

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Avalon

Address: 14 Power Avenue, Toorak

HO Reference: HO332

Citation status: Final

Date Updated: 17 March 2022

Designer: Walter R. Butler (Butler & Bradshaw)

Year of Construction: 1914-15

Builder: John Richards



Photograph of Avalon (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO332.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings

Heritage Type: House

Key Theme: Buildings suburbs

Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most 'designed' suburbs – architects and their houses

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 property at 14 Power Street, Toorak (otherwise known as Avalon) is significant. The form, scale and detailing of the substantial 1914-15 Arts and Crafts house is of local significance, along with the 1925 garage and 1920s extensions undertaken under the original ownership with the Butler family. The landscaping, swimming pool and front boundary wall are not significant.

How is it significant?

Avalon is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington, and is associated with the well-reputed Australian architect, Walter Richmond Butler and his family.

Why is it significant?

Avalon is of historical importance in demonstrating the development of early 20th century mansions and houses within the suburb of Toorak. The 1925 garage is also historically important as demonstrating early 20th century parking facilities, during a time when the motor car was gaining popularity amongst the wealthy. (Criterion A)

Avalon is aesthetically significant as an intact and visually distinct example of an early 20th century Arts and Crafts house. Key characteristics that contribute towards its aesthetic value include the rectilinear form with porch treatment, low-pitched gable roof with slate, deep eaves with exposed timber trusses, the use of render and timber shingling as cladding, leadlight windows and unadorned roughcast chimneys. To the south of the original building is a double storey extension, built in a sympathetic form to the main house by the Butler family and joined by a walkway. (Criterion E)

Avalon has associative significance as a house designed by the well-reputed Australian architect Walter Richmond Butler, for his nephew Richard Butler. The garage and additions were added by the family in the 1920s and the house was owned by the Butler family for over sixty years. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Avalon is of historical importance in demonstrating the development of early 20th century mansions and houses within the suburb of Toorak. The 1925 garage is also historically important as demonstrating early 20th century parking facilities, during a time when the motor car was gaining popularity amongst the wealthy.
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.

<i>D</i>	<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.
<i>E</i>	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	Avalon is aesthetically significant as an intact and visually distinct example of an early 20th century Arts and Crafts house. Key characteristics that contribute towards its aesthetic value include the rectilinear form with porch treatment, low-pitched gable roof with slate, deep eaves with exposed timber trusses, the use of render and timber shingling as cladding, leadlight windows and unadorned roughcast chimneys. To the south of the original building is a double storey extension, built in a sympathetic form to the main house by the Butler family and joined by a walkway.
<i>F</i>	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>G</i>	<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.
<i>H</i>	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	Avalon has associative significance as a house designed by the well-reputed Australian architect Walter Richmond Butler, for his nephew Richard Butler. The garage and additions were added by the family in the 1920s and the house was owned by the Butler family for over sixty years.

Description

• Physical Analysis

Avalon is a large two-storey grey roughcast structure built in the Federation Arts and Crafts style. The house consists of a main, larger wing oriented north, and a smaller wing oriented east west and located south west of the main structure. The two wings have a simple slate tile hipped roof with wide eaves supported by exaggerated by wide timber eave brackets. Three unadorned roughcast chimneys extend from the main roof.

The northern elevation of the main wing, facing Power Street, is clad in timber shingles painted white. The façade presents grouped double hung timber sash windows. The fixed pane of the sash windows consists of eight panes and is a repeated feature throughout the building. The ground level windows are protected by a projecting shingle clad eave. The second level features a polygonal balcony supported by projecting joists. The first and second level eaves are further supported by angled timber brackets.

The west elevation facing Power Avenue features a projecting bay forming an enclosed main entry and balcony on the upper level. The main entrance is a natural timber frame door with sidelights and arched fanlight. The flat balcony balustrade is flush to the bay and roughcast with perforated square detailing which is a distinct to the façade. An oriel window clad in timber shingles and supported by four brackets projects from the façade beside the entrance bay.

The smaller second wing has two levels and is sympathetic in form, finish and detailing to the main structure. A timber pergola supported by five round concrete columns extend from the north elevation of the smaller wing. The two wings are connected by a narrow extension that is clad in what appears to be a copper roof.

