

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

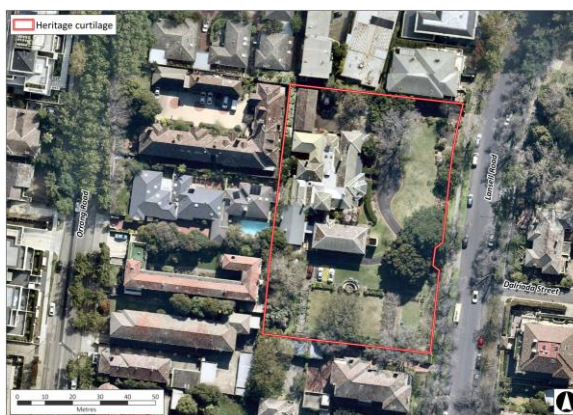
Heritage Place: Umina
Address: 3 Lansell Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO760
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 25 October 2023
Year of Construction: 1875

Designer: Smith and Johnson
Builder: Unknown



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



Location map and extent of 3 Lansell Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Heritage Group: Residential building
Heritage Type: House

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

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Remove from the curtilage of HO143 Montalto Avenue Precinct and include on the HO as an individually significant place in its own right; tree controls are recommended in relation to the mature white oak (*Quercus alba*) tree.

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 3 Lansell Road, Toorak (otherwise known as Umina) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale and detailing of the Victorian era Italianate villa is of local significance, as is the mature white oak (*Quercus alba*) tree, curved return driveway and formal garden situated to the south of the property. Later alterations and additions to the property, including the secondary wings at the rear (west elevation) connected by a central corrugated metal flat roof, the two-storey face brown brick extension at the north-west corner, and the two-storey extension with a gabled roof at the south-west corner, are not significant. The 1968 south wing extension comprising a two-storey structure with a hipped roof is also not significant.

How is it significant?

Umina is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Umina is historically significant in demonstrating the development of late Victorian Italianate villas on substantial allotments during the late 19th century, prior to the wider subdivision of the late Victorian estates. This history is also reflected in the mature white oak (*Quercus alba*) tree, which is a remnant of the of the demolished 19th century property Repton that now forms part of Umina's grounds. As the former residence of the former Premier of Victoria, John Alexander MacPherson, the property is also of historical significance in demonstrating residential development in the southeastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthiest citizens during the mid to late 19th century period. (Criterion A)

Umina has aesthetic significance as a fine example of a late Victorian Italianate villa established on a substantial allotment with a deep setback. While the building has undergone a number of alterations and additions, the building maintains several original and defining late Victorian Italianate features which contribute to its aesthetic value. Designed by architects Smith and Johnson, these features include its distinct tower with projecting eaves, polygonal projection with matching verandah, complex hipped roof form with profiled chimneys, and decorative mouldings below the eaves. These elements are also enhanced by the deep building setback, original curved return driveway and established gardens with a remnant mature white oak planting that combine to create a picturesque setting. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Umina is historically significant in demonstrating the development of late Victorian Italianate villas on substantial allotments during the late 19th century, prior to the wider subdivision of the late Victorian estates. This history is also reflected in the mature white oak (<i>Quercus alba</i>) tree, which is a remnant of the of the demolished 19th century property, Repton, that now forms part of Umina's grounds. As the former residence of the former Premier of Victoria,
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		John Alexander MacPherson, the property is also of historical significance in demonstrating residential development in the south eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthiest citizens during the mid to late 19th century period.
<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>	Umina has aesthetic significance as a fine example of a late Victorian Italianate villa established on a substantial allotment with a deep setback. While the building has undergone a number of alterations and additions, the building maintains several original and defining late Victorian Italianate features which contribute to its aesthetic value. Designed by architects Smith and Johnson, these features include its distinct tower with projecting eaves, polygonal projection with matching verandah, complex hipped roof form with profiled chimneys, and decorative mouldings below the eaves. These elements are also enhanced by the deep building setback, original curved return driveway and established gardens with a remnant mature white oak planting that combine to create a picturesque setting.
<i>F</i>	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>G</i>	<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>	This place does not meet this criterion.
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Description

• Physical Analysis

Umina is a large Victorian era mansion consisting of a single-storey original stuccoed brick villa with a two-storey tower. The original villa is built in an Italianate style, distinguished by its tower with projecting eaves, prominent verandah and characteristic polygonal projection. The complex hipped roof is clad in slate tiles with metal ridge flashing. Several sections of the original roof have been reclad in corrugated sheet metal. There are five stuccoed brick chimneys extending from the roof of the original structure with a characteristic Italianate form. The roof extends over the main structure with OG profile guttering and fascia painted a deep red colour. This contrasts with the off-white stucco colour of the structure.

The villa and main entrance are raised above Lansell Road and accessible via a set of steps that lead to the covered front verandah. The verandah mirrors the projecting roof profile that is characteristic of the Italianate villa form. The verandah awning is supported by paired turned timber posts. The verandah protects the arched main entrance door and tall timber sash windows. The verandah awning roof is separated from the main roof by horizontal lined mouldings and round vents that run the length of the façade.

