

## 30 Albany Road, Toorak Heritage Citation Report



Figure 1 30 Albany 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*'.<sup>1</sup> 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* (1 Illawarra Crescent), 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

<sup>1</sup> 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 were 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 ever more prosperous merchants, businessmen and land speculators sought to create houses 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 wealthy suburbs within present day Stonnington. 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. Not surprisingly, a number of these successful 'society' architects designed and built their own houses among those of their wealthy clients.

### Place History

The property at 30 Albany 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, on which Bayles built his mansion, 'Yar Orrong' in 1873. 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. The stables can be seen on the 1902 MMBW Detail Plan of the area.<sup>2</sup>

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. Land fronting Albany Road adjacent to the former mansion estate 'Eilyer' was also sold.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> State Library of Victoria MMBW Detail Plan 1765

<sup>3</sup> Stonnington Local History Catalogue

In 1921, the Yar Orrong stables were extended to form a brick house of 8 rooms for Dorothy Alsop. The house, named 'Darleydale', was a conversion from the original stables to the design of architect Rodney Alsop of the firm Klingender & Alsop, and husband of Dorothy Alsop.<sup>4</sup>

Rodney Alsop is listed as the house's occupant in Sands and McDougall directories until 1927. Around this time Alsop moved to a newly built residence in Tintern Avenue, Toorak. Darleydale was then sold to Catherine Ludbrook.<sup>5</sup>

In 1937, prominent ear, nose and throat specialist Dr R V Hennessy commissioned architects F L and K Klingender to design alterations and additions to 30 Albany Road.<sup>6</sup> F L Klingender was Alsop's partner at time the building was first altered in 1921. An existing conditions plan was prepared in April 1937 that would appear to be an accurate record of Alsop's design.<sup>7</sup> The plan shows the arched headed windows of the original stable building on the front elevation and the east side wall. They also show timber strapping, attic roof forms and slender chimneys.

Klingender's works included an addition, which replaced the 1921 garage and extended further toward the street with two maids' rooms above a new garage, as well as sundry other changes. These included a new sleep-out extension at the rear on the west elevation.

Dr Hennessy resided at 30 Albany Road until c1955. From c1964 it was the residence of Dr A J Mackay. Architect J W G Palliser prepared (undated) plans for Dr Mackay for a small, single-storey addition to the rear living room.<sup>8</sup>

### Rodney Alsop

Rodney Howard Alsop (1881-1932) was born on 22 December 1881 at Kew, Melbourne. He showed great gifts as a child in both drawing and model-making, skills encouraged by his poor health which kept him in passive convalescence. While still at school he worked on Saturday mornings for the architects Hyndman and Bates, to whom he was articled in 1901. After admission to the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in 1906, Alsop entered partnership with Frederick Louis Klingender, an older well-established architect. With Alsop as the designing partner, the practice drew heavily upon the English vernacular revival and its medieval sources but evolved to combine English and American idioms in a distinctive Arts and Crafts oriented mode.

Alsop was a foundation member of the Victorian Arts and Crafts Society and a respected designer of furniture. He also shared a skill in landscape design with his wife Dorothy Hope whom he had married in June 1912. Their only child died in 1915.

After World War I, Alsop turned towards an arcaded Italian Renaissance mode, which, by the 1920s, after Alsop had traveled to Spain had evolved into the popular Mediterranean style. Alsop promoted a synthesis of Mediterranean idioms with an acceptably British Georgian or Colonial style to create a uniquely Australian hybrid.

In his mature years, Alsop was a fellow of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects. He was an active member of its board of architectural education, and in 1919 was appointed first director of the University of Melbourne's Architectural Atelier.

In 1927, Alsop and Conrad Sayce won first place in a limited international competition for the design of the Hackett Memorial Buildings at the University of Western Australia. Built in 1931

<sup>4</sup>Stonnington Local History Catalogue MH 14399.

<sup>5</sup>City of Malvern Rate books.

