'St Cyr'

10 William Street, South Yarra

Place type: Residential Buildings (private), Mansion

Significance level: Local

Recommended protection: Planning Scheme

Architectural style: Victorian period (1851-1901) Italianate

Locality history

South Yarra, situated on the elevated south side of the Yarra River, emerged as a suburb of Melbourne in the 1850s. Before that, from the late 1830s and until the early 1840s, George Langthorne's Anglican Mission for the Aboriginal people was situated near present-day Anderson Street. The Botanical Gardens had been reserved in 1846 and the surrounding land began to be developed for large residential estates in the 1850s. The second director of the gardens from 1859, Government Botanist Ferdinand Mueller, resided in South Yarra, as did his deputy, Carl Wilhelmi.

Government House (1876) was situated close by in the Domain, and although situated outside the suburb of South Yarra, the vice-regal presence provided an influential social cachet to the area. On the elevated ground between the Yarra River and Toorak Road a number of mansions on large estates were established, including 'Como', 'Avoca', 'Redfern' and 'Airlie'. The Botanic Gardens, also outside South Yarra, lent a strong character to the area. Wealth enabled the development of extensive private gardens, and large properties were often laid out

with gravel walks and beds, large expanses of lawn and orchards. Smaller villas were also embellished with garden beds, and also often sported a fashionable fernery.

South Yarra was accessed from the city via St Kilda Road, and also by a punt across the Yarra. The South Yarra railway station was first opened on Toorak Road in the 1860s, servicing the private Hobsons Bay railway, but was expanded in the 1880s when the station was added to the new Oakleigh line. The strip along Toorak Road and along Chapel Street (bordering with Prahran) developed into a busy shopping and commercial area.

South Yarra was home to many of Melbourne's wealthiest and most influential people, including businessmen and merchants, professionals, academics, retired graziers and diplomats; the close proximity to Victoria Barracks also attracted military men to the suburb. Well-known families that lived in South Yarra in the nineteenth century included the Armytages and the Deakins. A number of fine churches and private schools, including Melbourne Girls' Grammar School (Merton Hall), and Melbourne Grammar School and Christ Church Grammar School (outside the municipality), were established in the mid to late nineteenth century.

The suburb has a concentration of examples of fine architecture, from Victorian-era mansions through to Modernist styles, with a number of notable architects represented. From the early twentieth century and through the interwar period, many large estates were subdivided and grand homes were converted into flats and boarding houses. A number of fashionable interwar-era apartment blocks were erected in the Botanic Gardens area, along Alexandra Avenue and between Domain Road and Toorak Road. The breaking up of large properties continued into the 1950s and 1960s.

Place history

The site of 10 William Street was formerly occupied by Thomas Lang's Nursery. The Toorak builder Henry Everest acquired a block of land here in 1876 and soon after had built four brick houses on the land, all of which were tenanted (RB; Porter 2013). In the ratebooks for 1877-78, Everest is listed as the owner of large brick houses at numbers 4, 6, 8, and 10 William Street, which in current numbering equates to 10, 12, 14 and 16 William Street (RB).

The largest of Everest's houses was 10 William Street. It was tenanted by barrister John Buckley, and was known as 'St Cyr' from the late 1870s. The large residence required several staff and in 1878 an advertisement in the *Argus* sought the services of a cook, laundress, house and parlour maids (Porter 2013, citing *Argus* 5 January 1878). Following the departure of Buckley by 1880, the house was occupied by the French Consul, Charles Fauconnet. A subsequent French Consul, Julius Belcour, took up residence at 'St Cyr' in 1881 (Porter 2013).

The house was sold to Frederick Collie Christy of Malvern in 1881 and he took up residency with his wife Caroline and daughter Edith in 1888. The family remained at 'St Cyr' for many years. After the death of both her parents, Edith Christy left the house to her companion. Subsequently, the house was tenanted and used as a boarding house for many years (Porter 2013).

