

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Toorak Primary School No. 3106

Address: Canterbury Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO8

Citation status: Final

Date Updated: 12 October 2021

Designer: Public Works Department

Year of Construction: 1888 and 1889

Builder: Mr. Young



Photograph of Toorak Primary School No. 3106
(source: Toorak Primary School)



Location map and extent of HO8.

Heritage Group: Education

Key Theme: Education

Heritage Type: School – State (public)

Key Sub-theme: Developing a system of state education

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as an individually significant place on the HO

Controls:	<input 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 red brick building at Toorak Primary School (otherwise known as Toorak School No. 3016) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale and detailing of the Queen Anne Revival school building is of local significance. The site landscaping and contemporary school buildings are not significant.

How is it significant?

Toorak School No. 3016 is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington, and clearly demonstrates the representative characteristics of late 19th century public school design.

Why is it significant?

Toorak School No. 3016 is historically significant as a school building that was erected during the rapid expansion of public school provision in the late 19th century, during a time when the population of inner eastern suburbs like Toorak continued to grow. The building forms a tangible link to this period of school and education history in this part of Melbourne, and its features reflect both prevailing pedagogical attitudes and the growing influence of the Queen Anne Style in school design following its popularisation by the London Schools Board in England. Moreover, its windows, altered in c.1916 to allow for better natural lighting, reflects changing approaches to school design by the 20th century, as well as the careful consideration given to schools in the more privileged and affluent suburb of Toorak. (Criterion A)

Toorak School No. 3016 has representative significance, demonstrating the key characteristics associated with late 19th century school design. More restrained in style, it demonstrates the shift away from the exuberant Gothic Revival style that had previously dominated school design, and thus illustrates the ways in which the Queen Anne style was being applied to school buildings towards the end of the 19th century. Its well-anchored form, materiality and careful use of ornamentation are also typical for a time whereby schools were viewed as a means of cultivating an ordered society. (Criterion D)

Toorak School No. 3016 is aesthetically significant as an intact example of English Queen Anne Revival architecture within the City of Stonnington. While it is restrained in comparison to domestic Queen Anne architecture, it is of overall high integrity and comprises all the features associated with the idiom. Its terracotta paneling and pedimented gables are of a high design quality, and both its well anchored form and use of red brick render it a discernible and distinct example of the style. The building presents well to the street and is a landmark building within the school site owing to its heritage integrity. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Toorak School No. 3016 is historically significant as a school building that was erected during the rapid expansion of public school provision in the late 19th century, during a time when the population of inner eastern suburbs like Toorak continued to grow. The building forms a tangible link to this
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		<p>period of school and education history in this part of Melbourne, and its features reflect both prevailing pedagogical attitudes and the growing influence of the Queen Anne Style in school design following its popularisation by the London Schools Board in England.</p> <p>Moreover, its windows, altered in c.1916 to allow for better natural lighting, reflects changing approaches to school design by the 20th century, as well as the careful consideration given to schools in the more privileged and affluent suburb of Toorak.</p>
<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>	<p>Toorak School No. 3016 has representative significance, demonstrating the key characteristics associated with late 19th century school design. More restrained in style, it demonstrates the shift away from the exuberant Gothic Revival style that had previously dominated school design, and thus illustrates the ways in which the Queen Anne style was being applied to school buildings towards the end of the 19th century. Its well-anchored form, materiality and careful use of ornamentation are also typical for a time whereby schools were viewed as a means of cultivating an ordered society.</p>
<i>E</i>	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	<p>Toorak School No. 3016 is aesthetically significant as an intact example of English Queen Anne Revival architecture within the City of Stonnington. While it is restrained in comparison to domestic Queen Anne architecture, it is of overall high integrity and comprises all the features associated with the idiom. Its terracotta paneling and pedimented gables are of a high design quality, and both its well anchored form and use of red brick render it a discernible and distinct example of the style. The building presents well to the</p>

		street and is a landmark building within the school site owing to its heritage integrity.
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

