

Chastleton House

**17 Chastleton Avenue, Toorak**

Place type: Residential Buildings (private), Mansion

Significance level: Local



Recommended protection: Planning Scheme

Architectural style: Victorian period (1851-1901) Italianate

### Locality history

Toorak has long been recognised as Melbourne's most affluent suburb. It has played a key role in Melbourne's social and cultural history, and is perceived Australia-wide as a symbol of wealth and influence. Toorak is situated on the elevated south side of the Yarra River, with views across the river to the city of Melbourne. Although it was elevation and topography that established Toorak as a fashionable address, its name in fact comes from an Aboriginal word for 'reedy swamp'. The first Crown land sales took place in the 1840s and 1850s. 'Toorak House', built by merchant James Jackson, along with its extensive grounds, was acquired by the newly established Victorian government in 1851 as Victoria's first Government House. The creation of a vice-regal seat in 1851 set the tone for social exclusivity and was the foundation for Toorak's development as a desirable and sought-after address.

As Melbourne developed and industrialised, the wealthy middle-class sought to escape the bustle of the city and to settle in a quieter, more spacious environment. Paddocks and native bush gave way to large estates and substantial homes. The approach to Toorak was via the Gardiners Creek Road (later Toorak Road), which was the chief east-west route; the drive along it was described as 'very pleasant' in 1879. (Whitworth 1879: 390) Toorak was also accessed from the private punt that linked the two sides of the Yarra and via the Oakleigh railway line that opened in 1879.

During the 1870s and 1880s, many large mansions were erected, typically with a large complex of outbuildings so that each one effectively constituted a self-contained entity. These included servants' quarters (for laundrywomen, cook, housemaids, nursemaid, etc.); a laundry;

accommodation for gardeners and groomsmen, as well as toolsheds for their equipment; and stables and carriage house. Toorak in its heyday appeared as an impressive collection of large country estates within relative close proximity in a suburban setting. Many adopted the Italianate style of architecture and like 'Toorak House', were surmounted with a decorative square tower. The scale and extravagances of these residences reached a peak during the land boom of c.1888-1891. The homes of the wealthy in Toorak were often sumptuously and exquisitely decorated in the latest styles. Owners could afford to 'go home' and bring back art and other decorative pieces not easily obtainable in the colonies. Large estates also allowed for the establishment of impressive gardens and these were often in keeping with prevailing good taste and in sympathy with the design of the house. In many cases affluent property owners commissioned landscape designers.

Toorak society at its height, from the 1870s and up until the dawn of the First World War, represented an unusually high concentration of wealth, power and influence not seen elsewhere in Australia. This was home to many of Melbourne's wealthiest and most influential families, including the Baillieu, Clarke, Grimwade, Fairburn, Fink, Miller and Myer families. The salubrious environs of Toorak provided a seasonal Melbourne base for many landed families (mostly from the Western District), but was also a sought-after address for the professional classes and the merchants and others of Melbourne's expanding *nouveaux riches* who had 'made it', and then often subsequently lost it, through over-investing during the boom years of the late 1880s. The population of Toorak was dominantly British and overwhelmingly Protestant. St John's Church of England was a lynchpin of Toorak social life in the Victorian era and has become a symbol of social aspiration. Other 'English' influences in the development of Toorak can be seen in the Tudor Revival style of a number of the interwar-era shopfronts along Toorak Road.

Other parts of Toorak were developed with more typical middle-class homes of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. There was very minimal, if any, industry in Toorak proper, although many of its elevated homes had clear views across the Yarra of the factories with their chimney smoke that were concentrated on the Richmond flats.

In the 1920s and 1930s the fashion for flats saw mansion houses converted into multiple self-contained dwellings or demolished to allow subdivision. In the 1950s and 1960s many more of Toorak's mansions were demolished owing to the high cost of maintenance and changing lifestyles, including 'Heathmont', 'Nareeb', and 'Ellerslie'. Large blocks of flats were constructed amidst considerable outcry in the 1960s and 1970s in the case of the Domain Flats and Lansell Road. Many new subdivisions, through their layout and street-naming, reflected the earlier period of the 'big house', for example Montalto Avenue, Tintern Avenue and Brookfield Road, which were named after the mansions they replaced.

### Place history

The area between Toorak Road and the Yarra River was largely undeveloped in the 1850s, including this site on the west side of Orrong Road (Kearney 1855). In 1884 there were no occupants listed in the post office directory for Orrong Road between the Yarra River and Struan Street (S&McD).