The house appears in the MMBW Detail Plan of 1895, by now with its current address, 10 William Street, with the back garden showing trellis, outbuildings and stables.
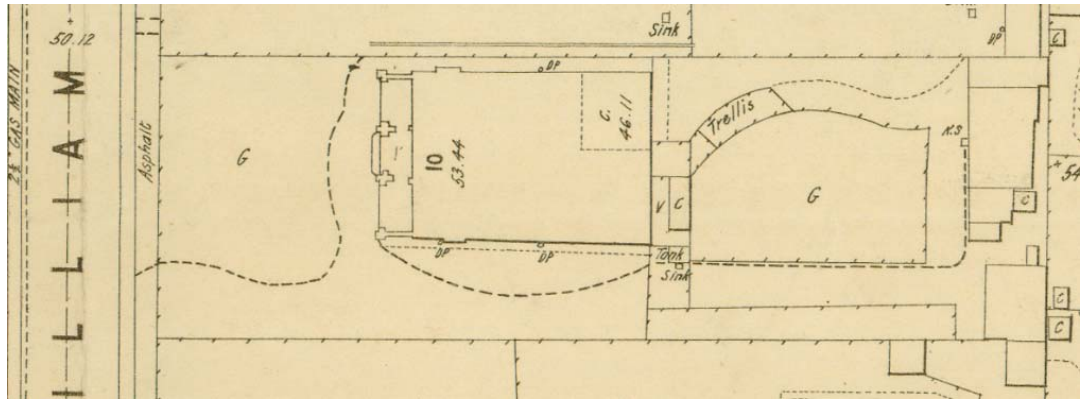
CONTEXT

Figure 1. MMBW Detail Plan no. 950, dated 1895 (SLV).

Violet Gladys Dulieu of South Yarra purchased the property in 1959 and moved in the following year. She added a swimming pool to the front garden (removed after 2011) and in 1961 opened an art gallery (South Yarra Galleries) in the former stables. The gallery was novel at the time for its specialisation in Australian art. The artists who exhibited there included Jeffrey Smart, John Olsen, John Blackman and Greg Irvine. Dulieu lived at 'St Cyr' for 20 years (Porter 2013). From 1987 until 2011, the stables were run as the Libby Edwards Galleries, which represented a group of emerging artists, whose work then ranged from the conservative to the avant-garde (Boxwind).

Sources

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Physical description

Figure 2. Front façade of 10 William Street. (source: Abercromby's Real Estate, 2011)

The house at 10 William Street, South Yarra, is a large Italianate two-storey villa in a terrace house form, expressed with blank side walls and wing walls surrounding the front verandah. Much larger than the typical terrace house, the front façade is five bays wide. The slate roof is hipped with large chimneys with curved wythes at the top. The chimneys are finished in unpainted cement render and have a bracketed cornice, which is echoed by the bracketed eaves of the house. The walls are also rendered with some restrained classical cast-cement ornament.

The presentation of the house is dominated by its substantial two-storey verandah. The ground floor is arcaded, with three wide segmental arched openings, divided by pilasters with an incised geometric pattern on their face and barley twist colonnettes to the corners. At first floor level is a masonry balustrade featuring an open guilloche motif. Above it are short cast-iron columns with cast-iron brackets. There is no cast-iron frieze, instead there are drops at the centre of the three wide bays and dentilation to the verandah beam. At the tops of the verandah wing walls are large cast-cement urns.

Behind the arcade at ground floor level, the four-panel front door sits within a recessed opening with barley-twist colonnettes to the corners. Barley-twist colonnettes also divide the door from the sidelights, and above the door is a simplified Greek pediment. There is a large highlight at the top, which appears to have lost its vertical divisions. The floor of the verandah is of black and white marble tiles. To either side of the front door, through an arch, is a single large opening containing simple French doors. The opening is stop-chamfered at the top with simple pilasters on either side. It appears that the doors are modern replacements. At first floor level, there are four double-hung sash windows with segmental heads and label moulds with large bosses. At the centre is a door with arched glazing and a segmental arched highlight. Its height and detail (including label mould) allows it to read as another window.

