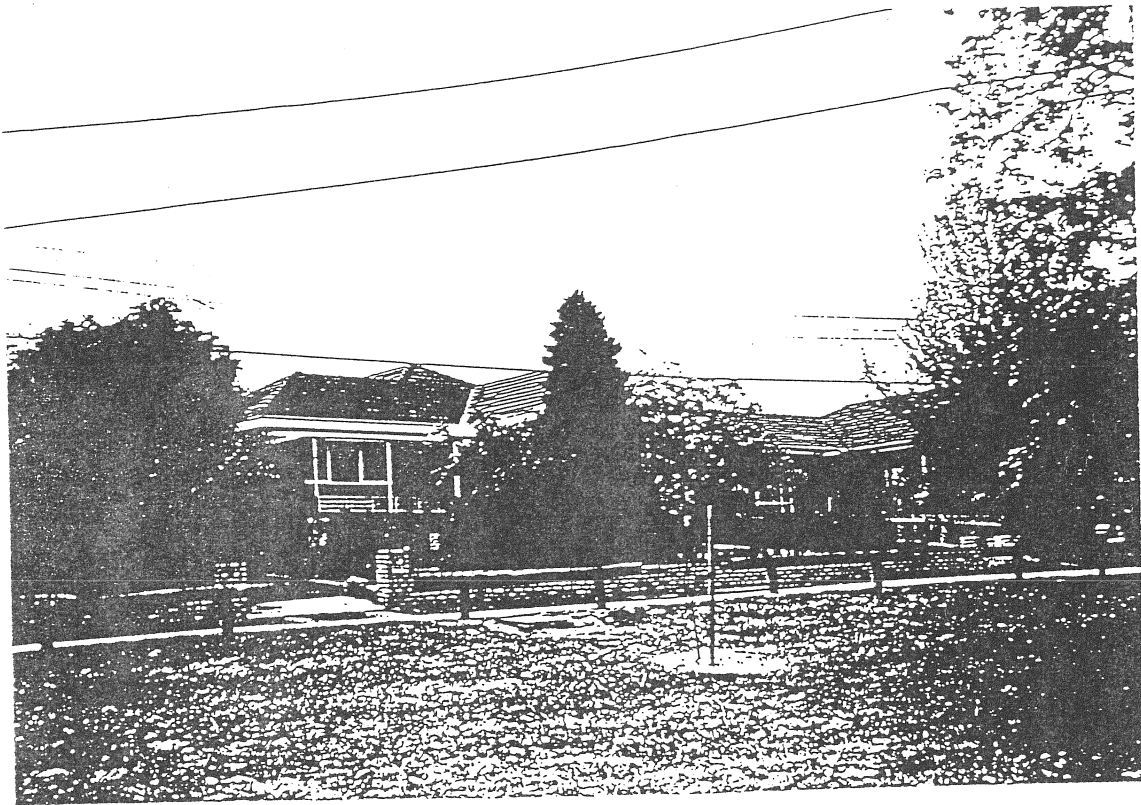


Rialto Estate Proposed Conservation Area



October 1998

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd in association with Di Foster, historian, in support of a proposed amendment to the Stonnington planning scheme which will create an urban conservation area centred on The Rialto, East Malvern. The report builds on work carried out by Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken Pty Ltd in Association with the Malvern Historical Society for the *City of Malvern Heritage Study*, 1992.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the area be protected as an Urban Conservation Area under the Stonnington Planning Scheme and be nominated to the Register of the National Estate.

EXTENT OF PROPOSED URBAN CONSERVATION AREA

The proposed Urban Conservation Area comprises all addresses in The Rialto, The Rialto West and Oravel Avenue and Nos 469 to 501 Malvern Road, East Malvern.

HISTORY

The first sales of Crown Land in the area that was to become the City of Malvern, took place on the 10th June 1840. The area had been surveyed and divided into large allotments suitable for market gardens and farms but land east of Belgrave Road, generally remained as farm land and pasture until after the first World War.

Main roads that were already established in the west were extended east and Malvern Road continued as far as Gardiners Creek, the parish boundary. When the road reached the creek it turned south-east and followed the creek along one of the old tracks to Dandenong.¹ Waverley Road, created in 1854, and known as Scotchman's Creek Road until 1872, intersected with Malvern Road at East Malvern, and followed the creek until the road turned south-east at Batesford Road.

