INTRODUCTION

This chapter specifically considers the residential buildings associated with the development of suburbs and examines how wealth and social status were reflected in the design and siting of houses, creating neighbourhoods often ‘cheek by jowl’, but often with vastly different characters. As we have seen in Chapter 3, from the earliest time of settlement, the more desirable higher ground was claimed by upper and middle class residents, leaving the less-desirable (and often flood-prone) lower reaches to workers’ housing and industry.

Of major significance to the history of the study area is the social and physical development of some of Australia’s most prestigious suburbs, particularly Toorak. The growth of middle-class suburbs such as Malvern is discussed in the context of middle-class suburban aspirations, economic booms and recessions, and the development of public transport routes that influenced their creation. The working-class residential areas reflect the original topography and their relationship with the local industries, and include the Housing Commission flats built in the mid-twentieth century.

This chapter also considers the way the physical fabric of the residential properties represents the lifestyles of the wealthy and middle class, and explores the strong tradition of patronage of leading architects by wealthy residents. The list of architects whose work is represented in the study area reads like a ‘who’s who’ of Australian architectural practice. Some architects also lived within the study area in their own creations.

Some very significant changes have affected the study area through the twentieth century – firstly, the trend to shared accommodation and flat building from quite early in the century, and more recently the gentrification of much of the old working-class housing stock.

Finally, the chapter outlines the creation of the pleasant private and public landscapes, particularly the public gardens and tree-lined boulevards that have been a notable feature of the study area since the late nineteenth century and contribute so much to the character and identity of Stonnington today.

This chapter incorporates the following themes:

Australian Heritage Criteria (AHC)
Building settlements, towns and cities; Planning urban settlements; Developing Australia’s cultural life.
HISTORY

8.1 Creating Australia’s most prestigious suburbs

8.1.1 Self-made men and landed gentry

As de Serville has pointed out, Toorak ‘was the only suburb to acquire and keep a name which was synonymous in the public mind with wealth, extravagance and display’. Toorak’s ‘climb to fashionable pre-eminence’ was due to its pleasing topographical features and the presence of the Governor’s residence from 1854 (de Serville, 1991:147). As we have seen, Toorak and the higher parts of South Yarra were settled by pastoralists, army officers, merchants and people in the higher ranks of the professions, particularly law. According to de Serville, they tended to be self-made men, rather than gentlemen of the English upper class, and Victorian colonial society was very conscious of this class distinction. Early colonial ‘society’ consisted of English landed gentry and high government officials, but few of them actually lived in the study area.

The old distinctions between traditional society and the newly rich were challenged during the gold rushes, when fortunes were made by those supplying the needs of the goldfields. He built Beaulieu in the late 1850s, and sold it to the founder of the Buckley and Nunn store in Bourke Street, Melbourne (now David Jones). The property, in Heyington Place, is now part of St Catherine’s School (Malone, 2004:15–16). A later, extremely successful retailer to establish his home in Toorak was Sir Sidney Myer. In 1920 Myer and his wife Merlyn (nee Baillieu) bought and renovated Fyans Lodge, formerly the home of a Western District squatting family, renaming it Cranlana (Malone, 2004:44).

The inhabitants of Toorak were mostly the families of professional men or those with private means. Many wealthy graziers (invariably called squatters until recently) also lived there, preferring to live an urban life rather than on their country properties for which they employed managers. However, wealth had no bearing on social acceptability. Family background, relationships and profession were the measuring stick. Quite a few wealthy and successful business men lived in Toorak but those in retail trade were never admitted into the magic circle (Paxton, 1983:18).
Another Toorak resident who was accepted into colonial ‘society’ was barrister Edward Eyre Williams, who became a Supreme Court judge in 1852. Williams built a single-storey house in South Yarra, which he and his wife Jessie called Como. This house and property is interesting in that it shows the layers of history, representing the status and aspirations of a series of owners, and thus helps to explain the rise to pre-eminence of Toorak in particular, but also South Yarra, which is Como’s address.

8.1.2 Seats of the mighty – mansion estates in the nineteenth century

As we have seen, the ‘wealth, extravagance and display’ described by de Serville was often manifested in the construction of a suitably impressive mansion, usually set within expansive grounds. These ‘seats of the mighty’ were not all in Toorak, with Stonington and Moorakyne part of a group lining the east side of Glenferrie Road, Malvern, while others were in Kooyong.

