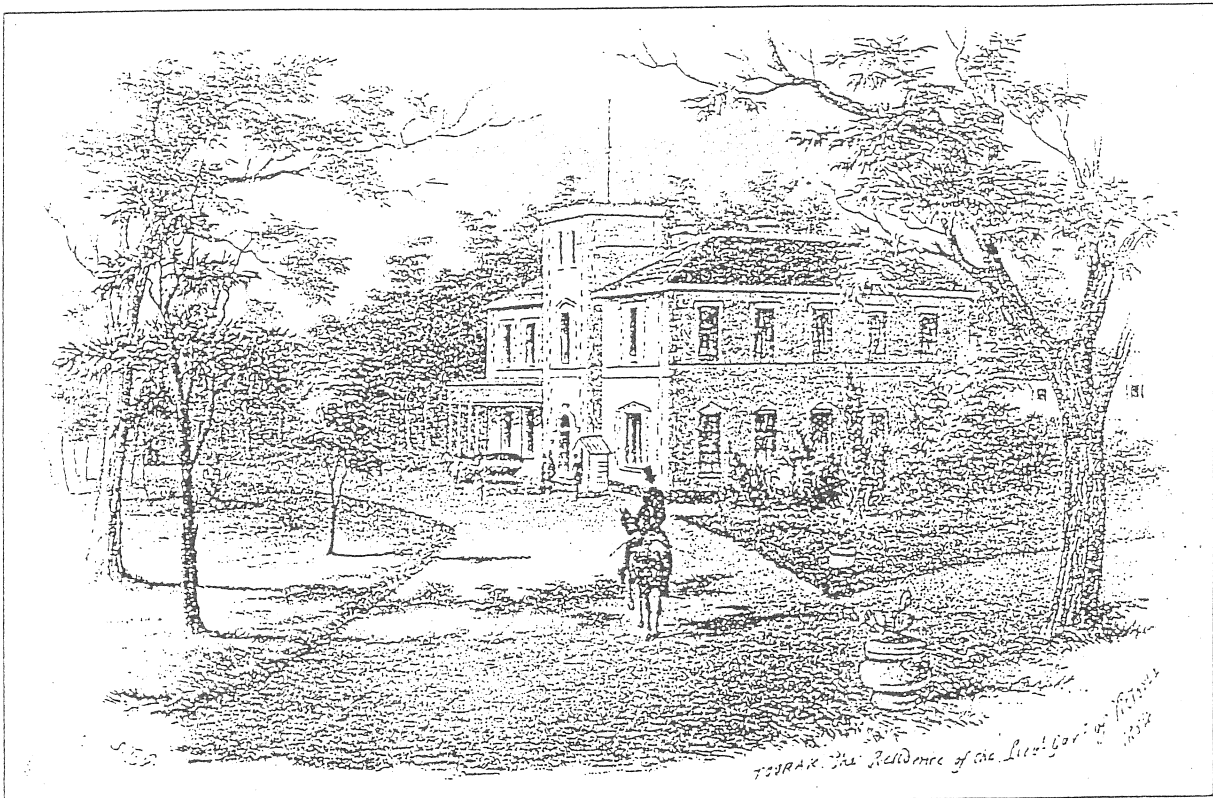


St Georges Court Proposed Conservation Area



September 1997

ST GEORGES COURT STOORAK

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd in support of a proposed amendment to the local planning scheme which will create an urban conservation area centred on St Georges Court, Toorak.

The report builds on work carried out by John Curtis Pty Ltd for the *Toorak Residential Character Study*, 1991 and by Context Pty Ltd for the *City of Prahran Conservation Review*, 1993.

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 the following: all addresses in St Georges Court, and Nos 6, 9, 11 and 11A St Georges Road.

ST GEORGES COURT STOORAK

HISTORY

St Georges Court, Toorak was created in 1938 following the subdivision of 'Kildrum', a large Federation property facing St Georges Road. The demolition of 'Kildrum' and the subsequent development of St Georges Court with prestigious houses, although typical of the development of much of the Toorak area, is unusual in having occurred during the early years of World War II.

The line of Toorak Road was first shown on a map drawn by Surveyor Robert Hoddle in 1837, when Prahran was surveyed into sixteen main blocks bounded by main roads. These were sold as large Crown Allotments that were subsequently subdivided and re-sold. On the more valuable high land towards Prahran's east, large mansion estates developed, contrasting with the smaller allotments created on the cheap flat land at the western end of the municipality.¹

At the first Crown Land Sales in June 1840, three large allotments bounded by Orrong Road, Toorak Road, Kooyong Road and the Yarra River were sold to speculators. Lot 16 consisting of 70 acres was purchased by Sylvester J. Brown, Lot 17 of 78 acres was sold to J. D. L. Campbell, and Lot 18 consisting of 60 acres was sold to W. H. Yaldwyn.²

James Jackson soon purchased lots 16 and 17, lot 17 from Campbell's estate, and lot 16 from Brown, a bankrupt sea captain. Jackson with his partner James Rae manufactured soap and ran a successful merchant business.

In 1849-50 Jackson built a large mansion to the design of architect Samuel Jackson,³ with a formal garden on 148 acres. Most of the land was kept as bush, but outhouses surrounded the mansion which was some distance back from the main roads.⁴ Jackson named the property 'Toorak House', which gave the area its name, and Kearney's map of 1855 shows the property extending from Orrong Road to the east side of the present-day St Georges Road. Jackson never lived at 'Toorak House', but died at sea in 1851.