There are a number of outbuildings to the rear, visible in 2016 aerial photos and in a 2011 real estate photo, two of which have gabled roofs covered in slate. The structure in the north-east corner of the site may correspond to an outbuilding shown on the 1895 MMBW plan. A two-storey former stables is located in the south-east corner. It has a larger footprint than the building shown in this location in 1895, so may have been replaced or enlarged not long after

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that time (as stables became obsolete by the 1910s). It has rendered walls and a parapeted gable to the front elevation. Both of these buildings are surrounded by flat-roofed extensions which may relate to the stable's use as an art gallery from 1961 to about 2011.

Figure 3. The side of the house and the western (front) elevation of the former stables (source: Abercromby's Real Estate, 2011).

Comparative analysis

The terraced house form was introduced from Britain and characterises inner suburban development from the 1850s to the 1890s in Australia's capital cities. A terrace house is defined as a dwelling with blind boundary walls, designed to fit on a narrow building block. While the most common type of terrace house in Melbourne is the terrace row, of three or more houses sharing party walls, the terrace house was also built in pairs (semi-detached) and even singly where more space was available (Tibbits & Goad 2012:695).

The very earliest terrace houses, in early suburbs such as Fitzroy, followed the British model and did not have a front verandah. As this form was adapted to the hotter Australian climate, timber-framed verandahs were added at ground floor level (even for two and three-storey houses). From the 1860s to the 1890s, a distinctive Australian terrace idiom emerged, embellished with cement decoration and full-height verandahs employing cast-iron posts, balustrades, and decorative brackets and frieze (Tibbits & Goad 2012:695-7). Some of the more prestigious examples used masonry arcading (usually rendered brick) instead of the mass-produced cast-iron verandah construction.

While Windsor had by far the densest 19th-century development in Stonnington, inner-suburban South Yarra also had a number of semi-detached terrace house pairs on narrow allotments. Further to the east, in Armadale and Malvern, as well as Windsor and South Yarra, we see large single terrace houses on wider blocks with space between them. While not attached, they were often built in rows.

Almost all Victorian terraces could be described as Italianate in style, though some lean toward the more substantial Renaissance Revival. There are also a very small number of Gothic Revival examples.

The Italianate style had its origins in the landscape paintings of Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorrain over a century earlier. These two French artists were enamoured with the landscapes and architecture of rural Italy, depicting it as a vision of Arcadia. Their efforts inspired a broader pursuit of 'the Picturesque' in architecture (Statham 2008).

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 style, which emerged as the preferred expression for Melbourne's grandest mansions of the mid-century, was quickly adapted to suit more modest suburban villas and terraces. As Hubbard (2012:357) notes:

> *Flexibility and adaptability were the secrets to the success of the Italianate style. It could range from the simplest of buildings to the grandest. It was not a precise style and could accommodate different levels of architectural sophistication. It could be formally symmetrical or informally asymmetrical. While towers were standard, they might be reduced to just a porch. The style was easy to copy and could be used by speculative builders buying stock items for decoration. Most importantly, the Italianate style used the vocabulary of classical architecture freely but sparingly, generally with relatively plain expanses of wall and hipped roofs with bracketed eaves.*

As the style evolved to accommodate less substantial residential types, the deliberate asymmetry and rambling form inspired by the Picturesque massing of wings and towers of buildings such as 'Osbourne' became less central to the mode. So much so that the Italianate terrace forms of the 1880s were not substantially different to their forebears of a generation earlier apart from an appliqué of 'Italian' detailing.

The Italianate house is so common in the Melbourne area that this is the standard image people hold of the 'Victorian house'. Condensed to its key features, they would be a hipped roof with an M-profile (i.e. having a central valley to the rear half, which allows a low ridgeline), bracketed eaves, chimneys with a cornice at the top (a run cement-render moulding), and a timber or iron-framed verandah with cast-iron ornament to all but the grandest houses. Common extras included a faceted (canted) bay used to create an asymmetric composition (or occasionally used symmetrically), and windows that had a round or segmental arched opening, some of which were embellished with run cement-render mouldings or delicate hood moulds.

