

Heritage Citation – Precinct

Heritage Place: St Georges Court Precinct

Address: 1-15 and 2-14 St Georges Court and 9-11 St Georges Road, Toorak

Designer: Architects include Marcus Martin & Tribe, A. Mortimer McMillan and Billson & Mewton

Builder: N/A

HO Reference: HO348

Citation status: Final

Date Updated: 24 October 2023

Year of Construction: 1938-1942



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



Location map and extent of HO348.

Heritage Group: Residential Buildings

Heritage Type: Residential Precinct

Key Theme: Building Suburbs

Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most 'designed' suburbs – houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as a local precinct on the HO; separate 13 St Georges Road from the precinct curtilage and include on the HO as an individual heritage place with its own HO number as the building is significant in its own right but does not align with the heritage character of the precinct.

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input 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 St Georges Court Precinct, comprising a group of dwellings on St Georges Court and St Georges Road, Toorak, is locally significant.

All properties are graded contributory to the precinct.

Character elements that contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- A high degree of intactness arising from the large group of Interwar era dwellings of a uniform style;
- The regularity and harmony of the two-storey, pitched roof building stock;
- Intactness of most individual buildings to their original designs. Dwellings typically survive with their presentation to the street largely unaltered, roof forms and materiality, chimneys, window and door openings, Georgian Revival details such as timber louvred shutters, porticos and entrances flanked by classical order columns, and Mediterranean influences with simpler massing and restrained detail;
- A mixture of free-standing dwellings and maisonettes;
- Consistent use of render, timber joinery and roof tiles;
- The shallow and uniform front setbacks; and
- Low rendered masonry walls.

Later additions and alterations to the properties are not significant.

How is it significant?

The St Georges Court Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The St Georges Court Precinct is historically significant as a subdivision of part of the 19th century Toorak Estate prior to World War II. The dwellings form a tangible link to this period of development and change in Toorak, whereby there was a shift from sparsely developed estates to a middle-class urban area. The precinct derives further historical importance from the number of quality houses designed by prominent architects for wealthy professional clients. (Criterion A)

The St Georges Court Precinct is aesthetically significant as an intact, visually cohesive and prestigious Interwar subdivision that pursues a consistent stylistic theme despite the involvement of a range of architects. The largely intact group of two-storey Interwar residences and maisonettes with Georgian Revival and Mediterranean influences, and the quality of their design to conceal multi-residential properties into what appear to be large and stately residences, contribute to the significance of the precinct as a visually distinctive residential development from the interwar period. The curve in the road and uniform shallow setback of the dwellings promotes a picturesque character and an atmosphere of seclusion. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	The St Georges Court Precinct is historically significant as an Interwar era subdivision of part of the 19th century Toorak Estate. The dwellings form a tangible link to this period of development and change in Toorak, whereby there was a shift from sparsely developed estates to a middle-class urban area. The precinct derives further historical importance from the number of quality houses designed by prominent architects for wealthy professional clients.
B	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	The place does not meet this criterion.
C	<i>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history</i>	The place does not meet this criterion.
D	<i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i>	The place does not meet this criterion.
E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	The St Georges Court Precinct is aesthetically significant as an intact, visually cohesive and prestigious Interwar subdivision that pursues a consistent stylistic theme despite the involvement of a range of architects. The largely intact group of two-storey Interwar residences and maisonettes with Georgian Revival and Mediterranean influences, and the quality of their design to conceal multi-residential properties into what appear to be large and stately residences, contribute to the significance of the precinct as a visually distinctive residential development from the interwar period. The curve in the road and shallow setback of the dwellings promotes a picturesque character and an atmosphere of seclusion.
F	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	The 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>	The 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>	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

• Physical Analysis

The St Georges Court Precinct in Toorak is a small cul-de-sac extending west of a roundabout on St Georges Road. The alignment of the cul-de-sac adopts a shallow S-shaped plan on a gently sloping site. The precinct is small, occupying the entirety of St Georges Court and two residences fronting St Georges Road. The alignment of the cul-de-sac provides visual interest and a degree of seclusion to residents at the western end of the street. The precinct is bounded to the north and south by other residential allotments. The properties along the east of the precinct front St Georges Road. The properties along the west side back onto Dalriada Street. There are no laneways intersecting or bordering the precinct.