From 1854-1873 the Victorian Government leased the property and in 1854, Sir Charles Hotham took formal possession. Other governors who lived there were Sir Henry Barkly (1856-63), Sir Charles Darling (1863-66) and Sir J.H. Manners-Sutton (1866-73). Toorak House was extended during the Governor's occupancy and its use helped attract other wealthy residences to the area. At this time the

1 Nigel Lewis, *Prahran Character and Conservation Study*, 1992.
2 Betty Malone, *Section 13, North East Toorak*, unpublished essay.
3 National Estate citation, Toorak House.
4 James Kearney map, 1855.

Gardiners Creek Road (Toorak Road) was graded and surfaced to become the best road in the district. The 1895 MMBW plan shows the entrance to 'Toorak House' with a gatehouse and driveway off Toorak Road.

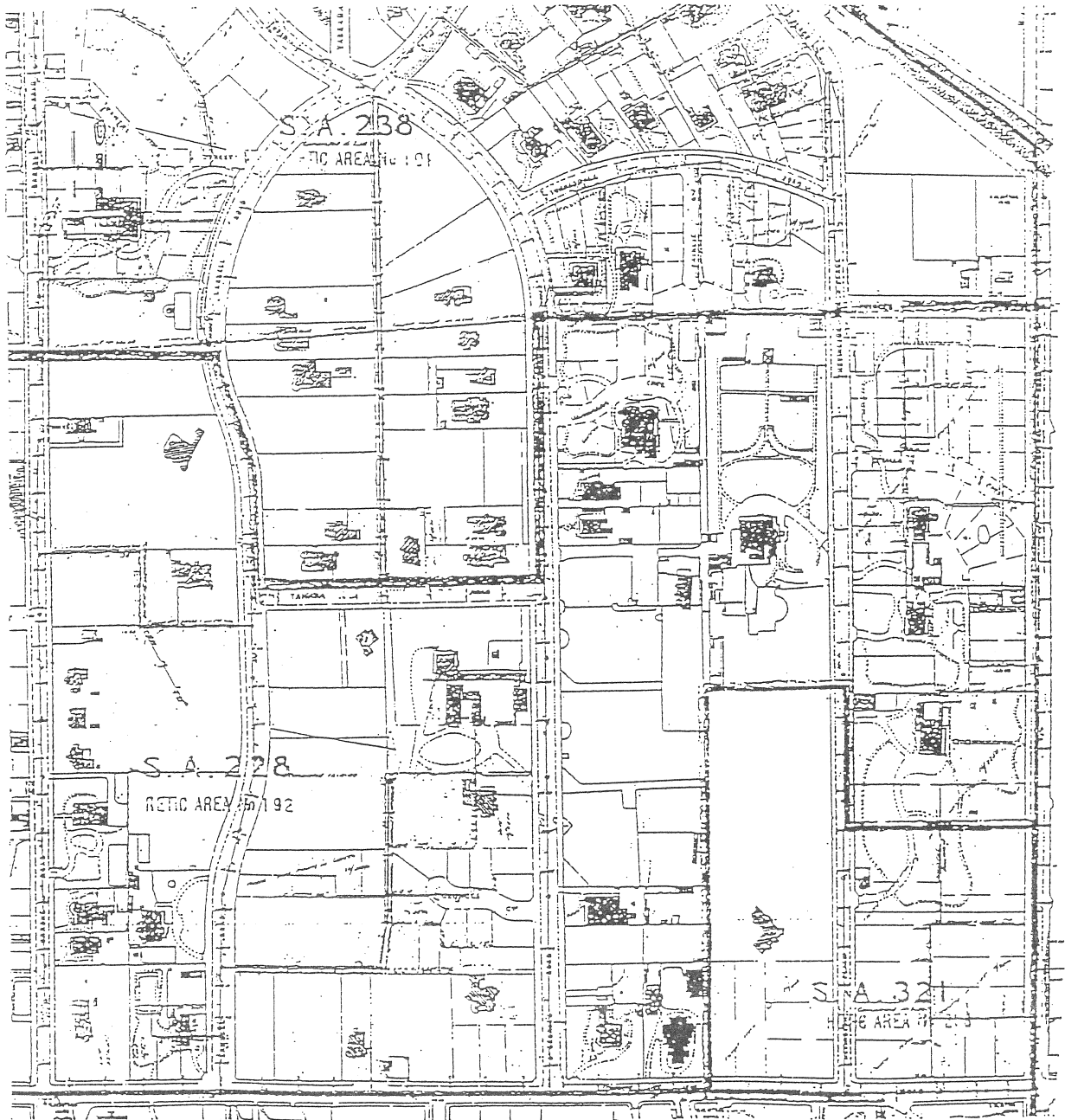


Illustration 1 MMBW Plan from 1895 with later subdivisions overlaid

A further subdivision of the Toorak Estate occurred in 1900 when 45 allotments were auctioned. The subdivision included the west side of St Georges Road and the east side of Lansell Road.⁸ By this time the 'Toorak House' property had been reduced to 5 acres.

The cable tram in Toorak Road and the extension of the railway through Heyington in 1890, added to the attraction of this prestigious district for new property owners,⁹ and following the subdivision of the Toorak Estate a number of grand Federation style homes were built. In 1901 Charles Russell built 'Daralee' in Lansell Road and the following year William Drummond built a 15 room brick house facing St Georges Road on lots 41 and 42 of the Toorak Estate.¹⁰

Drummond's property 'Kildrum', included more than 1 acre of land with a coach house and outhouses. In 1937 William Baragwanath purchased 'Kildrum' at 7 St Georges Road. By the following year the house had been demolished, the estate had been subdivided into allotments and St Georges Court had been created.