The house first appears in the rate books of 1886-87 when Martin Petrie Blundell is rated as the owner-occupier of a 16-roomed brick house and 4.5 acres of land on Orrong Road (RB). In 1888 the land area is recorded as being 7 acres (RB). Blundell was a leading banker with the Bank of Australasia and the family moved in exclusive social circles (Clarke & Francis 2015). Advertisements for servants appeared in 1887 and 1893: 'Children's maid and needlewoman ... needed ... Chastleton, Orrong Rd, Toorak' (*Argus*, 23 Nov 1887); 'Cook and Laundress, also Nursery housemaid, Protestant, ... Chastleton, Orrong Road, North Toorak' (*Argus* 8 March 1893). In 1904, a notice appeared for the wedding of 'Miss Sophie Blundell, younger daughter of the late Mr W. P. Blundell, "Chastleton," Toorak, to Mr. H. L. Cumming, Camperdown' (*Table Talk* 24 March 1904). It is most likely that the house was built for Blundell.



*Figure 1. 'Chastleton', c.1894-96, photograph in collection of the State Library of Victoria, Accession no. H93.64/78. The current front façade, in its original form is to the right (source: SLV).*

A photograph of 'Chastleton', the home of M.P. Blundell, dated c.1894-96 (Figure 1), shows an elaborate two-storey Italianate mansion with a pyramidal tower, set amidst manicured gardens (SLV). The layout of the house, outbuildings and extensive grounds are shown in the MMBW Detail Plan No. 936, dated 1905. The plan shows the house occupying spacious grounds on Orrong Road, with a long carriage drive from Orrong Road, with a turning circle at the front entrance that faced south, and an extensive garden layout that included covered arbours, and probably an extensive kitchen garden. The footprint of the house extends almost to the Orrong Road boundary, with servants' quarters, five water closets, and stabling at the rear with a 'pitched' yard for the horses and a 'bin' for horse manure.

M.P. Blundell died in 1901. The Blundell family remained living at 'Chastleton' until at least 1904 (*Table Talk*, 24 March 1904). A large sale of valuable furniture and artworks belonging to Mrs M.P. Blundell was held at 'Chastleton' in May 1905 (*Age* 5 May 1905). A sale notice for the house has not been located but it can be assumed that Mrs Blundell had sold the house by early May 1905.

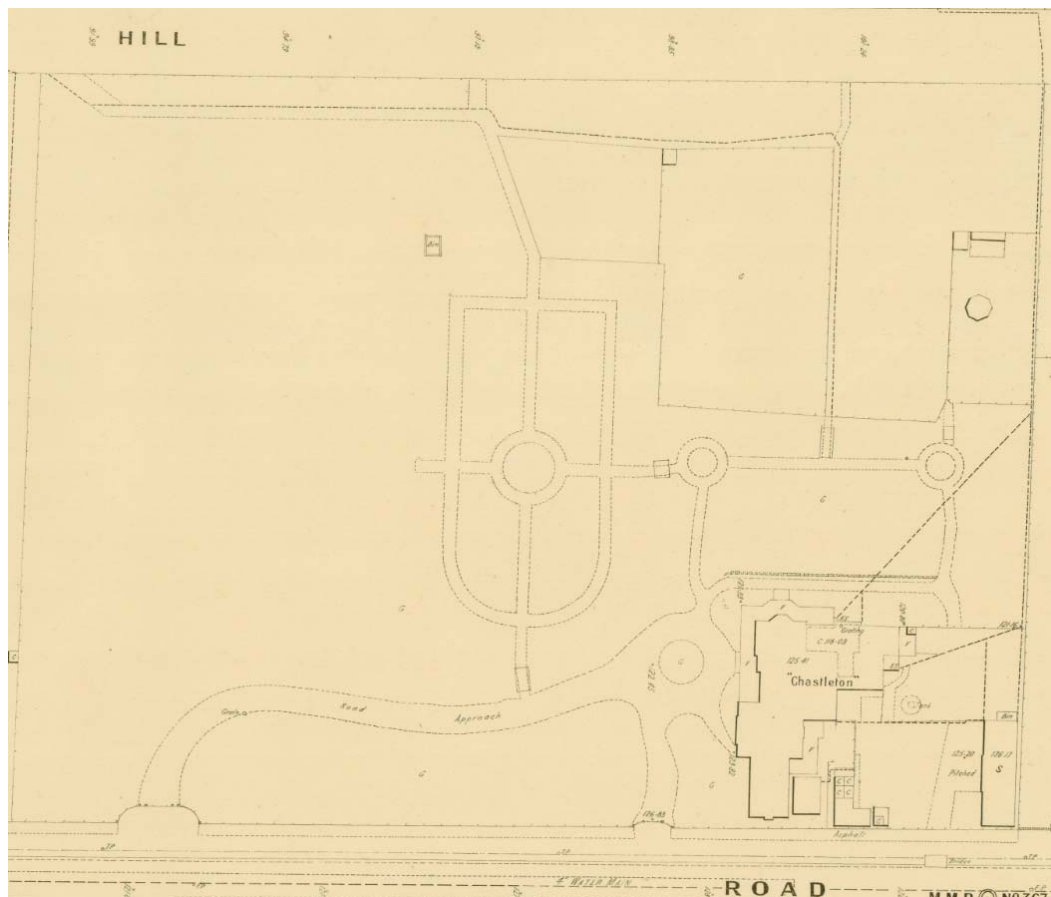


Figure 2. MMBW detail plan no. 936, City of Prahran, dated 1905 (source: SLV). This shows extensive garden setting before subdivision in the 1920s [North is to the right of the image].

