

1 Chesterfield Avenue, Malvern Heritage Citation Report



Figure 1 1 Chesterfield Avenue, Malvern.

History and Historical Context

Thematic Context

The following is drawn from the *City of Malvern Heritage Study: Appendix 1* (Nigel Lewis, 1992).

'The City of Real Homes' – development of Malvern after World War I.

As was the case across most of metropolitan Melbourne, house building in the former City of Malvern was interrupted by World War I and did not resume in earnest until the 1920s. Development was spurred on by the expansion of tram networks, and the electrification of the railway lines passing through the municipality. One of Malvern's 1920s subdivisions was the Woodmason's Malvern Park Estate, a former dairy farm occupying the triangle between Waverley and Malvern Roads and Albert Street. The publicity material for the estate described Malvern as 'The City of Real Homes'. Within five years of its subdivision and sale in 1922, the Woodmasons dairy farm was almost covered with Californian bungalows and Spanish mission villas. Grander forms of housing could be found in the north-western parts of Malvern, closer to the prestigious suburb of Toorak. By 1945 the City of Malvern was almost fully developed apart from vacant land at the far eastern end of the municipality, near Warrigal Road.

Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Malvern is fortunate to retain the architectural legacy of many important architects. This has been mainly due to the social status of the area and the neighbouring suburb of Toorak in particular. In the 1920s the area experienced a rapid release of residential land from the former estates of the nineteenth century mansions. This provided opportunities for some of the most prestigious residential commissions in Melbourne at the time when strong architectural traditions flourished.

Houses in the Toorak area (in the former cities of Malvern and Prahran) dominated the pages of contemporary journals of the interwar period to an extent unrivalled by other suburbs. No other area of Melbourne had so many large and notable houses designed by prominent architects in this period. 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 1 Chesterfield Avenue originally formed part of Crown Allotment 24, which included 72 acres of land bounded by Malvern Road, Glenferrie Road, Toorak Road and the line of Henderson Avenue. Crown Allotment 24 was sold to Robert Balbirnie at the second sale of Crown land in 1849. Balbirnie subdivided the land into seven large allotments. One 20 acre allotment at the corner of Glenferrie Road and Toorak Road was sold to Isabella Cunningham in 1850 and then to Albert Proudfoot in 1853. The land was purchased by commission agent William Philpott in 1856 and became the site of his residence 'Rosehill', a brick house of nine rooms.¹

In 1888 Rosehill was purchased by Walter Lewis, solicitor and later Mayor of Malvern. Lewis demolished Rosehill and subdivided the property into 108 allotments known as the 'The Great Toorak Estate'. Chesterfield Avenue and Mayfield Avenue were created at this time. The Great Toorak Estate was promoted enthusiastically as the 'best land ever yet submitted for subdivision in Melbourne'.² The sudden onset of the 1890s depression saw only sporadic development with just a few large houses occupying multiple allotments. A 1907 MMBW plan of the area shows only four houses in the entire estate.³

In 1928, architects Hudson and Wardrop designed a house on lots 14 and 16 of the Great Malvern Estate (ie present day 1 Chesterfield Avenue) for widower Mrs Louisa Braithwaite.⁴ A garden plan was also prepared for the site by influential landscape designer Edna Walling.⁵

The house was first listed in Sands and McDougall directories in 1929 as 1a Chesterfield Avenue with 'Mrs L Braithwaite' as the occupant. Braithwaite's house was featured in the April 1930 edition of *Australian Home Beautiful*. The article, entitled 'The Beauty of Brick', offers the following description of the house:

It is interesting in the successful use of texture brickwork and the half timbering which is typical of the English Tudor type of domestic architecture.

The house is two storied, without attics and consists of three main living rooms on the ground floor with kitchen, maids' sitting alcove and maids' bed and bathrooms, together with kitchen offices and three garages which are connected with the house.

¹ Stonnington Local History Catalogue Reg. No. MP9000.

² Nigel Lewis, *City of Malvern Heritage Study*, p. 35.

³ MMBW Detail Plan No. 1771. State Library of Victoria.

⁴ Stonnington Local History Catalogue Reg. No. MB4355.

⁵ Edna Walling Collection, State Library of Victoria.

