

2 Yar Orrong Road, Toorak Heritage Citation Report



Figure 1 2 Yar Orrong 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*, 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 interpreted today. Although new subdivisions imposed new road patterns within the original

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

grids, in many cases new estates and streets bore the name of the old properties, while the original houses was 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 newly prosperous merchants, businessmen and land speculators built mansions and grand villas that would stand as testament to their wealth, status and fashionable taste. 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 Stonnington's wealthy suburbs. 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 2 Yar Orrong 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. Twenty five residential allotments in the Yar Orrong Estate were offered for sale in May 1918.² Yar Orrong remained on three acres of land with its entrance off Albany Road. The mansion was demolished in 1939 and the land subdivided to create Eden Court and ten residential allotments. Land in the second 'Yar Orrong Estate' were offered for sale in February 1940 with the restriction that only one private dwelling could be erected on each lot.³ The beginning of the Second World War did not deter purchasers and all but one of allotments was quickly sold.⁴

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

³ Stonnington Local History Collection. Reg. No. MH867.

⁴ *Argus*, 19 February 1940, p. 11.

In 1940 architects Hughes and Orme designed a double-storey house for Ronald J Marriot on lot 9 of the Yar Orrong Estate (ie present day 2 Yar Orrong Road).⁵ The house is first listed in the Sands and McDougall directories in 1942. It was one of two Hughes and Orme houses featured in the July 1942 edition of *Australian Home Beautiful* under the heading 'Two Interesting examples of Georgian style in Suburban Homes'.⁶ The house was praised for its 'formal eighteenth century elegance' and plan form that anticipated conversion into three maisonettes in the future:

*The house is really designed in three sections, the owner's wing on the left, the guest section in the centre and the staff quarters on the right, with the idea that if it ever were desired the building could be converted economically into three maisonettes.*⁷

Ronald Marriot resided at 2 Yar Orrong Road until at least 1974.⁸

Description

The house at 2 Yar Orrong Road, Toorak is sited on the north east corner of Yar Orrong and Albany Roads. It is a large and urbane interwar Georgian revival style house with mottled cream brick walls and a terracotta shingle roof. The house's multi-hipped roof form and the articulation of the projecting bays lend the design picturesque tendencies although a strong sense of Georgian formality pervades. The façade achieves a carefully balanced sense of asymmetry with a strongly modelled chimney at the northern end providing a visual anchor point. The house is characteristic of the Georgian idiom in having regularly spaced multi-pane timber framed windows with louvred timber shutters. Decorative ornament is limited to the elegant Adamesque rendered door aedicule.

The exterior is virtually intact apart from a modest single-storey addition on the Albany Road (south) elevation. The property also retains the original cream brick front fence with its wrought iron pedestrian gate on Yar Orrong Road and the timber gates on the Albany Road boundary.

Comparative Analysis

The interwar Georgian revival style is closely related to Colonial revival and Mediterranean style. It was particularly fashionable during the interwar period in the wealthy middle ring suburbs of Toorak, South Yarra and Armadale when it became synonymous with upper middle class concepts of good taste.

Interest in the Colonial Georgian resulted in part from a continued desire for the creation of a national idiom through a search for a local vernacular, which in Australia was equated with Colonial buildings of the early nineteenth century. The inspiration for the re-investigation of colonial and Georgian modes was drawn from a number of factors, first was objective of marrying colonial and Mediterranean idioms into Australian vernacular, the second was the well known precedent established by British architects such as Edwin Lutyens of abandoning the medieval inspiration of the Arts and Crafts style for a return to classicism and the international revival of interest in the classical modes. Australian architects also looked to the United States where a vigorous Colonial Georgian revival had been underway since the late-nineteenth century.

⁵ Stonnington Local History Collection Plans No. 104200700.

⁶ *Australian Home Beautiful*, July 1942, pp.18-21.

⁷ *Australian Home Beautiful*, July 1942, pp.18-21.

⁸ Sands and McDougall directories.

By the First World War, the revived Georgian style was well established in Britain, often being used for houses, blocks of flats and commercial buildings of modest size. In Australia, William Hardy Wilson is credited with a major role in popularising the Georgian revival idiom through his rediscovering and recording of early nineteenth century architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania, and through his admiration for American Colonial architecture encountered on his overseas travels.

