

232 Kooyong Road, Toorak Heritage Citation Report



Figure 1 232 Kooyong Road, Toorak. (Source: www.realestate.com.au)

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'*.¹ 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 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

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

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. 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 newly prosperous merchants, businessmen and land speculators built mansions and grand villas that would stand as testament to their wealth, status and fashionable tastes. 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 within 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 which included the Georgian revival, Mediterranean/Spanish Mission and Old English modes.

Place History

Crown allotments 19 and 20, consisting of 131 acres of well-drained land bound by present day Kooyong Road to the west and Glenferrie Road to the east, the Yarra River to the north and Toorak Road to the south was purchased by John William Gosling in the first Crown land sales of June 1840.² In February 1851, Gosling sold his allotments to pastoralist Thomas Herbert Power. In 1860, Power's son Robert built his house 'Myrnong' on the east side of Kooyong Road (originally Boundary Road). Robert Power leased out Myrnong during the 1890s depression but he later returned and resided there until his death in 1914.

In 1923, the subdivision of the Myrnong Estate created twenty six 'magnificent' allotments on Myrnong Crescent, Turnball Avenue and the east side of Kooyong Road.³ A map of the estate shows the property at present day 232 Kooyong Road forming part of a larger allotment (Lot 1) extending east to Mynong Crescent.⁴

In November 1927, architect Cedric Ballantyne prepared plans for a house on Kooyong Road for G C Tallis esq (presumably George Tallis, son of prominent theatrical entrepreneur Sir George Tallis).⁵ Tallis senior was one of the co-owners of Hoyts, for whom Cedric Ballantyne designed a series of opulent picture palaces across Australia in the 1920s.

² Di Foster, *Melbourne's most fashionable suburb: a history of Toorak, east of Kooyong Road, 1840-1998*, Unpublished MA thesis by Di Foster, Monash University, 1999, p.5.

³ Stonnington Local History Catalogue Reg. No. MP 63.

⁴ Stonnington Local History Catalogue Reg. No. MP 63.

⁵ Stonnington Local History Catalogue Reg. No. MB4140.

The 1929 Sands and McDougall directory lists 'M A Tallis' as the occupant of an unnumbered house on the east side of Kooyong Road, north of Toorak Road. The directory for the following year lists 'G C Tallis' in the same location. By 1932, directories give the address of the Tallis house as 232 Kooyong Road. George Tallis resided at 232 Kooyong Road until c1933, after which the house was occupied by Herbert Setchell for little more than a year, and then Ivor Manton until 1937 when it was acquired by Dr H L Stokes.

In July 1937, noted architect Marcus Martin prepared plans for additions to Dr Stokes' house, creating a first floor bedroom and bathroom in the north-east corner.⁶ Some internal alterations and changes to a front window also occurred.

From c1951, 232 Kooyong Road was the home of Everard Baillieu, a member of one of Melbourne's most prominent family dynasties. In the early 1960s, the house was acquired by Freeman Strickland, a businessman who had served with the RAAF as fighter pilot in the Second World War.⁷ A building permit was issued in July 1963 for alterations to the house including a series of new round arched openings on the ground floor of the west elevation.⁸ The plans were prepared by architects McGlashan & Everist.

Cecil Ballantyne

The architect of 232 Kooyong Road was Cedric Heise Ballantyne (1876-1957). Ballantyne was born in Prahran and educated in Sydney and Melbourne. He was articled to Percy Oakden from 1892 to 1897 and served as his chief draftsman from 1897-1900 before entering into partnership with Oakden in 1901. Oakden and Ballantyne are credited with being the first Melbourne architects to show an interest in American bungalow idioms. Notably early bungalow designs by the firm include Skelbo, Ballantyne's own house in Toorak Road, Malvern (1908, demolished), and Illabrook, Lansell Road, Toorak (1909, demolished). Oakden and Ballantyne were also responsible for a number of commercial buildings in the city including Lister House at 61-65 Collins Street (1915, now demolished), the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency offices, and the Champions Buildings.

After Oakden retired in 1916 due to failing health, Ballantyne designed a garden suburb in Goulburn with Donald Esplin. In 1919, Henry Hare was accepted as a partner in Oakden Ballantyne & Hare (soon renamed Ballantyne & Hare). Projects from this phase of Ballantyne's career include the clubrooms for the Lawn Tennis Association of Victoria at Kooyong, and several private homes and flats in Toorak, Brighton and St Kilda Road, Melbourne.

In the late 1920s, after undertaking a study tour of the United States, Ballantyne designed a series of opulent picture palaces for Hoyts Theatres Ltd, for which he is perhaps best remembered. The finest of Ballantyne's theatres, the Regent in Collins Street (1929), had lavish interiors in an amalgam of Italian renaissance, Medieval and Spanish baroque styles.