St Georges Court is a narrow street with two-way traffic and parking on both sides of the street. The road is predominantly planted with young birch (*betula*) trees that are distinct for their white bark and leafy canopy. Roadside landscaping at the eastern end of the court is precise and orderly, with manicured lawns and hedges, however they tend towards a less formal approach at the western end of the court. Private gardens in the street are modest by local standards and also reflect the increasing tendency towards informality from east to west.

St Georges Road is a wide two-lane road with dedicated on-street parking on both sides of the road. The public domain of the road is defined by wide, lawn covered planting strips with mature sweetgum (*liquidambar*) and London plane (*platanus x acerifolia*) trees.

St Georges Court and St Georges Road are both surfaced in bitumen with concrete curbs and crossovers. The roundabout forming the junction of the two streets is centre planted with a low groundcover and a ring of square bluestone tiles around the centre perimeter of the roundabout. The footpath and road at the entrance to St Georges Court is flanked by extensive garden beds with boxwood and shrub underplanting. The north end of the entrance includes a stand of ornamental Lily of the Nile (*agapanthus*) plantings and a historical metal sign with decorative brackets, painted white with blue painted lettering reading 'St Georges CRT'.

The St Georges Court precinct is defined by low-density residential housing. The precinct comprises fifteen dwellings across twelve building allotments, and consists of a mixture of free standing and maisonette structures. The allotments vary in size and orientation, although they are considered small in relation to the allotment sizes across the rest of Toorak. Properties in the precinct have shallow setbacks from the street with small front yards typically occupied by a short, paved driveway or off-street parking

area. The houses are situated in close proximity to each other, and are also smaller in size in comparison to residences outside of the precinct. Despite the relatively dense siting of the houses, the streetscape of St Georges Court remains open and spacious.

The front property boundaries in the precinct are defined by a mixture of fencing types. This includes tall white rendered masonry walls along St Georges Road and at 3 and 15 St Georges Court. 1, 5, 6, 11 and 14 St Georges Court are demarcated by low white rendered masonry walls which is the original and predominant fencing type. 2 St Georges Court is the only property in the precinct that features a steel panel and post fence, which is considered to be intrusive to the overall streetscape. The fences and boundaries on the western end of the road around the cul-de-sac are softened by mature shrubbery and vine plantings.

The properties in the precinct are two-storey masonry structures finished in cement-render or white painted brick, with roofs of slate or Marseilles tiles. Stylistically, the residences in the precinct draw from both Georgian Revival and Mediterranean styles.

Residences at the eastern end of St Georges Court and along St Georges Road generally draw from Georgian inspired sources, which can readily be seen through the use of façade bay and elliptical windows, ornamental balustrades, and louvred timber shutters. 14 St Georges Court is a good example of the Georgian style in the precinct with its symmetrical form, portico entrance with Corinthian order columns and façade detailing typical of the style. Towards the western end of St Georges Court, the housing styles incorporate detailing typical of the Mediterranean style. This includes structures with simpler massing and restrained detail compared to the Georgian style houses. Such features ultimately reflect the growing influence of modernism and architects' attempts to incorporate contemporary trends into the Interwar Mediterranean idiom. Alterations to the existing structures, including the rendering of the red brick residence at 14 St Georges Court and the clinker brick exterior of 9 St Georges Court, are generally sympathetic with the overall character of the original development.

The St Georges Court Precinct is unusual for the high proportion of maisonette development and for the extent to which architects have worked to conceal the multi-unit nature of these buildings with the appearance of large and stately homes. This is especially visible at 1 St Georges Court. The residences do present variations in overall design influence, character and detail in the streetscape, however, this is reconciled through the consistency of scale, colour and texture of exterior surfaces of the residences. Additionally, the presence of decorative shutters sits with equal ease amid Georgian formality and the casual Mediterranean styles forming a stylistic link between the residences. The integrity of the streetscape and contributing houses is high overall.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)

Visible modifications to the precinct include:

- 2 St Georges Court: Front garage added, sympathetic in form and finish but its prominent location detracts from the streetscape. The new steel post and panel front fence is also an outlier in the street.
- Fence alterations and replacements throughout.

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). His house, called Toorak House, is 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 St Georges Court Precinct has previously been authored by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd for the City of Stonnington in 1997. The following account is drawn from this existing study and is augmented by supplementary archival research and revisions by Extent Heritage Pty Ltd.

