

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Miegunyah
Address: 641 Orrong Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO88

Citation status: Final

Date Updated: 24 October 2023

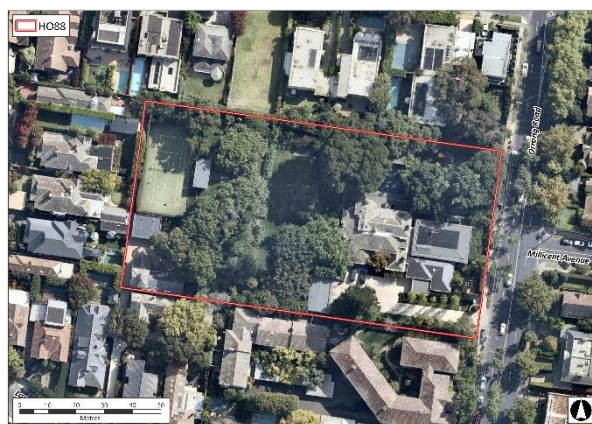
Designer: M. Shields (1910 additions), Philip B. Hudson and Wardrop (1919-20 conversion of stables), Harold Desbrowe Annear (1920s alterations and additions), Stephenson and Meldrum (1930s alterations and additions)

Year of Construction: c.1850s to 1930s

Builder: Unknown



Photograph of Miegunyah (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO88.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Mansion

Key Theme: Buildings suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most 'prestigious' suburbs – seats of the mighty – mansion estates in the 19th century

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as an individually significant place on the HO; tree controls recommended in relation to the several English oak (*Quercus Robur*) plantings and the mature Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*).

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tree controls
	<input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Heritage Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporated Plans	<input type="checkbox"/> Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited uses may be permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 641 Orrong Road, Toorak, (otherwise known as Miegunyah) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale and detailing of the substantial 1850s-1930s mansion as well as the English oak (*Quercus robur*) trees and a Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) are of local heritage significance. The 1896 stables, if extant, would also be of local significance. The front boundary wall, pool, tennis court, broader garden setting and later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

Miegunyah is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonington. It is also associated with Sir Wilfrid Russell Grimwade and Lady Mabel Louise Grimwade of the notable industrialist Grimwade family.

Why is it significant?

Miegunyah is of historical significance in demonstrating the development of mid-19th century Victorian mansions by Melbourne's wealthiest citizens in Toorak, an area once characterised by Victorian era estates. The residence itself has been subject to design interventions by a number of prominent architects, including Harold Desbrowe-Anneer, who oversaw the 1920s alterations and additions to the residence, Stephenson and Meldrum, who oversaw the 1930s alterations and additions to the residence, and Philip B. Hudson and Wardrop, who oversaw the conversion of the stables in 1919-1920. In addition to the residence, the mature English oaks (*Quercus robur*) and the Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) are also historically significant as remnant plantings from the Miegunyah Estate. (Criterion A)

Miegunyah has aesthetic significance as a high-quality but visually distinct example of a mid-Victorian era mansion that has been extensively altered with Arts and Crafts extensions and design detailing. The Victorian characteristics are not easily discernible anymore, other than the hipped slate roof. The notable Arts and Crafts characteristics include the use of render, recessed square form and single corbel chimneys, window shutters, and elliptical windows reflective of Harold Desbrowe-Anneer's design style. The site also has aesthetic value for its mature garden setting, including several tall mature English oaks (*Quercus robur*) and a mature Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*). (Criterion E)

Miegunyah has associative significance as the home of Sir Wilfrid Russell Grimwade and Lady Mabel Louise Grimwade for over six decades. The Grimwades were a prominent and influential industrialist family who are noted for their enduring philanthropic contributions to various educational and cultural organisations. Miegunyah was of great importance to Grimwade family – it was the site of numerous social events hosted by Sir and Lady Grimwade, housed their impressive collection of artworks, furniture, objects and botanical specimens, and the heavily landscaped garden itself was an expression of the Grimwade's enduring horticultural interests. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	
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<i>B</i>	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>C</i>	<i>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>D</i>	<i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>E</i>	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	<p>Miegunyah has aesthetic significance as a high-quality but visually distinct example of a mid-Victorian era mansion that has been extensively altered with Arts and Crafts extensions and design detailing. The Victorian characteristics are not easily discernible anymore, other than the hipped slate roof. The notable Arts and Crafts characteristics include the use of render, recessed square form and single corbel chimneys, window shutters, and elliptical windows reflective of Harold Desbrowe-Anneer's design style.</p> <p>The site also has aesthetic value for its mature garden setting, including several tall English oaks (<i>Quercus robur</i>) plantings and a mature Moreton Bay fig (<i>Ficus macrophylla</i>).</p>

