900s the house was let to Dr J.P. Ryan. When Dr Ryan died in 1910, the 'household furniture and effects' of the house 'Hybla', Wallace Avenue, were advertised for

sale (*Argus* 1 March 1910). In 1913 the house was advertised to be let 'as flats' (*Argus* 15 August 1913).

The house was again advertised to be let in 1916, having an address at that time of 2 Wallace Avenue. It was described as: 'TOORAK, HYBLA, 2 Wallace avenue; 8 rooms or part, handsome villa, gardens; minute tram' (*Argus* 15 February 1916).

Sometime later, by 1917, 'Hybla' had become the permanent residence of Jane Anderson (née Hastie) and her only daughter Mary Cameron 'Marnie' Pott. It is not clear to what extent the house had been altered to be let as flats, and whether Jane Anderson and her daughter occupied one of the flats or had taken up the entire residence.

Jane Anderson was the widow of Rev. John Anderson, former minister of St John's Presbyterian Church in Warrnambool. She was the daughter of George Hastie and Ann Thompson. Her father's sister was Miss Mary Hastie, who had first owned 'Hybla' in 1889, and his brother was the benefactor John Hastie (d.1866) of 'Leslie Manor', Camperdown. Jane had been orphaned as a girl and raised firstly by her uncle John Hastie and then cared for by her aunt Mary Hastie. Jane was sent at around 14 years of age to Melbourne to attend Miss Tripp's School in Prahran, which evolved into Toorak College (Kiddle 1961: 487-88).

Jane's daughter Mrs Pott was formerly Mary Anderson. She had married Scotsman James Gideon Pott in Edinburgh in 1905 (*Australasian* 12 August 1905) and lived overseas during the Great War. She served as a V.A.D. nurse, and was mentioned in despatches (*Morning Bulletin* 13 August 1937). Her husband, J.G. Pott, had joined the British Army and died at Salonika in 1917 (*Argus* 14 February 1917). After the death of her husband, Mrs Pott returned to Australia and lived with her mother at 'Hybla' in Wallace Avenue, Toorak (*Table Talk* 3 July 1924).

Jane Anderson died in 1933 and in the absence of any other descendants, the house 'Hybla' was presumably left to her only daughter, Mary Cameron Pott. Mary Pott was listed as Mrs J.G. Pott in the 1934 publication, *Who's Who in the World of Women, Victoria, Australia*, recognised for her service work, and her place of residence was given as 'Hybla' (*Who's Who* 1934). Mary Pott played a significant role in the YWCA, serving as national president of the World Fellowship Committee (*Morning Bulletin* 13 August 1937). She was also a keen gardener (*Who's Who* 1934). She remained living at 'Hybla' until at least 1947 (ER), and died in Gardenvale, Victoria, in 1969.



Figure 2. Mrs J.G. Pott (Mary Cameron Pott née Anderson), depicted in *Who's Who in the World of Women, Victoria, Australia* (1934)

'Hybla' stood to the south-west of Miss McComas's Toorak Preparatory Grammar School, also known as 'Glamorgan' after its original home, located on the south side of Douglas Street since 1919. The site was taken over as the Geelong Grammar School junior campus in 1947. The villa residence, 'Hybla', at 18 Wallace Avenue, was used by Geelong Grammar School as part of its junior campus in 1967 and acquired in 1970 (Lemon 1999:199). The school nicknamed the building 'The Pottery' after Mrs Pott who had lived there. The school used the coach house at the rear for art classes until it was demolished in 1978 (Lemon 1999: 207, 252).

'Hybla' was used as the school kindergarten in the 1980s and extended for this purpose in 1992 (Lemon 1999: 277).

The Geelong Grammar School Handbook (undated) states that 'The Pottery' building and outdoor spaces were transformed via a significant renovation process in 2002'. Further details are not provided (Geelong Grammar School [n.d.]: 57).



