HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name: BURNHAM
Address: 14 GRANGE ROAD TOORAK
Significance Level: A2
Place Type: Flat
Citation Date: 2013

Recommended Heritage Protection: VHR - HI - PS Yes
Designer / Architect: Hamilton, RB
Architectural Style: Interwar Period (c.1919-c.1940)
Old English

History and Historical Context

Thematic context
This place is associated with the following themes identified by the Stonnington Thematic Environmental History (2006; Update 1, 2009):

8. Building suburbs
8.6 Developing higher density living; 8.6.2 Developing apartment living; 8.6.3 Architect-designed apartments

Developing apartment living
The building of apartments or residential flats began in Melbourne in the first decades of the twentieth century and gathered momentum after World War I. The war affected patterns of living and social life within Australia and the
population boom that followed led to a shortage of housing. Terrace houses were becoming increasingly unpopular, few houses had been built during the war and the building of flats was seen as one solution to the problem.

A particular impact of WWI upon what is now the City of Stonnington was the difficulty of retaining domestic staff, which meant that many of the older mansions in suburbs such as Toorak and Malvern could no longer be maintained as workable houses (Sawyer, 1982:33). Financial considerations were also an imperative. Wilde (1999:62) cites an article from the 18 October 1919 edition of the *Prahran Telegraph*:

*It was held to be no longer necessary to labour with a house and all the domestic drudgery that entailed when by borrowing Continental ideas, people who could afford it could live in flats. Land has become so valuable the villa of the Victorian days, in a crowded thoroughfare, no longer shows anything like an adequate return of interest on the land's present capital value. It is more profitable to pull the house erected thereon down, and to erect flats.*

In the early twentieth century the municipalities of Prahran and Malvern therefore possessed many sites ripe for flat development. Generally speaking, they were near to public transport and shops, in an area of 'character or atmosphere' and preferably enjoying views. Public transport, in particular, was viewed as crucial to the success of a development and this caused flat developers to pay particular attention to the 'well established boulevards of St Kilda Road and Dandenong Road' (Sawyer, 1982:36)

*The conquering flat - 1925-45*

By the late 1920s there was a boom in flat building as the last of the remaining big estates began to succumb to what Wilde (1999:40) describes as 'the combined pressures of probate, depression and profit'. For example, after the subdivision of the Trawalla Estate in Toorak four blocks of flats were built in the period from 1931 to 1934.

The extent of flat development during the inter-War period is demonstrated by the population growth in Toorak Ward of Prahran Council; between 1920 and 1940 the population of Prahran municipality increased by 12.5% and over three-quarters of that was in Toorak where the population nearly doubled. By 1934-35 there were 570 flats in Toorak ward, as many as in South Yarra and Windsor Wards combined. This growth continued until the late 1930s and by the outbreak of WWII there were almost as many flats in Toorak ward as houses (Wilde, 1999:64-68).

However, the boom in flat building eventually led to resident protests about flats destroying the character of South Yarra and Toorak and so in 1933 Prahran Council passed a by-law that placed controls over site coverage and building height, and construction standards in certain areas. Some new housing estates also introduced covenants prohibiting flat development.

While this slowed the rate of flat development - according to one article the number of approvals dropped by half in a single year - it did not stop it and approvals continued to increase year by year in the late 1930s (*The Argus*, 14 November 1934).

The most lasting impact was in the design of flats, which from 1933 until the post-war era were limited to two storeys in height and set within generous gardens. The effect of this change can be seen in the contrast in scale between the 'Trawalla Court' (built in 1931) rising to four storeys and covering most of its site and nearby 'Grange Lynne' (1933), two storeys with garden setbacks to both frontages.

*Mansion flats and maisonettes*

The design and layout of flats varied markedly due to factors such as changing social attitudes, location, overseas influences and the attitudes of local councils to flat development (Sawyer, 1982:60). Residential flats in Toorak and South Yarra were considered to be superior to those in St Kilda or South Melbourne flats and a defining characteristic of flat development in the study area is the large number of what (Sawyer, 1982:60) describes as 'Luxury' flats.
'Luxury' or 'Mansion' flats (Often referred to by name - e.g., 'Fawkner Mansions', 'Tsoshaan Mansions') were among the earliest flat types in the study area and became fashionable for the wealthy as a way of living in a prestigious suburb without the bother of a large house and garden or large numbers of servants. The first 'Luxury' flats were large single-level flats in buildings designed to emulate large houses or mansions and a distinguishing feature of was usually the inclusion of a 'maid's' or 'staff' room, which remained a feature at least until World War II. For example, the four flats in 'Hillingdon' (1918) each contained a small maid's room and they were still included in 'Denby Dale' designed by Robert Hamilton almost 20 years later.

