

Identification and location

Name of place: Elms in mature garden

Other Name Ulmus' sp.

Address 031-033 Somerville Road
Yarraville

Place Identifier 22598

Heritage Significance City

Creation date(s) 1880-1890c **Map (Melway)** 42B8

Boundary description The trees and sufficient land around each to allow for root zone and canopy protection, nominally 1m beyond the drip line, root zone or canopy perimeter which ever is the greatest.

Local Government Area City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type Private

Description

Site Type: Tree(s), specimen

Physical Description

A row of seven very mature elms along the lot frontage. Buildings (house and other structures obscured) on this site are set well back from Somerville Road.

The 20 or so species of the Ulmus genus of trees and shrubs occur naturally in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. During the 1920s and 1930s, and again in the 1960s and 1970s, elm trees in Europe and North America were devastated by Dutch elm disease, caused by the fungus Ophiostoma ulmi, which is transmitted by the elm bark beetle. Except for a few East Asian species, they are deciduous, turning yellow in fall (autumn). The leaves are usually alternate, one-sided at the base, with prominent, parallel, lateral veins and regularly toothed margins; the small, disc-like fruits have a membranous wing and are carried in clusters. Most elms are large limbed with furrowed grey bark and high, domed crowns { Botanica}.

Condition

good (partially disturbed, well preserved)

Integrity

substantially intact/some intrusions

Context

Set in front of an early and historic residence and beside a notable 20th century housing group within the City. It is near to the Stephen St elm street trees.

Threats:

Pruning for added and existing service lines, removal with maturity, new crossovers, carparking, root compaction, adjoining development.

History

Industrialist James Macmeikan acquired this site in later 1872 after a series of dealings arising from Andrew Rodgers' three acre grant purchased in 1856 for £20 { RGO Search Note 7646}. No evidence exists of Rodger's occupation of the site or Rodgers himself: one A. Rodgers (or Rogers) being an engine fitter at Sandridge during the period {BD.1868; D1857-70}.

Rodgers sold his land, in 1859, to Footscray councillor, factory-owner and solicitor, Stephen Stephens, who immediately mortgaged it for the purchase price of £400 {BD.1868; D1857-70; D1863-8}. His business address was in Queen Street and his residence at Footscray {D1866}. After a number of similar deals, his mortgage was transferred to J.S. Ogilvy, in 1868, until finally his equity in 'premises' plus £5 was transferred to Catherine (John's wife?) Ogilvy in 1872 {D1866}. It is likely that Stephens had the house built in 1859, given the series of mortgages which occurred in that year.

Stephen Stephens resided in South Yarra. His firm became A. J. Ogilvy & Co. by the early 1870s, J. S. Ogilvy possibly having died in the interim. The firm was now accountants and estate agents and H. Ballantyne was a partner; A.J. Ogilvy resided in Footscray {D1870-2}. During the Ogilvy tenure, the property was rated (Nov. 1871) as a stone and wood house with land in Somerville Road, NAV 85 pounds {RB1871,885 }.

Meanwhile Macmeikan had purchased the 3 acre lot for £1400 (previous mortgage in 1865 had been for £900), immediately mortgaging it to H.R.W. Walker and J. Espie as two transactions prior to having the General Law title changed to Torrens in 1875 {RGO Search Note 7646}. During Macmeikan's involvement with the property came the relocation to Yarraville, from Flemington, of his Animal Guano and Converting Works with partner James Reid { Cuming, 'James Cuming an Autobiography':14; RB1871, 832} Macmeikan commissioned architect, James Donaldson to design a 'large basalt factory' in 1870 followed by Reid commissioning Crouch & Wilson to design his own 'cottage and outbuildings' in 1871 in Whitehall Street {MUAI}.

By the late 1870s, trustees controlled Macmeikan's estate and leased Airlie to its long-term occupant, the customs officer, Horace Walpole. Around the same time, part of the guano works was sold to the adjoining Cuming Smith & Co. for use in conjunction with their fertilizer works {Footscray's First Fifty Years (FFFY), 1909,p.48}. By 1881 Walpole owned what was

described as a 'stone house and land' on the south side of Somerville Road while Ida owned land on the north side and Emma leased fenced land from one Hamilton in Whitehall Street { RB1881, 2463-4 }. The Chinese market gardener Ah Hoy leased Airlie's northern grounds in 1882-3 while Walpole was appealing against a valuation increase, suggesting improvements were made this year possibly with the income from the market garden rent {RB 1883, 3200,2510}. Walpole's next property investment was in 1888-9 when a note was entered in the rate book '£250 house' and the valuation rose considerably to £400 { RB1889, 5050}. This may have been a speculative house built on the property, but in Castlemaine Street, which was later leased to Margaret Swallwell {RB1900,6192}.

Local knowledge has it that Walpole was related to the celebrated 'Gothik' novelist, Horace Walpole (1717-97), who also served as a customs officer of sorts during 1737-8 {Hammerton, 'Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopaedia' :7870}. Walpole's son (?) is said to have become a 'film-star', seen in features at the St. George's Theatre c1910-11 { Verbal, FHS}. Other reports are that the stone walls are some three feet thick{ FHS, Notes on Historical Buildings.., 1969}. More recent occupants have included Frederick Parsons, dating from the 1940-50s {D1945-55}.

The MMBW Detail Plan (DP 163) of the area, 1895, shows the Walpole house on its large block, adjoining the Chinese market garden where today's inter-war housing group stands: no trees are shown but this is typically so for private land. The 1945 aerial view shows the elms as a row of large trees.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme	Developing cultural institutions and ways of life
PAHT Subtheme	Creating landscape
Local Theme(s)	Cultural development

Cultural Significance

These elm trees are significant to the City of Maribyrnong:

- as mature and large examples of their type, being among the largest, and therefore possibly oldest, in the City (Criterion B2);
- for their association with Horace Walpole and other well known persons who lived in this house (Criterion H1).

Comparative Examples:

An elm of a similar size can also be seen at the Hyde Street Primary School with lesser size examples in Nicholson Street and Ballarat Road, as street trees.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register

Register of the National Estate:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

National Trust Register:

Other Heritage Listings

Planning Scheme Protection

External Paint Controls Apply?:

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?:

Tree Controls Apply?:

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act:

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?:

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted

Recommendations:

The following management objectives have been drawn from the Statement of Significance:

- to conserve and enhance the listed trees at the place;
- to conserve and enhance the visual relationship between trees and the house at the place;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of these trees;
- to ensure that new plantings or elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the trees; and
- to further research the detailed origins of the tree row and maintain the link with its history, via promotion and publication of the findings.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

as mature and large examples of their type, being among the largest in the City

H1 Importance for their close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, state or region.

for their association with Horace Walpole and other well known persons who lived in this house

☒ historical significanc ☐ architectural significan ☐ social significance ☐ scientific significanc

Documentation

References

Registrar General's Office (RGO) Search Note (SN)
Bailliere's 'Post Office Directory of Victoria' (BD)
Sands and MacDougall Victorian Directories (D)

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

Municipal rate books (RB)
Cumming `James Cumming an Autobiography'
Melbourne University Architects Index Compiled by M. Lewis (MUAI)
Hammerton, `Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopaedia'
Verbal, Footscray Historical Society
MMBW Detail Plan (State Library of Victoria);
Footscray Council committee minutes (VPRO) VPRS 005337
Landinfo aerial 1945 images

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