The prominent two-storey tower is square in plan and rendered like the ground floor villa. It features a centralised door flanked with two small windows on each side of the tower. Expressed architraves and an arched hood mould emphasise the fenestration on the tower. The tower is capped with a low-pitched hipped roof with a pointed cast iron finial. The roof eaves project over the tower supported by timber brackets resting on a string mould.

The original structure includes several smaller secondary wings located towards its rear (west) side which has since been connected under a central shared corrugated metal flat roof. The smaller northwest secondary wing features a square clerestory window. There have been multiple extensions and additions to Umina, including a 1919 southwest addition, as well as extensive two-storey wings to its north added in 1961 and to its south in 1968. The south wing is the most visible from the street front and includes a tall front U-shaped wall enclosing an external set of stairs leading to the upper level on the front elevation. The north extension is constructed of face brown brick with two distinct roof sections; a gable terracotta tiled roof and a hipped green corrugated steel roof. A separate two-storey extension with a grey corrugated steel gable roof and two chimneys is located at the southwest corner of the complex.

The residence has a deep setback from the street. The large property is set on a rising slope with the low end at the street level. The street front boundary is demarcated by a tall face red brick wall laid with a stretcher bond. The wall is topped with a rounded terracotta cap. The wall includes two openings at both ends to accommodate the return driveway. The main entrance is recessed with flanking tall square

brick posts. The curved return driveway is laid in asphalt and edged with brick. The driveway extends to parking areas located to the north and south of the complex.

The front yard encircled around the driveway consists of an open lawn. The sloped area between the house and the driveway is heavily planted with hedges and low shrubs, and edged with a retaining low rubble wall. The south of the property is occupied by a formal garden. The garden includes a two-tiered semi-circular fountain and two wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) pergolas with reinforced concrete pillars. The garden also includes a lozenge shaped pond and stone retaining walls and steps. The formal garden is centred around a mature large white oak (*Quercus alba*) tree. In addition to the white oak tree, there are numerous mature trees located on the property particularly around the formal garden, east and north boundaries. This includes a Lilly Pilly (*Syzygium sp*), Magnolia (*Magnolia sp*) and coniferous trees.

Umina is located by the junction with Lansell Road and Dalriada Street. The property is currently managed by the Country Women's Association (CWA) and used mainly as bed and breakfast accommodation. The property is considered to be in good condition. There have been extensive changes to the original structure over time. Further alterations and additions were implemented by the CWA including the highly visible two-storey 1968 south wing located next to the original structure. The grounds have also been relandscaped to include two large parking areas but retains the south formal garden and several historic trees. Overall, Umina has moderate to low integrity.

- ### Alterations and Additions

- Additional structure added to the south west of the villa (1919).
- Replacement of some original windows with square bayed windows (1930s).
- Tennis court, octagonal pavilion and fernery located south of the residence removed.
- North garden stone fountain removed.
- Outbuildings including original stables removed.
- Original property expanded to the south and reduced to the north (after 1936).
- Original tower balconies removed.
- Internal alteration to the room layout undertaken.
- Northern end of the verandah glazed.
- Two-storey north wing added (1961).
- Two-storey south wing added (1968).
- Sections of the original roof reclad with corrugated sheet metal.
- Middle section of the front wall rebuilt with different coloured bricks and without the curved terracotta cap.
- Return driveway paved with asphalt.
- Asphalt paved parking areas added to the north and south of the complex.
- Large water tank added to the south of the complex.
- Water access system added to the front yard area.

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](#)

The residence known as Umina was built for politician and seventh Premier of Victoria, John Alexander MacPherson in c.1875 to a design by architects Smith and Johnson (Fitzpatrick 2006). The residence was designed with the intention of adding another storey, however this never eventuated. The property originally included a tennis court, octagon pavilion and fernery on the southern side of the house. A large stone fountain on the northern side of the garden has also been removed, as have the outbuildings including the stables (Heritage Victoria 2004).

MacPherson sold the property to politician A. Grant McIntyre who died shortly after. The property was then rented to politician and solicitor Norman Bayles and his family in c.1891 (Table Talk 1898, 12). It appears that they later purchased the property. The Bayles made several alterations to the property including the installation of electricity (The Australasian 1903, 41). By 1905, the property comprised a formal return curved driveway, a tennis court, fernery, octagon pavilion as well as an outbuilding (MMBW 1905)

Umina was purchased by the Country Women's Association (CWA) from the Bayles family in 1948 for use as a residential club and later as the administrative headquarters (The Age 1948, 5). The block on the south side with the formal garden and mature centerpiece white oak (*Quercus alba*) tree was purchased separately and was originally part of the adjacent property to the south known as Repton. The date of the garden's construction has not been ascertained, though it appears that the white oak planting predates establishment of the gardens. Existing research has speculated that the garden design may be the works of renowned interwar designers like Edna Walling or Harold Desbrowe Annear, although this has not been substantiated by historical evidence. Some land on the north side was later sold.