Crown Allotment 195 with a frontage to Scotchmans Creek Road was part of a Police Reserve and the 1857 plan of suburban allotments at Gardiner describes this area along Gardiners Creek as 'low, flat - flooded after heavy rain ... light sandy soil ... [several banks of] tea tree'.² The allotment, which was bounded to the north by Gardiners Creek and included more than 19 acres of land, was first sold to James Quirk in 1864³. The area was ideal for grazing, and by 1885 the owner was dairyman William Bates.⁴ Both William and John Bates owned other land nearby and Andrew Bates leased the toll on nearby Breakneck Road, which was subsequently re-named Batesford Road.

The Outer Circle Railway ran through lot 195 from 1890. By this time Donald Munro was the owner of allotments 192-195. The partnership of Munro and William Baillieu was at that time Melbourne's most successful auctioneers and estate agents.⁵ It would appear that Munro, the son of landboomer and Premier, James Munro, had purchased the Waverley Road land as one of his speculative ventures during the boom years. These years were coming to an end however, and with the severe economic depression of the 1890s, the partnership of Munro and Baillieu was dissolved,⁶ along with numerous companies, building societies and banks that were placed in liquidation. In 1891 Mrs Louisa and Miss Annie Munro⁷ were listed as rate payers of lot 195 and three years later the rates were reduced by 25%.⁸ By

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- 1 Georgina Whitehead, Appendix A: 'A physical history, Malvern urban character study' Malvern, 1989, p.2.
 - 2 Plan of suburban allotments at Gardiner, Parish of Prahran, 1857.
 - 3 Rob Bower, 'Malvern 1840-1989, A History of the subdivision,' plan 13. Unpublished manuscript, Malvern Archives.
 - 4 Shire of Malvern rate book, 1885, No 878.
 - 5 M. Cannon. *The landboomers*, Melbourne, 1973
 - 6 Cannon, p.128-9
 - 7 Shire of Malvern rate book, 1891. No. 4862.
 - 8 Ibid., 1894. No. 3972.

1895 the Federal Bank had claimed ownership of Munro's land⁹ and the Waverley Road section of the Outer Circle had closed. Munro was elected Malvern Shire President in 1896.

At the turn of the century the Federal Bank leased lot 195 to grazier John Scott¹⁰ but by 1905 the economy had improved and Mrs Ellen O'Toole purchased the property from the Federal Assets Company.¹¹ O'Toole's properties included land in Glen Iris north of the creek, as well as the Craigmere Estate at Darling Station. Around 1909 O'Toole's property, consisting of a total of 315 acres, was put up for auction.¹² William James Woodmason¹³ purchased lot 5 of the estate, (Crown Allotment 195), which included 21 acres bounded by Gardiners Creek and Waverley Road.

The Woodmason family were successful market gardeners and dairy farmers, with substantial land holdings throughout the district. From 1859 the family owned land at the corner of Glenferrie Road and Malvern Road, where William Woodmason cultivated a highly successful market garden.¹⁴ Woodmason was Shire President and a long serving member of the Malvern Council. On his death in 1892, his son, William James Woodmason, took over the dairy and his father's prize winning jersey herd. Woodmason became a breeder of pure breed jersey cattle¹⁵ and the herd was noted as one of the best in Victoria, winning several championships at the Royal Melbourne Show.¹⁶

Woodmason's Melrose Dairy was established at the corner of Glenferrie Road and Malvern Road. Jersey cows were also kept at Twickenham in Waverley Road, where Woodmason had established a second Melrose Dairy. Woodmason's land Coolgardie, at the corner of Malvern Road and Waverley Road was used to grow maize to feed his herd.¹⁷

Around 1922¹⁸ Woodmason decided to release much of his land for subdivision whilst retaining a small section near Warrigal Road where he built his new home, Green Gables.¹⁹ By 1923 Woodmason's land fronting Gardiners Creek, extending east of the old Outer Circle Railway to Warrigal Road had been

9 Ibid., 1894. No. 3872.

10 Ibid., 1899-1900. No. 3873.

11 Town of Malvern rate book, 1905-6. No. 4234.

12 Subdivisional Sale at East Malvern, undated. c.1909. Alway plan Book 2 No. 19. Malvern Archives.

13 Shire of Malvern Rate book, 1909-10. No. 5229.

14 *Victoria and its Metropolis*, Vol. 2. 1888, (Melbourne) p.699.

15 *Who's Who*, 1927, p.891.

16 Woodmason, family history file, Malvern Archives

17 Ibid.

18 W. Woodmason, Malvern Park Estate. Sale notice and subdivision plan. 11 November, 1922. Alway Plan. Malvern Archives. Sale notice and subdivision plan, East Malvern, 25th May 1922, Alway Plan.