Sometimes, as in the case of Como, houses were enlarged by successive owners. The 1852 Como constructed by the Williams family was grand by the standards of its time, but it was vastly enlarged and changed by later owners. Como’s third owner John Brown, was a self-made man, having started colonial life as a builder, grown rich through land speculation, and was a successful wine merchant at the time he purchased the property in 1853. Brown and his wife Helen, were not accepted into society, but spared no expense in developing the house and gardens so that they could entertain lavishly. Unfortunately Brown’s financial situation deteriorated, and Como was sold in 1864. The new owner was wealthy pastoralist Charles Henry Armatage, whose father had established a squatting dynasty in the Western District. Charles’ mother was the daughter of a convict, and his wife, Caroline, was the daughter of English gentry, albeit impoverished. In only one generation the gentry had cancelled out the convict, and the Armatages were accepted into society. Como was again enlarged and enhanced to accommodate the social lifestyle and reflect the wealth of its owners. After Charles died in 1876, Caroline maintained Como, and the lifestyle of a wealthy squatting family, even through the depression of the 1890s. Como remained as the city home of the Armatage family, although most of the land was sold off for housing subdivision, until in 1959 the remaining daughters of Charles and Caroline virtually gave the property to the National Trust (Fox 1996).

As Victoria’s boom progressed, the mansions became more elaborate, one of the best examples being Illawarra, built by land-boomer, Charles Henry James in 1891. Illawarra and several other boom-time mansions in the study area have already been mentioned in Chapter 3.

After the collapse of the boom, many mansions were put to other uses, subdivided or demolished. Sometimes, as in the case of the Miller family’s Glyn (Kooyong Road) or the Gurner family’s Glyndebourne, mansions were rebuilt in a more modern style (Foster, 1999:65).

8.1.3 The end of an era – mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century

From quite early on large estates were beginning to be subdivided, leaving the mansion surrounded by an acre or two of garden. After the last Governor departed from Toorak House in 1875, the Toorak Estate was subdivided by George Lansell, creating Lansell and St George’s roads. This is shown in plans lxxiii (page 126). A number of mansions and large villas including Homeden, The Towers (both demolished) and Umina were built in the vicinity. However, the subdivision of the grand old estates in Toorak began to increase after the turn of the century and particularly after World War I when rising labour costs made the cost of servants and other people to maintain the estates prohibitive.
This process of subdivision created a unique pattern of development, which can still be understood and interpreted today. Although the new subdivisions imposed new road patterns within the original grids, in many cases the new estates and streets bore the names of the old properties, while the original house was retained within its reduced garden. Often the old driveway to the mansion would become a new street – Merriwee Crescent, for example, is the former carriage drive for Moonga (Foster, 1999:66). Some mansions, such as Trawalla (Wilde, 1993:68) and Glyndebourne, survived with reduced land, surrounded by the newer houses, which are often situated on large residential blocks that take advantage of the topography. Glyndebourne Heights Estate ‘touching Toorak Road’, offered 16 villa sites in 1915 (agent’s advertisement, in Foster, 1999, after p.69). Often the mansion survived the first subdivision round, only to succumb to demolition in a later subdivision, as did Moonga. Similar patterns were repeated throughout Toorak and other parts of the study area during the twentieth century, and can now be seen in the variety of housing styles representing the different eras in which the estates were subdivided.

The area centred on Albany Road demonstrates this process (see Foster, 1999 Chapters 5 and 6). In another part of Toorak a small estate at St George’s Court replaced the large Federation villa, Kildrum, which in turn had been built on two blocks of Lansell’s subdivision of the Toorak Estate. Kildrum had a life of only 38 years, succumbing to the pressure of development just before World War II. The group of houses – most designed by leading architects – subsequently built in St George’s Court demonstrates the continued development of Toorak as an affluent suburb up to the war. One prominent resident of the Court was Harold Winthrop Clapp, Chairman of the Victorian Railways Commissioners from 1920 to 1939, who lived at No. 11 (Raworth, 1997). Clapp was the son of Francis Boardman Clapp, who was instrumental in developing Melbourne’s cable tram system (Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 2, p.398).

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the process of replacing Toorak’s big old houses with big modern houses continued. Increasingly, though, old houses were being replaced by apartment blocks. This will be discussed later. Nevertheless, Toorak has maintained its status as one of Australia’s most prestigious suburbs.
These plans show the sequence of subdivision of the land originally occupied by Toorak House from 1855 to 1895.