St Georges Court was created in 1938 following the subdivision and demolition of the Kildrum residence, a large Federation era property facing St Georges Road. While the subsequent development of grand mansions on a new road following demolition and subdivision was typical in Toorak, it is unusual for having taken place during the early years of World War II.

The line of Toorak Road was first shown on a map drawn by surveyor Robert Hoddle in 1837, when Prahran was surveyed into sixteen main blocks bounded by main roads. These were sold as large Crown Allotments that were subsequently subdivided and re-sold. On the more valuable high land towards Prahran's east, large mansion estates developed, contrasting with the smaller allotments created on the cheaper flat land at the western end of the municipality. At the first Crown Land Sales in June 1840, three large allotments bounded by Orrong Road, Toorak Road, Kooyong Road and the Yarra River were sold to speculators. Lot 16 consisting of seventy acres was sold to Sylvester J. Brown, lot 17 of seventy-eight acres to J. D. L. Campbell, and lot 18 of sixty acres to W. H. Yaldywn (Malone, n.d.).

By 1849, prominent Melbourne merchant James Jackson purchased lot 16 from Brown and lot 17 from Campbell, ultimately resulting in the construction of a large mansion between 1849-50 to the designs

laid out by architect Samuel Jackson. The mansion consisted of a formal garden on 148 acres, and was given the name 'Toorak House', the eventual namesake of the suburb itself. A map from 1855 shows the property extending from Orrong Road to the east side of the present day St. Georges Road (Survey General 1855). Unfortunately, Jackson never lived at Toorak House, having died at sea in 1851.

From 1854-1873, the Victorian Government leased the property. Throughout this period, the mansion was occupied by a succession of Victorian Governors; Sir Charles Hotham (1854-55), Sir Henry Barkly (1856-63), Sir Charles Darling (1863-66), Sir J.H. Manners-Sutton (1866-73) and Sir John Bowen (1873-74). Toorak House was extended during the Governor's occupancy and its use as Melbourne's first Government House attracted other wealthy individuals to the area. Following this period, the mansion was reverted to a private home. It was briefly owned by solicitor Edward Klingender, before being sold off to mining entrepreneur George Lansell in 1875. Lansell's ownership saw the subdivision of the estate into large allotments fronting Orrong Road and Toorak Road, as well as the establishment of both Lansell and St. Georges Roads. The subdivision not only drastically changed the rural appearance of this portion of Toorak, but attracted wealthy pastoralists, merchants and professionals looking to build residences. Prominent mansions built during this late 19th century period include Illawarra (1891) and Edzell (1892). Following subdivision, Toorak House also occupied a much reduced allotment. While Lansell continued to own the property, it was leased to several occupants, including notable surgeon and army officer Sir Charles Ryan.

A further subdivision of the Toorak Estate took place in 1900 when forty-five allotments were auctioned. The subdivision included the west side of St Georges Road and the east side of Lansell Road, and reduced the land at Toorak Estate to five acres. This second round of subdivisions saw the construction of several Federation style mansions. These included Darnlee in Lansell Road in 1901, and Kildrum fronting 7 St. Georges Road in 1902.

Built for William Drummond, Kildrum comprised a fifteen room brick house with a coach house and outhouses on over one acre of land. Ownership was subsequently taken up by William Baragwanath in 1937, and the following year saw the subdivision of the estate into allotments, as well as the subsequent development of St. Georges Court. As with the development of other interwar mansions in the suburb, purchasers of the St Georges Court allotments chose prominent architects to design their new homes. These included notable firms such as Billson & Mewton, and Marcus, Martin & Tribe.

A timeline of the houses built at St Georges Court and St. Georges Road during this period is included below.

St Georges Court:

- 1939: 14 St Georges Court- Georgian Revival residence built for Lilliam Chaliyer.
- 1940: 1 St Georges Court- Residence containing Georgian derived elements is constructed for Mrs. E. A. Nunn. Forms a semi-detached pair with 9 St. Georges Road.
- 1940: 4 St Georges Court- Residence containing Georgian derived elements is constructed for Mrs. B. Cozens.
- 1940: 5/6 St Georges Court= Semi-detached pair is erected to designs by the architectural firm Marcus Martin & Tribe for Mrs E.E. Macfarlan.