Figure 3. 'The Pottery' at Glamorgan, photographed after demolition of the coach house and renovations in 1978 (source: Andrew Lemon, *The Pride of Miss McComas*, 1993).



Figure 4. 'Hybla' at 18 Wallace Avenue, Toorak, taken c1970s (source: Committee for Urban Action collection, SLV).

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Physical description



Figure 5. Front elevation of 'Hybla' (source: City of Stonnington 2016).

'Hybla' is a large single-storey residence, occupying a wide allotment on the north-east corner of Wallace Avenue and Jackson Street in Toorak. It is set back from both street frontages behind a modern fence which conceals most of the building from Jackson Street. The former garden has been lost to various school-yard requirements.

Constructed in 1889, the building is distinctive for its bold use of traditional and abstracted Greek decorative elements, primarily drawn from 'Holmwood House' in Glasgow Scotland. That building was designed by leading Greek Revival architect Alexander 'Greek' Thomson and built in 1857-58. 'Holmwood House' was described as a 'picturesquely treated ... adaptation of the Greek', and the same can be said for 'Hybla', which combines an Italianate massing and square tower with extensive Grecian and a bit of Egyptian ornament.

It has complex massing with variously scaled projecting gabled bays and a large central tower over the centre of the building. The wide eaves have a widely spaced pierced scallop detail along their bottom edge. The rectangular projecting bay fronting Wallace Avenue is highly ornamented with a relatively shallow-pitched gable roof, unusual double bargeboard with wide eaves, and a high relief rendered tympanum that utilises a range of Greek ornamental motifs executed both in high relief and as an incised band at the base. This includes anthemion (palmettes), arabesques, tridents, a star or sunburst within a notched circle, and a bas-relief Aeolic capital (Figure 6). An Aeolic capital is the predecessor of the Ionic capital; it has two large volutes (spiral scrolls) with a palmette (a leaf ornament resembling a fan) in between them.

The south side gable has a splayed form, and somewhat simpler detail. An incised Greek Key frieze runs above the verandah roof. Above it are pairs of simple dwarf pilasters below a large incised design on an anthemion. To the west of this gable is the only (visible) chimney, which is unusually small and features incise patterns on the shaft and a terracotta chimney pot at the top.

A shallow-pitched skillion corrugated iron verandah wraps around the front facade and returns to encircle the canted bay to the south. It retains slim cast-iron columns resting on battered masonry plinths, and has a verandah beam covered in two layers of pointed scallops. The floor retains its bluestone nosing and what may be original red and cream biscuit tiles.

The roof is a complex grouping of low-pitched gables, apart from the central tower with a nearly pyramidal roof, all clad in new slates and with very wide eaves. Bargeboards have scrolled ends and regular raised bosses along their length.

The windows are full-length, probably casements, with large, rich painted and stained glass highlights. The architraves are battered, in the Egyptian style. Beside them, on the façade are large incised floral designs. The front door is recessed and there are very large panels of incised anthemion designs beside it. The door was not visible, but retains leadlight sidelights and highlights. The entrance is reached via a small flight of steps with a cast-iron balustrade between battered and fluted piers (similar to those of the verandah).



Figure 6. Detail of the elaborate high relief render tympanum to the front projecting bay. The scalloped fringe to the verandah is just visible below (source: City of Stonnington 2016).

The building is dominated by the landmark tower which has deep overhanging eaves with a timber fascia of a pointed scallop fringe motif that matches the verandah below. The eaves are supported on enlarged paired Italianate eaves brackets which in turn rest on pilasters. The capitals are an unusual combination of a dog-tooth moulding to the abacus (top block) and palmettes in high relief below. The shafts of the pilasters are panelled with an incised scrolling floral design along their length. Contributing to the tower's distinctive appearance is Italianate corbelling above windows with shouldered hood moulds and consoles beneath the window sills.

