

## La Chaumiere, 219 Kooyong Road, Toorak Heritage Citation Report



Figure 1 219 Kooyong 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. Edward Billson's stylised English Domestic Revival style flats at 6 Grange Road (HO347)

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 in 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.

### Place History

By the end of the nineteenth century Heyington Place was well established as a prestigious residential enclave of mansions on large estates. A 1905 MMBW plan shows three mansions on the east side of the Heyington Place – Corry, Dalmeny and Tyalla – each with rear boundaries to Kooyong Road.<sup>2</sup> Dalmeny was built c1891 for W H Glen, an importer of musical instruments.<sup>3</sup> By the early 1900s, it was the town residence of Charles Mills, owner of the Uardry sheep station near Hay, New South Wales.<sup>4</sup>

In May 1931, Dalmeny was subdivided and five 'magnificent' allotments were offered for sale.<sup>5</sup> The mansion was retained on a reduced curtilage with one new allotment to its south fronting Heyington Place, and four allotments to its rear fronting Kooyong Road [including present day 219 Kooyong Road].

In 1932, a house was built at 219 Kooyong Road for H K Reddin.<sup>6</sup> The 1932 Sands and McDougall directory shows a 'house being built' on the west side of Kooyong Road in this location. The first listing for 219 Kooyong Road occurs in the 1933 Sands and McDougall directory with H K Reddin as the occupant. Mrs Reddin is named as the owner on the first MMBW Plan of Drainage.<sup>7</sup> The plan also names architect Hugh Peck as 'the agent' (the agent was often the house's architect or builder).

<sup>2</sup> MMBW Detail Plan Nos. 930 & 931. State Library of Victoria.

<sup>3</sup> *Australasian*, 11 October, p.44.

<sup>4</sup> Betty Malone, *Discovering Prahran: Area Seven*, p.21.

<sup>5</sup> *Argus*, 30 May 1931, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Sands and McDougall directory, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> MMBW Plan of Drainage No: 189496. South East Water.

The Reddin house (named 'La Chaumiere') was featured in the September 1934 edition of *Australian Home Beautiful*.<sup>8</sup> The article, entitled 'A Home with a French Provincial Atmosphere' described how architects Arthur and Hugh Peck were instructed to give the house a French character as a setting for the owner's furniture, some of which had been brought from France. The architects were also required to take advantage of unobstructed views over the Gardiner's Creek valley, and provide a ground floor plan that could be wholly opened for entertaining purposes.

The Reddins lived at 219 Kooyong Road until c1942, after which time it became the home of Walter E Hill.<sup>9</sup>

### Arthur & Hugh Peck

Arthur Peck (1855-45) was a successful residential architect of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, operating a practice from Queen Street in Melbourne. He was President of the RVIA during WWI. His son, Hugh Peck was born in 1888. He had been involved with the practice before the outbreak of war but enlisted with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion and departed for overseas service in 1914. He was wounded at Gallipoli in the following year. While abroad, he used the opportunity to study European architecture. On his return to Australia in 1918, he rejoined his father's practice, which became A & H L Peck.

Arthur Peck ran a successful practice prior to son's involvement. His works include the South African War Memorial, Alfred Square, St Kilda (1905) and the *Majella* flats, 473-475 St Kilda Road, Melbourne (1913). Through the interwar period Hugh Peck became an important residential architect in his own right working alone and in association with his father.

Both Arthur and Hugh Peck were competent if understated designers and were generally regarded as valued members of the profession. The practice endured for over half century producing a large body of work. From the late 1910s to the 1930s, A & H Peck promoted two different visions of the English Revival. Arthur Peck was motivated by the English Domestic Revival as evinced by British architect Charles Voysey and popularised locally by the work of Rodney Alsop. Hugh Peck, by contrast, tended towards the academic approach preferred by the next generation of designers such as Robert Hamilton and others who had served in Europe and experienced European medievalism first hand.

Through the late 1930s, Arthur Peck ignored his advanced years and attended his office every day. He died in 1945. The firm of Hugh Peck and Associates continued through the 1950s concentrating on industrial works. Hugh Peck died in 1965.

### **Description**

The site at 219 Kooyong Road is substantial double-storey English Domestic Revival style house with strong French provincial overtones. The principal roof is hipped and clad in terracotta shingles with three first-floor dormer windows breaking through the eaves line. External walls have a smooth rendered finish with contrasting clinker brick dressings to the windows sills and around the main entry providing a restrained form of ornament. The main entry is located at the base of a circular tower with a conical roof. Staggered windows to the east side of the tower mark the location of an internal staircase. The aesthetic qualities of the house are enhanced by its terraced garden setting and elevated siting.