<sup>6</sup>Stonnington Local History Catalogue Plan No10390,00500

<sup>7</sup>Stonnington Local History Catalogue Plan No10390,00500

<sup>8</sup>Stonnington History Centre, Malvern Building Plans.

in an early Renaissance style with the towered Winthrop Hall at its centerpiece, the design is considered Alsop's crowning achievement. Rodney Alsop died suddenly of bronchitis and asthma on 26 October 1932, not long after having been awarded the 1932 bronze medal by the Royal Institute of British Architects for Winthrop Hall. Survived by his wife, he was buried in Brighton cemetery.

### F L and K Klingender

Frederick Louis Klingender was born in 1866 and educated at Melbourne Grammar. He served articles with Charles D'Ebro and joined the RVIA as an Associate in 1891. He formed a partnership with Robert Bell Hamilton in 1922 following his lengthy partnership with Rodney Alsop. From 1925 Klingender practised with his son Keith A'Beckett Klingender. FL & K Klingender were responsible for a number of houses in Toorak, including 19 Evans Court (1929), 30 Linlithgow Road (1930) and 9 Yar Orrong Road (1929). The partnership continued until 1936. F L Klingender was a life fellow of the RIVA and served as its president from 1935-37. He retired from professional life at the outbreak of the Second World War and died in 1960.

### **Description**

The house at 30 Albany Road is a converted and extended stable presenting as an attic style residence with the strong building forms of the gabled Craftsman bungalow. The roof is a picturesque composition of slate clad gables punctuated by simply detailed chimney. The transverse gable formed the second floor of the original stables. The gable detail from the Alsop design is matched by the 1937 gabled extension. They each have louvred vents at the apex, and are clad with vertical planked boards with narrow timber cover straps, a trademark of Alsop's work at this time. The dark finish of the vertical boarding of the upper floor provides a contrast with the light coloured finish to the ground floor masonry walls. The building exterior appears to be largely intact to its 1937 state apart from the rear single-storey addition.

### **Comparative Analysis**

30 Albany Road is closely related to Rodney Alsop's series of cottages built in and around Stonnington Place in the 1910s. Two surviving examples are protected by individual heritage overlays - 2 Stonnington Place (1918) [HO341] and 6 Stonnington Place (1916) [HO285]. Alsop's work in this mode drew on precedents of the English Arts and Crafts movement although his use of stained timber cladding shows the influences of the American Craftsman bungalow style. It is clear that Alsop was moving rather freely between the English and American idioms at this time. John Clare in his study of post-Federation houses in Melbourne describes how these cottage style houses can be seen as an illustration of the concern expressed by Alsop in a 1908 article for a local architectural identify based on 'simple lines and sound construction.'<sup>9</sup> The pared back simplicity of 30 Albany Road was relatively advanced for contemporary practice, and demonstrates trends away from the picturesque complexity and fussy detailing of the previous decade. The conversion of the stable building in this instance can be seen as an embodiment of the romantic ethos of the Arts and Crafts movement. The use of planked vertical timber in lieu of more common timber shingles is also of note. In this respect, 30 Albany Road compares favourably with the Alsop designed house at 6 Stonnington Place, which has lost the stained boarded finish and has been altered in recent years.

<sup>9</sup>Rodney Alsop, 'Australia and her buildings', in *Trident*, December 1908, p.150.

## Thematic Context

The house at 30 Albany 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
- 8.4.3 Architects and their houses

## 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

Note that the relevant HERCON criteria and themes from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (TEH) are shown in brackets.

### *What is Significant?*

The house at 30 Albany Road, Toorak was originally constructed as stables for the Yar Orrong mansion in the early 1870s and then converted for use as his own residence by architect Rodney Alsop in an Arts and Crafts cottage style in 1921. The house was sympathetically altered and extended in 1937 by architects F L and K Klingender.

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

- The external form, materials and detailing of the building surviving from the original nineteenth century stables, the 1921 residential conversion by Alsop and the 1937 additions and alterations.
- The high level of external intactness to its 1937 state.
- The domestic garden setting (but not the fabric of the garden itself).