Below the tower, the building name 'HYBLA' is fashioned on an unusual pediment which projects through the eaves. It is boldly modelled with abstracted Greek pediment and cenotaph forms. Along the base is a row of incised designs suggesting a triangular pediment.



Figure 7. Detail of landmark tower and unusual name plate projecting above the main roof of the building. (source: Context 2016)

On the ridge of the roof, on the north side, is a very unusual chimney. It has a stepped rectangular base, but the shaft is round and narrow with a fluted top.

There have been numerous additions to the rear of the former residence which were likely undertaken as part of the conversion to school use. Much of the property is concealed from the public realm by high fences and a gabled weatherboard shed in the front garden, but the house as viewed and appreciated from Wallace Avenue appears largely intact. The Jackson Street façade is also intact, but is hidden by a high paling fence.

Comparative analysis

As discussed in the Stonnington Thematic Environmental History, section 8.2.2, the suburban house on a garden allotment was an aspiration of many middle-class Victorians:

Davison (1978:145) describes the Victorian cult of the home in the fresh air and tranquillity of the suburbs as a haven from the noise and dirt of the city - the ideal of rus in urbe (country in the city) which, through Victoria's prosperity and the growth of the public transport system, became possible for many working people. For most suburbanites this home was a single-storey detached house surrounded by its own garden. On a visit to Australia in the 1880s, Twopeny (1883:37) noted that this was the almost universal preference of Australians. During the boom of the 1880s many people found their ideal piece of rus in urbe in the Malvern municipality. Here streets of Victorian villas rapidly began to replace market gardens, especially in the vicinity of the railway lines.

The detached house was the typical Victorian house form in the middle-ring suburbs, in areas where the new tram and train lines facilitated travel and allowed lower density development. In this spacious suburban environment, they could be set in large gardens with side setbacks allowing for a return verandah on one or two sides. They were also built in inner suburban areas for better-off residents, but were usually restricted in form with a front verandah only and side walls near the boundaries.

Through the first half of the nineteenth century, the Italianate style spread widely in Britain fuelled by the works of architects such as John Nash and Charles Barry and through designs promoted in pattern books such as Charles Parker's *Villa Rustica* (1832). In 1845, the style received Royal endorsement when Prince Albert, working with architect Thomas Cubitt,

designed 'Osbourne' on the Isle of Wight as a retreat for Queen Victoria and the Royal family. 'Osbourne' with its plain stuccoed expression and tall balustraded tower would become the model for many large residences throughout the Empire including Government House in Melbourne.

The earliest form of the Italianate villa had complex gabled roofs and a bracketed pyramidal roof to the tower. In Australia, this type is seen far less frequently than the later type with a hipped roof. The preeminent example in Australia is 'Northbury' at Longford, Tasmania (1862, designed by Edward Archer).



Figure 8. 'Northbury' of 1862, Longford, Tasmania (source: National Trust of Tasmania, 1965)

Closer to home is the former 'Yarra House', now known as 'Grimwade House' and part of Melbourne Girls' Grammar, at 86 Anderson Street, South Yarra. It was designed by Reed, Henderson & Smart in 1882 and is an example of the late Victorian 'Red Brick Italianate' with gabled roofs and a pyramidal-roofed tower reminiscent of the earlier 'Northbury' (HO6, City of Melbourne). No examples of this type have been identified in Stonnington.



Figure 9. Former 'Yarra House', Reed, Henderson & Smart, 1882 (source: detail of painting by William Tibbits, State Library of Victoria)

The picturesque, asymmetrical massing of the Italianate villa could also be used as the base for a number of picturesque styles, with suitable adjustments in roof pitches and ornamentation. This was the case for the 'Neo Greek' houses designed in the mid-nineteenth century by architect Alexander 'Greek' Thomson in Glasgow and its suburbs.