The house appears to remain externally intact apart from the replacement of a ground floor window frame on the front projecting bay. The French doors near the northern end of the façade may also be non-original but are nonetheless sympathetic to the original design.

<sup>8</sup> *Australian Home Beautiful*. 1 September 1934. p.12.

<sup>9</sup> Sand and McDougall directories, 1942-1950

Council building files indicate that alterations and additions were made to the rear of the house c2000.<sup>10</sup> These works have not adversely impacted on the character of the house as it presents to the street.

## **Comparative Analysis**

### *English Domestic Revival Styles*

Sometimes referred to as Tudor, interwar Old English was an offshoot of the Arts and Crafts medievalism of the late nineteenth century, and shared that movement's values in terms of dark, natural colourings, a predominance of brickwork, the use of half timbering and a love of wrought iron and leadlight windows. Old English architecture was typified by the use of red or clinker brick, brick nogging and/or half timbering in gables or upper storeys, boldly modelled brick chimneys and terracotta tile roofs.

Steeply pitched roofs with gables rather than hips were a typical characteristic of the larger, two storey examples, though small suburban houses often had a combination of hips and gables. Walls were usually sheer rather than textured and ended flush with the gable of the roof. Sometimes manganese bricks or tiles or tapestry bricks were used to highlight openings and to decorate walls. Picturesque asymmetry was attained through double or triple fronts to the facade, arched porch entries, large, prominent chimneys and, in larger examples, oriel windows and towers.

Porches were generally small, and the traditional Australian verandah was not included except in some hybrid examples. Windows were of the sash or casement types, and often featured twelve panes or diamond pattern leadlight. Muted colours were appropriate to this style. Cream, off-white, buff, stone, terracotta and dark brown were most popular. Dark stained timber and red brick were the dominant materials, and cast iron painted black or a dark chocolate brown was also common.

The use of an external expression drawing heavily from medieval precedents became a means of expressing the solidity and longevity of British traditions. Old English or Tudor styled houses were associated with a profound Empire consciousness. Larger houses of the type exploited the associations of the manor to convey wealth and social status. A large Tudor house, no matter how new, somehow conveyed a sense that wealth, even recently achieved, was permanent.

By the late 1920s, the inclusion of imitation half timbering in the black and white tradition declined although buildings continued to achieve medieval associations through picturesque massing of gabled and hipped roofs and through the application of elements such as leadlight windows. Architects also looked to the vernacular of Normandy and Brittany for inspiration. According to Peter Cuffley, the emergence of a French provincial style in Australian can be explained in part by the popularity of the style in America, particularly in fashionable Hollywood and Bel Air.<sup>11</sup>

Design in a true Old English mode runs right through the 1920s but it gained much greater momentum from the early 1930s as the bungalow and Spanish Mission began to wane in popularity. From this time it was taken up by a far greater proportion of the architectural profession, and began to appear as a builder's expression. Some of the more progressive designers in this mode, such as Edward Billson and Osborn McCutcheon, incorporated modern planning with careful zoning of spaces according to function. Few houses designed by either architects or builders took the opportunity to break away from revivalism in Old English design other than through the process of progressive simplification, the hallmark of late 1930s stylism. As the decade drew to a close the sentimentality and strong British

<sup>10</sup> City of Stonnington Property File. 25905BL.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Cuffley, *Australian Houses of the '20s and '30s*, p.131.

associations of the academically detailed Old English were replaced by an expression which drew ever closer to the post-war multi-fronted multi-hipped and unadorned Australian suburban vernacular.

A substantial number of residences drawing inspiration from English Domestic revival were built in the well-heeled suburbs of Stonnington during the interwar period. Houses in this style with individual heritage overlay controls currently include: 3 Hopetoun Road, Toorak (HO327), 429 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (HO313), 3 Illawara Crescent, Toorak (HO62), 8 Monaro Road, Kooyong (HO277) and 4 Struan Street, Toorak (HO168). La Chaumiere at 219 Kooyong Road is distinguished from these examples by its French provincial character. Normandie at 657 Toorak Road (an A2 graded building in the Power Street heritage precinct) is perhaps the key example in the municipality of the French Provincial variant of the English Domestic revival style. La Chaumiere has similar attributes, including a conical turret and dormer windows, but it does not match the picturesque rustic quality of Normandie's stone clad façade. Nonetheless, La Chaumiere has a more imposing streetscape presence and stylized character, illustrative of the increasing simplification of form and detail in Melbourne's 1930s domestic architecture.