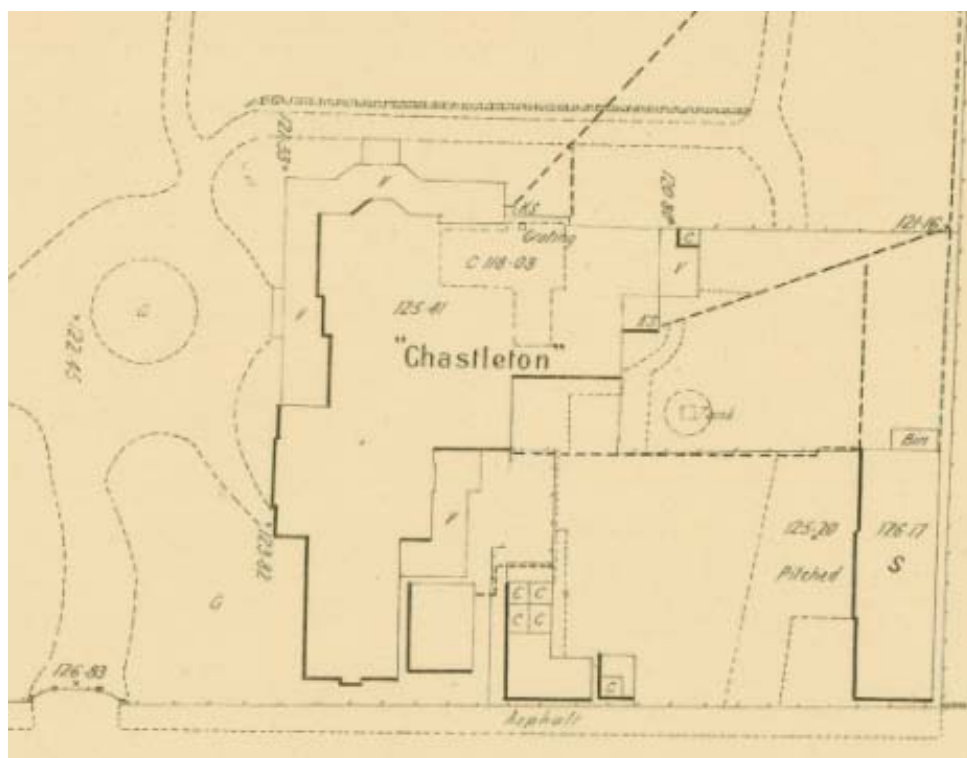


Figure 3. MMBW detail plan no. 936, City of Prahran, dated 1905 (source: SLV). This shows detail of the original house with servants' quarters and stabling, etc [North is to the right of the image].



William Barrett, maltster (1861-1939), purchased 'Chastleton' in Orrong Road in 1905 (*Table Talk* 28 December 1905). The Barrett family moved into their new home in late December 1905, after staying for six months at nearby 'Illawarra' in St Georges Road (possibly while their new house was undergoing alterations) (*Table Talk* 28 Dec 1905). By 1907, architect George De Lacy Evans had been commissioned (by William Barrett) to make alterations to the house, overseeing the 'demolition of the large rear wing and stable block and then the construction of the two projecting canted bays which surmount the entry' (Context 1994: 39, citing MMBW House Cover 495351). De Lacy Evans was responsible for the elaborate classical design of the new front porch which adopted an entablature supported on Tuscan-order columns and piers with balustrading above. The structure itself was designed by the eminent engineer (Sir) John Monash using the novel 'Monier' system of reinforced concrete construction (Lewis 1988: 25-26; Serle 1982: 154). Monash obtained the rights in 1905 to establish his own Monier company in Victoria, and the porch at 'Chastleton House' is one of his earliest experiments using the system in a residential context (Lewis 1988: 25).

This relatively early domestic use of reinforced concrete for building was featured in the 'Property Owners' section of the magazine, *Building*, in December 1907, which described "a simple method of construction that is likely to be widely adopted in Australia". An image of the new entry porch at Chastleton, attributed to De Lacy Evans, illustrated the article which espoused the virtues of concrete house construction, "...you will have walls that ivy may cling to and adorn without damp or injury. Your residence will have the virtues of stone, with walls that shall need neither paint nor repair, nor shall they settle, fall apart or go up in smoke" (*Building* 14 December 1907: 42).

