

46 Albany Road, Toorak Heritage Citation Report



Figure 1 46 Albany Road, Toorak.

History and Historical Context

Thematic Context

The following is drawn from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006).

The End of an Era – Mansion Estates Subdivision in the Early Twentieth Century

Toorak has been described as *'the only suburb to acquire and keep a name which was synonymous in the public mind with wealth, extravagance and display'*.¹ The suburb's climb to fashionable pre-eminence was due to its pleasing topographic features and the presence of the Governor's residence from 1854 (Toorak House, after which the suburb is named). Toorak and the higher parts of South Yarra were settled by pastoralists, army officers, high-ranking professionals, and 'self made' merchants and traders. Their wealth was manifested in the construction of a suitably impressive mansion, usually set within expansive grounds. As Victoria's land boom progressed into the late 1880s, the mansions became more elaborate, one of the best surviving examples being *Illawarra* (1 Illawarra Crescent), built by land-boomer Charles Henry James in 1891.

After the collapse of the land boom, many mansions were put to other uses, subdivided or demolished. The subdivision of the old estates of Toorak began to increase after World War I when the cost of maintaining these large properties became prohibitive. This process of subdivision created a unique pattern of development which can still be understood and

¹ Paul de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees: The Upper Class in Victoria 1850-1880*, p.147.

interpreted today. Although new subdivisions imposed new road patterns within the original grids, in many cases new estates and streets bore the name of the old properties, while the original houses were sometimes retained within a reduced garden. Toorak nonetheless retained its appeal as a wealthy enclave.

Creating Australia's most designed suburb

Toorak is notable for the strong culture of patronage between architects and their wealthy clients, which existed from the earliest times of settlement. This has resulted in a much higher than average ratio of architect designed houses. In Albany Road alone, 47 of the 61 houses built since 1872 have been attributed to architects. The consequence of this is one of the strongest concentrations of high quality residential architecture in Australia, which provides an important record of all major architectural styles and movements since the earliest days of settlement.

Architects were particularly busy in Toorak in the boom years of the 1880s when numerous mansions and grand residences were built for newly rich merchants, businessmen and land speculators. A great many examples of nineteenth century domestic architecture in the Municipality were lost through demolition, however many of these demolitions created opportunities for twentieth century architects.

After the turn of the century, architects continued to have a major influence on the character of the wealthy suburbs in present day Stonnington. Walter Butler, Robert Hamilton, Marcus Martin and Rodney Alsop were among the notable architects whose work is well represented in Toorak. These architects built predominately in the fashionable architecture styles of the 1920s and 1930s, particularly the Georgian revival and Old English modes.

Place History

The property at 46 Albany Road originally formed part of Crown Allotment 26, which was first purchased in 1849 by merchant James Jackson. Lot 26 comprised 76 acres of land bordered by present day Kooyong, Malvern and Toorak Roads and the line of Denham Place. Jackson also purchased 108 acres of land west of Kooyong Road, where he built his mansion 'Toorak House'. East of Kooyong Road, most of 'Jackson's Paddock' remained undivided for more than twenty years. The land was fenced and leased to a succession of dairymen.

With the subdivision of Jackson's Paddock in 1872, Albany Road was created and successful merchant William Bayles purchased several large allotments, including 22 acres of elevated land at the corner of Toorak Road. Bayles' mansion 'Yar Orrong' was built in 1873 on a corner site bound by Albany Road, Kooyong and Toorak Roads. The property included a billiard room, tennis court, gardener's cottage, detached kitchen, orchard, formal garden, and stables on the east boundary, close to Albany Road.

At the end of the First World War, fifteen acres of the Yar Orrong Estate were subdivided, and three new roads, Yar Orrong, Macquarie and Barnard, were created. Yar Orrong remained on three acres of land with its entrance off Albany Road. The twenty-five residential allotments offered for sale in the Yar Orrong Estate in May 1918 do not seem to have included the property on the south-east corner of Albany and Kooyong Roads (ie present day 46 Albany Road).² A house was built on this site c1936-37³ for Edith K Noonan to designs by architect A Mortimer McMillan.⁴

² Stonnington Local History Catalogue. Reg. No. MP531.

³ Sands and McDougall directories

⁴ Stonnington Local History Catalogue. Building Plan No. 1039000100.

In 1938 architect Robert Demaine prepared plans for a passenger lift to be built on the house's northern elevation with brick walls to match the existing.⁵ The garage at the southern end of the house was extended c2012 and a lych gate also built on the street corner.