### **Thematic Context**

La Chaumiere, 219 Kooyong Road, Toorak illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006, Addendum March 2009):

8.1.3 - The end of an era – mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century

8.4.1 - Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

### **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?*

La Chaumiere, 219 Kooyong Road, Toorak is a large double-storey interwar house with a hybrid French provincial/English Domestic revival character. It was constructed in 1932 to designs by prolific interwar architects A & H L Peck, on land subdivided from the grounds of the c1891 mansion Dalmeny.

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

- The original external form, materials and detailing.
- The plain rendered walls surfaces with contrasting clinker brick dressings.
- The high level of external intactness.
- The legibility of the original built form.
- The domestic garden setting (but not the fabric of the garden itself).
- The absence of modern vehicle accommodation in views from the street.

Modern fabric is not significant.

*How is it significant?*

La Chaumiere, 219 Kooyong Road, Toorak is of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

*Why is it significant?*

La Chaumiere is architecturally significant as a fine and largely intact example of the French Provincial variant of the interwar English Domestic Revival style (Criterion D). It eschews most of the replica medieval style embellishments of the archetypal half-timbered Old English style in favour of strongly modelled roof forms and austere simplicity in decoration.

La Chaumiere is of some historical interest as evidence of a 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). La Chaumiere also illustrates the role of architect designed houses as symbols of wealth, status and taste for Melbourne's upper classes of the interwar period (TEH 8.4.1 - Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion).

## 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 below. External paint controls, internal alteration controls and tree controls are not recommended. The building should retain its current A2 grading.

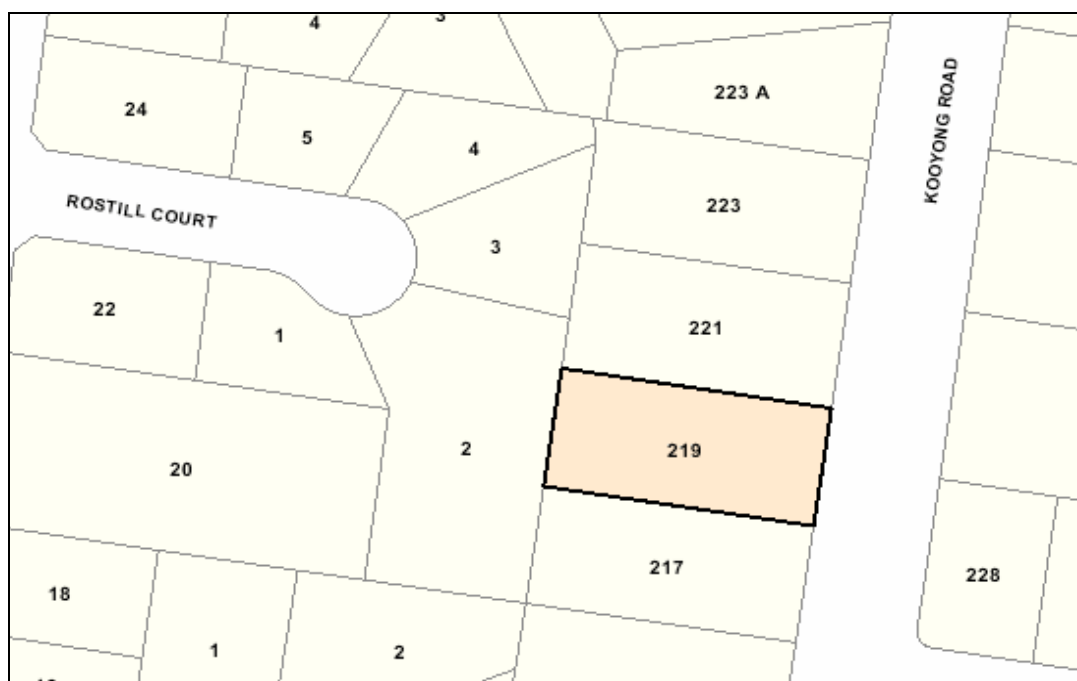


Figure 2 Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 219 Kooyong Road, Toorak.