The grounds of Avalon are landscaped with a lawn area on the north west area of the property. There are several mature trees located along the north boundary. The property is accessible from two entrances along Power Street and the corner of Power Street and Avenue. A curved walkway leads to the main house. There is a swimming pool located in front of the pergola. The street front boundary is demarcated by a grey roughcast blockwork wall. The wall has a rendered dark grey flat cap and is stepped along Power Avenue. Piers with ball lights frame the grey timber paling gate entrances along the wall. A driveway is located on Power Avenue and leads to the garage located at the south eastern corner of the property behind the secondary wing.

Avalon is located on the corner of Power Street and Power Avenue. It is located close to the main roads Glenferrie Road and Toorak Road as well as the Kooyong Railway Station. Avalon is currently used as a residential property. It is considered in good condition. The original structure has been extended several times under the original ownership and such extensions are sympathetic in form, finish and detailing to the design of the original property. The grounds have been modified to include a swimming pool, driveway and garage. The property is considered to be of moderate integrity overall.

• Alterations and Additions

- Several extensions added under the original ownership with the Butler family.
- Garage added (1925).
- Copper roof added between the wings.
- Driveway along the south boundary.

- Solar panels added to the garage roof.
- Timber pergola added.
- Mature trees removed from north and west boundary wall area (2017).

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

Avalon at 14 Power Avenue (previously known as 12 Power Avenue) was erected in 1914-15 for Richard Harry Butler to designs by the architectural firm Butler & Bradshaw. A partnership formed by prominent Arts and Craft style architect Walter Butler and Ernest R. Bradshaw, the duo worked together from 1907 to 1916. Key designs by the firm include the Queensland Building at 84 William Street, Melbourne (1913) and the residence Marathon at 12 Marathon Drive, Mount Eliza (1914), while notable works by Walter Butler include the Mission to Seamen building at 717 Flinders Street, Docklands (1916), ballroom and garden extensions at Edzell Mansion at 76 St Georges Road, Toorak (1917) and the dwelling Thanos (formerly known as Wyalla) at 13A Monaro Road, Kooyong (1907).

Built by contractor John Richards, Avalon was designed for Walter Butler's nephew Richard Harry Butler. An accountant and partner in the accountancy firm of Brentall, Mewton and Butler, Richard Harry Butler, more commonly known as Harry Butler, resided at the dwelling with his wife Jane (née Haines) and their three children Lorraine, John and David from 1915 (MMBW 1915; The Argus 1947, 5). An examination of Walter Butler's architectural plans indicate that the ground floor originally comprised a bedroom, drawing room, dining room, kitchen, lobby, scullery, cellar, laundry, smoking room and three projecting bay windows (Butler 1915). Early photographs of Avalon also reveal a landscaped garden and

a large lawn demarcated by high gridded timber fencing (Stonnington History Centre Archives c. 1916). By 1925, additions were made to the south of the dwelling by the Butler practice (Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken 1992, 309). These included a garage as well as the conversion of the lawn into a tennis court (W. & R. Butler 1925). Documented social events at the dwelling during the initial decades of the Butler occupancy include dances hosted by Richard Harry and Jane's daughter Lorraine in 1935 and 1936, as well as a dog show organised by Jane to raise funds for the services of a Red Cross almoner (The Herald 1936, 16; The Herald 1937, 13; The Argus 1935, 10).

Avalon remained under the ownership of Richard Harry Butler until his sudden death in 1947. The dwelling was subsequently transferred to a relative within the family and by 1950, Mrs E. J. Butler is listed as the owner (Sands & McDougall 1950). Although the identity of Mrs E. J. Butler has not been verified, records indicate that Richard Harry Butler's wife Jane continued to reside at Avalon following his death. The dwelling remained in the Butler family for the next few decades, and in the 1980s, the south west corner of Avalon's first floor was converted into flats comprising a new bedroom and bathroom (A. Richard Butler & Associates Architects c.1983). As illustrated in the architectural plan drawn up by a firm associated with Walter Butler's nephew Richard, these alterations included the demolition of several existing walls and the removal of three windows and a fireplace across the ground and first floors (A. Richard Butler & Associates Architects c.1983).

The dwelling was ultimately put up for auction by the Butlers in the late 1980s. This transfer of ownership has subjected Avalon to several contemporary alterations and renovations, including changes to the windows, modifications to the entry and the addition of a new high masonry fence.