Thomson (1817-1875) designed in a variety of styles, but is best known for his austere Neo-Classical public buildings, many of which employed Greek temple forms as well as Egyptian-style motifs. Thomson's residential designs were even more eclectic, and became internationally influential through their publication in the architectural pattern book *Villa and Cottage Architecture: Select examples of country and suburban residences recently erected*, published by Blackie & Son in 1868. This book contains detailed engravings of a house that was clearly the model for 'Hybla', both in its massing and its detail.



Figure 10. Perspective view of 'Holmwood House', Glasgow, of 1857-58 (source: Blackie 1868)

This model was 'Holmwood House', built in 1857-58 to Thomson's design. In its massing and the use of a central tower, it is similar to Thomson's Italianate villas, such as 'Craig Ailey Villa' of c1852. 'Craig Ailey Villa' has a square tower with a low-pitched pyramidal roof and a corbel table below the tower windows, both of which can be seen at 'Hybla'.



Figure 11. Perspective view of Alexander Thomson's Italianate 'Craig Ailey Villa', Glasgow, c1852 (source: Blackie 1868)

It is Thomson's Greek-inspired villas that exhibit his most innovative work. Two of them are illustrated in *Villa and Cottage Architecture*: a 'double villa' (semi-detached houses) at Langside of 1856-57 and 'Holmwood House' at Cathcart of 1857-58. The two buildings share a number of

distinctive details, such as low-pitched gabled roofs with wide eaves, bargeboards with scrolled ends and bosses along them, and the use of Greek decorative motifs and orders. These features also characterise 'Hybla' and explain the origins of its highly unusual form. Even more striking is the extensive use of decorative designs, both from the exterior and interior of 'Holmwood House', executed in cement render and covering the walls of 'Hybla'. Some of the most important similarities are set out below.

To start, the very low pitch of the gables of 'Hybla' is in keeping with 'Holmwood House', as are the bargeboards with scrolled ends and bosses along their length. The criss-crossed finials and pendant of 'Holmwood House' has not been reproduced, or have been lost.

Incised running designs of a Greek key and alternating anthemias and tridents used at the eaves line of 'Holmwood' are also used on the south and west gables of 'Hybla'.

Most of the remaining external details of 'Hybla' were drawn from the interior decoration of 'Holmwood'. The same Aeolian capitals seen in the 'Holmwood' dining room appear on the front gable of 'Hybla'. The battered Egyptian door architrave to the 'Holmwood' dining room is used as the external window architrave of 'Hybla'. Details of the 'Holmwood' chimney mantels also inspired details at 'Hybla'. The horseshoe curve of the hall fireplace, with bosses and notched borders, has been used on the front gable. The incised design of a stylised plant in a vase has been reproduced from the drawing room and dining room fireplaces and enlarged for use on 'Hybla's' walls.



Figure 12. Front gables of 'Holmwood' (left) and 'Hybla' (right). Note low pitch of gable, metal bosses along bargeboard, scrolled ends of bargeboard. The incised patterns below the gable of 'Hybla' are shown more clearly below (source: Blackie 1868).

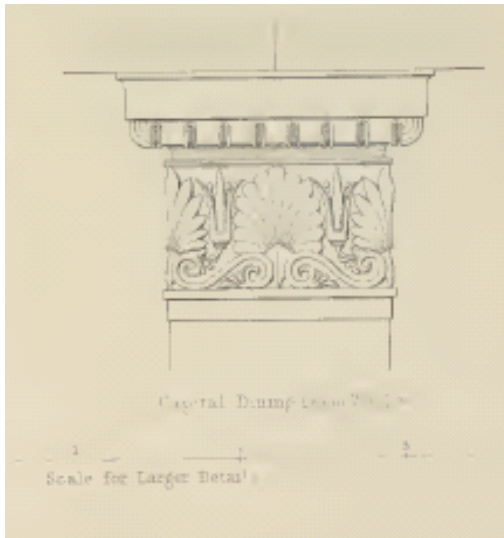


Figure 13. Capital detail from the 'Holmwood' dining room, used on the 'Hybla' front gable (source: Blackie 1868).