Purchasers of the St Georges Court allotments chose prominent architects to design their new homes. Architects Billson & Mewton designed one of the first houses to be built on the estate, numbers 11/12 St Georges Court. The first occupier of 11 St Georges Court was Harold Winthrop Clapp, K.B.E., Chairman of the Railways Commissioners from 1920-39. Lady Clapp continued to live at 12 St Georges Court in the 1950s. The architectural firm of Marcus Martin & Tribe were responsible for 5/6 St Georges Court in 1940 and 11 St Georges Road in 1941.

8 Toorak Estate Subdivision Plan and Auction Notice, 27th October 1900.

9 Malone, loc cit

10 City of Prahran Rate Books, 1901-2, No 857.

In 1875, solicitor Edward Klingender sold the property to George Lansell, the Bendigo mining entrepreneur. Lansell subdivided the vast estate into large allotments facing Orrong and Toorak Roads and created the elegantly winding Lansell and St Georges Roads.⁵

Following Lansell's subdivision, Toorak House remained on a much reduced allotment and the property was leased to a number of occupants, including Sir Charles Ryan. Long-term owners were the Spowers family, owners and editors of the *Argus* newspaper, and during the Second World War the building was used as a W.A.A.F. hostel. In 1956, the mansion and remaining land, bounded by Tahara Avenue and St Georges Road, became the property of the Swedish Church.⁶

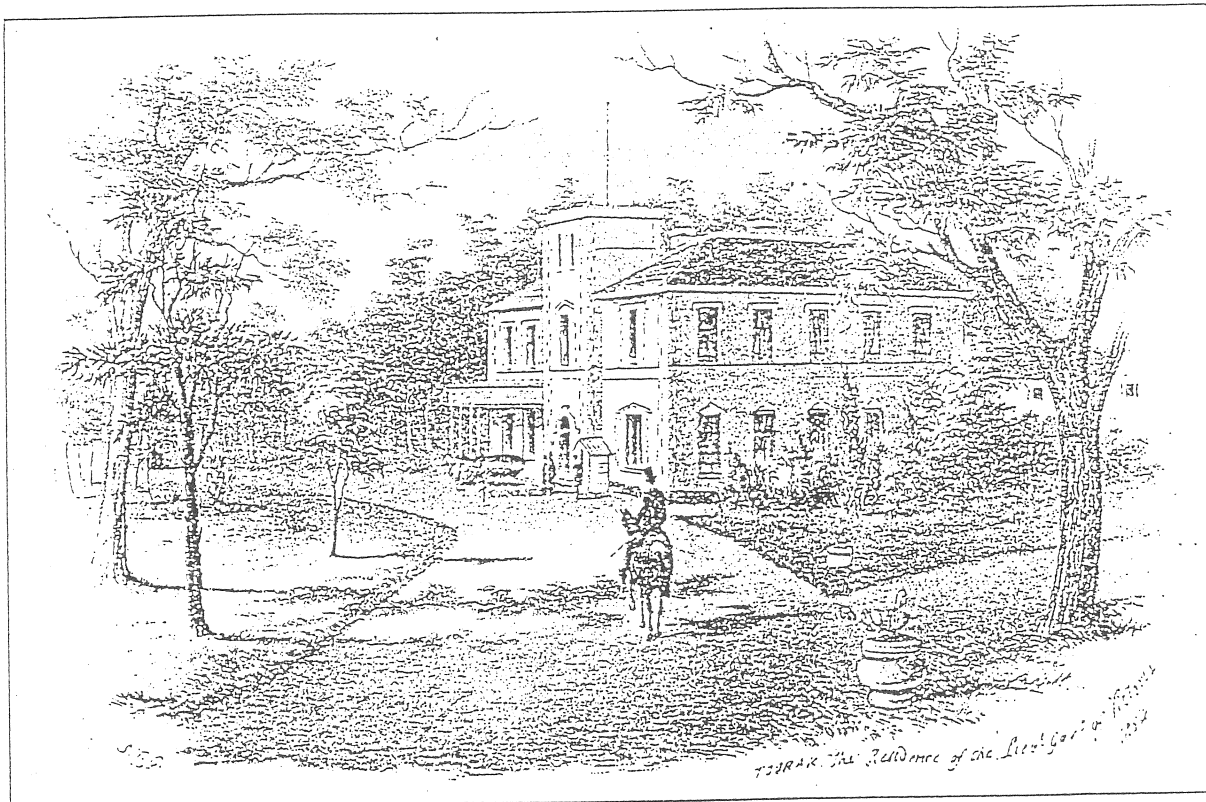


Illustration 2 Toorak House, Toorak, c1854

George Lansell's 1875 subdivision, which was to change the rural appearance of this part of Toorak was aimed 'specially for the gentry of Victoria'.⁷ The sale attracted wealthy pastoralists, merchants and professionals who chose this prestigious area to build their mansions. 'Illawarra' and 'Edzell', both built facing St Georges Road, remain but 'The Towers', built for land boomer Sir Matthew Davies, was demolished in 1927. Towers Road was created from a subdivision of this mansion's allotment.