Throughout most of his career, Ballantyne was architect for the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade Board, a position he inherited from Percy Oakden. Ballantyne practised as C H Ballantyne & Associates from 1927, creating the Athenaeum Club in Collins Street (1928-30). By 1933, he entered into partnership with G H Sneddon to form Ballantyne and Sneddon. Ballantyne was in semi-retirement from the early 1930s, working on various projects before closing his office in 1951 and permanently retiring to Merimbula.⁹

⁶ Stonnington History Centre, Malvern Building Plan No. 1001001400.

⁷ *The Age*, 24 February 1971, p.2.

⁸ Stonnington history Centre Malvern Building Plans.

⁹ Heritage Alliance, *City Road Industrial Precinct - Citations for Individual Heritage Places*, p.4.

Description

The house at 232 Kooyong Road is a substantial double-storey Spanish Mission revival style house, which is built on a sloping site so that it essentially presents as a single-storey building to the street. It has a hipped Cordova tiled roof with broad eaves and ornate chimneys with arched vents and Cordova tile capping. External walls are rendered with a rough trowelled finish. The picturesque asymmetrical Kooyong Road façade has projecting bay with a round arched opening to the front entry porch trimmed with 'ropework' moulding. The remainder of the façade is screen by a tall garden wall with a small arched timber gate providing access to a front courtyard. This aspect of the design is evocative of a walled Southern Californian mission compound.

The house remains largely intact externally apart a double car garage addition to the front, and the glazing-in of the original arcaded ground floor loggia and sleep out balcony at the north-west corner. The gate in the front garden wall was originally located near the garage but has been moved closer to the entry porch. The original plans show a gabled Cordova tiled awning over the entry porch, which no longer exists, or perhaps did not form part of the house as first built. The garage addition is reasonably prominent but it does not conceal key aspects of the façade. A second freestanding garage to the north of the house matches the size and location of the garage shown on the original Cedric Ballantyne plans.¹⁰ The Marcus Martin additions were fairly modest in scope and blend in well with the house as originally designed by Cedric Ballantyne. The 1960s McGlashan Everist alterations are also largely sympathetic to the original character of the house, and, in any event, are largely concealed from the street by the original garden wall.

Comparative Analysis

Interwar Mediterranean and Spanish Mission

During the early interwar years a strong Mediterranean cum Spanish and Spanish Mission movement developed alongside the contemporary revivalist neo-Georgian and Colonial idioms. This was to have a significant impact on not only the architecture of the 1920s but also the development of modernism in Melbourne in the 1930s. The Mediterranean and Spanish Mission idioms are closely related, although the former is often perceived to be a more sophisticated 'up market' version of the latter. The Mediterranean expression typically avoids the more obviously Mission features of the Spanish Mission in favour of a subtle blend of Georgian and Mediterranean elements.

The rise of the Mediterranean and Spanish revival idioms gained impetus from two major sources - the influence of American publications advertising their interest in the Mediterranean and the Californian Spanish Colonial Revival, and the example set by those Melbourne architects and educators who, either through academic publications on the vernacular idioms of the different Mediterranean regions or through travel itself, realised the suitability of such idioms for coping with the light and climates of the major Australian suburban centres. The underlying theme of all contemporary writings on the style is its potential as the basis for the creation of a national style, climatically congenial and appropriately modern. The popularity of Spanish Mission inspired architecture was also boosted by the example of Hollywood movie stars who favoured the style for their luxurious Beverly Hills mansions.

¹⁰ MMBW Plan No. 58. Dated 5/12/1947. State Library of Victoria.

By the mid-1920s the various Mediterranean/Spanish idioms had taken a vigorous hold on the domestic work of many of the more prominent architects in Melbourne. Beside the houses of Cedric Ballantyne, Irwin & Stevenson, Gawler & Drummond and Rodney Alsop one finds examples by Marcus Martin, Arthur Plaisted, Barlow & Hawkins and F L & R Klingender.

It is apparent from contemporary advertisements of speculative building companies that the mode had spread to domestic projects by the late 1920s in which architects were to have little or no direct involvement. Such examples saw Spanish detailing such as parged stucco and arched porches merged with what was basically Californian bungalow form. Other examples took a more thorough approach to the style, with multi-angular Cordova tiled hipped roofs, above a Spanish porch with baroque parapet and twisted columns. The walls of such buildings commonly had roughcast or rough trowelled render to provide a pattern or texture. Baroque parapets, twisted columns of precast concrete, cartouches, medallions and coats of arms were also common on the facade.