Toorak Primary School consists of a large two storey brick building and several contemporary structures located within the school grounds. The original school building consists of open face brown polychrome brick structure laid in a Flemish bond. The design of the structure is influenced by the Queen Anne Revival style. The front façade facing Canterbury Road features a stuccoed name and date plaque with expressed lettering painted red, reading 'ERECTED A.D. 1890' and 'TOORAK SCHOOL NO.3016'. The building has a robust and well anchored built form with an asymmetrical pitched and open gable roof laid in random brown and red terracotta tile. The elevations are broken up by slightly projecting open gable bays. The polychrome brown brickwork is segmented by red brick laid string courses and imitation quoining at the corners. The roof includes five tall open face chimneys with a stuccoed corbel and chimney pots. There are a number of newer round steel chimney vents along the roof ridges.

The front facade facing Canterbury Road consists of five bays that are presented asymmetrically. The smallest bay to the left on the south side of the elevation is a single storey secondary entrance bay with a lean-to hipped roof. The main entrance is raised up three steps and has a double door with sidelights and fanlight. The door and window joinery on the structure consist of timber painted a light cream colour. The next bay features a bank of three single hung six pane sash windows and three pane fanlight with a concrete sill and lintel matching the colour of the elevation's timber elements. The ground level windows and doors are protected by galvanised chain link security screens. The upper level features a group of three centred windows. The three single hung six pane sash windows and arched fanlight are recessed on the elevation and framed by an expressed brick bay. The windows sit on a stuccoed black sill and expressed shaped open face brick skirt. The windows have a red brick flat gauged arch. The bay features a rough cast frieze under the timber fascia and gutter. The corresponding fourth bay presents a similar elevation to the second bay.

The next bay located at the centre of the east elevation is a projecting open gable bay. The ground level features a centred group of three widows in a similar style to the previous bay. However instead of a

concrete lintel, the tops of the windows are emphasised with a stylised flat gauged arch, fine string course moulding and recessed detailing in a square form all laid in a red brick. The upper level consists of the date plaque. The brick face is interrupted above the date plaque by a red shingle skirt course and the rest of the wall above is rendered in a roughcast stucco. The upper-level windows present in a similar style to the previous bay except the expressed brickwork around the windows are finished in a smooth stucco. The upper level is separated from the open gable by a well-defined shingle skirt that continues upwards to emphasise the form of the pediment. The roughcast wall of the gable features a highly detailed decorative centred red key motif with an expressed arched cap.

The last bay on the north side of the east elevation is a projecting gable bay and which houses the original main entrance to the building. The tall arched door is accessible up three steps. There are two windows with a concrete sill and detailed flat gauged arch next to the arched door. The upper level features the stucco name plate and a group of three windows. Unlike the other projecting gable bay, this bay is only stuccoed at the gable pediment level. The gable features a similar centred key motif but without the arched cap. A prominent feature on the elevation is the octagonal roof turret with a rounded roof clad metal sheeting painted red. The turret is capped with a tall flagpole.

The south elevation of the structure consists of three open gable bays. The feature banks of four windows with concrete sills and lintels. The upper level of the left two bays has a centred louvred vent and two tall brick chimneys expressed on the elevation surface on the left side of the pitch. The rightmost gable lacks the chimney detail but has a half-timbered stucco pedimented gable.

The west elevation of the structure is largely unadorned. It overlooks the sports field and playing area which is accessible via a long ramp leading up to a wide entrance situated in the centre. . The north elevation features a single pedimented stuccoed gable with similar detailing as the east and south elevations. There is an extensive single storey contemporary school building built up to and joining the brick structure on the ground level of the north elevation.