Description

The house at 46 Albany Road stands on the north-east corner of Albany and Kooyong Roads. It is a large and picturesque double storey English Domestic Revival style residence with its principal elevation aligned to Kooyong Road. The roof is composed from a series of hips and gable ends with terracotta shingle tile cladding and tall sturdy brick chimneys. External walls are mostly of clinker brick with plain rendered surfaces used sparingly on the Kooyong Road gable ends. The plain rendered walls are enlivened by fine brick detailing, including herringbone bond infill above the entry porch and irregular panels of darker thin bricks on the gable ends. Timber framed windows with leadlight glazing add further to the house's romantic Medieval character.

The house remains substantially intact externally apart from the c1938 lift addition and the larger scale c2012 attic storey addition to the garage at the Albany Road end. These works were sympathetically detailed to match the existing house and have not undermined the integrity of the original A Mortimer McMillan design.

Comparative Analysis

English Domestic Revival Styles

Commonly referred to as Tudor or Old English, the English Domestic revival was an offshoot of the Arts and Crafts medievalism of the late nineteenth century, and shared that movement's values in terms of dark, natural colourings, a predominance of brickwork, the use of half timbering and a love of wrought iron and leadlight windows. Old English architecture was typified by the use of red or clinker brick, brick nogging and/or half timbering in gables or upper storeys, boldly modelled brick chimneys and terracotta tile roofs.

Steeply pitched roofs with gables rather than hips were a typical characteristic of the larger, two storey examples, though small suburban houses often had a combination of hips and gables. Walls were usually sheer rather than textured and ended flush with the gable of the roof. Sometimes manganese bricks or tiles or tapestry bricks were used to highlight openings and to decorate walls. Picturesque asymmetry was attained through double or triple fronts to the facade, arched porch entries, large, prominent chimneys and, in larger examples, oriel windows and towers.

Porches were generally small, and the traditional Australian verandah was not included except in some hybrid examples. Windows were of the sash or casement types, and often featured twelve panes or diamond pattern leadlight. Muted colours were appropriate to this style. Cream, off-white, buff, stone, terracotta and dark brown were most popular. Dark stained timber and red brick were the dominant materials, and cast iron painted black or a dark chocolate brown was also common.

A number of new economies in materials facilitated the rise of the English Domestic revival. The increasingly availability of seasoned hardwoods made possible the use of brick nogging and half-timbering, even in the most modest house. Added to this was the introduction of terracotta shingle tiles, manufactured by the Eureka tile company in their Ballarat kilns.

⁵ Stonnington Local History Catalogue. Building Plan No. 1039000100.

By the late 1920s, the inclusion of imitation half timbering in the black and white tradition declined although buildings continued to achieve medieval associations through picturesque massing of gabled and hipped roofs and through the application of elements such as leadlight windows. Architects also looked to the vernacular of Normandy for inspiration.

Architect Robert Hamilton was recognised as the foremost practitioner in this style, designing large and impeccably detailed houses and luxury flats. Other architects strongly associated with Old English/Tudor Revival include Philip Hudson, Eric Beedham and Arthur Plaisted.

The use of an external expression drawing heavily from medieval precedents became a means of expressing the solidity and longevity of British traditions. Old English or Tudor styled houses were associated with a profound Empire consciousness. Larger houses of the type exploited the associations of the manor to convey wealth and social status. A large Tudor house, no matter how new, somehow conveyed a sense that wealth, even recently achieved, was permanent. So common was the use of this idiom within the nouveau riche enclaves of Toorak and South Yarra that the essentially British term 'Stockbroker Tudor' gained popular usage.

Design in a true Old English mode runs right through the 1920s but it gained much greater momentum from the early 1930s as the bungalow and Spanish Mission began to wane in popularity. From this time it was taken up by a far greater proportion of the architectural profession, and began to appear as a builder's expression. Some of the more progressive designers in this mode, such as Edward Billson and Osborn McCutcheon, incorporated modern planning with careful zoning of spaces according to function. Few houses designed by either architects or builders took the opportunity to break away from revivalism in Old English design other than through the process of progressive simplification, the hallmark of late 1930s stylism. As the decade drew to a close the sentimentality and strong British associations of the academically detailed Old English were replaced by an expression which drew ever closer to the post-war multi-fronted multi-hipped and unadorned Australian suburban vernacular.

A substantial number of residences drawing inspiration from English Domestic revival sources were built in the well-heeled suburbs of Stonnington during the interwar period. Examples in this mode with individual heritage controls currently include 3 Hopetoun Road, Toorak (HO327), 429 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (HO313), 3 Illawara Crescent, Toorak (HO62), 8 Monaro Road, Kooyong (HO277) and 4 Struan Street, Toorak (HO168). The latter has substantial additions and alterations. 46 Albany Road is not as intact as some other individually significant examples listed above, but displays a similar high architectural quality, exemplifying architect A Mortimer McMillan's talent for design in the Old English mode.