19 Brick residence, Waverley Road, East Malvern for W. Woodmason.' Malvern building plan, 1922, plan no. 3982.

sold to agent T. M. Burke. Included in the sale was allotment 195,²⁰ which Burke immediately subdivided into housing allotments and named the Malvern Meadows Estate.²¹

The Malvern Meadows Estate was described as having 'the most charmingly situated home sites within the Malvern Municipal area'.²² In 1924, plans were lodged for a number of streets including The Rialto²³, a wide avenue providing for a large drain to hold the creek running down to Gardiners Creek. Low lying land south of Gardiners Creek was reserved for a municipal golf course.

When the Waverley Road land was released for sale, most of the area to the west of Belgrave Road had been subdivided into housing allotments and following the end of the First World War, with the improved economy and the demand for new housing, land sales and building activity in most areas increased dramatically. The tram had run to the terminus at Darling Road since 1913 and the proposed new station at East Malvern was a short walk from Burke's new estate.

When the railway line was extended from Darling to Glen Waverley in 1929, the line passed through the Malvern Meadows Estate and while it was anticipated that this would benefit property in the vicinity, the Government's Railway Construction and Betterment Tax²⁴ had the opposite effect.²⁵ The financial burden placed on land-owners particularly during the depression years meant that no building had taken place on the estate prior to the Second World War. Aerial photos²⁶ taken around 1932 show the area as undeveloped farmland and an inspection of the area in 1936 showed hundreds of allotments of vacant land that the Malvern Council considered 'would have been built over, but for the Railway Rate'.²⁷

It was not until after the Second World War, in 1947, that the first house was built in The Rialto. Others quickly followed and most of the houses in The Rialto were built in the 1950s by building

20 City of Malvern Rate Book 1923-4. Sale of 21 acres Waverley Road from Woodmason to T. M. Burke.

21 Malvern Meadows Estate, Sale notice and subdivision plan. undated. c.1924. Alway Plan. Book 4. no. 13.

22 Ibid.

23 Lodged Plan 10109 20.6.1924.

24 The Act authorising the construction of the line to Glen Waverley required that the cost of the line should be borne by the land in the railway area which it was anticipated would benefit by the construction of the line. This money was to be provided by a "Construction Rate" made by the Railway Trust at varying rates according to the Zone in which the land was situated - such zones being graded according to the benefit to be derived from the Line. The Act also provided that losses on running costs should be borne for a period of 5 years to the extent of 10,000 pounds (\$20,000) per annum by the land in the area. This was to be provided by a "Betterment Rate" which was to be borne equally by the whole of the land in the area. These taxes caused an adverse effect on development and considerable amount of opposition. B. Crosbie Goold, Town Clerk, Malvern, presented the case for the removal or lowering of these taxes on 21 May, 1936. Report held in Railways, Darling to Glen Waverley, file, Malvern Archives.

25 Goold, Town Clerk, City of Malvern. 'Darling to Glen Waverley Railway' 6th February 1936

26 Aerial photos in Malvern archives taken by Council to show the new municipal golf course at East Malvern.

27 Goold, 21 May, 1936.

companies. The Modern Home Building Advisory Service built a number of these houses, although one house, number 26, was designed by architect H. Holt.²⁸

DESCRIPTION

The Rialto area is situated on a ribbon of land located between Waverley Road and the Glen Waverley railway line adjacent to the East Malvern Station. The streets form a crescent which borders the railway station reserve to the east and wraps around a strip of undeveloped land around the former open drain. The result is a precinct in which the area of developed land is matched by an equal area of lightly wooded parkland producing a quiet, almost rural, character that is rare in inner suburban Melbourne.

The streets in the area are paved in bitumen with modern concrete footpaths and crossings. Kerbs and gutters are generally constructed of modern materials although evidence of earlier bluestone kerbs is present on the site. Nature strips are modest by local standards but are sufficient to extend the open and spacious atmosphere generated in the reserves up to and beyond the largely unfenced property boundaries. Private gardens share the same combination of native and exotic trees found on the reserves and the same sense of informality.