The school grounds are bounded by Canterbury Road to the east, Brookville Road to the north and Fairbairn Road to the west. The south boundary of the school is shared with the Brookville Gardens and Playground Park. The original brick building is located at the southeast corner of the school grounds. It opens directly onto the road and footpath and is not demarcated by a perimeter fence. The school grounds are highly modified with contemporary landscape alterations and additional buildings. However, the original brick building remains largely intact. New fabric on the building including the roof, gutters and downpipes is sympathetic with the design and colour scheme of the structure. The most intrusive additions include the security screens at ground level, a set of red steel stairs on the south elevation and the ramp extension on the north elevation. With the exception of the ramp, most of the contemporary fabric can be easily removed from the structure if allowed to do so. Therefore, the building would be considered to be of good condition with high integrity overall.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)

- Windows altered (c.1916).
- Main roof reclad in brown and red terracotta tiles.
- Metal flashing added to roof.
- New downpipes and gutters painted a sympathetic red colour.
- Galvanised chain link security screens added to ground level openings.

- Circular steel chimney vents added to the main roof.
- Air conditioning units added to the west elevation wall.
- Ramp on the west elevation is likely a later addition.
- Contemporary school building built up to and joining the original brick structure on the ground level of the north 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

Toorak Primary School, then known as Toorak State School and subsequently Toorak Central School, was erected in Canterbury Road in 1889 as an outcome of the late 19th century expansion of public education provision. Designed and carried out by the officers of the Public Works Department and built by contractor Mr Young, the school was officially opened in June 1890 (The Prahan Telegraph 1890, 3; The Prahan Telegraph 1890, 2). As revealed in the excerpt below, initial descriptions of the building made note of its discernible Queen Anne style and distinct use of red brick cornices:

Built in the Queen Anne style of architecture, with red brick cornices, rough cast cement and white painted window sashes, it has an extremely pleasing and quaint appearance. In the interior the finish is much superior to that of the older school buildings, the accommodation being designed for 400 scholars... the infant room was nicely fitted with varnished decks, higher than ordinary, with rests for the back. This plan was adopted in several of the rooms, which were mostly fitted up with Tobin's ventilators... (The Prahan Telegraph 1890, 2)

Evoking notions of western modernity, Dr Erson of the Malvern Board saw the building as a fine embodiment of a public school that was integral to the colony's 'progress' and civil 'advancement' (The Prahan Telegraph 1890, 2). Indeed, schools during the late 19th century were seen as a means of cultivating an ordered society, and this was reflected in the building design itself, which typically featured plain brick walls, high ceilings and rooms filled with mass-produced desks (Lawn 2016, 20). This close relationship between building design and purpose points to the influence of the London Schools Board, who had set a precedent for the use of simple brick style and English craft style in school buildings (Gargano 2013). A turn away from the Gothic style school architecture that dominated 1850s and 1860s England, E. R. Robson, the architect appointed by the Board, saw the Queen Anne style as appropriately embodying the civic and secular mission of the new, state controlled board schools (Gargano 2013).

Although its form was praised, a small number of features were critiqued for failing to generate an appropriate learning environment. This mainly pertained to the low level of natural light afforded by the windows, an issue that was becoming of particular concern across state schools towards the end of the 19th century (The Prahan Telegraph 1890, 2). Consequently, by the first decades of the 20th century, the Education Department embarked on a program to improve the lighting of its schools by altering inadequate windows. Records reveal that the school was re-modelled in 1916, and it is likely that the windows were also altered during this period (Prahan Chronicle 1916, 2). Such changes ultimately reflect new approaches to school design, and the growing recognition that light levels had a bearing on students' capacity to learn (Willis 2016, 1-2).

The building underwent further renovations and repairs in 1985, and it was ultimately renamed Toorak Primary School towards the end of the 20th century.

Comparative Analysis

As a late 19th century Queen Anne style school building derived from the design principles espoused by the London School Board, Toorak Primary School No. 3106 reflects the close relationship between school architecture and changing approaches to education. It was erected at a time of rapid public education expansion, and is thus directly comparable to several schools that were also established during this period. As there is only one analogous example in the municipality, the following comparative analysis also draws from examples outside of the City of Stonnington.