The University of Melbourne Archives hold estimates, sketches and rough calculations of the porch design, dated May through August 1905 and two photographs of the completed porch in the Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Co. Collection (Holgate, Alan 'John Monash Engineering enterprise prior to WW1', accessed 13 July 2016). The roof of the porch was constructed of Monier plates, and the square piers (Figure 4) are shown on the drawings as brick while the round columns are Monier concrete finished with render (Holgate nd).



Figure 4. Entrance Porch for "Chastleton", University of Melbourne Archives GPNB/1195 Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Co. Collection (source: Alan Holgate nd).

De Lacy Evans retained the eastern wing of the house that included the large ballroom wing (PB). It would also appear that he rebuilt and modernised the rear servants' wing, as shown in the floor plan dated c1926-30 (PB). De Lacy Evans also updated the plumbing, added bathrooms to the house, presumably making provisions for plumbed toilets, as Toorak had just been sewered (PB). De Lacy Evans advertised for tenders for sewerage (house drainage) in December 1907 (*Age* 23 December 1907).

The Barretts lived at 'Chastleton' until the mid-1920s (ER). William and Annie Barrett sold the house in 1923 (*Argus* 22 September 1923) and subsequently spent time travelling in Europe



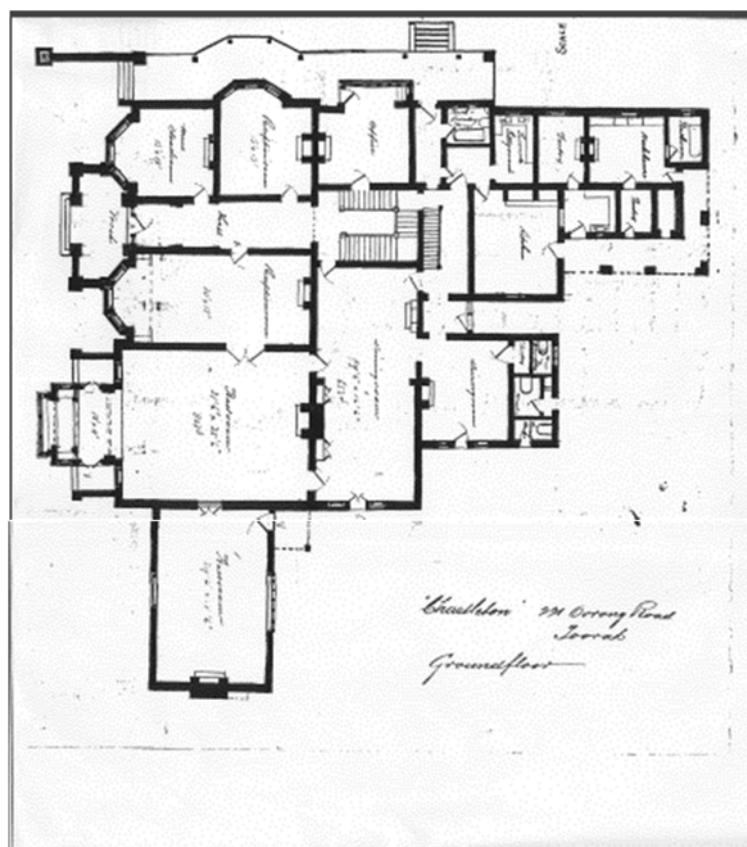


Figure 6. Floor plan (undated) of c1926-1930 (source: copy held PH 13689, SHC (PB)).

By 1934, the fashionable socialite Mrs Linda Davey-Milne was the owner of 'Chastleton' (*Who's Who in the World of Women* 1934) at which time the house was advertised for boarding in 'singles' and 'doubles' (*Argus* 9 April 1934). Further alterations are believed to have been carried out by architects (Walter) Butler and (Marcus) Martin between c1930 and 1945, probably for Davey-Milne or for the previous owner E.A. Mackay which likely related to works to convert the house from a reception centre to flats. Fittings, bricks, leadlight joinery and flooring were advertised for sale by Whelan ("the Wrecker") from a 'large mansion' on Orrong Road, Toorak in May 1930 (*Age* 5 May 1930). As the ballroom wing does not appear on the 1945 MMBW Plan no 936, it can be assumed that it was demolished sometime c1930. Aside from the removal of the ballroom wing, it was noted in the *Prabran Conservation Review* (1994) that the work by Butler and Martin does not appear to have substantially affected the exterior of the building (Context 1994: 39).