F	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	<i>Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	Miegunyah has associative significance as the home of Sir Wilfrid Russell Grimwade and Lady Mabel Louise Grimwade for over six decades. The Grimwades were a prominent and influential industrialist family who are noted for their enduring philanthropic contributions to various educational and cultural organisations. Miegunyah was of great importance to Grimwade family – it was the site of numerous social events hosted by Sir and Lady Grimwade, housed their impressive collection of artworks, furniture, objects and botanical specimens, and the heavily landscaped garden itself was an expression of the Grimwade’s enduring horticultural interests.

Description

• Physical Analysis

Miegunyah is a large two-storey mansion. The original c.1850s structure has been undergone multiple extensive alterations and additions since the late 19th century, resulting in a building that presents a mix of Victorian era and Arts and Crafts styles and forms, as well as a contemporary style and form as viewed from Orrong Road. The original structure has a compact form with projecting symmetrically located bays off the north and south elevations. The main roof consists of a double hipped roof with the bay projections and verandah awnings extending from it. The roof is clad in square slate tiles with metal ridge capping. Six chimneys project from the roof of the original structure. The tall chimneys have a distinctive form with a wide base comprising of a false stepped shaft with a punctured façade. The working chimney shaft is decorated with a recessed square form and single corbel. The distinctive chimney form is typical of architect Desbrow-Anneer’s designs.

The structures main north elevation opens onto the raised patio, swimming pool and backyard. The asymmetrical façade is dominated by its half-octagonal projecting bay. The bay features tall double hung white timber sash windows that flank a centre face that features a wide masonry chimney running the

full height of the façade. The façade set back beside the bay features a wide two storey covered porch and verandah. The verandah is dominated by two tall round classical order columns supporting a pediment roof. The upper level of the verandah includes black wrought iron balustrades. The fenestration on the façade includes timber louvred shutters. The covered patio opens to the raised paved patio. The perimeter of the patio is demarcated by a short white rendered masonry retaining wall. Steps lead down to the swimming pool.

The eastern elevation of the original structure adjoins an extensive single-storey contemporary addition. The addition includes a small private courtyard area to its southeast and is located close to the street front boundary fence. The main entrance to the original structure was located on the southern elevation, which is accessible from the driveway and garage. The west elevation overlooks an extensive lawn area.

The grounds of Miegunyah are landscaped. The driveway and surrounding garden beds were recently relandscaped. There is a lawn on the northeast corner of the property. The middle section of the property due west of the main structure consists of a large lawn with formal border planting. The lawn leads to an area that is heavily planted with mature trees which then leads to the enclosed tennis court. Visible from the public domain are several mature English oaks (*Quercus robur*). There is also a mature Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) that is not immediately visible from the public domain. The boundary of the lawn tennis court is demarcated by a high hedge wall and a free-standing single storey flat roof structure to its east. The south east corner of the property includes a single storey garage, parking area and possibly the extant original stable building. There are multiple mature trees on the property particularly around the main house including deciduous and fig (*Ficus carica*) trees. The street front boundary of the property is demarcated by a contemporary high open face masonry wall that is unlikely to be original as well as more recently installed black wrought iron gates. .

Miegunyah is located on Orrong Road directly west of the junction with Millicent Avenue. It is located close to the main intersections of Orrong Road, Malvern Road that runs over the railway line. Historical analysis has detailed the various additions, alterations and extensions that have taken place over time on the original c.1850s property. Landscape elements have also been modified over time. Meigunyah is currently used as a private residence and is considered to be in good condition. However, the extensive list of changes since the late 19th century to the main house, external structures and landscape makes an assessment on the integrity of the property difficult to evaluate. While the integrity of the Victorian era mansion and grounds would be considered low, the integrity of the early 19th century additions is high. The later, contemporary addition visible along Orrong Road is considered to be intrusive.

• Alterations and Additions

c.1850s original structure:

- Earliest records indicate a six room single storey house was present.
- Several outbuildings indicated on site.
- Some original landscape elements may be extant.

c.1880-1910:

- Three sided bay (single storey) added.
- Triangular vent in the roof added.

- Timber coach house and stable added (1896).

