

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Residence

Address: 13 St Georges Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO770

Citation status: Final

Date Updated: 22 March 2022

Designer: A. Mortimer McMillan

Year of Construction: c.1938

Builder: Unknown



Photograph of 13 St Georges Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of 13 St Georges Road.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings

Heritage Type: House

Key Theme: Building suburbs

Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most 'designed' suburbs – houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Remove from the curtilage of HO348 St Georges Court Precinct and include on the HO as an individually significant place in its own right; paint controls are recommended.

Controls:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input 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 13 St Georges Road, Toorak is significant. Specifically the built form, fenestration, materiality and colour of the Interwar International Style residence is locally significant, as well as the integrated garage and wall along St Georges Road. Later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

13 St Georges Road, Toorak aesthetic and representative significance to the City of Stonnington, and is associated with the noted architect A. Mortimer McMillan.

Why is it significant?

13 St Georges Road, Toorak is a representative example of Interwar International Style architecture which achieves its starkly modern, almost timeless architectural character through an emphasis on form and volume, and a rejection of decorative devices. Key characteristics that embody the European modernist derived International Style include the distinct rectilinear form punctuated by a curved projecting bay, flat parapet concealing the roof, repetitive horizontal and vertical design elements, smooth rendered walls painted off-white with no decorative detailing, and integrated garage. (Criterion D)

13 St Georges Road, Toorak is aesthetically significant as an intact and visually distinct International Style residence. Key architectural elements contributing to its aesthetic value include the well balanced and visually striking asymmetrical form, the distinct corner and vertical strip steel windows, the curved projecting bay, smooth render painted off-white, and matching garage and boundary wall. (Criterion E)

13 St Georges Road also has associate significance as an unusual International Style example of the work of architect A. Mortimer McMillan, who was more commonly known for this Interwar Old English designs. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

<i>A</i>	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<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>	13 St Georges Road, Toorak is a representative example of Interwar International Style architecture which achieves its starkly modern, almost timeless architectural character through an emphasis on form and volume, and a rejection of

		decorative devices. Key characteristics that embody the European modernist derived International Style include the distinct rectilinear form punctuated by a curved projecting bay, flat parapet concealing the roof, repetitive horizontal and vertical design elements, smooth rendered walls painted off-white with no decorative detailing, and integrated garage.
E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	13 St Georges Road, Toorak is aesthetically significant as an intact and visually distinct International Style residence. Key architectural elements contributing to its aesthetic value include the well balanced and visually striking asymmetrical form, the distinct corner and vertical strip steel windows, the curved projecting bay, smooth render painted off-white, and matching garage and boundary wall.
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>	13 St Georges Road also has associate significance as an unusual International Style example of the work of architect A. Mortimer McMillan, who was more commonly known for this Interwar Old English designs.

Description

• Physical Analysis

The residence at 13 St Georges Road, Toorak is a three-storey, rendered brick Interwar International Style structure. The double fronted residence presents a strong rectilinear form to the street, punctuated in the centre by a curved projecting bay articulating the ground and first floors. The residence has a flat roof which is concealed by a flat parapet that sits flush to the façade. The roof level is accessible from behind the circular bay.

The smooth wall render is painted off-white which is in keeping with the character of International Style residences. It was previously painted cream. The rectilinear form of the front façade is emphasised by horizontal rectangular corner windows and a vertical strip window centred on the semi-circular projection, all constructed of steel. The main entrance of the residence is located on the front set back from the street. There is a group of five recessed horizontal slit windows above the front entrance door. It is accessible from the enclosed front garden.

The other elevations of the residence maintain the character of the unembellished, rectilinear form observed on the front façade. The elevations are punctuated by square and rectangular steel windows that vary in width and placement. The west side of the residence consists of a smaller two-storey secondary wing which features a small west facing balcony and a hipped roof with white corrugated metal cladding with a single chimney. The west elevation opens up to a small private enclosed courtyard with a white rendered wall and single arched opening leading to the main backyard. The south elevation includes a narrow balcony on the first level which houses services.

The front façade includes a projecting garage and driveway. The driveway is laid in concrete from the street and with stone within the property boundary. The garage has a white roller door. The street front boundary is demarcated by a tall white rendered masonry wall which includes a black metal gate from the street footpath. The wall is broken along the driveway front to form a recessed open courtyard which includes a small corner stone edged garden bed and a secondary gate entrance beside the garage door.

The grounds of 13 St Georges Road are landscaped and consists of an interconnected front and back yard forming the north side of the property. The enclosed front yard consists mainly of lawn with plantings along the edge. There is a stone laid path leading to the main entrance. The smaller backyard includes stone paved sections around a smaller lawn.

13 St Georges Road remains in use as a residential property. The property is considered to be in good condition and with high integrity.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)
- Structure repainted from cream to white (after 2007).
- Services added to the south elevation.