Sally Wilde in *The History of Prabran* (1993), relates the memories of tenant John Parker who occupied a flat at 'Chastleton' in 1934. He recalled there was a marble entrance hall and about five flats in all (Wilde 1993: 60).

In the 1940s Chastleton operated as a boarding house with flats available for the wealthy. By 1945 the remaining estate was subdivided into two allotments, leaving the original house on a smaller block on Chastleton Avenue. A new residential building had been erected on the land facing Orrong Road, where the ballroom wing had formerly been (MMBW Plan no. 936 1945). The MMBW plan of 1945 (Figure 7) shows Chastleton without the eastern bay with two additional rooms formed by closing in two sections of the west-facing verandah, which have since been demolished. A semi-detached garage was constructed at the south-western corner of the house in 2000 (PA0476/00 City of Stonnington).

In 1998 'Chastleton' was purchased by television host Steve Vizard, who bought it from widow Maria Stone who had been running it as a boarding house. Stone had purchased the property in 1964 (*Real Estate Buzz* 23 September 2013).

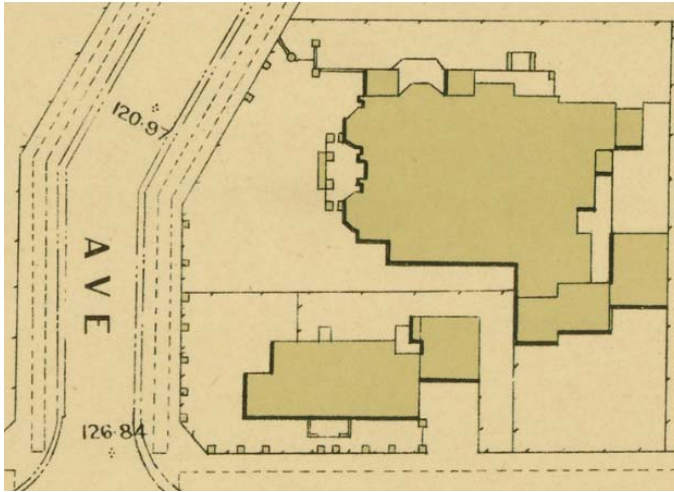


Figure 7. MMBW detail plan no. 936, Municipality of Prahran, dated 1945 (source: SLV). This shows the changed shape of the house, now fronting Chastleton Avenue, following subdivision in the 1920s. The north-facing side bay window is the point of reference with the original plan (1905) above.



Figure 8. Front porch of Chastleton, 1966 (source: Colin Caldwell, SLV Pictures Collection)



Figure 9. The current front façade of Chastleton, 1966. (source: Colin Caldwell, SLV Pictures Collection)

#### *George De Lacy Evans, architect*

George De Lacy Evans (1863-1948) was a notable Melbourne architect whose work spanned a period from the early 1880s to c1915. Following time in the office of William Pitt and as a student at the Prahran School of Design, De Lacy Evans briefly formed a loose partnership with James Birtwistle to enter the Grace Park Estate Housing competition in Hawthorn (Boroondara, various HOs), for which they won two of the nine prizes offered (Willingham 2012: 238). After 1885 De Lacy Evans practised alone, undertaking a number of commercial and warehouse commissions in central Melbourne, taking advantage of the property boom of the late 1880s. Following its collapse in 1891, De Lacy Evans moved to a dairy farm in rural Victoria before a short stint as a draftsman in the Public Works Department of the Western Australian government. In c1899 he returned to Melbourne and built a family home, ‘Hillstead’, in Munro Street, Coburg. De Lacy Evans’ final partnership was with Ernest Wright – formerly De Lacy Evans’ office colleague – between 1912 and the outbreak of World War I, after which he intermittently practised alone (Willingham 2012: 239).

De Lacy Evans was responsible for some of the more unique commercial architecture of Melbourne’s boom period in the 1880s. His association with prominent members of the Chinese community in Melbourne brought commissions to design prominent buildings in the heart of Melbourne’s Chinatown: namely, the See Yup Society Clubhouse (1886), a warehouse for Ah Ching (1886) and the Sum Kum Lee warehouse (1887). All of these were designed in the Italian Mannerist and French Medieval Revival modes (Willingham 2012: 239). His other commissions, executed in Boom Style, included a number of multi-storey stores and warehouses, offices and showrooms in Melbourne’s central city. On his return to Melbourne in



the early twentieth century, De Lacy Evans won the private commission to design the Arts and Crafts Gothic Style Memorial to Fallen Soldiers on St Kilda Road in 1902.