5 Governor's Park Vice Regal Estate, Toorak, 1875.

6 Malone, Betty, *Section 13, North East Toorak*, unpublished essay, p 7.

7 Governor's Park Vice Regal Estate, Toorak, 1875.

At the western end of the site (9/10 and 11/12) property boundaries are demarcated by plants alone, without fences. Unfortunately the general sparseness of landscaping and the scarcity of mature trees lends visual prominence to the timber power poles and associated overhead wires.

Architecturally, St Georges Court is notable for its large houses and maisonettes. Houses in the estate are invariably of two stories and finished in cement-rendered or white painted brick, with roofs of slate or Marseilles tiles. The area is unusual for its high proportion of semi-detached residences and for the extent to which architects have worked to conceal the multi-unit nature of these buildings with the appearance of large and stately homes.

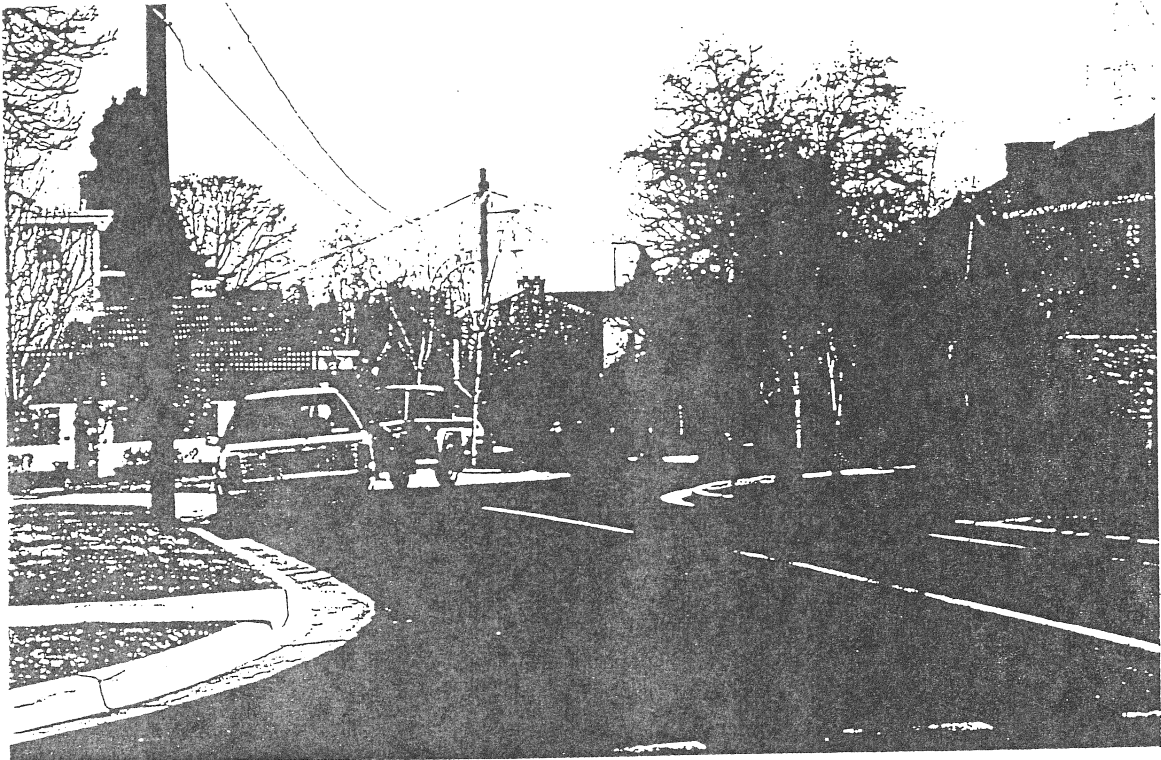


Illustration 4 St Georges Court from St Georges Road

Stylistically, the estate draws from a handful of broadly overlapping styles. With the exception of the large Modern residence at 11A St Georges Road, housing at the eastern end of the street draws generally from Georgian sources. The addresses facing St Georges Road present formal Georgian facades to the major thoroughfare and establish a vocabulary of details that extend into the Court. These include bay and elliptical windows, ornamental balustrades and timber shutters. The purest and most refined Georgian Revival building occurs at 13 St Georges Court but neighbouring buildings retain the flavour of the style in less academic structures. Towards the western end of the street, housing draws its inspiration from popular Mediterranean sources. Houses in this area are simpler in terms of their massing and their applied detail, reflecting the influence of modernism and the concern of contemporary architects to achieve a polite, climate responsive regional expression. Variations in character and detail

DESCRIPTION

St Georges Court is small landscaped *cul de sac* located in Toorak, springing from the west side of St Georges Road between Toorak and Lansell Roads. The area under review comprises 15 dwellings occupying 12 buildings (1-15 St Georges Court and 6, 9, 11 & 11A St Georges Road).

St Georges Court adopts a shallow S-shaped plan upon its gently sloping site. The curve of the road provides interest and a degree of seclusion to residents at the western end of the court. Despite the relatively high density of housing, St Georges Court remains open and spacious.

St Georges Court is surfaced in bitumen with concrete kerbs and crossovers. Pedestrian areas provide planting strips (1.8m) with light plantings of shrubs and trees, concrete footpaths (1.2m) and an additional planting strip adjacent to property boundaries for ground cover and decorative shrubs (0.4m). Roadside landscaping at the eastern end of St Georges Court is precise and orderly, with manicured lawns and hedges but tends towards a less formal approach at the western end of the court. Private gardens in the street are modest by local standards and also reflect the increasing tendency towards informality from east to west. With the exception of the houses on St Georges Road and 15 St Georges Court, which feature high front fences in white-painted or rendered brick, boundary walls are generally low and unobtrusive. They are typically constructed of brick and softened by plantings.