1855 Kearney Plan.
[As reproduced in Context 1991]

c.1875 Subdivision plan.
[SLHC Reg. No. 11072]

1895 MMBW record plan showing the development of large villas and mansions in the subdivision. [As reproduced in Context 1991]
8.2 Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal

The subdivision of large estates was repeated in other parts of the study area from the nineteenth century. At Hawksburn, for example, Martha Cassell, who was widowed in 1853, sold off most of her estate from the 1850–70s, beginning with land at the south-west corner of Toorak Road and Williams Road. Here, the new owners, mostly middle-class businessmen or people from pastoral families, built large houses on relatively small acreages – *Vinterfield*, *Coolullah*, *Quamby*. Mrs Cassell eventually sold all her estate, apart from the house and large garden, taking advantage of the new Oakleigh railway and nearby Hawksburn Station, opened in 1879 (Malone, 2000:36–41). Hawksburn Road shows the resulting pattern of settlement, with the larger two-storey middle-class villas on the higher land near the Hawksburn Station, and near Toorak Road, and smaller single-fronted workers’ houses in the lower section in between. Similar middle-class enclaves can be found throughout the former City of Prahran, however, it was in the neighbouring City of Malvern that the development of the ‘suburban ideal’ was to find its fullest expression.
8.2.1 Mansion estates and the high ground - Middle class estates in Prahran

8.2.2 ‘Country in the city’ – suburban development in Malvern before 1920

Davison (1978:145) describes the Victorian cult of the home in the fresh air and tranquillity of the suburbs as a haven from the noise and dirt of the city – the ideal of *rus in urbe* (country in the city) which, through Victoria's prosperity and the growth of the public transport system, became possible for many working people. For most suburbanites this home was a single-storey detached house surrounded by its own garden. On a visit to Australia in the 1880s, Twopeny (1883:37) noted that this was the almost universal preference of Australians. During the boom of the 1880s many people found their ideal piece of *rus in urbe* in the Malvern municipality. Here streets of Victorian villas rapidly began to replace market gardens, especially in the vicinity of the railway lines.

One of Mathew Davies’ boom-era subdivisions, the *Gascoigne Estate*, offered ‘character and stability rivalling Toorak and South Yarra’, but only 27 houses were built there before the boom collapsed, and only three houses – all of timber – were built during the depression that followed. In the 1890s a number of timber houses were built in Malvern as an economy measure, but some residents complained that wooden houses would degenerate into slums. Concern about this development led to a slum abolition movement known as the ‘Minimum Allotment, Anti-Slum and Housing Crusade’, which held a conference in 1912 at the Melbourne Town Hall that was attended by the Mayor of Malvern. Subsequently, around 1912, Malvern Council began to declare brick areas – areas where timber houses were not permitted. By 1916 the council had also fixed the minimum area for a housing allotment at 6000 square feet, with minimum frontages of fifty feet (Strahan, 1989:66–7, 69). The regulations were clearly meant to prevent the building of small workers’ cottages – Malvern was clearly intended to be a middle-class suburb. However, this did not prevent small groups of ‘working-class’ cottages and terraces being constructed throughout Malvern, such as the Edwardian-era terraces in Repton Road, not far from the Caulfield Railway Station.

In 1899 development of *Gascoigne Estate* and the neighbouring *Waverley Estate* was revived, partly through small speculative ventures by architecture and building firms. Ussher and Kemp built six six-roomed brick villas on the estate, and similar ventures by other firms followed. The development of Central Park by Malvern Council in 1907, and the opening of the new electric tram-line along Wattletree Road in 1910, stimulated further home building by individuals. The houses were eight to ten roomed villas in the Queen Anne style, and many were designed by architects for middle-class clients. This area has been described as ‘quintessential Malvern’ (Strahan, 1989:64–66; Raworth, 1994:5) and set the standard for much of what followed. The ideal of Malvern as a middle-class enclave was at last being realised.

The expansion of the electric tram system as described in Chapter 4 before World War I brought further suburban development throughout most of the municipality of Malvern. In 1912 it was reported that 800 houses a year were being built in the (by then) City of Malvern, which boasted ‘a progress unprecedented by any other suburb’. Much of the new development was then taking place in the Glen Iris Valley (Strahan, 1989:69).
‘Quintessential Malvern’ – The Gables, at 15 Finch Street, Malvern East.