There are a large number of dwellings in the City of Stonnington derived from Mediterranean/Spanish Mission antecedents. Many lesser quality examples rely on a superficial application of architectural motifs. This cannot be said of the house at 232 Kooyong Road. It takes a thorough approach to the style, and displays a level of sophistication on par with examples in this idiom that have been found worthy of individual heritage overlays. They include Marcus Martin own residence of 1926 at 6 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak (HO264) and the Irwin and Stevenson designed house at 762 Orrong Road (HO90). Another large scale Mediterranean/Spanish style house exists at 719 Toorak Road, Toorak (HO344). Mediterranean influences in that design are tempered by some eclectic detailing and the design is, on the whole, not as well resolved as 232 Kooyong Road.

The architect of the house at 232 Kooyong Road, Cedric Ballantyne, may be better known as a theatre designer but he also left behind an important body of residential work – among which must be included 232 Kooyong Road. Ballantyne's proficiency in the Spanish Mission mode presumably arises from his first hand exposure to Southern Californian examples, no doubt encountered on his study tour of American cinemas. The use of a flamboyant Hollywood inspired Spanish Mission idiom for 232 Kooyong Road also seems particularly apt given that the house was built for the son of an eminent cinema entrepreneur.

Thematic Context

The house at 232 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 substantial double-storey Spanish Mission revival style house at 232 Kooyong Road, Toorak was designed by noted architect Cedric Ballantyne in 1927. It was built on land

created from a subdivision of the nineteenth century Myrnong mansion estate. Sympathetic alterations and additions were made in 1937 to designs by architect Marcus Martin.

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

- The external form, materials and detailing of the building as originally built and extended in 1937.
- The generally high level of integrity of the exterior to its 1937 state.
- The domestic garden setting (but not the fabric of the garden).

Modern fabric, including the garage addition, does not contribute to the significance of the place.

How is it significant?

The house at 232 Kooyong Road, Toorak of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The house is architecturally significant as sophisticated and generally intact example the interwar Spanish Mission revival style (Criterion D).

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 large 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 place should retain its current A2 grading.

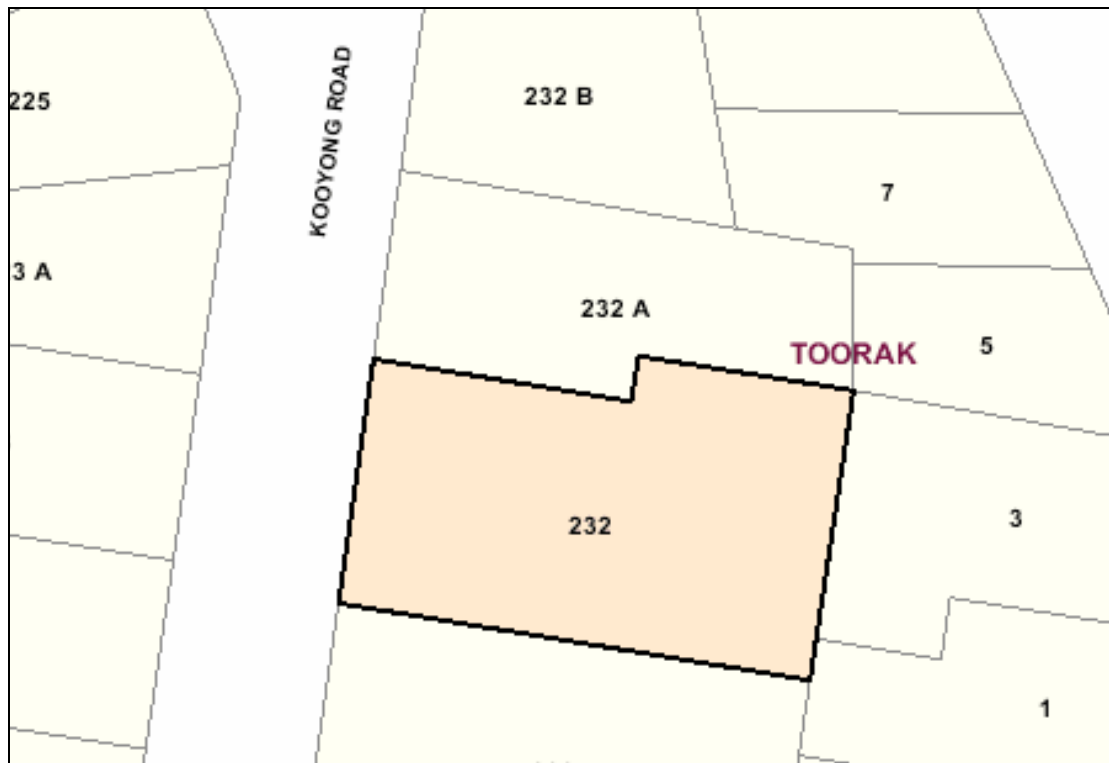


Figure 2 Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 232 Kooyong Road, Toorak.