Illustration 3 Location Map (Melways Map 2M)
St Georges Court circled

in the streetscape are reconciled through consistency of scale, the colour and texture of exterior surfaces and by the presence of decorative shutters which sit with equal ease amid Georgian formality and the casual Mediterranean styles.

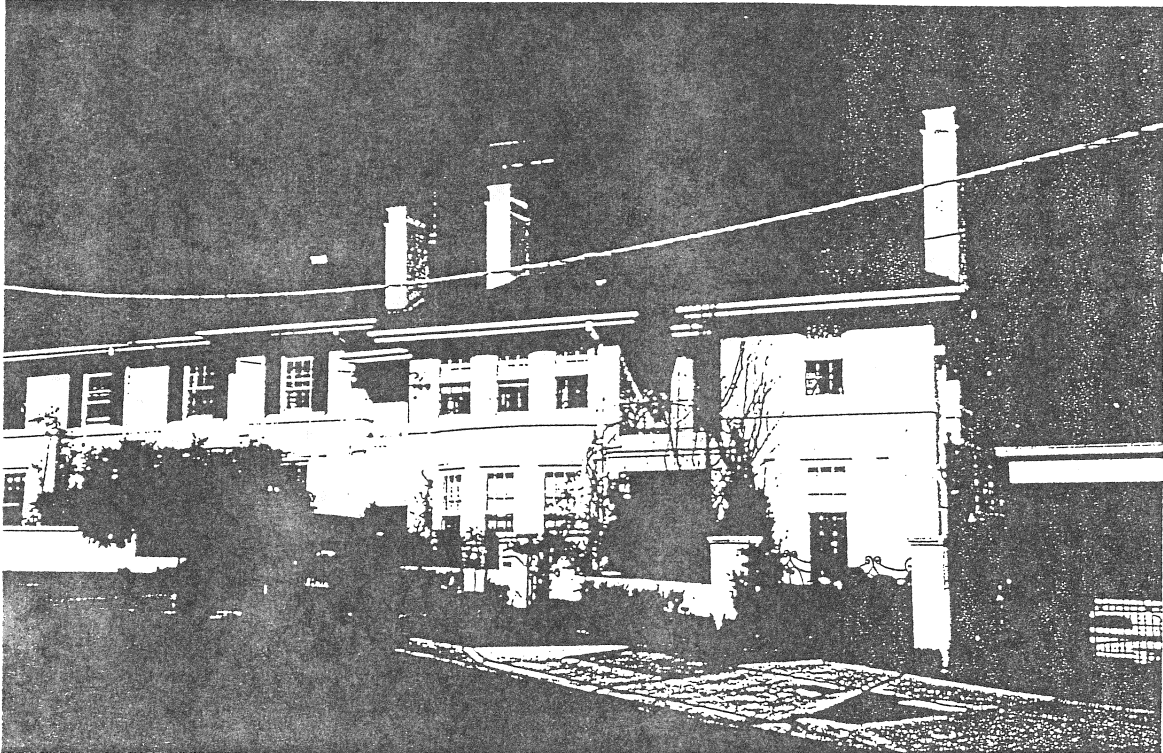


Illustration 5 9 St Georges Road / 1 St Georges Court

Every building from the original development has survived intact. New work, including the rendering of the red brick residence at 13 St Georges Court and the painting over the clinker brick exterior of 9/10, has generally worked to enhance the character of the original development.

The house at 6 St Georges Road faces directly onto the entrance to St Georges Court. The broadly Mediterranean character of this house appears to result from a substantial reworking of a c. 1875 house during the 1930s. Although not part of the original St Georges Court subdivision, this building plays an important role in closing the vista from within the court, and complements the interwar character of the precinct.