*On the first floor there are four bedrooms, one sleepout bedroom, bathroom, sewing room and storage ...*⁶

The architect's drawings also show an arcaded verandah to the front of the house and a porte cochere to its east side.⁷

Louisa Braithwaite passed away at the age of 70 in June 1931⁸ after which time the house became the home of Alex McLachlan.⁹ By 1934 the property had been renumbered as 1 Chesterfield Avenue.¹⁰

Hudson and Wardrop

The practice of Hudson and Wardrop was formed by in 1919 by architects Phillip Burgoyne Hudson and James Hastie Wardrop. Hudson was born in Auckland in 1887 and moved to Melbourne in 1903 when his father, Charles Hudson, became Railway Commissioner of Victoria. He was articled to Anketell Henderson in 1904 and briefly practiced with Charles D'Ebro. In 1910 Hudson established a practice of his own specializing in domestic design. His early houses showed strong influences from the English Domestic revival and contemporary Californian bungalow designs. Hudson also began teaching architectural drafting with Harold Desbrowe Anear and Robert Haddon at the Working Mens College, now known as RMIT University.

Wardrop was born in 1891 and commenced his architectural career articled to Charles D'Ebro. He won the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) Bronze Medal for measured drawing in 1910 and the following year he received a silver medal for the design of a branch bank. In 1913 he was elected an associate of the RVIA but his career was interrupted by WWI. Wardrop enlisted in the AIF in 1915, serving in Europe with the 6th Field Artillery Brigade where he was awarded the Military Medal in August 1918. After the war Wardrop studied briefly in England before returning to Melbourne and entering into partnership with Hudson.

In 1924, Hudson and Wardrop won first prize for the design of Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance (1927-1934) – arguably the most prestigious commission of its day. Architect and engineer Kingsley Ussher joined the firm in 1929 to assist with calculations for the Shrine's 'eye of light'. The practice continued with residential commissions through this period, and by the late 1920s Hudson could be ranked among Melbourne's most capable designers in the Old English Mode.¹¹

Wardrop went into sole practice in the mid 1930s when the partnership with Hudson was dissolved. Hudson continued to design notable Old English style residences before turning to simpler modes of expression, such as the stripped classical Moderne for the Hecla Factory, South Yarra (1936, demolished), and restrained Gothic for the Commercial Union Building, 411-413 Collins Street (1943-44). For his own practice, Wardrop left classicism behind and embraced Jazz Moderne as an architectural style. Notable buildings by Wardrop in this mode include Alkira House at 17 Queen Street (1936-37) and the former United Kingdom Hotel on the corner of Queens Parade and Heidelberg Road, Clifton Hill (1937-38).

⁶ *Australian Home Beautiful*. 1 April 1930, p. 13.

⁷ Stonnington Local History Catalogue Reg. No. MB4355.

⁸ *Argus*, 11 November 1931, p. 1.

⁹ Sands and McDougall directories, 1932-1934.

¹⁰ Sands and McDougall directories, 1932-1934.

¹¹ John Statham, 'Phillip Hudson' in *Encyclopedia of Australia Architecture*, p. 345.

Description

The property at 1 Chesterfield Avenue, Malvern is occupied by a substantial double-storey Old English style house. It has a clinker brick ground floor and half-timbered first floor with a steep timber shingle gable end facing Chesterfield Avenue. The street façade is visually anchored by a tall, boldly modelled brick chimney with angled shafts and corbelled caps. Windows typically have multi-pane sash frames.

The gable roofed porte cochere on the east side of the house has been enclosed and the arcaded ground floor front verandah has been glazed-in. A metal deck roofed carport has been built on the west side of the house. The brick front fence also appears to be a comparatively recent addition to the site. Despite these changes, and the demolition of the original three-car garage and servant's wing, the house presents to the street as being largely intact.

Comparative Analysis

English Domestic Revival Styles

Sometimes referred to as Tudor, interwar Old English 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 increasing 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.

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.

Old English style houses featured prominently in the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects 1928 Exhibition of Domestic Architecture – including a well received design in Albany Road,

Toorak by Hudson and Wardrop. Described as '*among the best representations of modern architectural development in the Exhibition*', it was a large two storey house with high boldly sculptured chimneys.¹² The 1928 exhibition was a great success and seems to have raised the public's interest in Old English design, for from this time references to what had been a relatively uncommon idiom became more frequent.

The Old English mode gained much greater momentum from the early 1930s as the bungalow and Spanish Mission style 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.

Architects who came to be most strongly associated with the Old English idiom in the 1930s included Philip Hudson, Robert Hamilton, Eric Beedham and Arthur Plaisted.