Georgian revival buildings began to appear in Melbourne from about the end of the First World War. Architects drew eclectically from British, French and even Spanish architecture for motifs which to aggrandise the basic Georgian box. Almost invariably the idiom was represented by a two storey rectilinear form of brick or stucco with simple hip or single ridge gable roofs, symmetry or near symmetry in the arrangement of doors windows and balconies, and restrained classical or Adamesque detailing, quoins at corners and around entries, a porte cochere, often with balconies above. Gabled porticos and simple wrought iron were also common. Occasionally elements of the Mediterranean or modern styles might be introduced in an attempt at variety of expression but the end result was always suitably restrained.

The house at 2 Yar Orrong Road is a quintessential example of the Georgian revival mode. It compares favourably with other examples in Stonnington that have been found worthy of individual heritage overlay controls – notably the Marcus Martin designs at 7 Glenbervie Road (1924) [HO311] and 8 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak (c1926) [HO265]. The very large house at 17 St Georges Road, Toorak (1936) [HO98] also provides a close point of comparison, it having been designed by Hughes and Orme, the architects responsible for 2 Yar Orrong Road. Both house designs demonstrate an urbane American approach to the Georgian revival idiom that held sway among Melbourne architects of the 1930s.

Thematic Context

The house at 2 Yar Orrong 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 *City of Stonnington Environmental* (TEH) are shown in brackets.

What is Significant?

The house at 2 Yar Orrong Road, Toorak is a substantial double-storey Georgian revival style residence constructed c1940 to designs by architects Hughes and Orme. 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 very high level of external intactness.

- 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.
- The understated presence of on-site vehicle accommodation
- The front fence and wrought iron and timber gates.

Modern fabric is not significant.

How is it significant?

The house at 2 Yar Orrong Road is of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The house is architecturally significant as a large, well designed and virtually intact Georgian 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 Georgian revival 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.

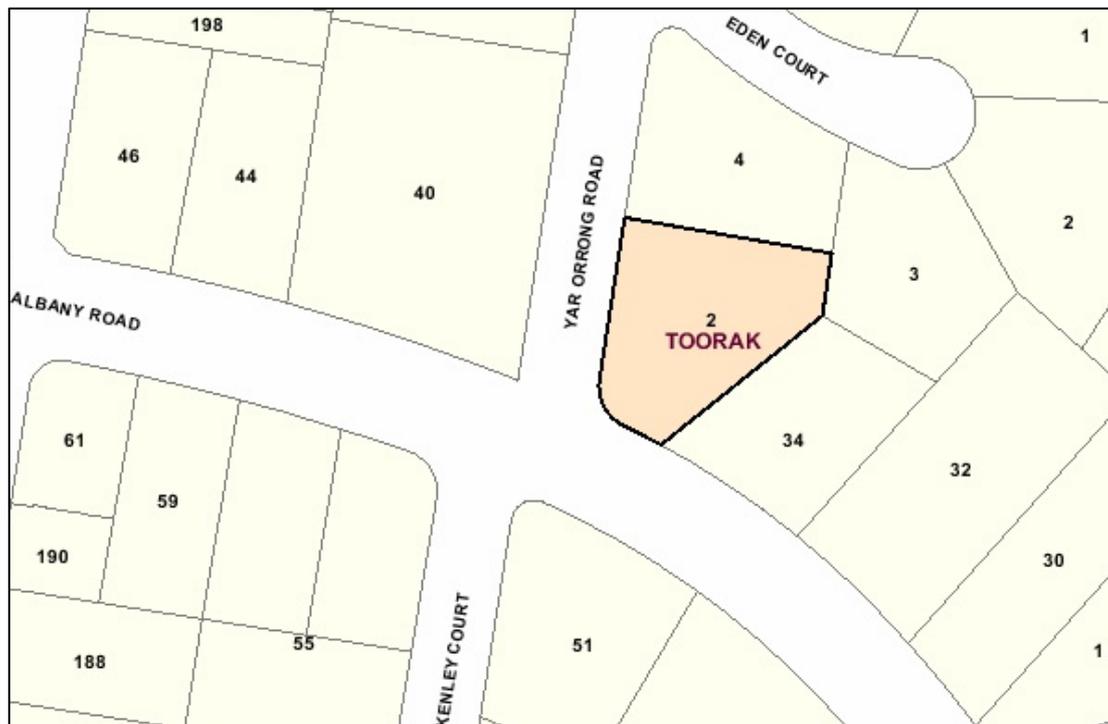


Figure 2 Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 2 Yar Orrong Road, Toorak.