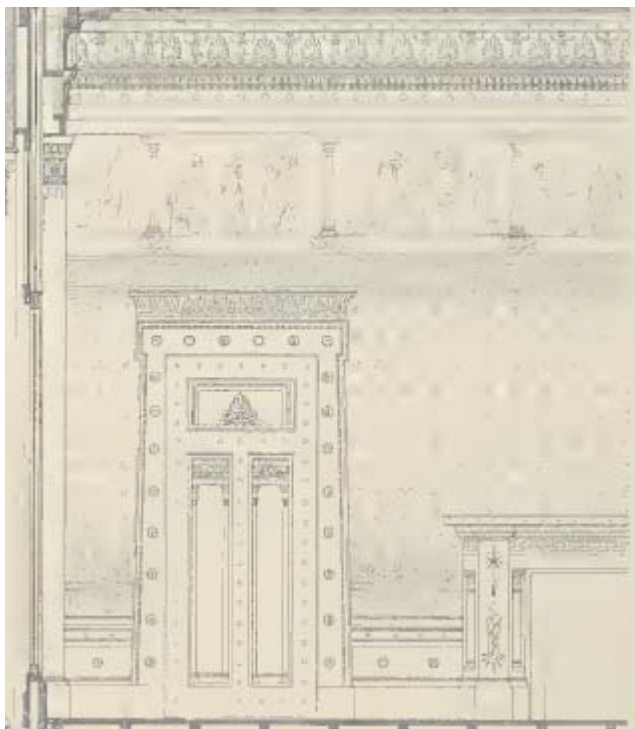


Figure 14. Battered, Egyptian style door surround in the 'Holmwood' dining room, and around the windows of 'Hybla' (source: Blackie 1868).

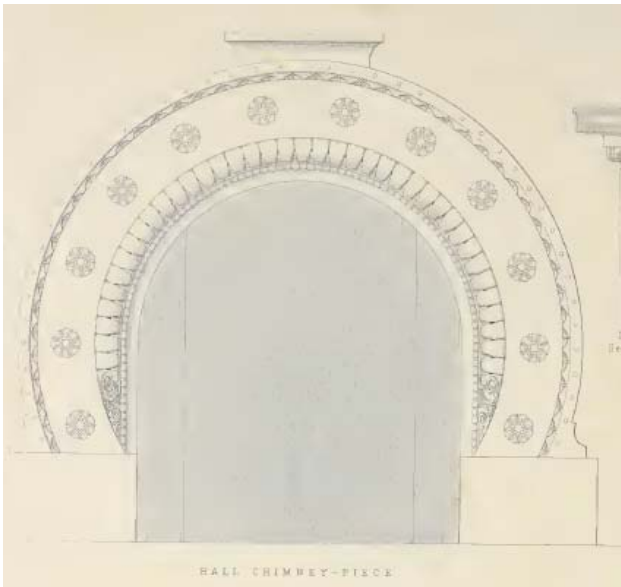


Figure 15. Horseshoe arched hall chimney-piece at 'Holmwood' and the same design on the 'Hybla' front gable (source: Blackie 1868).