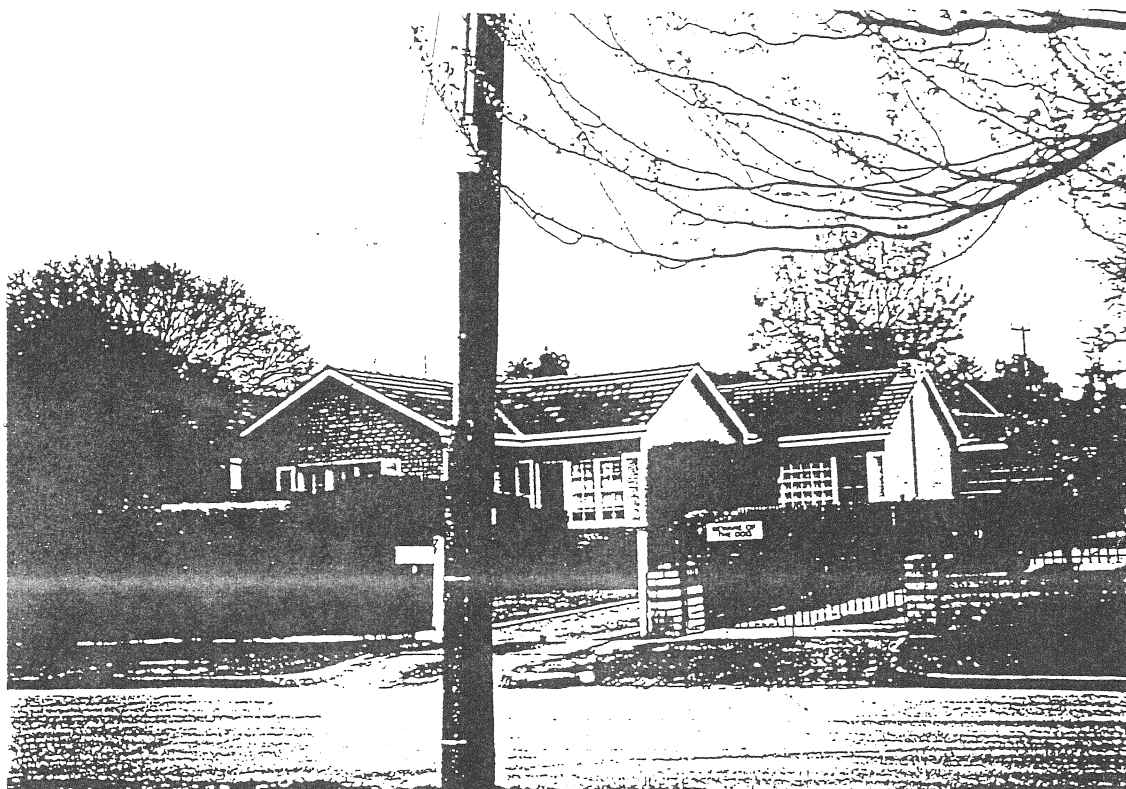


Illustration 2

The Rialto, 1998.