*John (later Sir John) Monash, engineer*

Civil engineer, (Sir) John Monash (1865-1931) was a pioneering figure, distinguished engineer and promoter of the use of reinforced concrete (Goad 2012: 234). Colin O'Connor notes that Monash had, in effect, 'three successful careers - as a reinforced concrete engineer, as an army officer, and as the first general manager of the State Electricity Commission' (Lewis 1988: 37). Monash obtained the licence to manufacture the Monier system concrete (brought to Australia by the Carter Gurnow & Co company in 1896) in Victoria and South Australia in 1905 and was responsible for the design and construction of many of Australia's earliest reinforced concrete structures (Lewis 1988: 11, 37).

Monash's earliest reinforced buildings were in Melbourne and included two stores for the Australian Mortgage Land and Finance Company (c1905-06), the Bank Place Chambers, commissioned in 1904 but built 1905-06, and Monash's own offices in Oliver Lane (c1905-07). They are attributed as being the first conventional buildings in Australia constructed wholly of reinforced concrete (Lewis 1988:11-12). Monash's Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company was responsible for numerous engineering structures including bridges, arches, and pipes. Monash experimented with reinforced concrete at a domestic scale as early as 1905 with two known examples in Melbourne; the porch added to 'Chastleton', and a flat roof over the ballroom at 'Raveloe' in South Yarra (Individually Significant in HO6 City of Melbourne) (Lewis 1988:25-26).

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### Physical description

'Chastleton House' is a grand Italianate mansion that occupies a large allotment on the corner of Chastleton Avenue and Orrong Road in Toorak. The building is oriented towards Chastleton Avenue and is set back behind a mid-sized front garden and a contemporary fence. The adjoining property fronting Orrong Road was (re)consolidated in late 2014 (City of Stonnington, Planning Application No. 5859/14) and the interwar brick house that stood there was demolished c2015. A tennis court has been built in its place.

Constructed c1886-87, the rendered building has complex massing that was the result of a highly picturesque asymmetrical composition of variously scaled projecting bays and the landmark tower (Figure 1). The building is now dominated by the bold entrance composition that was created by architect George De Lacy Evans c1905-07. This entrance porch had a classical and symmetrical form, centred on the existing tower, replacing the original encircling cast-iron verandah. A pair of two-storey canted bay windows surmount the sculptural entrance portico of a classical entablature supported on Tuscan columns and square piers which is linked at the first floor level by a parapet wall with pediment and shield details. The composition is further distinguished by the central landmark tower with pedimented pyramidal roof, clad in slate, that is shown in the c1894-1896 photograph. As a result of De Lacy Evans' work, the house combines the stateliness of a classical style with a picturesque and fashionable asymmetry.

The entrance portico is notable as a pioneering example of the Monier-system of reinforced concrete construction in a domestic context designed by the eminent engineer (Sir) John Monash. The portico has fine classical detailing including stop-fluted columns and piers, metopes, triglyphs and dentils to the frieze and a balustraded parapet above. Beneath the portico, the front entrance door with elaborate timber surround of Corinthian pilasters supporting a dentil moulded entablature, appears to be largely intact and may date to the house's original construction. It retains the decorative glazing to the finely executed door, sidelights and highlights.



Figure 10. Detail of entrance portico (source: Context 2016).



Figure 11. Entrance Porch for "Chastleton", University of Melbourne Archives GPNB/ 1195 Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Co. Collection (source: taken from Alan Holgate's, 'John Monash Engineering enterprise prior to WW1 c1896-1914' [www.abolgate.com](http://www.abolgate.com), accessed 13 July 2016).

The building has a complex roof form of intersecting gables with hip roofs to the canted projecting bays, all clad in slate. The numerous chimneys, all set back to the rear of the house are typical of the Italianate style with cement rendered cornices. The landmark tower contains a group of three round-arched double-hung sash windows to each elevation with run hood moulds and a keystone to the tall central window of each group.

The west elevation is largely intact to the early Italianate design retaining two projecting bays that can be seen in the c1894-96 photograph (Figure 1) and are indicated on the 1905 MMBW plan. The early encircling verandah to the south and west elevations was altered and eventually removed entirely as part of alterations to the house over time. The rear rectangular bay is gabled with closely spaced eaves brackets and a vermiculated pediment to the window hood above the square-headed double-hung sash to the upper level, giving it a classic Italianate villa appearance. The canted projecting bay to this elevation appears to have been the inspiration for the pair of canted bays to the new front façade with segmentally arched double-hung sash windows with run hood moulds and vermiculated keystones. Other windows to the ground floor (only the south (front) and east elevations are visible) are full height simple square-headed double-hung sashes with shouldered hood moulds. The eastern elevation of the house was also reconstructed at ground level to meet the eastern projecting gabled bay, following the demolition of the large ballroom wing c1930 (depicted on the 1905 MMBW Plan) (PB). In this case, the bay adopts a pedimented hood supported on large consoles above a pair of narrow segmentally-arched double-hung sash windows which is embellished by an iron balconette. Other windows to the first floor level of this elevation are square headed sashes with unusual label moulds and simple stops.