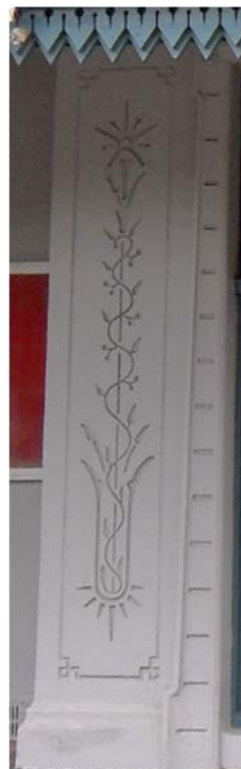
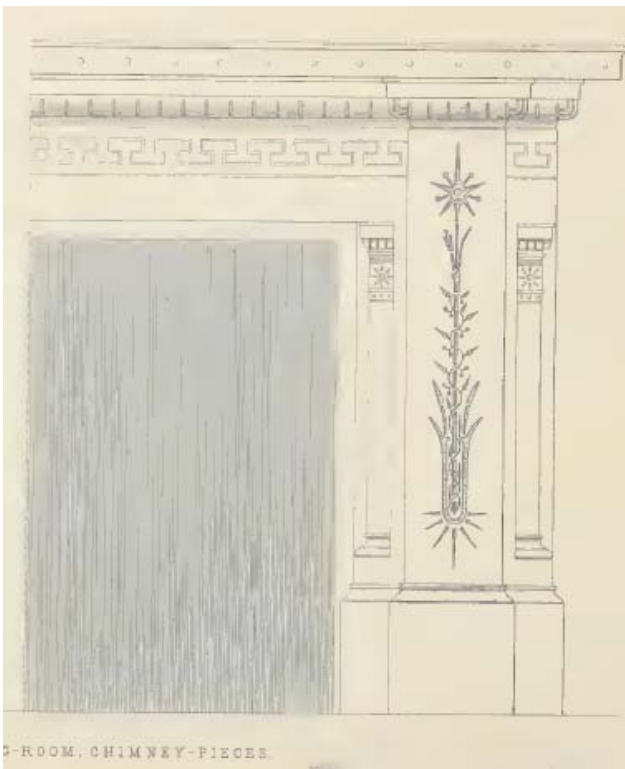


Figure 16. Abstracted floral design from the 'Holmwood' dining room chimney piece, and the same design incised into the walls of 'Hybla' (source: Blackie 1868).

The extensive use of the precise decorative designs reproduced in *Villa and Cottage Architecture* in a very free manner indicates that the designer of 'Hybla' relied on the engravings in this book and probably did not have first-hand knowledge of 'Holmwood House'.

Apart from this pattern book, Mary Hastie or her designer may have also heard about the second 'Holmwood House' that was built in South Australia in 1885. This house, at 20 Devonshire Street, Walkerville, almost entirely replicated the Glasgow house, including the columned round tower. It used a minimum of the Greek-inspired detail – unlike 'Hybla' – and the interiors are typical for their day.



Figure 17. 'Holmwood House', Walkerville, SA, of 1885 (source: brockwilliams.net.au)

Greek Revival buildings are not especially numerous in Australia, and it is a style most commonly used for public buildings such as courthouses and houses of worship. There are some country villas in this style, most of them very austere, Georgian examples with very little applied detail. The best known examples are 'Panshanger' (1831) and 'New Town Park' (1833) in Tasmania, and 'The Vineyard' (1833) near Parramatta, NSW.

The closest comparable example to 'Hybla' identified in Victoria is the Supreme Court building at the Sale Court House. It was built in 1889 to a design by Public Works Department architect John Thomas Kelleher. Here we see another building inspired in its form and details by Alexander Thomson's Neo-Greek designs. This one has very clear links to Thomson's 'Double villa' at Langside of 1856-57.