- 1940: 11/12 St Georges Court- Semi-detached pair containing Mediterranean influences is erected to designs attributed to the architectural firm Billson & Mewton for Haffe S. Ferne.
- 1941: 9/10 St Georges Court- Pair of houses erected to designs by architects Billson & Mewton for Mary Drummond.
- 1941: 2/3 St Georges Court- Residence characterised by a synthesis of Georgian and English Arts and Craft architecture is erected for Harriet Yencken.
- 1941: 15 St Georges Court- Residence with Georgian detailing built for C. Cox.

St Georges Road:

- 1941: 9 St Georges Road- Building containing Georgian derived sources is part of a semi-detached pair built on corner of St. Georges Road for Mrs. E. A. Nunn.
- 1942: 11 St Georges Road- Georgian style residence built for Mr. R Jennings to designs prepared by the architectural firm Marcus Martin & Tribe.

Comparative Analysis

St Georges Court Precinct is an important and distinctive example of an interwar residential estate. The quality of its homes, the relative uniformity of their scale, consistent Georgian Revival and Mediterranean architectural character, the curve in the road and the integrity of the original interwar houses all combine to encapsulate the essence of an affluent interwar suburb. The most notable character of the precinct is the size and quality of the housing typical of the Toorak area, Kooyong and parts of Malvern but rarely found in such consistency in the suburbs beyond. St Georges Court lacks the generous front setbacks that contribute to the garden estate feel of comparable courts.

While various other interwar residential suburbs such as in Camberwell, Essendon, Kew and Caulfield also contain middle class estates of a high quality, in most instances they comprise primarily single storey villas or a combination of one and two-storey housing as opposed to the consistent two-storey character of St Georges Court Precinct. Comparative precinct examples include:

- **Montalto Avenue Precinct (HO143).** With specific relation to Montalto Avenue, the streetscape primarily consists of two-storey interwar subdivisions. While this area of the precinct also includes a large number of two-storey Interwar Georgian Revival dwellings, the precinct is also more varied in its specific style of interwar era dwellings than St Georges Court Precinct and consists of a range of Old English styles and qualities, some with Tudor style influences.
- **Huntingfield Road Precinct (HO347).** Huntingfield Road Precinct is an Interwar era precinct which is also characterised by two-storey Georgian Revival style residences. St Georges Court Precinct, however, is also heavily influenced by Mediterranean architecture which makes it less representative of the style. Both precincts share a similar level of intactness in building height and overall form, and are situated on curved roads. Both precincts have undergone alterations to their boundary walls.
- **Linden Court / Jessamine Avenue / Kenleigh Grove Precinct (HO141).** This precinct has significance as a cohesive and intact 1920s-40s precinct containing an impressive grouping of substantial houses set in landscaped grounds and streetscapes of the period. Linden Court / Jessamine Avenue / Kenleigh Grove Precinct shares similarities to the St Georges Court Precinct in terms of built and roof form, height and inclusion of entry porticos on the front façades, however the buildings in the Linden Court / Jessamine Avenue / Kenleigh Grove Precinct present

with additional typical Interwar Bungalow style features, such as leadlight windows and timber shingles.

As demonstrated by the above examples, St Georges Court Precinct is a high-quality group of interwar era dwellings that are largely consistent in their form, scale and setting, however there is some overlap in specific architectural styles which creates a greater sense of diversity than that seen in comparable precincts.

Precinct Map



Grading Table

* S: Significant

C: Contributory

NC: Non-contributory

Refer to Heritage Victoria's Model brief for consultants (p.6) for explanation of designations.

<i>Street address</i>	<i>Place type</i>	<i>Style/era</i>	<i>Grading</i>
ST GEORGES COURT			
1 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
2 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
3 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
1/4 St Georges Court	Duplex	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
2/4 St Georges Court	Duplex	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
5 St Georges Court	Duplex	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
6 St Georges Court	Duplex	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
9 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
10 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
11 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
12 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
14 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
15 St Georges Court	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
ST GEORGES ROAD			
9 St Georges Road	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C
11 St Georges Road	House	Interwar period (c.1910-c.1940)	C

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- Surveyor General, Victoria. 1855. Melbourne and its suburbs. 1 map on 4 sheets, 119 x 98 cm; 66 x 52 cm. BIB ID: 786996. State Library of Victoria.
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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



View west showing 9-14 St Georges Court
(source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View east showing 11-15 St Georges Court
(source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View west showing 1-4 St Georges Court. (source:
Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View west showing 11-15 St Georges Court.
(source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



1 St Georges Court (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



1 St Georges Court (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



14 St Georges Court (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



9 St Georges Road (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 1997.

Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.