*Figure 12. West elevation as viewed from Chastleton Avenue showing the two original projecting bays (source: Context 2016).*

Externally, the house appears largely intact to its c1940s form following the demolition of the ballroom wing and the removal of the remaining sections of verandah to the west elevation. The consolidation of allotments has reinstated 'Chastleton House's' boundary to Orrong Road, however the house has almost entirely lost its original setting including the garden. A modern semi-detached garage c2000 has been constructed to the south-west corner of the building with rendered masonry walls adorned with stepped pedestals and cast orbs.

### **Comparative analysis**

Although many single-storey villas were built in Melbourne and its suburbs during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the 1840s the grandest houses were almost always of two storeys, or occasionally three as at Government House and 'Cliveden'. Owners often added a storey to their single-storey house as their fortunes improved, of example, 'Como' in South Yarra had a second storey added by 1855. Towards the end of the century, there was an increasing tendency to prefer the higher status of a two-storey house over that of a single-storey one (Jordan 2003:117 as cited in Statham 2008).

The architectural expression of a grand two-storey Victorian house could reflect any one of a range of fashionable British antecedents drawing their inspiration from classical Greek, Roman or Georgian sources to the more picturesque, such as Gothic or Tudor. British country houses of the mid-nineteenth century drew predominantly from the range of Picturesque styles. While the Picturesque Gothic was gaining popularity, it was not as popular as those drawing on Tudor, Elizabethan or Jacobean antecedents. About a third of these grand Victorian houses adopted an Italianate style combining informal massing with a plain rendered expression enriched by classical motifs. The balance adopted a formal symmetrical classical expression. The Italianate was seen to combine the stateliness of a classical style with a picturesque and fashionable asymmetry (Jordan 2003:117 as cited in Statham 2008).

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.*

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.

Examples of substantial Italianate houses that are of individual significance in Stonnington's Heritage Overlay (both in individual HOs and HO precincts) can be divided into a number of groups according to architectural composition and plan form, their size, ornament and level of architectural sophistication.

Substantial two-storey Victorian houses typically adopted an asymmetrical Italianate plan form comprising a projecting bay to one side of a verandah. Grand examples in the municipality include 'Stratford', at 768 Malvern Road, Armadale (in HO130), 'Montrose House' at 38 Huntingtower Road, Armadale (HO367), 'Carrington' at 58 Kooyong Road, Armadale (HO318), 35 Grandview Grove, Prahran (in HO135), 72 Elizabeth Street, Malvern (HO309), 'Glenayon', 19 Pine Grove, Malvern (HO278), and 1 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra (in HO137).

In comparison, 'Chastleton House' is more substantial than the examples listed above with a scale more comparable to some of the mansions included on the Victorian Heritage Register. Its bold front façade composition combined with the complex massing of the early picturesque design offers a more sculptural version of the Italianate house than the examples above. The two-storey villa at 1 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra is a variation on the typical asymmetrical plan form incorporating an arcaded verandah at ground level and a balustraded tower. In comparison to 'Chastleton House', it is a more finely executed example adopting slender columns and cast-iron ornamentation. Other examples that adopt the classic Italianate tower are single-storey villas, including 'Wyuna' at 116 Kooyong Road, Armadale (HO240), 1043 Malvern Road, Armadale (HO324), 78 Clendon Road, Toorak (in HO143) and 3 Lansell Road, Toorak (in HO143). In comparison to 'Chastleton House', these examples are less substantial residences constructed on smaller suburban allotments.



Figure 13. 1 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra, significant in HO137 (source: Google Streetview).

The early encircling verandah to the south and west elevations of 'Chastleton House' was altered and eventually removed as part of alterations to the house from c1905-07 with the construction of the new classical frontage by De Lacy Evans. 'Montrose House' at 38 Huntingtower Road, Armadale (HO367) and 21 William Road, South Yarra (HO462) are individually significant under the City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay despite the loss of their verandahs. 'Chastleton House' compares well in level of intactness to these examples, particularly as the removal of the verandah to the front elevation can be considered as part of innovative architect-designed plans for the new concrete entrance portico. The loss of the verandah to the west elevation is now largely concealed by the modern garage construction to the south-west corner of the house.

While a much earlier example, a close stylistic comparator is the two-storey mansion, Greenwich House at 75-77 Irving Road, Toorak (HO63 and H0693), which is notable for the central Roman Doric portico over the front entrance and its restrained ornamentation. It is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as one of the oldest surviving Toorak residences and for its association with a number of important figures, including prominent architect Leonard Terry who is attributed as the original designer. It is also important for its changes in use over a long period of time that make it a valuable historical document through which many social and economic transformations can be traced. Like Chastleton House, 'Greenwich' reflects the fate of many Melbourne mansion houses, that underwent many changes of use in the twentieth century. De Lacy Evans' design for Chastleton House's new façade c1905-1907 is very similar to the classical stateliness of Greenwich House's frontage including the



symmetrical arrangement of canted bay windows and the entrance portico, although at a grander and more elaborate scale utilising the latest construction technologies of the time.