[SLHC Reg. No. 9537]
8.2.2 ‘The city of real homes’ – development of Malvern after World War I

World War I interrupted further building and much of the south-east of the City of Malvern had to wait until the 1920s for urban development. One of the 1920s subdivisions was Woodmason’s Malvern Park Estate, the triangle between Waverley and Malvern roads and Albert Street. The publicity material showed houses in Malvern Road with the caption ‘Malvern. The City of Real Homes’. Within five years of its subdivision and sale in 1922, the former maize paddocks of the Woodmason dairy farm was almost covered with Californian bungalows and Spanish mission villas. The estate was serviced by a small shopping strip at the junction of Waverley and Malvern Roads (Strahan, 1989:74–75, 77; ‘The Woodmasons of Malvern’).

The last part of the study area to come under suburban development – the eastern extremity to Warrigal Road – was also part of the Woodmason farm. Most of the area between Gardiners Creek, Warrigal and Waverley roads and the Outer Circle Railway reserve was sold to agent T.M. Burke, who subdivided and offered it as Malvern Meadows Estate. The Woodmason family kept a few acres near Warrigal Road, where in 1922 they built their large bungalow, Green Gables (formerly at 627 Waverley Road, now demolished). The proposed extension of the railway from Darling to Glen Waverley was expected to pass through the estate and stimulate development, but the financial burden of the Railway Construction and Betterment Tax imposed on the properties along the line discouraged home building. The line opened as far as Holmesglen in 1929 – the beginning of the Great Depression – but the estate was used as grazing paddocks until after World War II. After the war people finally began buying the blocks and hiring building companies, such as the Modern Home Advisory Service, to construct their cream brick houses (Raworth and Foster, 1998). Ex-serviceman, Tom Tyrer and his wife bought a block and built a house in The Rialto in the early 1950s:

The Rialto was no road, just an open drain and you couldn’t drive a car into it. There was a bridge at the foot of it – footbridge, and very quiet and pleasant living. … There was a strong community spirit in the street, because when we bought the block of land there were no houses in it, and everyone was building houses. They were generally ex-servicemen, and of course all my children are therefore ‘baby boomers’ (Recorded interview 3 August 2000, MECWA).
The Rialto actually followed the course of a small creek that ran into Gardiners Creek. The creek is now a covered drain surrounded by a strip of undeveloped green space. A small wooded park nearby maintains the rural feel that attracted Tom to the street in the first place.

8.2.3  Gentrification – creating a new middle class

The 1950s saw an exodus of middle-class residents out of parts of the study area. This trend was reversed in the 1970s as the pressure for high rise development in South Yarra and Toorak brought young professionals seeking cheap houses for restoration. Many of Prahran’s old cottages brought high prices, squeezing out working-class residents. The new occupants have renovated and extended the cottages, most endeavours to restore their facades, some more sympathetically to the original than others. A number of the cottages have been completely rebuilt displaying some interesting post-modern architectural uses of the small sites.

8.3 Living in and around Australian houses

8.3.1 Grand houses – servants and extended families

Paxton (1983:11) has described the Toorak mansions that he knew in the early years of the twentieth century:

Most of the larger houses contained a ballroom, billiard-room, and conservatory, as well as the necessary number of rooms for a large family and staff. Their beautifully kept gardens were so spacious, one had to ring a bell to summon the gardeners. Many families travelled in their own carriage, so within their grounds were stables, harness and coach-rooms, and living quarters for the coachman and grooms. The drives and paths inside the properties were always gravelled, as concrete was unknown. Grass or asphalt tennis courts were prevalent, croquet lawns were sometimes another extra, but the Sabbath was sacred and they were never used on Sundays. Every establishment, whether large or small, had a chicken-run and hens were kept for laying eggs and for the table.

The prevalence of tennis courts in Toorak’s backyards can be seen in an aerial view taken in 1927, looking south along Glenferrie Road (reproduced in Foster, 1999, following p.87). In later years, swimming pools were an addition to many Toorak backyards. The Nicholas family had a covered swimming pool installed in their garage building at Homeden some time around the 1920s while the architect, Marcus Martin, designed the pool and surrounds at Glyn (Malvern Heritage Study, pp.3–26). In the mid–1960s private swimming pools were still enough of a novelty for several Toorak identities to open their backyards for a fundraising tour of Toorak swimming pools run by the Mercy Hospital (Mercy Hospital for Women archives).
Although the large houses and mansions of the study area were an expression of wealth and status, many of them accommodated large families, which were common until World War I. The Armytages of Como had ten children, Octavius Beale, the piano manufacturer of Oma (demolished), had thirteen. For those who could afford it, a large house and garden was ideal for a family. However large families were not only the preserve of the wealthy. Lil was one of nine children growing up in a Prahran cottage after World War I. The park was their playground (recorded interview, 24 March 1999, PH and AS).