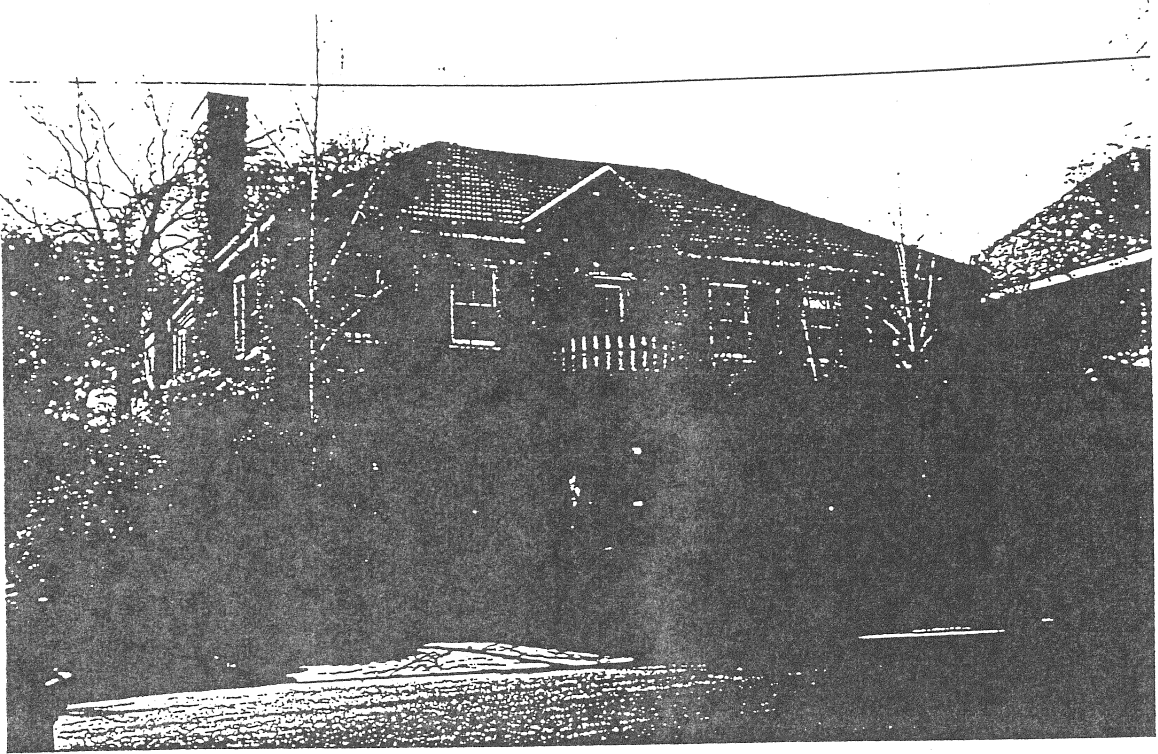


Illustration 6 13 St Georges Court

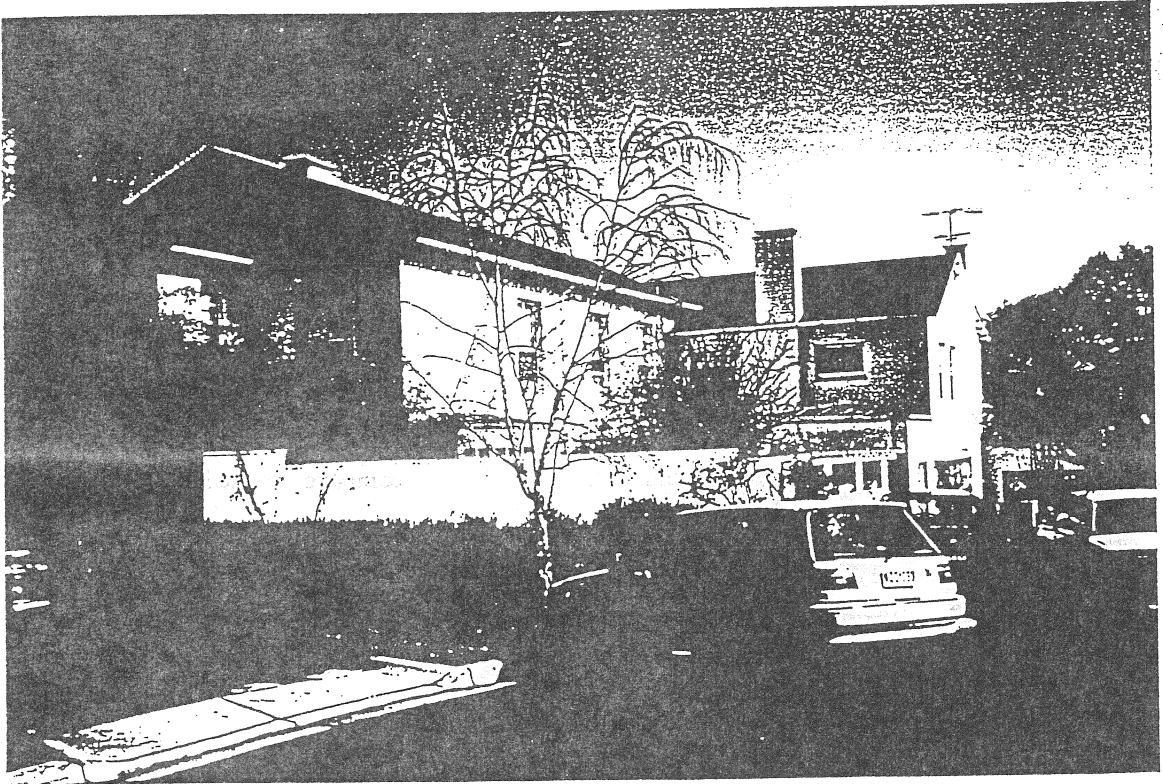


Illustration 7 516 St Georges Court

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

St Georges Court, Toorak, is unusual in that it features a mixture of individually designed two-storey houses and maisonettes rather than the individual housing typical of what are usually referred to as bungalow or garden estate courts. St Georges Court also lacks the generous front setbacks which contribute to the airy, garden estate feel of comparable courts.

While courts of this kind are not uncommon in interwar areas, it is unusual to see such unity of form and materials, varied through subtle distinctions in stylistic expression and detailing. Comparison might be made with Linden Court, Armadale, which comprises relatively uniform two storey detached houses, Lempriere Avenue, East St Kilda, with its garden estate character and single storey villas, or, to a lesser extent, Heatherleigh Place, East Malvern, with its concrete road, garden roundabout and uniform bungalows, but the relatively densely developed, two-storey maisonette character of St Georges Court is unique amongst metropolitan interwar estates.