By the 1930s the maisonette - that is, a large flat over two levels - was emerging as the 'Luxury' flat of choice for many well-heeled residents. The attraction of maisonettes was due to them being perceived 'complete houses in miniature'. An article in the *Australian Home Beautiful* noted:

*That, however, does not mean that the rooms are small or pokily arranged. On the contrary, the 'maisonette' is remarkable for its feeling of spacious seclusion - achieved by the elimination of superfluous walls and passageways.*

(*Australian Home Beautiful*, 2 October 1933)

While 'Luxury' flats were designed by a number of architects in the study area, Robert B. Hamilton was the most prolific designer of flats for the wealthy residents of Toorak and South Yarra. Throughout the 1930s Hamilton would design at least 11 flat developments in Toorak and South Yarra. Most of them, such as 'Denby Dale' mentioned above, fit within the category of 'Luxury' flats.

**Architect-designed apartments**

The strong culture of patronage between architects and their often wealthy clients, as described in section 8.4 of the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, also applied to the design and construction of residential flats. Employing a leading architect to design the building was also a strategy to counter criticism that flats were destroying the character of suburbs such as Toorak and South Yarra.

Just as houses in the study area dominated the pages of contemporary journals of the inter-war period (e.g. *Australian Home Beautiful*) so too did residential flats and no other area in Melbourne has so many notable flats and residential buildings designed by prominent architects in this period. According to Lewis (1992:1) the resultant architecture constitutes 'one of the high points in domestic design in Victoria'.

Architects of flats included, for example, Walter Butler, who designed the 'Studley' flats (1918, 1922) and Walter Burley Griffin, whose 'Langi' flats were built on the corner of Toorak and Lansell roads in 1926 (Tibbits, 1983:38). Other leading domestic architects who were prominent in the study area during the inter-war period include Robert B. Hamilton, Arthur W. Plaisted, J.H. Esmond Dorney and Marcus Martin. Hamilton, in particular, is regarded as the pre-eminent designer of Old English style apartments in Melbourne (Cuffley, 2007).

**Place history**

The conversion by 1927 of the cable tram along Toorak Road to electric traction stimulated development along the route. This is demonstrated by the four flat developments constructed in the Trawalla Estate between 1931 and 1934, as noted above. One of these was 'Burnham', containing four single level flats, which was erected at the north corner of Grange Road and Lascelles Avenue in 1932-3 to a design by Robert B. Hamilton. Each flat was of two bedrooms, with separate dining and lounge rooms, and a small 'maid's room'. A brick outbuilding containing four garages and laundry was situated in the rear yard (AHB, MMBW).

This development and 'Haddon Hall' at 405 Toorak Road (which comprised maisonettes rather than flats) were Hamilton's first two residential flat developments. They were featured in an *Australian Home Beautiful* article, one of a series by Nora Cooper on flat living in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Cooper described the flats with their 'pleasing diversity of chimneys and gables' as resembling English country manor houses and demonstrated what 'interesting and
attractive results’ Hamilton had achieved in designing flats to suit Australian conditions - for Cooper this included a love of privacy and of open air, whilst ensuring an 'architecturally pleasing building with maximum provision for accommodation and convenience' (AHB). The article demonstrated how architecturally and aesthetically pleasing flats such as these were helping to change public opinion and prejudice toward flats, which according to Cooper was associated with a 'nomadic, makeshift existence, in which both space and air and privacy were sacrificed to obtain various debatable advantages' (AHB).

The other flat developments in the Trawalla Estate are 'Grange Lynne' (1933, Edward F. Billson) directly opposite 'Burnham' at No.8 Grange Road, 'Trawalla Court' (1931, designed by Lewis Levy) at 24 Lascelles Avenue, and 'Amberley' at 12-14 Trawalla Avenue (1933, Lewis Levy).

Robert B. Hamilton

Robert B. Hamilton was the pre-eminent designer of flats, particularly in his trademark Old English style, in Toorak and South Yarra in the 1930s. After studying and working overseas, including a position as assistant to the Government architect in Bombay, India he returned to Australia and formed a partnership with Rodney Alsop in 1921 before establishing his own practice in 1925. According to Cuffley (2007:114) while Hamilton possessed a deep affection for romantic styles in architecture he had a 'practical and inventive talent and was capable of working in a range of styles and to any scale'.

