

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Deodara Cedar Tree
Address: 39 Mathoura Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO746
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 28 March 2022
Year of Construction: c.1890s

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown



Photograph of the cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) tree (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of 39 Mathoura Road, Toorak.

Heritage Group: Parks, gardens and trees

Heritage Type: Tree

Significance Level: Local

Key Theme: Building suburbs

Key Sub-theme: Creating leafy suburbs

Recommendation: The mature cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) tree at 39 Mathoura Road is recommended for the Heritage Overlay as an individual place; tree controls are recommended.

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 deodara cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) tree at 39 Mathoura Road, Armadale, is significant. Specifically, the scale and sitting of the deodara cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) is of local significance. The residence, front boundary fence, landscaping and other elements of the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

The deodara cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) tree is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The deodara cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) tree is historically significant as a late 19th century planting which demonstrates how 19th century upper-middle class residential gardens solidified the City of Stonnington's reputation as a pleasant and leafy suburb, following the subdivision of large Victorian estates. The deodara cedar forms a tangible link to this period of development. (Criterion A)

The deodara cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) tree is aesthetically significant as a visually prominent and picturesque tree that forms a key residential landscape and streetscape element. This is primarily due to its impressive height and width, street front position, deep canopy over the property, and branches overhanging the sidewalk. The tree is an important element of the streets green character. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	The deodara cedar (<i>Cedrus deodara</i>) tree is historically significant as a late 19th century planting which demonstrates how 19th century upper-middle class residential gardens solidified the City of Stonnington's reputation as a pleasant and leafy suburb, following the subdivision of large Victorian estates. The deodara cedar forms a tangible link to this period of development.
B	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	This 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>	This 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>	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	The deodara cedar (<i>Cedrus deodara</i>) tree is aesthetically significant as a visually

		prominent and picturesque tree that forms a key residential landscape and streetscape element. This is primarily due to its impressive height and width, street front position, deep canopy over the property, and branches overhanging the sidewalk. The tree is an important element of the streets green character.
F	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This 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>	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.

Description

• Physical Analysis

The deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*), commonly known as a Himalayan cedar, is situated in the front setback of 39 Mathoura Road, Toorak. The large tree is a visual element on the landscape owing to its sheer height and width. The branches overhang the street and residence forming a deep canopy over the property.

The remainder of the site contains a single storey Victorian era residence in a form and style that is common to the municipality. The residence is set back from the street, separated by a front yard space.

The site is located at the junction with Edward Street. The south boundary of the property is bounded by the railway line. The main street front boundary is demarcated by a tall painted timber paling fence.

The Deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) tree is considered to be in good condition and with high integrity.

• Alterations and Additions

N/A

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 properties along Mathoura Road became available for residential development following the subdivision of the Brookville Estate in 1885, which created allotments fronting Mathoura Road, Brookeville Road, Cunningham Road and Canterbury Road. Precipitated by the 1880s land boom, this unprecedented period of prosperity, growth and development saw an intense pattern of subdivision and expansion across Toorak as people, sharing in the ideals of home ownership, sought new residential lands (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 41).

The residence at 39 Mathoura Road, then listed as 1 Mathoura Road, was erected shortly after this subdivision. Located adjacent to the railway line, this allotment fronting Mathoura Road contained a Victorian era Italianate style residence characterised by a projecting bay window, verandah and landscaped front lawn by 1898 (MMBW 1898). While the exact date of the extant mature deodara cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) has not been determined, its size strongly suggests that it was planted as part of the formal front lawn depicted in the 1898 MMBW map. As with the other private gardens established in newly erected middle-upper class residences in this area, the trees planted here would have contributed to the municipality's reputation as a pleasant, leafy suburb by the early 19th century. While many of these mature trees, typically introduced rather than native species, have since been removed due to subsequent interwar and contemporary housing subdivision and developments, a handful in the area have remained intact.

Comparative Analysis

The majority of mature plantings that have been afforded heritage protections within the City of Stonnington fall within the popular oak (*Quercus*) genus, making the deodara cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) tree unusual for the Heritage Overlay. As a result, the following comparative analysis predominantly draws from examples that are comparable in terms of size and aesthetic as opposed to species.

Comparative examples include:

- **Blairholme House (formerly Awbridge), 1034-1040 Malvern Road, Armadale (HO528).** The mature Camphor Laurel tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*) is directly comparable to the 39 Mathoura Road cedar as large planting that dates back to the late 19th century. It also survives from an earlier garden and is similarly defined by an impressive canopy size. It not only comprises a main landscape element along the front of the residence but contributes to the leafy streetscape character by virtue of its street front sitting.
- **Crumpford, 2 Stonnington Place (HO341).** This c.1920s mottle-leaf English oak (*Quercus robur*) forms part of a wider residential listing. It is directly comparable to the cedar at 39 Mathoura Road as a substantially sized private planting that comprises a valuable landscape element and streetscape feature. As with the mature planting at 39 Mathoura Road, the tree has a visually prominent wide spreading canopy that overhangs the front wall boundary. It is an interwar planting and therefore younger and smaller in size than the 39 Mathoura Road cedar.
- **Umina, 3 Lansell Road (HO143).** Umina comprises a large White Oak (*Quercus alba*), believed to have been planted in the early 20th century, that is also a mature private residential planting. It forms the centre piece of the landscaped interwar garden. While its sitting and associated garden layout is more formal than the 39 Mathoura Road cedar, it is nevertheless similar in terms of visual prominence, scale and integrity. As with the above comparative example, it is younger and smaller in size than the cedar at 39 Mathoura Road as an interwar era planting.

As the above comparative analysis has demonstrated, the cedar planting at 39 Mathoura Road is a visually prominent landscape element and streetscape feature that compares well to similar plantings that have been afforded heritage protection within the municipality. As it dates back to the late 19th century, it is one of the older private residential plantings in the municipality.

References

Context Pty Ltd. 2009. 'Stonnington Thematic Environmental History.' Unpublished report prepared for City of Stonnington. PDF file.

Foster, D. 1999. 'Melbourne's Most Fashionable Suburb: A History of Toorak, East of Kooyong Road 1840–1998.' Unpublished Masters diss., Monash University.

State Library of Victoria, Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, detail plan No. 981, dated 1898.

Stonnington City Council. 2019. Heritage Citation Report: Blairholme House (formerly Awbridge), 1034-1040 Malvern Road, Armadale, Hermes ID 200136. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2020. Heritage Citation Report: Umina, 3 Lansell Road, Toorak, Hermes ID 152824. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington Council. 2010. Heritage Citation Report: Crumpford, 2 Stonnington Place, Hermes ID 31517. Unpublished report. PDF file.

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



North-west facing view of the cedar from Mathoura Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing view of cedar from Mathoura Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing view of the cedar from Mathoura Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



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

Authors

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