1910-1973:

- Original structure still single storey as of 1913.
- Curving driveway present as of 1913.
- Northwest corner of the main structure extended (c.1910).
- Original stables altered (c.1910).
- White stucco or roughcast with vertical slabs of imitation half-timbering in the gables added (no longer present as shown on 3D oblique views).
- Second storey extension with hipped slate roof added to the main structure (c.1920).
- Entrance porte cochre replaced the earlier single storey entrance porch (c.1920).
- 1896 timber stable and coach house converted to two units (c.1920).
- Banked windows altered (c.1930).
- Three distinctive backyard sections developed containing a box-hedged rose garden, birch copes and native arboretum.

1973 - Present:

- Property bequeathed to the University of Melbourne and subsequently subdivided.
- Swimming pool added to the north of the main house.
- Tennis court added.
- Round steel chimney caps added to the original structure.
- Metal ridge capping added to the original roof.
- Services added to the original roof.
- Three skylights added to the original roof.
- Major single storey extensions to the west, adjoining the original structure.
- Landscaping around the main house altered (2017).
- Mature trees removed from street side of the property (2013).
- Garage structure added to the southwest of the original structure.
- Driveway aligned and topped with white aggregate (2017).
- New tall masonry front wall and entrance gates added, and the northern half of the previous shorter front wall retained (2017).

History

• Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

Following the establishment of Melbourne in 1835, squatter John Gardiner and many others like him sought out land in what would become present day Toorak and surrounds on account of its densely timbered landscape, undulating terrain and proximity to water. By 1840, crown land sales marked the area's transition to pastoral settlement, and later in 1851, with the purchase of land in Hawthorn by Thomas Herbert Power, the surrounding environments gradually became a place where the early merchant and squatter elite of Melbourne built their homesteads. In Toorak, this is best represented by the purchase of lot 26 by James Jackson, associate in Jackson, Rae & Co. soap and candle merchants. Jackson was described by politician William Westgarth as 'Melbourne's greatest merchant of this early time' (Forster 1999, 10). It is only fitting that his house, called Toorak House, would be the namesake of what would become arguably the most affluent suburb in Melbourne. Following the discovery of gold in the 1850s and the wealth this produced for ancillary trades, the Toorak area drew in Melbourne's newly wealthy. Today, over a century later, Toorak still has connotations of wealth and prestige as best represented in its history and built environment (Forster 1999, 5–26).

- **Place History**

A detailed history of Miegunyah was previously authored in 1993 by Context Pty Ltd for the City of Stonnington. The following account is drawn from this existing study and is augmented by supplementary archival research and revisions by Extent Heritage.

Some portions of the mansion Miegunyah may date from the 1850s during the ownership of a six roomed house on the site by squatter John Goodman. An early 1850s map of the area shows a main building on a large estate facing Orrong road with outbuildings (Kearney 1855). Elements of Goodman's garden, as described by J. Sinclair in 1856, may also survive (Sinclair 1856). There may also be some surviving fabric from the 1880s and 1890s when J. J. Smart was owner of the house (National Trust n.d.). An architectural assessment of the building made in 1986 by architectural historian Miles Lewis, describes aspects of the north side of the house such as the three sided bay (single storey) and triangular vent in the roof, which date prior to 1910 and are designed by an unknown architect (Lewis 1986).

J. J. Smart subsequently subdivided Miegunyah Estate in 1909, and the residence itself was purchased by Sir Wilfrid Russell Grimwade as a wedding gift for his wife Lady Mabel Louise Grimwade in 1910 (Vale & Co and J & T Ham 1909; Poynter 1983). Sir Grimwade was an industrialist, inventor, naturalist, benefactor and the youngest son of F. S. Grimwade, the founder of major pharmaceutical company Felton and Grimwade. The Grimwade occupancy resulted in several alterations and additions, and the majority of the structure that is present today appears to date to this period (Poynter 1967). This included extensions on the north west corner, potentially designed by M. Shields, a relatively unknown architect, who lodged a drainage plan for stable alterations in 1910. However, according to Miles Lewis, Klingender and Alsop may also have been the architects, as described in the Real Property Annual of 1914 (Lewis 1986, 17-18). The additions described as 'white stucco or roughcast with vertical slabs of imitation half-timbering in the gables' are considered to be consistent with the work of Alsop at this time, although also 'trademarks' of Harold Desbrowe-Anneer (Lewis 1986, 17-18). These speculations however, have yet to be substantiated by archival records.

In 1919-20, the old timber stable and coach house noted in 1896 were converted into two flats to designs prepared by architectural firm Philip B. Hudson and Wardrop, who had recently gained prominence as the designers of the Shrine of Remembrance (Lewis 1986, 17-18). Further major changes

were made to Miegunyah for the Grimwades in 1920-21 and 1933-34. The 1920s changes were most probably designed by H. Desbrowe Annear, and alterations from this period have been described by Lewis as:

Rooms of rather cubical character thrust northward from the north west corner of the house. The roof was raised to become an enveloping hipped shape, apparently providing space for attic rooms along the south. The remodelling at the north west corner continued down the west front to the south west corner... and on the south front the little entrance porch was replaced by the grand cantilevered porte cochere.... (Lewis 1986, 19).