Comparative examples include:

- **Prahan State Primary School, No. 2855 (45–69 High Street, Prahan) (H052).** Built in 1887 and officially opened in 1888, the former Prahan Primary School is a unique example of a Late Gothic Urban design that incorporates Queen Anne and Flemish idioms. It is historically and architecturally comparable to Toorak Primary School as a Queen Anne style derived school building erected by the Public Works Department during the expansion of educational services towards the end of the 19th century. Comparable Queen Anne elements include the use of red brick, projecting gable bays, chimney pots and pedimented gables. Given its incorporation of the Late Gothic, it is a more ornate and less orthodox example of the Queen Anne idiom when compared to Toorak Primary School.
- **Richmond North Primary School, No. 2798 (138–160 Buckingham Street, Richmond) (Yarra City H0251/VHR H1635).** Built in 1888 by the Education Department's head architect H. R. Bastow, Richmond North Primary School is an English Queen Anne Revival design that is directly comparable

to Toorak Primary School in terms of style, form, type and history. Analogous architectural features of particular note include its red brick, pitched roofs, projecting pedimented gable bays, terracotta paneling and arched entrance opening. As with Toorak Primary School, it reflects the influence of the London School Board on school design in Victoria. It is more intact than Toorak Primary School however, having retained its original windows.

- **Elsternwick Primary School, No. 2879 (44 Murphy Street, Brighton) (Bayside City, HO256).** Erected in 1889 by the Public Works Department to designs prepared by the Education Department's head architect H. R. Bastow, the original Elsternwick Primary School building comprises a single-storey brick structure with both Gothic and Queen Anne style influences. Although its form is different to Toorak Primary School by virtue of being single-storey, it is parallel in terms of its arched entrance opening, material, distinct gable roof and multi-pane sash windows. It is distinct from Toorak Primary School in terms of its incorporation of the Gothic style, and is thus important in its ability to demonstrate the Public Works Department gradual transition from the Gothic to the Queen Anne style by the late 1880s. Compared to Toorak Primary School, it is a more restrained example of the idiom.

Overall, Toorak Primary School is an important example of a Queen Anne Style school building established in the late 19th century. It is a rare instance within the municipality, and as with the above examples, it embodies the history of public schooling development as well as the changing approaches to school design and education. It embodies all the elements typically associated with the Queen Anne style, and is thus a fine representation of the idiom.

References

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Willis, J. 2016. 'Architecture and the School in the Twentieth20th Century.' In *Designing Schools: Space, Place and Pedagogy*, edited by Kate Darian-Smith and Julie Willis, 1-8. New York: Routledge.

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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

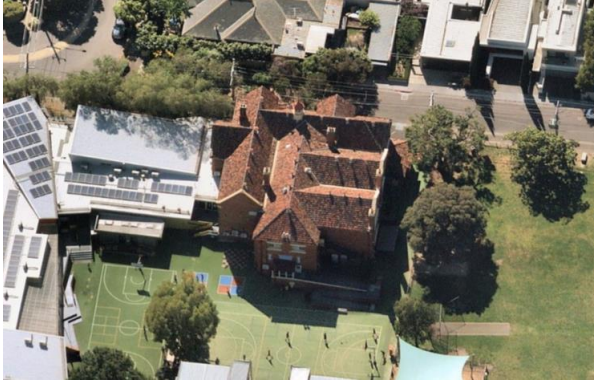
Note: fieldwork was not undertaken for this building by Extent Heritage Pty Ltd due to photograph restrictions around school sites.



Overview of the school building (source: Google Streetview, 2009).



Oblique aerial view of eastern elevation (source: NearMap, 2021).



Oblique aerial view of western elevation (source: NearMap, 2021).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Nigel Lewis and Associates, 1983.

Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021.