There were three general types of cladding for Italianate houses. The most modest were clad in timber weatherboards or blocked boards emulating expensive ashlar. The two most common types were finished in cement render or face brick. Rendered houses could obtain a high level of run and cast ornament at an affordable price, leading to some highly embellished examples. All, even the most modest, had ruled render with incised lines to emulate the more expensive stone construction. Face brickwork was also common, usually dark brown Hawthorn bricks with cream brick dressings (bichrome) from the late 1860s, and later in the century with red brick accents as well (polychrome). Some architects and designer-builders created bold patterns with the coloured bricks. As good building stone was not common in Victoria, very few houses were built of stone. Early examples were of bluestone, such as the grand 'Bishopscourt' in East Melbourne.

The development of the former City of Prahran and the western part of the former City of Malvern coincides with the emergence of the Italianate forms of expression in Victoria. Consequently the City of Stonnington retains a disproportionate number of Melbourne's better examples of the mode. A number of these, typically the grandest and most elaborate mansions or those associated with Victoria's most notable families, have been added to the Victorian Heritage Register. These include: 'Toorak House', 'Greenwich House' and 'Mandeville Hall', in Toorak; 'Stonington' in Malvern; and 'Malvern House' in Glen Iris.

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Examples of Italianate terrace houses that are of individual significance in Stonnington's Heritage Overlay can be divided into a number of groups according to the number of dwellings (attached or detached), their size, ornament and level of architectural sophistication.

Examples built in the 1870s until about 1885 have exposed eaves to the front (and sometimes to the side walls), and the walls are usually of bichrome or polychrome face brick. Less common are examples with walls finished in cement render include the two-storey terrace row at 200-210 Williams Road, Toorak (in HO380); the two-storey semi-detached pair at 52-54 Chatsworth Road, Prahran (in HO127); and the very grand detached two-storey house at 80 Williams Road (in HO155).

By the late 1880s, all terrace houses had a front parapet, almost always finished in cement render. More prestigious examples of the parapeted and rendered type with arcading to the front verandah, all two-storeys in height, include the terrace row at 28-36 Surrey Road, South Yarra (in HO379); semi-detached houses at 22 & 24 Northcote Road, Armadale (in HO130); and the detached houses at 80 Caroline Street, South Yarra (in HO355); and 70 & 76 Tivoli Road, South Yarra (in HO149).

'St Cyr', at 10 William Street, of 1877 is one of the earlier examples of the use of cement render as a façade treatment, and also one of the earlier examples of a terrace-type house that has masonry arcading to the verandah. The other houses cited above are all of the parapeted type built c1885-92, while 'St Cyr' has the traditional bracketed eaves form.

Among the parapeted terrace-type houses with an arcaded front verandah, most are more slender with cast-iron columns supporting the arches. The most comparable examples to 'St Cyr' are the freestanding houses at 70 & 76 Tivoli Road, and the terrace row at 28-36 Surrey Road, all in South Yarra. These three examples combine arcading with a masonry balustrade to the first-floor verandah. The house at 70 Tivoli Road has arcading to the ground floor only, making it the most similar to 'St Cyr'.

Figure 4. 70 Tivoli Road, South Yarra (Significant in HO149) (source: Google Streetview)

The house at 70 Tivoli Road, however, is less than half the size of 'St Cyr', and displays the use of stock elements seen on many houses of its day, unlike the architectural design approach seen at 'St Cyr'.

In fact, it compares more closely with a group of substantial houses, most of which have arcading at both levels, including 768 Malvern Road of c1880 (in HO130) and 34 Mercer Road of 1888 (HO82) in Armadale, and 7-9 Grandview Grove, Prahran (in HO135), which is built of red brick with rendered dressings and a balustraded parapet. 'St Cyr' shares the unusual use of a guilloche motif for the balcony balustrade with the eclectic 12 Grandview Grove, Prahran (in HO135) which is built of bichrome brick.