St Georges Court is also valuable as an unusually consistent repository of late interwar residential stock demonstrating contemporary interest in a modern expression tempered by Georgian and Mediterranean forms, detailing and taste, an architectural solution vigorously promoted by influential architect Leighton Irwin as the 'Southern Australian or Melbourne House'.¹¹

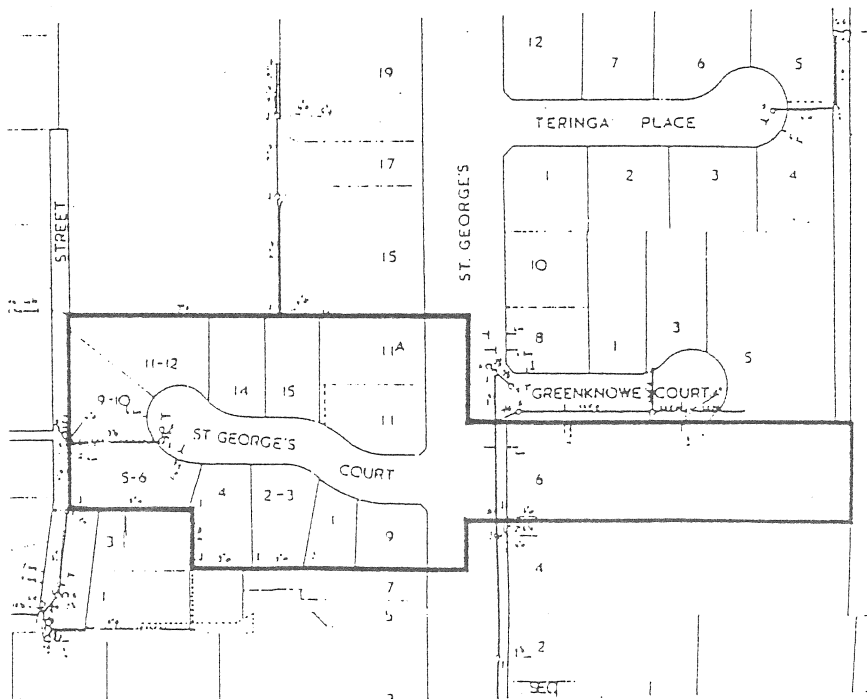


Illustration 11 *Extent of Proposed Conservation Area*

11 Leighton Irwin, *Australian Home Beautiful*, January 1936, p 14.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St Georges Court is a small *cul de sac* west off St Georges Road in Toorak. It developed as a result of the 1938 subdivision of a large Federation property in St Georges Road which in turn had been built on the highly significant Toorak House Estate. By local standards, the area exhibits a high population density but encourages a sense of space through a measured approach to landscaping. Housing in the area comprises a mixture of large residences and semi-detached units drawing from a narrow range of stylistic sources and unified by consistent scale, colour and applied decorative elements.

St Georges Court is of regional significance as a substantially intact example of an area subdivided immediately prior to World War II and developed by a range of builders and architects for an exclusive clientele. The area's special character and significance derives from the construction of a number of attractive homes and maisonettes during the early war years and the street provides an important illustration of affluent suburban development during this period. Noted architects, including Marcus Martin & Tribe, A. Mortimer McMillan, and Billson & Mewton, were responsible for a number of the homes in St Georges Court. The buildings broadly demonstrate the contemporary regional ideal of the modern house tempered through restrained use of traditional Georgian and Mediterranean form and details.

APPENDIX

SCHEDULE OF BUILDINGS, DESCRIPTIONS AND
RECOMMENDED GRADINGS

ST GEORGES COURT

Street No.	Grading	
1	B	This house forms a semi-detached pair with its partner at 9 St Georges Road. It was built in 1940 for Mrs. E.A. Nunn. The building draws its detail broadly from Georgian sources but its form is too complex to be considered a true product of the Georgian Revival. It is nonetheless a handsome residence which underscores the eclectic approach to applied ornament taken by architects and builders in Melbourne prior to World War II.
2/3	B	Built in 1941 for Miss Harriet Yencken, this pair is another to synthesise architectural details from a variety of sources. While the fenestration is generally of Georgian descent, the influence of the English Arts and Crafts is apparent in its entry and Bay windows.
4	B.	This unusual design, with its grand stairway to an ornate entry at first floor level, was built for Mrs. B. Cozens around 1940. It combines Georgian applied decoration with more complex three part massing. Georgian details include the Adamesque elliptical windows to the garage doors.
5/6	B	This semi-detached pair is the product of the noted local architectural firm, Marcus Martin & Tribe. It was built in 1940 for Mrs E.E. Macfarlan. It is simpler in form than other dwellings on the street with a gabled roof form that recalls Mediterranean sources.
9/10	B	This simple pair, dating from 1941, is one of two buildings at the western end of the court attributed to Billson & Mewton. It was built for Mary Drummond. The original clinker brick exterior has been painted white which heightens the simplicity of its massing.
11/12	B	This simple structure was built for Haffe S. Ferne around 1940. It is another semi-detached pair, generally accredited to the notable architectural firm of Billson & Mewton. It demonstrates the simple massing and stripped Mediterranean influences associated with Leighton Irwin's Southern Australian or Melbourne type.
14	B	The architect responsible for this impressive Georgian Revival residence is unknown. It was built for Lillian Chaliyer in 1939, and demonstrates the simple massing and authentic details of the idiom. It is noteworthy for its ornate portico of Corinthian columns. This residence is an intact and mature example of the Georgian Revival style. Anecdotal sources suggest that this building was originally finished in red brick and has since been rendered in cement and painted white.
15	B	Built in 1941 for C. Cox, this residence is an example of simple massing and sparse Georgian detailing. The application of render and trowelling of mortar courses in a manner that recalls rustication appear to be a recent modification.