Comparative Analysis

Avalon is a unique example of Butler's work, observing a greater focus on rectilinear symmetry than much of his Arts and Crafts Old English Revival work. However, there are two other comparable examples within the municipality of Stonnington which inform Avalon:

- **12-14 Moorakyne Avenue, Malvern (HO182 Moorakyne/Stonnington Precinct).** The house at 12-14 Moorakyne Avenue, Malvern, is an individually significant building within a broader heritage precinct. Designed by Butler in 1933, the house shares many stylistic characteristics comparable to Avalon including the strong rectilinear form, two-storey height, roof pitch, use of slate for the roof and deep eaves with exposed timber beams.
- **1 Linlithgow Road, Toorak (HO507).** The house at 1 Linlithgow was constructed in 1919 by Walter and Richard Butler, the same Richard Butler who resided originally at Avalon. The house is comparable to Avalon as an example of Butler's Arts and Crafts design, with Georgian Revival elements. The asymmetry and use of rectilinear form is comparable to Avalon, as is the asymmetry projecting bay which can be likened to the portico treatment seen at Avalon. The deep eaves, use of render, slate roofing and gabled roof pitch are all characteristics comparable to Avalon.

References

- A. Richard Butler & Associates. (c. 1983). *Residence: Power Avenue Toorak: For Mrs. R. H. Butler, Conversion to Flats* [architectural plan]. Stonnington History Centre collection.
- Dance At "Avalon". (1936, August 14). *The Herald*, 13.
- Dance Tonight At "Avalon". (1937, July 23). *The Herald*, 13.
- Dog Show at Toorak. (1935, June 15). *The Argus*, 10.
- Foster, D. 1999. 'Melbourne's Most Fashionable Suburb: A History of Toorak, East of Kooyong Road 1840–1998.' Unpublished Masters diss., Monash University.
- Goad, P., Willis, J. 2012. *The Encyclopedia of Australian architecture*. Cambridge University Press: Port Melbourne.
- Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken Pty Ltd. 1992. 'City of Malvern Heritage Study.' Unpublished report prepared for City of Malvern.
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- State Library of Victoria, Sands & McDougall Street Directories of Victoria, 1920-1974 ed.
- Stonnington City Council. 2020. Heritage Citation Report: Residence, 1 Linlithgow Road, TOORAK, Hermes ID 197693. Unpublished report. PDF file.
- Stonnington City Council. 2021. Heritage Citation Report: 12-14 Hamilton Road, MALVERN, 12-14 Hamilton Road, MALVERN, Hermes ID 153587. Unpublished report. PDF file.
- Stonnington City Council. 2021. Heritage Citation Report: Avalon Residence, 14 Power Avenue, TOORAK, Hermes ID 31445. Unpublished report. PDF file.
- Tibbits, G. (1979). *Butler, Walter Richmond (1864-1949)*. <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/butler-walter-richmond-5451>.
- Unknown. c. 1916. 'Avalon', Power Avenue Toorak. Photograph. Image collection, ref no. MP7267. Stonnington History Centre collection.
- Unknown. c. 1916. 'Avalon', Power Avenue Toorak. Photograph. Image collection, ref no. MP7265. Stonnington History Centre collection.
- Unknown. c. 1916. Garden at 'Avalon'. Photograph. Image collection, ref no. MP7266. Stonnington History Centre collection.
- Unknown. c. 1916. Tennis being played on the court at 'Avalon'. Photograph. Image collection, ref no. MP7283. Stonnington History Centre collection.
- W. & R. Butler. (1925). *Additions to residence at Power Avenue, Malvern for R. H. Butler, Esq.* [architectural plan]. Stonnington History Centre collection.

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



View from the intersection (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Front façade, looking southeast (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Later southern extension, looking south east (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Northern elevation, looking south (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Balcony on northern elevation looking south west (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of eaves and brackets (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Early photograph of Avalon fronting Power Avenue. c. 1916 (source: Unknown. c. 1916. 'Avalon', Power Avenue Toorak. Photograph. Image collection, ref no. MP7265. Stonnington History Centre collection).



