

## 221 Kooyong Road, Toorak Heritage Citation Report



Figure 1 221 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.

After the collapse of the land boom, many mansions were put to other uses, subdivided or demolished. The suburb nonetheless retained its appeal as a wealthy enclave and some mansions were rebuilt in a more modern style.

<sup>1</sup> Paul de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees: The Upper Class in Victoria 1850-1880*, p.147.

The subdivision of the grand old estates of Toorak began to increase after World War I when the cost of maintaining the estates 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 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. Nevertheless, Toorak maintained its status as one of Australia's most prestigious suburbs.

### *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 that illustrates the development 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. Many of these nineteenth century houses 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 that make up present day Stonnington, particularly Toorak, Armadale and Kooyong. Walter and Richard Butler were popular with Toorak home builders. Robert Hamilton, Cedric Ballantyne, Marcus Martin and Rodney Alsop were among other 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' residential allotments were offered for sale.<sup>5</sup> The mansion was retained on a reduced curtilage with a one new allotment to its south fronting Heyington Place and four allotments to its rear fronting Kooyong Road [including present day 221 Kooyoong Road].

The 1933 Sands and McDougall directory records a 'house being built' at 221 Kooyong Road (then unnumbered).<sup>6</sup> The directory for the following years shows Kenneth B Bagley at 221 Kooyong Road. Bagley, a stock and sharebroker, is named as the owner on the first MMBW Plan of Drainage.<sup>7</sup> Builders W O Longmuir & Son are listed as the 'agent' on the same plan

<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 1933.

<sup>7</sup> MMBW Plan of Drainage No. 183921. South East Water.

(the agent was often the architect or builder). The architect or designer of the house has not been identified.

Kenneth Bagley died in his home at 221 Kooyong Road on 30 May, 1955.<sup>8</sup>

## **Description**

The house at 221 Kooyong Road is a substantial English Domestic Revival style building with clinker brick walls and a terracotta shingle roof. The house sits proudly above street level with a terraced front garden. It has a complex, picturesque façade with gabled and hipped roof forms punctuated by sturdy brick chimneys with paired stacks. A projecting gable end at the southern end of the facade curves gently downwards to form a 'cat slide' roof over the entry porch. A second gable end is articulated as a half-timbered first floor element sitting over a faceted ground floor bay window.

The house appears to be intact in so far as it presents to the street and the building footprint is essentially as shown on the first MMBW plan of 1932. The only apparent change has been the construction of a new garage in the front setback, hard up against the street boundary. The 1932 MMBW plan shows the original garage sited further back.

## **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.

A number of new economies in materials facilitated the rise of the English Domestic revival. The increasingly availability of seasoned hardwoods made possible the use of brick nogging and half-timbering, even in the most modest house. Added to this was the introduction of terracotta shingle tiles, manufactured by the Eureka tile company in their Ballarat kilns.

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

<sup>8</sup> *Argus*, 1 June 1955, p.21.

massing of gabled and hipped roofs and through the application of elements such as leadlight windows. Architects also looked to the vernacular of Normandy for inspiration.

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. So common was the use of this idiom within the nouveau riche enclaves of Toorak and South Yarra that the essentially British term 'Stockbroker Tudor' gained popular usage.

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 associations of the academically detailed Old English style 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 the 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). 221 Kooyong Road compares favourably with these examples in terms of its design quality, imposing scale and high level of intactness. It most closely resembles 3 Illawara Crescent as an archetypal half-timbered Old English design. 221 Kooyong Road does not display the same variety in materials and textures as 3 Illawara Crescent but it is a more vigorous, sculptural composition.

### **Thematic Context**

The house at 219 Kooyong 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
- 8.4.1 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?*

The house at 221 Kooyong Road, Toorak is a large double-storey Old English style residence. It was built in 1933 on land subdivided from the grounds of the late-nineteenth century 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 unpainted state of the clinker brick and terracotta elements.
- The high level of external intactness.
- The legibility of the original built form in views from the public realm.
- The domestic garden setting (but not the fabric of the garden itself).

Modern fabric, including the garage addition, is not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The house at 221 Kooyong Road, Toorak is of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it significant?*

The house is architecturally significant as a fine and highly intact example of a large interwar Old English style house (Criterion D). It is picturesquely composed using a range of forms and decorative motifs characteristic of the Old English mode. The designer of the house is not known but its quality and scale suggest the involvement of an accomplished architect.

The house 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). It also illustrates the role of houses generally, and Old English style houses in particular, 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 place should retain its current A2 grading.

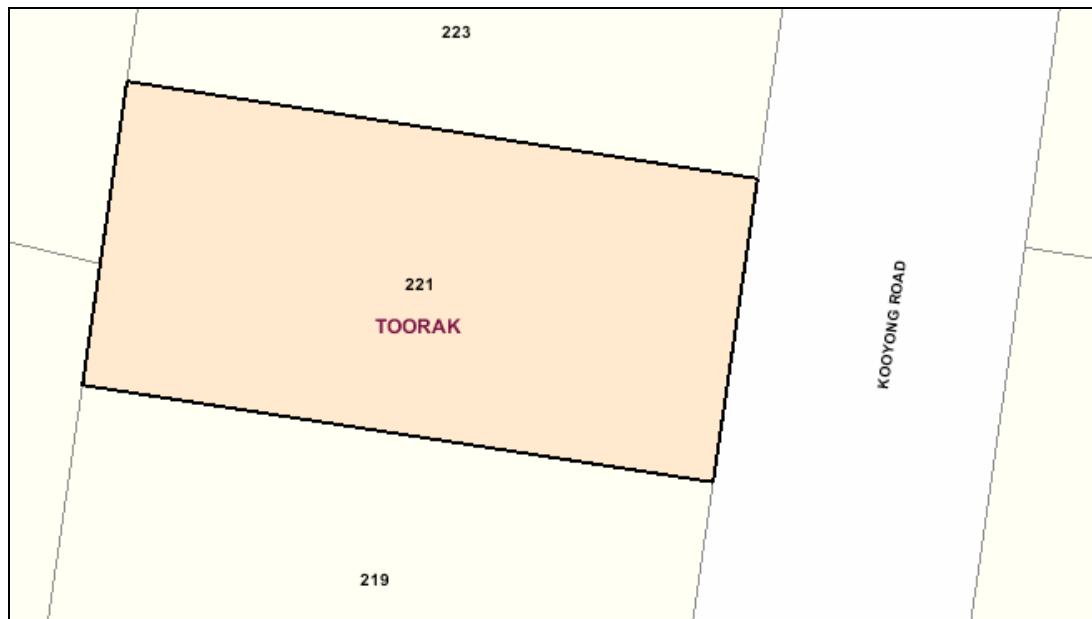


Figure 2 Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 221 Kooyong Road, Toorak.