A craft room with bedrooms above was built to the north-west in 1960-61. A bedroom wing with seventeen rooms was built on the southern side in 1968. Since the CWA took over ownership of the property, there have been several other alterations and additions to the residence.

Umina gained land on the south side from a property known as Repton which was demolished in c.1936. The residence also lost some property to the north which resulted in a new exit to Lansell Road in the early 1950s. Today, the residence continues to be owned by the CWA for use as club headquarters and a bed and breakfast facility (Heritage Victoria 2004, 2-3).

Comparative Analysis

Designed by Smith and Johnson in the picturesque Italianate style, Umina is directly comparable to several single storey Victorian era Italianate villas that were also constructed for the wealthy and influential in Toorak and Armadale during the late 19th century. Popularised following the development of Toorak House in 1850 and its subsequent use as the Governor's residence in 1854, the application of the Victorian Italianate style in domestic architecture was particularly prevalent in the Victorian era colony. Its association with the social and political elite was integral to its success, and the style is readily observable in residences across Melbourne's wealthy inner eastern suburbs. As Smith and Johnson were primarily known for their design of classical style public buildings, the only comparable example by the duo exists outside of the municipality:

- **Billilla (26 Halifax Street, Brighton) (Brighton City HO188/VHR H1155).** Constructed in 1878 to designs by Smith and Johnson and comprehensively altered by Arts and Crafts style architect Walter Butler in 1907, Billilla is a large, single-storey mansion that is similarly distinguished by a central tower. However, given its later alterations and additions, it is also characterised by a synthesis of the Art Nouveau and Jacobethan idioms as opposed to purely the Italianate. It is defined by its aesthetic range of architectural embellishment and stands as an important stylistic example of Walter Butler's work.

Other comparable dwellings within the municipality that are not designed by Smith and Johnson include:

- **Lillirie House (1089 Malvern Road, Toorak) (HO273).** Erected in c.1860 for merchant Nell McLean, Lillirie House is comparable to Umina as a large single storey Victorian Italianate villa erected for a wealthy family during the 19th century. As with Umina, it encompasses all the elements typically associated with the Italianate style, such as a slate-clad roof, bay windows, low pitched roof, rendered walls, and front verandah. Other analogous features include its semi-circular driveway and deep setback. However, while Lillirie is ornamented by a cast iron frieze and decorative brackets, Umina adorns round vents situated beneath its eaves and is defined by its complex massing and tower with projecting eaves. In comparison to Umina, Lillirie is considered to be a less sophisticated example of the style.
- **1043 Malvern Road, Toorak (HO324).** Constructed in 1889, this residence is comparable to Umina as an Italianate villa distinguished by a square tower. While more modest in size, this residence is similarly characterised by asymmetrical massing, a slate-clad hipped roof and an angled bay window that is reflected in its roof form. As with Victorian style residences constructed towards the end of the 19th century, 1043 Malvern Road makes use of moulded ornamentation, a stuccoed cornice,

garlands and a Corinthian pilaster that differ from the less elaborate mid-Victorian ornamentation at Umina.

- **Blairholme (1034-1040 Malvern Road, Armadale) (H0528).** Erected in 1887 to designs attributed to architect Lloyd Tayler, Blairholme is a large single storey Italianate villa set on an expansive garden setting. It is comparable to Umina as an Italianate style dwelling with a central landmark tower built for a prominent Melbourne resident. Analogous features include bay windows reflected in its roof form, slate-clad hipped roof and asymmetrical composition. Compared to Umina, it is a more sophisticated example of the style by virtue of its wrap around verandah and series of hipped projecting canted bays. Its high degree of ornamentation, evident in its intricate cast iron work, balustraded parapet with moulded piers and elaborate leaf impost mouldings, sets it apart from Umina and other buildings within this design idiom.

Overall, Umina is a good example of a single-storey Italianate villa erected for a prominent Melbourne resident during the 19th century. It is distinguished by its central tower with projecting eaves, massing and formal sitting. It is an unusual example of Smith and Johnson's work within domestic architecture and compares well to similar examples by contemporaneous architects within the City of Stonnington.

References

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Table Talk, 1898, Social, 6 May, 12.

The Age 1948, Inspection of New Club, 14 December, 5.

The Australasian 1903. 'At Home at Umina'. 2 May, 41.

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 from the entrance of the residence and driveway (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View from Lansell Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of the tower and roof form (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View of the tower from Lansell Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of the chimneys (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Two-storey south wing extension added in 1968 (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Aerial view of mature white oak planting and formal garden situated to the south (source: NearMap, April 2021).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Context Pty Ltd, 1993. *Note: the building was included in precinct citation for HO143.*

Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022 (Vivian Lu, Gabrielle Harrington and Reuel Balmadres).

Quality assurance review conducted by: Corinne Softley.