Thematic Context

The house at 46 Albany Road, Toorak illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006):

- 8.1.3 The end of an era – mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century
- 8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Assessment Against Criteria

Assessment of the place was undertaken in accordance with the HERCON criteria and the processes outlined in the Australian ICOMOS (Burra) Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance.

Statement of Significance

The relevant HERCON criteria and themes from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental* (TEH) are shown in brackets.

What is Significant?

The substantial English Domestic Revival style house at 46 Albany Road, Toorak was constructed c1936-37 to designs by accomplished interwar architect A Mortimer McMillan. It was built on land subdivided from grounds of the nineteenth century mansion Yar Orrong.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original external form, materials and detailing.
- The high level of integrity to its interwar appearance.
- The unpainted state of the face brick and terracotta elements.
- The domestic garden setting (but not the fabric of the garden itself).
- The legibility of the original built form from the public realm.

Modern fabric, including the corner gate and garage addition, is not significant.

How is it significant?

The house at 46 Albany Road, Toorak is of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The house is architecturally significant as a large, skilfully designed and generally well-preserved English Domestic Revival style interwar residence (Criterion D).

The house is of some historical interest as evidence of a major phase of development that took place in the 1920s and 1930s when many of Toorak and Malvern's grand nineteenth century mansion estates were subdivided to create prestigious residential enclaves (TEH 8.1.3 The end of an era – mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century, Criterion A). It also illustrates the role of houses generally, and architect designed Old English style houses in particular, as symbols of wealth, status and taste for Melbourne's upper classes of the interwar period (TEH 8.4.1 - Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion).

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme to the extent of the whole property as defined by the title boundaries as shown in figure 2 below. External paint controls, internal alteration controls and tree controls are not recommended. It is further recommended that an A2 grading be assigned to the house.

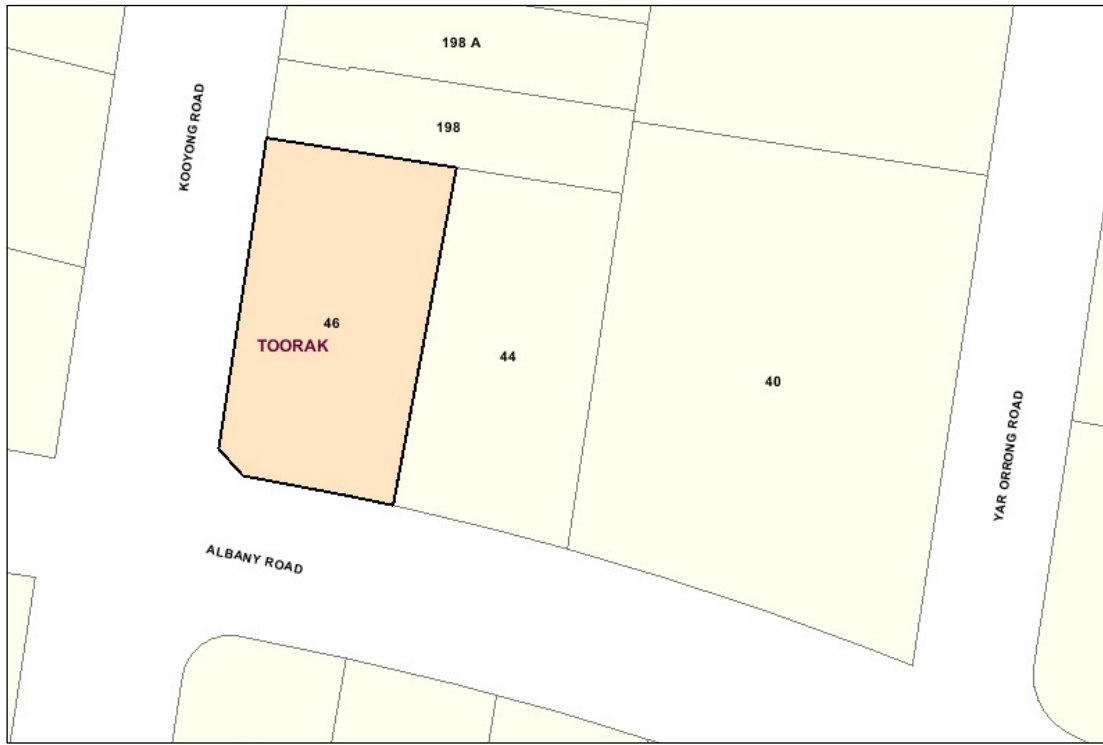


Figure 2 Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 46 Albany Road, Toorak.