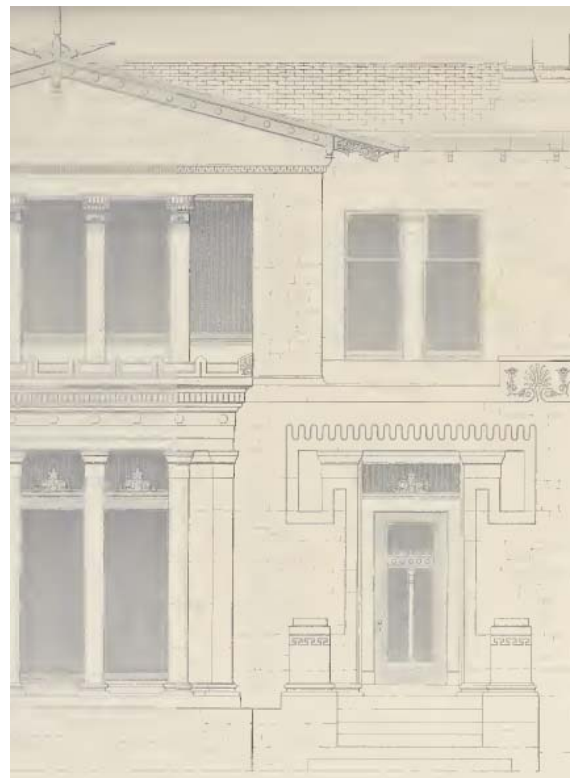


Figure 18. Sale Supreme Court of 1889 (left) and Thomson's Langside double villa (right) of 1856-57 (sources: GNLaw 2015 on [flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/gnlaw/) & Blackie 1868)

While the pitch of the front gable of the Sale building is steeper (probably to match the earlier courthouse beside it), and there is extensive stucco ornament in the gable tympanum, there are many similar or near identical features. These include the wide eaves and scrolled bargeboard ends, openings divided by pilasters to both floors, the detail of the entablature to the ground floor, the shouldered surround to the side entries, and the round chimneys with a lotus bud cap.

Conceivably, Kelleher could have also designed 'Hybla' for Mary Hastie in 1888-89 if he carried on a private practice apart from his Public Works Department duties. The only dwelling in the Hermes database that is identified as his design is his own house at 18 Poplar Grove, Carnegie, of 1889 (Glen Eira HO80). It is quite different in style from the Grecian Supreme Court and 'Hybla', and is described as a 'late Victorian Indian influenced eclectic stuccoed villa'. The interior is characterised by horseshoe arches to doorways and to a fireplace (the photos attached to the place citation are not clear enough to determine if the fireplace was inspired by 'Holmwood House').

In conclusion, 'Hybla' is a very rare example of a Greek Revival house in Victoria. Its extensive and elaborate Greek and Egyptian-derived ornament is based on Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's 'Holmwood House', built some 30 years earlier in Glasgow, but still contemporary in Australia thanks to Blackie & Son's pattern book *Villa and Cottage Architecture*, as also illustrated by the second 'Holmwood House' in South Australia, built in 1885. Thomson's Neo-Greek domestic designs also inspired the Sale Supreme Court, designed by Public Works Department architect John Thomas Kelleher in 1889. Kelleher may have also been the architect of 'Hybla', but this has not been confirmed by any documentary evidence. While the origins of 'Hybla' clearly lie with Thomson's work, it has been adapted for the Australian climate with a wide return verandah. It is in the verandah that we see further unusual and eclectic ornament – particularly the double toothed fringe on the verandah beam and the battered piers. The muscular and abstracted name pediment above the verandah is another successful Greek-derived addition to Thomson's original design.

Thematic context

This place illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, rev. 2009):

8.4.1 *Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion*

8.4.2 *Functional, eccentric & theatrical - experimentation & innovation in architecture*

9.3 *Developing the private school system*

10.3 *Helping other people*

It is of historical interest for its association with Mary Hastie and for the association with Mary Cameron Pott, a significant figure in the YWCA and other services in the 1920s-1960s.

Assessment against criteria

Assessment of this place was carried out in relation to the HERCON model criteria as set out in the VPP Practice Note 'Applying the Heritage Overlay' (2015).

Statement of significance

What is significant?

'The Pottery' (formerly 'Hybla'), at 18 Wallace Avenue, Toorak, built in 1889, and comprising a large single-storey residence with various gabled projecting bays and a large central tower is significant. It was built for the Scottish Mary Hastie, a recipient of the Hastie Bequest, from her brother, John Hastie of 'Leslie Manor', Camperdown, an unmarried grazier who had died in 1866, leaving a large fortune to his next of kin, to various Protestant churches, and sections of the University. It was later occupied by Mary Hastie's niece and her daughter Mary Pott. Mary Pott played a significant role in the YWCA, serving as national president of the World

Fellowship Committee. When the residence was taken over by the Geelong Grammar School in 1947, the school nicknamed the building “The Pottery” after her.