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 at 13 St Georges Road, Toorak was constructed in 1938 following the demolition and subdivision of the former residence known as Kildrum. Kildrum was constructed in 1902 for William Drummond and his family. In 1917 the property was sold to Fred Knight and his family and, following the death of both Knight's, the residence was sold for demolition in 1938 (*The Argus* 1938, 6). The grounds of Kildrum were subdivided into ten allotments which were sold in auction the same year (*The Argus* 1938, 16).

The current residence at 13 St Georges Road Toorak was constructed on one of these allotments in c.1938 to designs prepared by architect A. Mortimer McMillan. McMillan ran a small practice and was primarily accomplished for his Interwar Old English designs, though he also designed a number of International Style (otherwise known as European Modern) buildings.

The residence was formerly listed as No. 7 and later as No. 11A St Georges Road. Ratebooks from 1939 indicate the first owners were engineers, Alan James Powell and Doris Powell. The MMBW connection details suggest that F.E White had owned the building one year earlier. The Sands & McDougall Directory shows that the property was occupied by the Powell family until 1974 (Sands & MacDougall 1940 – 1970). The residence was put up for auction and sold in September 1999 (*The Australian Jewish News* 1999, 7). The property remains in use as a private residence.

Comparative Analysis

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) publication 'Our Inter-war Houses' includes a succinct description of the Interwar International Style of the 1930s:

The International Style was based on the pristine, cubic modernism of Europeans such as Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius and had much common with the Moderne. The style is characterised by flat roofs, or low hipped roofs behind parapets, smooth rendered brick walls and steel frame windows, sometimes placed on corners...Stark and revolutionary in terms of form and aesthetic, it was less popular amongst speculative buyers than the revival styles. It is therefore generally only used by architects or builder who had a specific, modern minded client (Raworth 1991, 21).

The A. Mortimer McMillan designed building at 13 St Georges Road, Toorak comprises a strong rectilinear form and stark exterior surfaces that render it a noted example of the European modernism

derived International Style. McMillan was primarily accomplished for his Interwar Old English style designs, such as his noted English Domestic Revival style residences at 46 Albany Road, Toorak (1936-37), 20 Heyington Place, Toorak (1933), Mindai at 407 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (1934) and 8-10 Marne Street, South Yarra. However, he also worked the International Style and closely related Moderne idioms across a small number of known places. These include the now demolished Jazz Moderne Richardson house opposite St Catherine's in Heyington Place, as well as the extant International Style residence at 68 Hopetoun Road:

- **68 Hopetoun Road, Toorak (HO314).** Designed by McMillan and built in 1936, this residence is directly comparable to 13 St Georges Road in terms of architect and style. As with 13 St Georges Road, the building adopts a strong use of the International Style via the built form, minimal decorative detailing, concealed roof, smooth rendered walls and corner windows. Analogous Streamline Moderne features are also visible in the emphasis on the horizontal and use of long strip windows. It is arguably more impressive than 13 St Georges Road in terms of its dramatic corner sitting, massing and fenestration.

Other comparable dwellings within the municipality that are not designed by McMillan include:

- **Coles House, 55 Lansell Road, Toorak (HO70).** Designed by Harry Norris and constructed in 1941-42, this residence is comparable in terms of its experimentation with International Style geometric forms derived from European sources. Analogous features include its smooth rendered brick walls, parapet concealed roofs, and strong rectilinear form. As with curved projecting bay at 13 St Georges Road, Coles House also incorporates elements from this closely related idiom, albeit via its 'ocean liner' form and clear emphasis on the horizontal. Its form is less distinct than 13 Georges Road, and is thus considered a more conservative example of the style.
- **35 Hampden Road, Armadale (Contributory place within precinct HO136).** While this residence places a greater emphasis on the Streamline Moderne via its liberal use of rounder corners and curved balconies, it presents similarly to 13 St Georges Road in terms of its white painted smooth rendered walls, distinct curved projecting bay and incorporation of cubic forms derived from European sources.

Stark and cutting-edge for its time, the Interwar International Style is not overly common in the municipality, and existing examples of the idiom are largely dominated by Moderne style elements as opposed to the unadulterated cubic modernism of the International Style. The only example that can be directly compared is the McMillan designed house at 68 Hopetoun Road.

References

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Stonnington City Council. 2008. Heritage Citation Report: 68 Hopetoun Road, Toorak, Hermes ID 31342. Unpublished report. PDF file.

The Argus 1938. "Demolition Sale Kildrum Toorak", 28 July, 16.

The Argus 1938. "Toorak Manision will be demolished". 9 July, 6.

The Australian Jewish News 1999. "Life at the Top", 3 September, 7.

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 east view of the building from St Georges Road (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



View of façade from St Georges Road (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Detail of windows along northern elevation (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of windows along north and east elevations (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of the projecting garage along northern elevation (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



North east view from St Georges Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 1997. *Note: the building was included in precinct citation for HO348.*

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

Quality assurance review conducted by: Corinne Softley.