ST GEORGES ROAD

Street No.	Grading	
6	B	The Mediterranean character of this house appears to result from a substantial reworking of a c. 1875 house during the 1930s. The designer of the original villa is unknown but the architect of the redevelopment may have been Marcus Martin. Although not part of the original St Georges Court subdivision, this building plays an important role in closing the vista from within the court, and complements the interwar character of the court.
9	B	This building is part of a semi-detached pair built on the corner of St Georges Court for Mrs. E.A. Nunn. This residence is first listed in the rate books in 1941, a year later than its partner at 1 St Georges Court. Both parts of the structure draw inspiration from Georgian sources, although this is the more convincing of the two. It presents a strict symmetrical facade to St Georges Road with decorative treatments to windows and balconies in cement render.
11	B	This residence was built for Mr. R. Jennings in 1942 to designs prepared by the noted firm of Melbourne architects, Marcus Martin & Tribe. It is an outstanding example of simple Georgian massing and understated, but sophisticated, detail.
11A	B	No 11 St Georges Road was designed by A. Mortimer McMillan. ¹² It demonstrates the impact of European Modernism on Melbourne domestic architecture. Its horizontal corner windows, cylindrical tower and roof garden all derive from contemporary European sources. Ratebooks from 1939 show the first owner to be Doris Powell, although the MMBW connection details suggest that F.E. White had owned the building one year earlier. While this building is stylistically removed from others in the court, its scale, simple massing and stark exterior surfaces contribute, nonetheless, to the character of the other buildings on the site.

¹² Personal recollection by Neil Clerehan.

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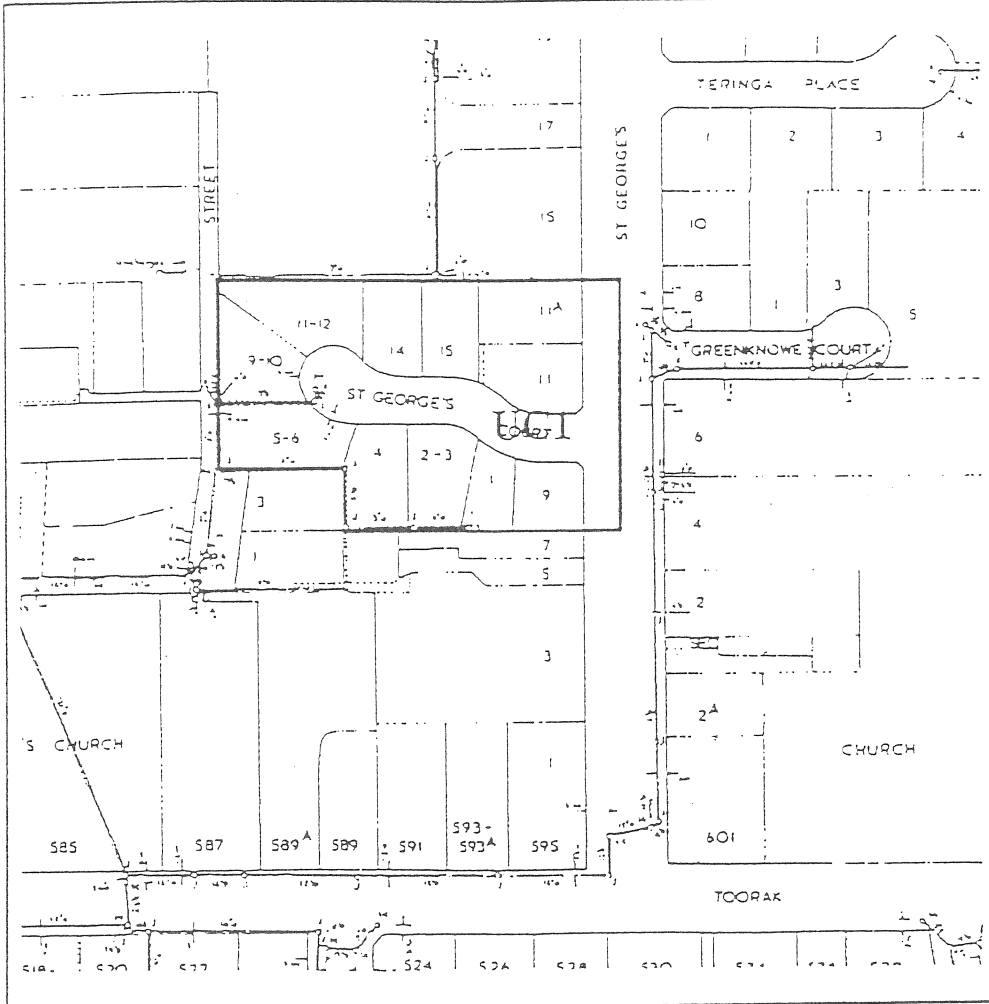
STONNINGTON PLANNING SCHEME

LOCAL SECTION

AMENDMENT L30

(Gazetted)

JP
4/8/98



SCALE 1:5000

REFER PLANNING SCHEME MAP NO. 2UC

LEGEND:

UC1

URBAN CONSERVATION AREA

13 FEB 1998

This map was prepared and approved by the
Minister for Planning and Urban Development on

13 FEB 1998
B.B. BROWN
Strategic Planning Services
Office of Planning and Development
Department of Infrastructure

This Map forms part of Amendment L30
adopted by Council on 15 December 1997.

B.B. BROWN
STRATEGIC PLANNING
CO-ORDINATOR