Nonetheless Hamilton is remembered best for his Old English style flats and commercial buildings constructed in Toorak and South Yarra. Cuffley (2007:115-6) cites a 1934 article in Art in Australia:

To those who seek the particular type of English domestic architecture that suggests comfort and romance ... Mr Robert Hamilton's outlook should appeal. Every detail is a matter of consideration, carefully selected and hand-made whenever possible.

Cuffley concludes that 'whether it was a small holiday bungalow, a country cottage, a Toorak mansion or a block of flats, Robert Bell Hamilton approached each work with equal concern for its integrity and with a great deal of artistry' (Cuffley, 2007:117).

This is one of at least 11 residential flats in Toorak and South Yarra designed by Hamilton during the inter-war period (please refer to comparative analysis).

Sources

Australian Home Beautiful (AHB) 2 October 1933, pp. 8-12 'Home life in the modern flat. A study of its development in Australia', by Nora Cooper
Context PL & Lesley Alves, Stonnington Thematic Environmental History (2006; Update 1, 2009)
Cuffley, Peter, Australian house of the twenties and thirties, 2007
Lewis, Nigel & Aitken, Richard, City of Malvern Heritage Study. Appendix I: Architects of Malvern, 1992
Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Drainage Plan No.190820, dated 14/9/1932
Sands & McDougall Directories (SM), 1933-38
Sawyer, Terry, 'Residential Flats in Melbourne. The development of a building type to 1950', 1982
The Argus, 26 December 1935, p.9
Tibbits, George, Prahran Conservation Study: History of Prahran, 1983
Wilde, Sally, The history of Prahran Volume II, 1925-1990, 1999

Description

Physical Description
Burnham flats, 14 Grange Road Road, Toorak, is a two-storey brick building on the corner of Grange Road and Lascelles Avenue. It is L-shaped in plan, creating a sheltered courtyard at the rear. On the Grange Road side, it is set back behind a modest front garden, bound by a low clinker brick fence. These walls are curved to meet the main entry on this elevation, which is reached via two short flights of clinker brick steps.

The building is expressed as two wings, one along each streetfront, with separate high hipped roofs, covered in brown Marseille tiles. There are many tall brick chimneys with wide corbelled tops. The walls are a combination of clinker bricks, scattered with distorted overburnt bricks to provide texture, and clinker brick fachwerk (half-timbering with brick nogging). The nogging is in a variety of picturesque patterns, seen in the slightly projecting gables marking the two entrances (one on each elevation). Balcony balustrades are comprised of vertical board and batten, in a matte-brown finish. The openings above and below the balconies are framed with curved timber brackets reminiscent of Medieval crucks. This cruck motif is also seen to the windows above the Lascelles Avenue entrance, and the brick wall of the opening below are slightly corbelled to echo this form.

Windows are mainly six-over-six double-hung sashes, with Medieval leadlight windows incorporating glass bullseyes to the staircases and above the two entries.

Beside the central entrance to the Lascelles Avenue elevation is a low entrance through an arch of timber 'crucks'. It has an arched cast-iron gate with a range of wrought-iron ornament (hearts, zigzags). At the centre is a small sheet-metal silhouette of an 18th-century shepherdess. Beside the entrance is rustic metal lettering reading 'BURNHAM' on the brick wall. The entrance on Grange Road is similar, with an arched metal gate with the silhouette of a woman and girl in hoopskirts and bonnets. There is a rustic metal lantern above this door.

One first-floor balcony openings has been infilled with windows, otherwise no alterations were noted.

In the rear yard, entered off Lascelles Avenue, is an original block of four garages. They have clinker-brick walls and parapeted fronts, which step down with the slope of the land. Their timber doors have been replaced with modern roller doors.

Comparative Analysis

Luxury flats by Robert Hamilton
While 'Luxury' flats in Stonnington were designed by a number of architects Robert B. Hamilton appears to have been the pre-eminent designer of luxury flats in Toorak and South Yarra - Sawyer (1982:68) cites a 1938 article in the RVIA Journal where Hamilton pointed out that there was demand in the South Yarra district for flats 'which provide accommodation for more affluent residents'. Throughout the 1930s Hamilton would design at least 11 flat developments in Toorak and South Yarra. Most of them fit within the category of luxury flats. Three of his known flat developments - Park Manor (built c.1935), Stonehaven (c.1933-35) and Denby Dale (c.1938) are currently listed in the HO and four more were assessed by the Residential Flats 2012 study.