Modern fabric including the timber front fence is not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The house at 30 Albany Road, Toorak is of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it significant?*

Architecturally, the house is significant as an unusual example of an interwar Arts and Crafts style house derived from American Craftsman bungalow and English cottage sources (Criterion E). It is illustrative of architect Rodney Alsop's pursuit of an Australian architectural identity based on a simple, unornamented and functional approach. The 1937 extensions by Klingender are respectful of the design of his former partner and are of note for the manner in which a modest cottage character is maintained in a larger house.

The house is of some historical interest as evidence of the major phase of development that took place in the 1920s and 1930s when many of Toorak'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 provides a tangible illustration of this pattern of development through the retention of remnants of the Yar Orrong mansion stables. The house derives additional historical interest from its association with Rodney Alsop (8.4.3 - Architects and their houses, Criterion H).

## 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. External paint controls, internal alteration controls and tree controls are not recommended. It is further recommended that an A2 grading be assigned to the building.

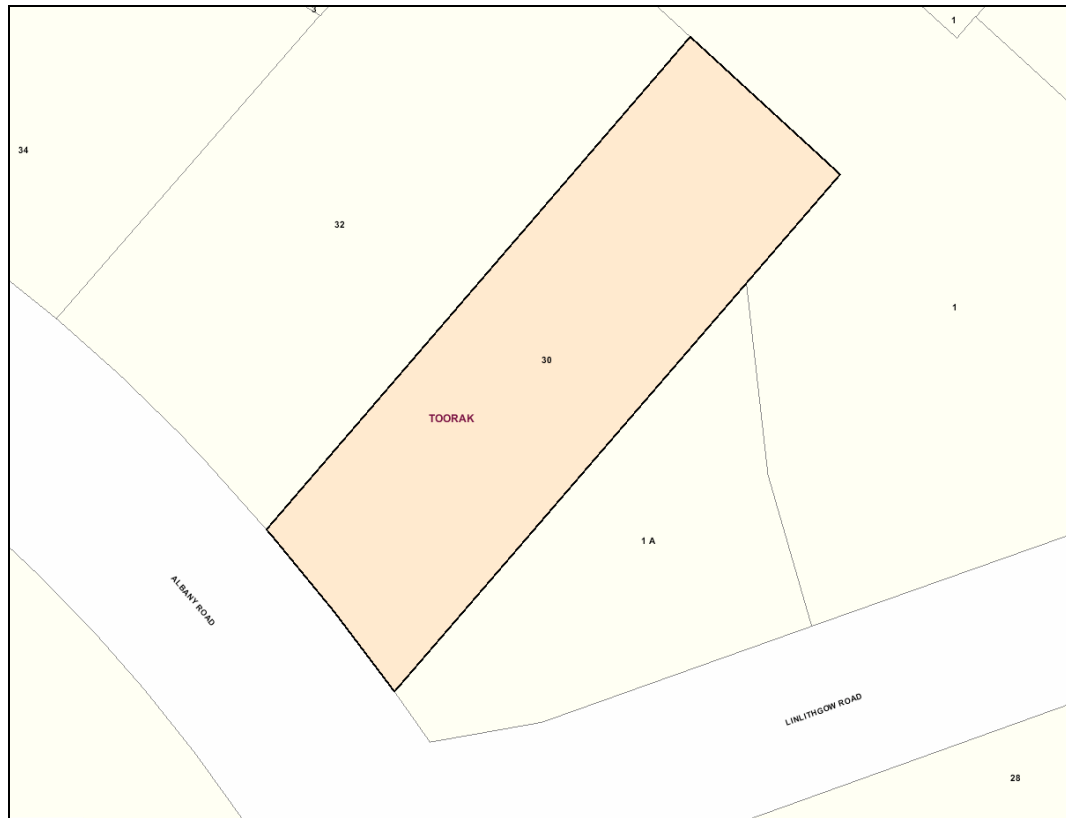


Figure 2 Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 30 Albany Road, Toorak.