It is significant to the extent of its nineteenth century external form and fabric. The modern alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

‘The Pottery’ (formerly ‘Hybla’), at 18 Wallace Avenue, Toorak is of local architectural and aesthetic significance and rarity value to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Architecturally, ‘Hybla’ is the only known Neo Greek (or Greek Revival) dwelling in the City of Stonnington (and possibly in the State of Victoria). It was closely modelled on architect Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson’s ‘Holmwood House’ of 1857-58 in Glasgow, as published in Blackie & Son’s *Villa and Cottage Architecture* of 1868. This exemplar provided the unusual low-pitched gables with wide eaves and bargeboards with scrolled ends and metal bosses along their length, as well as much of the external ornament executed in cement render. The house illustrates the importance of British architectural pattern books in introducing new and exotic styles to Australia during the nineteenth century. (Criteria B & D)

Aesthetically, it is distinguished by its wealth of high-quality Greek and Egyptian-derived ornament, most of which was adapted from the interior details of ‘Holmwood House’. Details of note in the tympanum of the front gable, all executed in cement render, is high reliefs of anthemias (palmettes), arabesques, an Aeolic capital (two large volutes with a palmette between), and a star or sunburst within a notched circle, with a band of incised tridents and anthemias below. The capitals have a dog-tooth moulding to the abacus (top block) and palmettes in high relief below. The square tower with a corbel table may have been based on Thomson’s ‘Craig Ailey Villa’. The design was adapted to the Australian climate by the addition of a return verandah, which features more unusual decorative detail whose origins are unknown. This includes the double toothed fringe on the verandah beam and the battered piers supporting the verandah posts, as well as the muscular name pediment above the verandah, based on abstracted Greek pediment and cenotaph forms. The painted and stained glass to window highlights and around the front door is also significant. (Criterion E)

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay to the extent of the former residence at 18 Wallace Avenue, as shown on the associated curtilage map.

HO Schedule controls: None

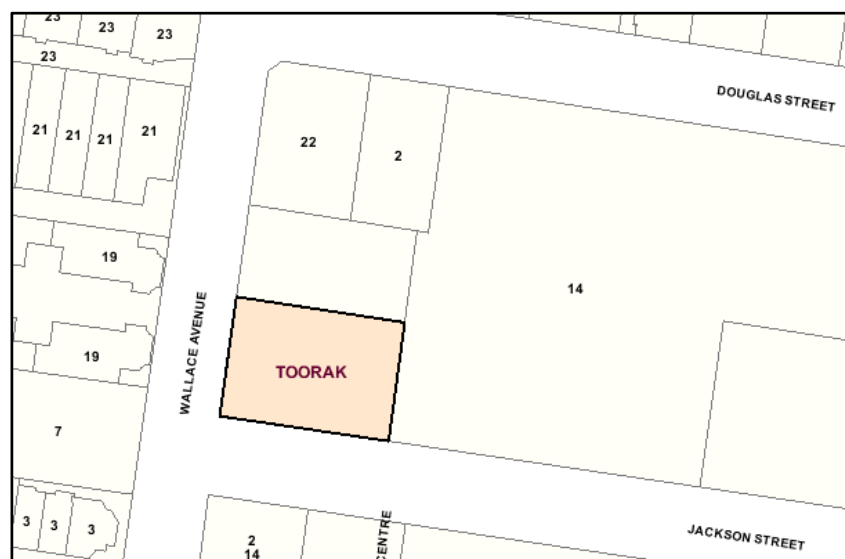


Figure 19. Recommended extent of heritage overlay for ‘Hybla’, 18 Wallace Avenue, Toorak (source: www.land.vic.gov.au).

Recommended grading: A1