The 1921 census revealed that the City of Prahran had 160 houses with more than 12 rooms – the greatest concentration of large houses anywhere in Victoria. Such houses were built with servants in mind. Como had a large staff to run the house and maintain the garden. Aberfeldie, the home of Dr Norman Wettenthal from 1912, had a servants’ wing. The provision of conveniences, such as electricity and gas, and labour-saving devices, certainly made a huge difference to housework, but in the 1920s it was still usual for wealthy families to employ a cook and a maid or two. In the 1920s and ‘30s houses were being designed with maids’ rooms, but many houses were also designed for the housewife without home help. The small two-storey ‘artistic Georgian house’ at 11 Russell Street, Toorak, built in 1930 had a maid’s room and ‘labour saving devices’ such as a servery between kitchen and dining room. World War II gave women new job opportunities. As men joined the services, housemaids took over the men’s better-paid factory jobs (Malvern Heritage Study, p.317; Wilde, 1993:38, 43, 47, 184). The plethora of guest houses in the study area (see below) may have been in part a response to the servant shortage. Nevertheless some families still employed women to come in part-time. After the war Lil began to work for a Toorak doctor’s family – minding children and doing housework – and kept the job for thirty years (Recorded interview, 19 July 2000, MECWA).
8.3.2 Gardens

As Paxton pointed out, gardens were an important element of the stately homes of Toorak, and some were designed by prominent gardeners. At Como, the nurseryman William Sangster was responsible for designing the garden for the Brown family, which he maintained for the Armytages until he left to go into business, as part of Taylor and Sangster, in 1866. Sangster also laid out Victoria Gardens in Prahran in the 1880s. Meanwhile Edward La Trobe Bateman, who designed many of the Botanic Gardens around Victoria in the nineteenth century, is said to have designed the original garden at St George’s (later Mandeville Hall) in the 1860s, which during its heyday is thought to have featured a canal complete with a gondola.

In some cases, architects also carried out the landscape design for the houses they accompanied. Walter Butler designed at least two gardens including that at Warrawee in 1906 and at Edzell at the bottom of St George’s Road for George Russell. The former garden is now lost, while the latter is thought to survive. Harold Desbrowe Annear designed the garden at Cranlana.

In the twentieth century Edna Walling was engaged to design the gardens of many Toorak homes, including that of Little Milton (Albany Road) and 401 Glenferrie Road (Malvern Heritage Study, p.21). In 1938, she was commissioned by businessman Matt Cuming to design a garden at his newly purchased property at 161–63 Kooyong Road in Toorak, while architect Marcus Martin re-designed the associated Victorian Villa in a modern style. The ‘picturesque’ garden created by Edna containing formal and informal elements is one of the few of her gardens in the study area to remain largely intact today.
The 1917 description of the large garden at *Kia Ora*, Gilpin’s a ten-roomed villa in Malvern, with its lawns, miniature artificial lake, summer house, fernery, croquet lawn and tennis court is reminiscent of Paxton’s description of gardens in Toorak (Strahan, 1989:65). The chicken run is not mentioned, although they were a feature of suburban backyards of all social levels throughout Melbourne to the middle of the twentieth century. Bower (2001) notes many poultry sheds in properties on the Tooronga Closer Settlement Estate.

A garden was part of the *rus in urbe* ideal, whether or not it was designed by a leading landscape gardener. The importance of gardens is evidenced by the formation of the Malvern Horticultural Society in 1907, whose members competed to grow perfect roses and chrysanthemums. In 1914 the *Malvern News* commented that ‘it has become a reproach if the citizen’s garden plot is not tastefully laid out and adorned with choice flower-beds and a well-tended lawn’. A stroll along any of Malvern’s residential streets is sufficient to show the continuing importance of the front garden to the local suburban dweller (Strahan, 1989:46).