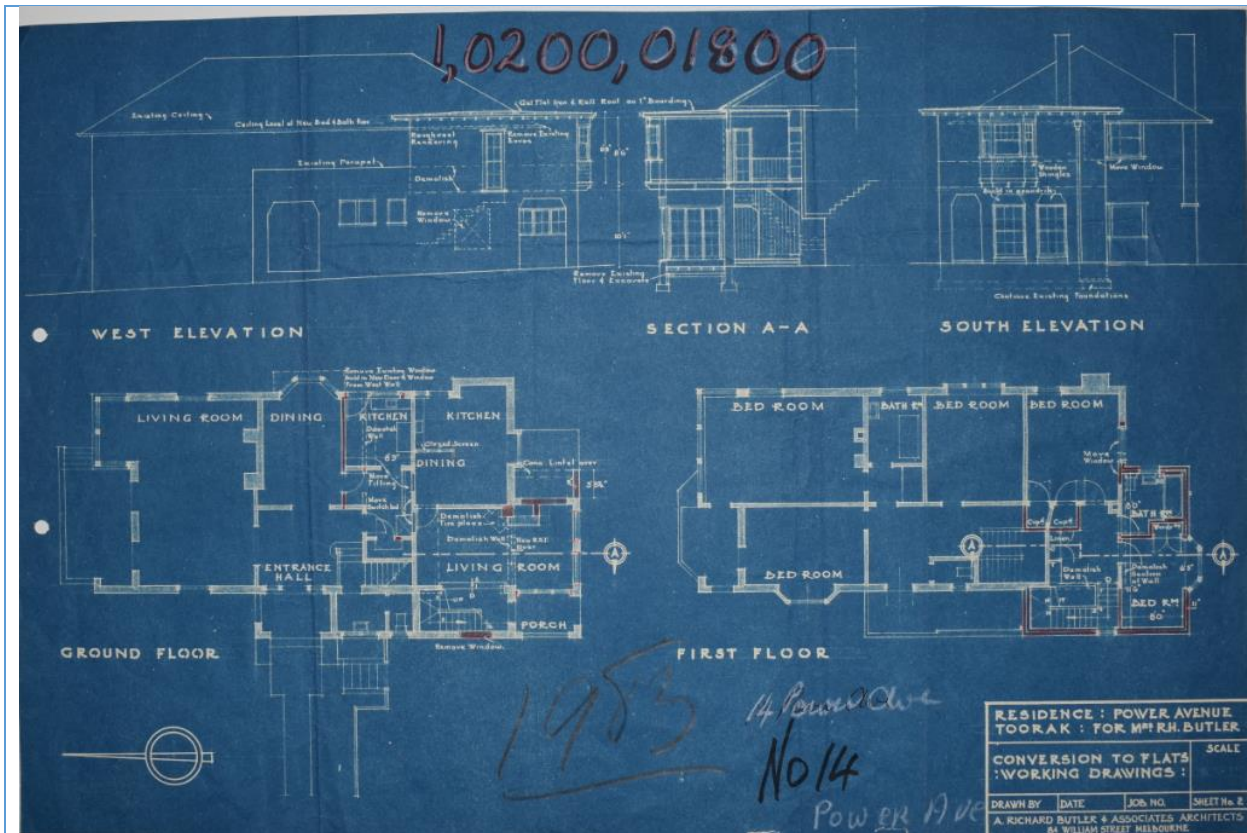
Photograph of tennis court at Avalon following alterations in 1925. Note: the source is dated c1916 but this seems to be incorrect (source: Unknown. c. 1916. Tennis being played on the court at 'Avalon'. Photograph. Image collection, ref no. MP7283. Stonnington History Centre collection).



Early photograph of landscaped garden at Avalon. c.1916 (source: Unknown. c. 1916. Garden at 'Avalon'. Photograph. Image collection, ref no. MP7266. Stonnington History Centre collection).



Early photograph of Avalon fronting Power Avenue. c. 1916 (source: Unknown. c. 1916. 'Avalon', Power Avenue Toorak. Photograph. Image collection, ref no. MP7267. Stonnington History Centre collection).



Plans for partial flat conversion at Avalon in the 1980s (source: A. Richard Butler & Associates. (c. 1983). *Residence: Power Avenue Toorak: For Mrs. R. H. Butler, Conversion to Flats* [architectural plan]. Stonnington History Centre collection.

Authors

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