Figure 5: 15 Grandview Grove, Prahran (source: Stonnington Local History Archives, ID: 12696)

The closest comparison is with 15 Grandview Grove, Prahran (in HO135), which has masonry arcading at both levels, panel details to the arcade render, a typical balustrade form and bracketed eaves (unlike most of the examples of this arcaded type, which are parapeted). It appears to retain an early iron palisade fence. It is a more muscular version of this type, with densely spaced round-headed arched openings, in contrast to the light elegance of 'St Cyr' with its three wide segmental-arched openings and delicate first-floor verandah. Both have interesting details to their render finish: the panelled detail at 15 Grandview grove, and the inset colonnettes, guilloche moulding and incised geometric patterns to 'St Cyr'. They are of a similar level of intactness.

In conclusion, 'St Cyr' is one of a limited number of very large Victorian residences in Stonnington, much larger than most other terrace-type houses with arcaded verandahs. It compares well with the most substantial villas in the most salubrious parts of South Yarra, Prahran and Armadale. Its fine render detail to the ground-floor arcade, combined with the guilloche balustrade and delicate cast iron of the first floor, create a successful and elegant composition not seen elsewhere. It is highly intact externally, apart from the replacement French doors to the ground floor. It is also enhanced by the survival of two early outbuildings, including a stable.

Thematic context

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

3.3.3 Speculators and land boomers

8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

8.6.1 Sharing houses

10.8 The arts

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The stables complex at the rear of the house is of historical interest for its role as a renowned early art gallery that specialised in Australian art. Violet Gladys Dulieu purchased the property in 1959, and in 1961 opened the South Yarra Galleries in the former stables, representing artists such as Jeffrey Smart, John Olsen, John Blackman and Greg Irvine.

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?
'St Cyr' at 10 William Street, South Yarra, is significant. It was built by owner and builder Henry Everest, who constructed a row of four brick houses of varying designs (two others survive at 14 & 16 William Street). This house was built in 1876-77.

It is two-storey Italianate villa with rendered masonry walls and a slate-clad hip roof with bracketed eaves. The verandah is arcaded at the ground floor with segmentally arched openings framed in engaged pilasters. At first-floor level is a masonry balustrade, above which are cast-iron posts and brackets.

The house retains two early outbuildings at the rear, which are also significant, each with a gabled roof clad in slate. At the south-east corner is the two-storey stable with rendered walls and a parapeted gable front.

The high masonry front fence and the c.1960s additions to the house are not significant.

How is it significant?
'St Cyr' is of local architectural and aesthetic significance, rarity value, and historical interest, to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?
Architecturally, 'St Cyr' is a fine and intact example of a prestigious and substantial Victorian residence as were built in the highest and most salubrious areas of Stonnington's suburbs. It is Italianate in style, with characteristic features including the M-profile hipped roof, clad in slate, with corniced verandahs, segmentally arched windows with hood moulds, and classicising detail executed in cement render. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, it is distinguished by its cement render detail and arcaded verandah form, with broad segmental arches to the ground floor decorated with incised geometric details and inset barely-twist colonnettes at corners, and a pierced guilloche pattern to the first-floor verandah with delicate cast iron, creating a very elegant composition. (Criterion E)

The early outbuildings at the rear are significant as rare surviving outbuildings, which were once seen behind every substantial house. The gable-fronted building in the south-east corner in particular is a rare example of a nineteenth century stable in Stonnington, which illustrates the importance that horse-drawn transport once had, and also indicates the high status of this residence in requiring its own stable. (Criterion B)

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay to the extent of the whole property as defined by the title boundaries.

HO Schedule controls: Outbuilding Controls: Gabled outbuildings

Figure 6: Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 10 William Street, South Yarra (source: www.land.vic.gov.au)

Recommended grading: A2

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