A substantial number of residences drawing inspiration from English Domestic revival were built in the well-heeled suburbs of Stonnington during the interwar period. Examples with individual heritage overlay controls currently include: 3 Hopetoun Road, Toorak (HO327), 429 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (HO313), 3 Illawarra Crescent, Toorak (HO62), 8 Monaro Road, Kooyong (HO277) and 4 Struan Street, Toorak (HO168). The house at 1 Chesterfield Avenue compares favorably with these examples and is a well executed example of the Old English mode with a good level of external integrity. The examples listed above tend to have more complex, picturesque massing and greater variety in roof forms than 12 Chesterfield Avenue. The house is nonetheless a strongly composed and well articulated design reminiscent of the 'Queen Anne' style houses of eminent British architect Norman Shaw (1831-1912).

Thematic Context

The house at 1 Chesterfield Avenue, Malvern illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006):

8.2.3 'The City of Real Homes' – development of Malvern after World War I.

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 History* (TEH) are shown in brackets.

What is Significant?

The substantial Old English style house at 1 Chesterfield Avenue, Malvern was constructed c1928 to designs by architects Hudson and Wardrop. It was built on a nineteenth century subdivision, at a time when Malvern was experiencing a major growth in suburban housing.

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

-The original external form, materials and detailing.

¹² *Australian Home Beautiful*, May 1928, p.15.

- The generally high integrity to its original design.
- The unpainted state of the face brick and terracotta elements.
- The domestic garden setting (but not the fabric of the garden itself).

Modern fabric, including the verandah glazing and flat roofed carport, is not significant.

How is it significant?

The house at 1 Chesterfield Avenue is of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The house is architecturally significant as a large, well-designed interwar Old English style residence with a good level of external integrity (Criterion D). It is illustrative of Hudson and Wardop's status as one of the foremost practitioners of the Old English style in interwar Melbourne.

The house is of some historical interest as evidence of the major period of suburban growth occurring in the former City of Malvern in the 1920s and 1930s. This phase of development firmly established Malvern's character as a dormitory suburb, predominately consisting of detached middle and upper middle class dwellings in garden settings (TEH 8.2.3 The City of Real Homes' - development of Malvern after World War 1, 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 (refer 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.

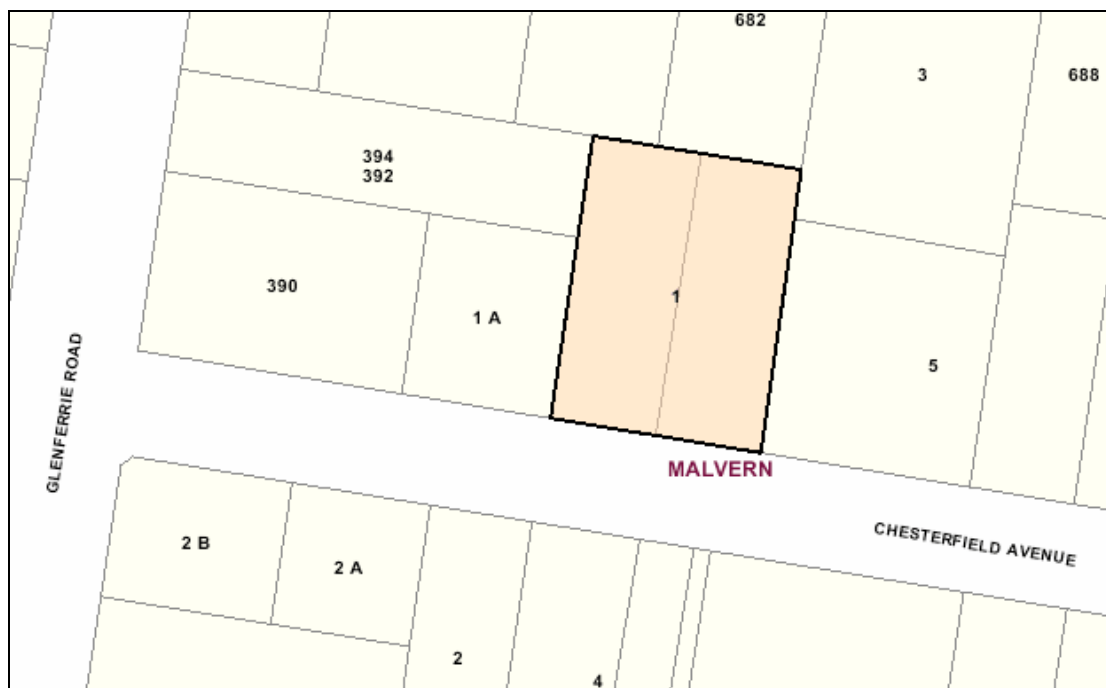


Figure 2 Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 1 Chesterfield Avenue, Malvern.