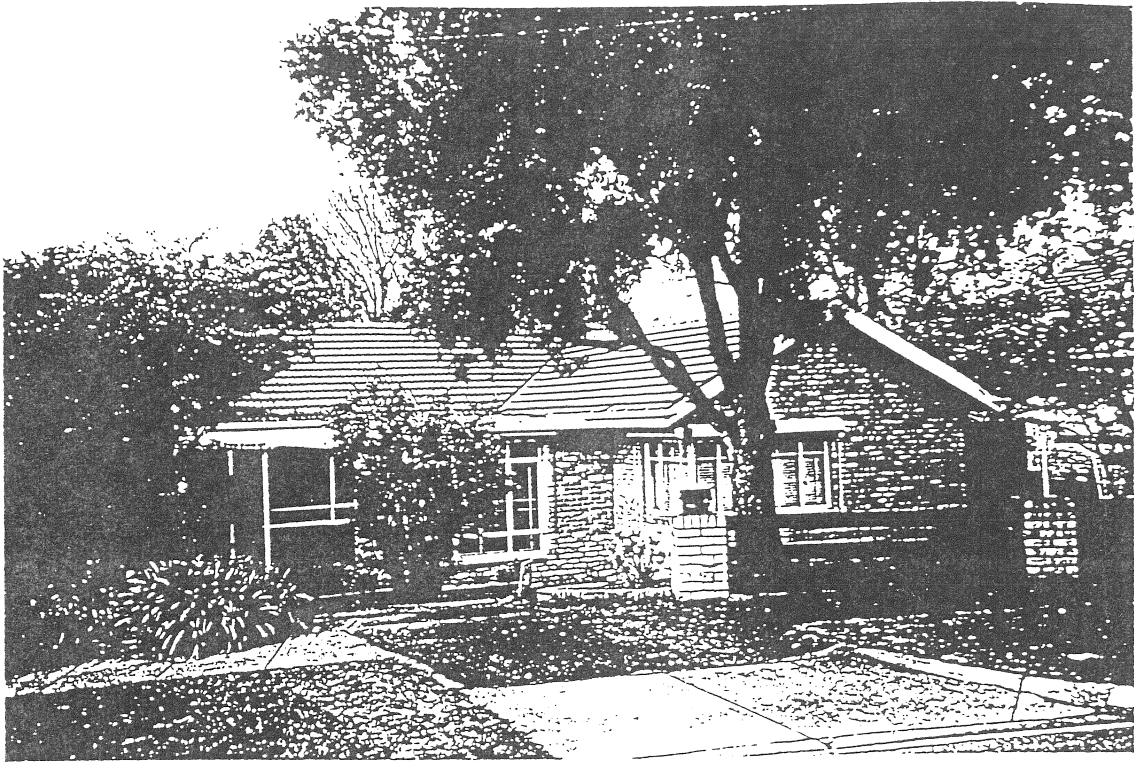


Illustration 3 The Rialto, 1998.

With the exception of the predominantly interwar residences on Waverley Road, housing stock in the area dates exclusively from the period between the late 1940s and the late 1960s. Consequently, the prevailing building type is the post war, cream brick double fronted villa with terra cotta roofs and inexpensive steel window framing. The presence of a small number of more modern villas constructed in brick or block with low raking roofs that would become the staple of builders through metropolitan Melbourne during the 1960s and 1970s provides additional interest (10 Oravel Avenue, 3 and 15 The Rialto West).

The area is especially noteworthy for its consistency. Only one recent construction exists in the area (479 Waverley Road). Otherwise, every house present on the site dates from the original subdivision. Furthermore, only three cases of substantial additions were encountered during site inspections. Recent first floor additions and external rendering of 14 Oravel Avenue have created a residence which is at odds in both scale and materials with other buildings in the group. First floor and ground floor additions to 477 Waverley Road and 26 The Rialto, respectively, are less conspicuous and are consequently of only minor detriment to the integrity of the area. Building stock throughout the area is in good condition, consistent with its location in a desirable section of East Malvern.

ANALYSIS

The distinctive character of The Rialto area results from its subdivision in the interwar period but failure to be developed until the postwar years, as outlined above. It is subdivided in a picturesque manner designed to capitalise upon its irregular land features, in striking contrast to the rigid grid of streets which extend to its east and south. While examples of such subdivision with interwar building stock are not uncommon, the combination of curvilinear streets with double fronted cream brick veneer homes and established postwar gardens is striking.

The Rialto area is understood to be unique within the City of Stonnington on this basis, although some few comparable examples can be found broader afield. Probably the most notable of these is the Glen Alvie estate, Mount Waverley, which retains the curved concrete roads of its interwar subdivision, but has exclusively postwar building stock.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Rialto Estate is of regional significance for the combination of its striking picturesque street layout with substantially intact postwar cream brick residential stock. This combination makes it unique within the municipality, and rare within the greater metropolitan area. The valued and significant character which results makes it one of the more unusual and interesting precincts of postwar residential development in Melbourne.

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APPENDIX 1

SCHEDULE OF BUILDINGS, DESCRIPTIONS AND
RECOMMENDED GRADINGS

ORAVEL AVENUE

Street No. Grading

North Side

1	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960.
3	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960.
5	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960.

South Side

2	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
4	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960.
6	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960.
8	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960.
10	B	Single storey modern villa. c. 1970
12	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
14	B	Double storey villa with visible additions. c. 1960.

THE RIALTO

East Side

2	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
4	B	Single storey villa. c. 195
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6	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
8	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
10	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
12	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
14	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
18	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
20	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
22	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
24	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
26	B	Single storey villa with visible additions. c. 1960
28	B	Single storey villa. c. 1950

THE RIALTO WEST

West Side

1	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
3	B	Single storey modern villa. c. 1960
5	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
7	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
9	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
11	B	Single storey villa. c. 1960
13	B	Vacant block.
15	B	Single storey modern villa. c. 1960

WAVERLEY ROAD

Street No. Grading

North Side

469	C	Interwar villa with attic storey.
471	C	Single storey interwar villa.
473/475	C	Single storey interwar pair. Semi-detached
477	C	Double storey interwar villa with visible additions.
479	C	Single storey units. c. 1980.
481	C	Single storey interwar villa.
483	C	Single storey interwar villa.
485	C	Single storey interwar villa.
487	C	Single storey interwar villa.
489	C	Single storey interwar villa.
493	C	Single storey interwar villa.
495	C	Single storey interwar villa.
495B	C	Single storey interwar villa.

The Rialto

501	C	Single storey interwar villa.
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HO 154 MAP 10