Figure 14. 'Greenwich House', 75-77 Irving Road, Toorak constructed 1869 HO63 and H0693 (source: Heritage Victoria, 2014).

The front portico at Chastleton House also represents a pioneering experiment in the use of the Monier-system of reinforced concrete construction by the eminent engineer (Sir) John Monash. It was one of Monash's earliest reinforced concrete works for residential buildings dating to c1905. The other known domestic example was the flat roof constructed over the ballroom at 'Raveloe' in South Yarra (individually significant in HO6, City of Melbourne).

In conclusion, Chastleton House is one of a limited number of very large Victorian residences in Stonnington, much larger than most of the comparator asymmetric houses. It compares with the most substantial villas in the most salubrious parts of Toorak, South Yarra and Armadale. Its complex massing creates a highly sculptural composition that combines the stateliness of a classical style with a picturesque and fashionable asymmetry. It is also enhanced as being a pioneering example of experiments in reinforced concrete construction, associated with (Sir) John Monash's testing of the Monier-system of construction.

### **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*

*8.1.2 Seats of the mighty – Mansion estates in the nineteenth century*

*8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion*

*8.6.1 Sharing houses*

### **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?**

Chastleton House at 17 Chastleton Avenue, Toorak is significant. It comprises a grand two-storey Italianate mansion with picturesque planning incorporating a classical frontage and a central landmark tower.

It was built c1886-87 for Martin Petrie Blundell, a leading banker with the Bank of Australasia in a highly picturesque asymmetrical composition. The house changed ownership in 1905, and new owner, William Barrett, maltster, commissioned notable Melbourne architect George De Lacy Evans to oversee major changes to the house including the construction of the new elaborate frontage in 1907. De Lacy Evans was responsible for the elaborate classical design of the new front porch which was engineered by the eminent engineer John (later Sir John) Monash using the novel Monier-system of reinforced concrete construction.

Chastleton House is significant to the extent of its intact c1940s external form and fabric. The legibility of the built form in views from its two street frontages, Chastleton Avenue and Orrong Road contribute to the significance of the place.

Modern alterations and additions such as the garage to the north-west corner and contemporary fence and landscaping are not significant.

### **How is it significant?**

Chastleton House at 17 Chastleton Avenue, Toorak is of local architectural, aesthetic, and technical significance to the City of Stonnington.

### **Why is it significant?**

Architecturally, Chastleton House at 17 Chastleton Avenue, Toorak is a distinguished example of a prestigious and substantial Victorian mansion built for a prominent Melbourne resident during the boom years of the late 1880s and 1890s. The changes to the house c1907 provide an important example of the later residential work of the architect, George De Lacy Evans, illustrating the development of the Victorian Italianate style in Melbourne. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, it is particularly distinguished within the City of Stonnington by its substantial size and complex massing that creates a highly sculptural composition. It combines the stateliness of a classical style with a picturesque and fashionable asymmetry, reflecting its creation over time. Its elaborate classical detail is exemplified by the entrance porch at the centre of the façade, instead of the typical verandah. It adopts a sculptural entrance portico of a classical balustraded entablature supported on stop-fluted Tuscan columns and square piers which is linked at the first floor level by a parapet wall with pediment and shield details. The composition is further distinguished by the central landmark tower with pedimented pyramidal roof. The classic Italianate villa appearance is apparent in the projecting gabled bays to the east and west elevations that retain the closely spaced eaves brackets and pediment window hoods. Fine cast and run cement render detail to the entrance portico, window surrounds, eaves brackets and the elaborate front door contribute to the highly ornamented composition. (Criterion E)

It is significant for its entrance portico 1907 which is a pioneering example of the Monier-system of reinforced concrete construction in a domestic context designed by the eminent engineer (Sir) John Monash. Architect De Lacy Evans was responsible for the elaborate classical design which was engineered by Monash to adopt the innovative Monier-system, including Monier plates to the roof, square piers of brick, and Monier concrete with render to the round columns. It is one of Monash's earliest experiments using the system in a residential context and only one of two known in Melbourne. Monash's experiments led to the prolific range of engineering structures constructed by his Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company, including bridges, arches and pipes. (Criteria B & F)

## **Recommendations**

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

HO Schedule controls: None



Figure 15: Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 17 Chastleton Avenue, Toorak (source: [www.land.vic.gov.au](http://www.land.vic.gov.au))

Recommended grading: A1