Hamilton's 'Luxury' flats fall into two broad sub-types, one being small blocks of two maisonettes or four flats designed to appear as one large house and the other being one or more blocks arranged in the manner of a Tudor or Medieval village. Hamilton's earliest flat developments fall into the first type - the first appears to have been Haddon Hall, constructed by early 1932 at the corner of Toorak Road and Williams Road, which comprises four two storey maisonettes. Later in the same year he designed Burnham, comprising four single level flats (each incorporating a small maid's room), which was built by late 1932 at the corner of Grange Road and Lascelles Avenue. Both were in the Old English style and each resembled a 'pleasant country mansion'.
These two residential flat developments essentially provide the prototypes for the luxury flats that Hamilton would incorporate into his developments during the 1930s.

*Old English Revival style*

Old English Revival, which included Tudor and Medieval influences, reflected Australia’s allegiances to England during the interwar period. The style is characterised by the use of red and clinker bricks, brick nogging and half-timbering, tiled roofs with steeply pitched gables, and highly modelled brick chimneys. Massing and details are picturesquely asymmetrical, as were window types, ranging from arches, standard casements and oriel, with multiple panes (often with diamond leadlights). It was popular both for single-family homes and flats.

Leading Melbourne architects designed residential buildings in this style particularly during the 1930s, and it became common in well-heeled suburbs such as Toorak and South Yarra. By the late 1920s, architect Robert Hamilton was recognised as the foremost practitioner in this style, designing large and impeccably detailed houses and luxury flats. Other architects strongly associated with Old English/Tudor Revival in the 1930s include Philip Hudson, Eric Beedham, Arthur Plaisted and Cedric Ballantyne.

Flats in this style on the Stonnington Heritage Overlay include:

- Denby Dale, 422 Glenferrie Road, Kooyong (Individually significant in HO181). Designed by Hamilton, 1937-8.
- Stonehaven, 692 Orrong Road, Toorak (Individually significant in HO143). Designed by Hamilton, c.1933 & 1935.
- Kings Lynn, 280 Williams Road, Toorak (Individually significant in HO155). Designed by P.J. O’Connor, c.1933.
- Park Manor, 284 Williams Road, Toorak (Individually significant in HO155). Attributed to Hamilton, c.1935.

Burnham is an example of Old English luxury flats. It compares favourably with Stonehaven, also by Hamilton. While smaller than Stonehaven, which is a massive S-shaped building designed to look like a collection of independent buildings, both have expert massing and similar high-quality Old English details, such as fachwerk balconies with interesting nogging patterns, timber cruck-like brackets to openings, and highly textured clinker brickwork walls.

It can also be compared to Haddon Hall, 405 Toorak Road, Toorak, by Hamilton of 1933 (also recommended for the Heritage Overlay by this study). Burnham and Haddon Hall are very similar, with many identical features including the L-shaped plan, high hipped roof with corbelled chimneys, use of clinker and distorted overburnt bricks, arched metal doorway gates with metal silhouette pictures on them, similar leadlight windows, and the use of patterned fachwerk. While a fine building, Burnham’s details are somewhat more modest, with the use of vertical boarding for a balcony instead of fachwerk (though the balcony has not been enclosed), simpler chimney shafts, and a tighter site without the grand entrance drive, and with a low boundary brick fence. Burnham, however, retains its original garages in the rear yard.

**Statement of Significance**

**What is significant?**

Burnham, 14 Grange Road, Toorak as designed by Robert B. Hamilton and constructed in 1932-3, is significant. The significant attributes are the Old English style form, materials and detailing of the flats and garages, front and side brick fences. The high level of external intactness and wide range of decorative and quirky detailing that is typical of Hamilton including uniquely designed screen doors with inset panels, the bracket with name plate and light fittings etc. are integral to the significance of the place.
Later alterations and additions are not significant.

**How is it significant?**
Burnham is of local historic, architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

**Why is it significant?**
Historically, it is significant as one of the first examples of the Old English Luxury flat type designed by Robert Hamilton to resemble a large single-family home, an approach that he would use in many of his subsequent developments. Hamilton was one of the most important and influential designers of Luxury flats in Toorak and South Yarra and this development of four large single-level flats together with 'Haddon Hall', which is of a similar design, but comprising maisonettes demonstrate the two approaches used by Hamilton over the next decade either in separate buildings or in combination. (Criteria A, D & H)

Architecturally and aesthetically, Burnham is a highly accomplished and externally intact example of interwar flats designed in the Old English style. Details such as the fine brickwork, massive corbelled chimneys, and entrance gates with silhouette panels and lanterns, and brick fence all contribute to its significance. Also for its association with Robert Hamilton, Victoria's foremost practitioner of the inter-war Old English style. (Criteria E, F & H)

**Recommendations 2013**

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**Other 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 with HO schedule controls as listed above.

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This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.