On the other hand, the 1930s alterations and additions were made to designs by architects Stephenson and Meldrum. The designs by this well-known architectural partnership altered many of the banked windows from the 1920-21 additions in the north west section of the house (Lewis 1986, 19). The original structure was also heightened by an additional storey, the garden façade made more imposing by two massive columns stretching from terrace to roof, and on the southern side a new entrance opened onto a large panelled hall, two-storeys high, with a wide gallery at the east end (Grimwade Papers n.d.).

The Miegunyah garden continued to be of great importance during the Grimwade ownership. Both Edna Walling and Ellis Stones are thought to have been involved at this time (Watts 1983), however this has not been confirmed by archival research. The garden was dominated by a large sweeping lawn. Three distinctive sections containing a box-hedged rose (*Rosa*) garden, birch (*Betula*) copse and native arboretum formed part of its composition. The arboretum reflected Sir Russell Grimwade's interest and research into the Eucalyptus genus. The rose (*Rosa*) garden is thought to be a copy of an unknown garden in England (Grimwade Papers n.d.).

As with other grand mansions in Toorak during this period, documented events at Miegunyah during the Grimwade occupancy include various social dances and gatherings amongst the wealthy and social elite (The Australasian 192, 44; The Argus 1938, 9). Lady Grimwade continued to own and occupy the dwelling following Sir Russell's death in 1955. She ultimately passed away in 1973, and Miegunyah was bequeathed to the University of Melbourne. It has since been sold several times and further subdivided, with the last auction being in 2010.

Comparative Analysis

The following comparative analysis of Miegunyah has been based on an analysis of the extant alterations and additions that have been made to the house since its initial construction in the early 1850s. The most recognisable alteration made to the site would be those most likely undertaken by Harold Desbrowe-Annear.

Comparative examples include:

- **Whernside (2A Whernside Avenue, Toorak) (HO117).** Whernside and Miegunyah were both altered extensively by famed Arts and Crafts architect Harold Desbrowe-Annear. Shared characteristics include the use of rectilinear form, the use of brick masonry with stucco rendering, the hipped slate roof, polygonal bays, and landscape setting, where both mansions occupy extensive mature remnant plantings. The use of elliptical windows at both sites is a trademarks of Desbrowe-Annear's design aesthetic. It is notable to clarify that Whernside still

conveys its late Victorian design qualities. However, in both instances, the significance of each place has been enhanced through the work of Harold Desbrowe-Anneer.

- **Duncraig (Former Hampton Villa) (31-33 Hampden Road, Armadale) (HO48).** Duncraig is significant for its 19th century origins, being first constructed in 1856, whilst also undergoing major alterations when occupied by renowned Arts and Crafts architect Walter Richmond Butler. This site provides the strongest comparative example to Miegunyah: two sites with Victorian origins that were then altered by highly significant Arts and Crafts architects. While having impacted the original Victorian integrity, the alterations made at each respective site do not detract from their heritage value. . Both sites retain some of the original form and features associated with Victorian houses of this period but they are both primarily accented with features that would have been considered a forward thinking design ethos at the time of remodeling.
- **Westerfield (86-96 Robinsons Road, Frankston) (HO5 and VHR No. H2200).** Outside of the municipality, it is also worth making note of the house Westerfield that was constructed in 1924. Westerfield was designed by Harold Desbrowe-Anneer for the Grimwade family as a holiday residence away from Miegunyah. This occurred around the same time as Miegunyah is said to have been altered, making the likelihood of Harold Desbrowe-Anneer being the project architect at Miegunyah (as opposed to Alsop) much higher. Stylistically, both houses are quite different.

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images

The residence is not readily visible from Orrong Road. As a result, historical images have been included to assist with contextualising the property.



The northern elevation of Miegunyah, dated to 1933 (source: University of Melbourne, 1933).



Oblique view of the northern elevation of Miegunyah, dated to 1933 (ssource: University of Melbourne, 1933).



Mature plantings and landscaping in front of the northern elevation of Miegunyah (source: www.realestateview.com.au, 2009).Source: RealestateView.



Roof forms visible from Orrong Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Mature English oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>), visible from Orrong Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).	Boundary wall and entrance gate, visible from Orrong Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).
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Authors

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