### 8.4 Creating Australia’s most ‘designed’ suburbs

The study area is notable for the strong culture of patronage between architects (or designer-builders) and their often wealthy clients that has existed from the earliest times of settlement and continues to the present day. Walter Butler, for example, was known as the ‘society architect’ for his long list of well-heeled clients. This has resulted in a much higher than average ratio of architect-designed buildings. Foster (1999), for example, has researched the streets within the area bounded by Toorak, Malvern and Glenferrie roads and Gardiner’s Creek, and found that in most streets at least half the houses were architect designed. In Albany Road alone 47 of the 61 houses built since 1872 have been attributed to architects.

The consequence of this is one of the most extraordinary collections of residential architecture in Australia, which provides an important record that illustrates the development of almost all major architectural styles and movements since first settlement.

### 8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

As we have seen, houses are a measure of wealth and status and by the 1860s architects were in demand as more wealthy settlers moved into the study area. Merchant James Lorimer had his house (later known as *Greenwich House*) in Irving Road, Toorak, built in 1869 to the design of noted architect Leonard Terry. Many early houses were later enlarged by architects, often after they changed hands. The second owner of *St George* (later *Mandeville Hall*), Joseph Clarke, engaged architect Charles Webb to extend the house from its original twelve rooms to thirty rooms.

Chapter 3 has described how architects were particularly busy in the study area during the boom years – Charles D’Ebro designed *Stonington for John Wagner* in 1890, Thomas Watts designed *Valentine* for land boomer John Mark Davies in 1891, while Reed Smart and Tappin designed *Edsell* (76 St Georges Road, Toorak) for former Lord Mayor of Melbourne James Cooper Stewart, in 1892, to name a few. A great many examples of nineteenth-century domestic architecture have been lost through demolition, however, many of these demolitions made way for the work of twentieth-century architects.
After the turn of the century, architects continued to have a major influence on the wealthy suburbs of the study area, particularly in Toorak, Armadale and Kooyong. Klingender and Alsop’s Glyn (224 Kooyong Road), the mansion designed for Sir Edward Miller in 1908, is considered an outstanding example of Arts and Crafts, an early example of this style that was strongly represented in Toorak well into the 1920s. The firm designed a number of other houses in the area. Little Milton (26 Albany Road) designed for Sir Leslie Moran by Muriel Scott of the firm Stephenson and Meldrum, is considered one of the finest late Arts and Crafts houses (Malvern Heritage Study, pp.69–70). Walter and Richard Butler were also very popular with Toorak home builders. Ballantyne and Hare, Joseph Plottel, Marcus Martin and the influential Robert Haddon were among other notable architects whose work is well represented in the study area.

The architects built predominantly in the fashionable architectural styles of Toorak in the 1920s and ‘30s, which were Georgian Revival and Old English. As we have seen, the latter was the style used on the shops at Toorak Village to capture the romantic atmosphere of an English village. The work of Robert Hamilton, whose charming Denby Dale apartments (424 Glenferrie Road) epitomise the Old English style, was much in demand. At Malvern East architects Ussher and Kemp set the trend for Queen Anne at the turn of the century with their six speculative houses on the Waverley Estate. The Gables (15 Finch Street) is considered to be the most important example this firm’s work (Malvern Heritage Study, p.121).
xciv (top left) Muriel Scott’s Little Milton.
(SLHC Reg. No. 9544)

xcv (top) Roy Grounds’ house at 24 Hill Street, Toorak.
(SLHC Reg. No. 13333)

xcvi (far left) Clendon Lodge, an example of ‘Knitlock’ construction.
(SLHC Reg. No. 13334)

xcvii (left) Harold Desbrowe Annear’s Katanga.
(SLHC Reg. No. 9543)

xciii (left) Kia Ora, Finch Street in 1912, showing the Malvern Heights Bowling Club pavilion at right. (SLHC Reg. No. 7579)
8.4.2 Functional, eccentric and theatrical – experimentation and innovation in architecture

The strong culture of patronage also led to some clients encouraging their architects to step outside the dictates of fashion and explore ideas and innovation in design and construction. Other architects (or in some cases, creative designer-builders) explored stylistic innovations that pushed the boundaries beyond the restrained detailing found on most contemporary houses. One such innovator was Walter Burley Griffin, whose ‘Knitlock’ construction system of concrete blocks was used in Stanley Salter’s house (16 Glyndebourne Avenue) in 1923, as well as at Clendon Lodge, a house designed in 1927.

Harold Desbrowe Annear, one of Australia’s leading domestic architects, was prolific in the study area. His innovative work ranges from his 1919 bungalow at 6 Erskine Street, Armadale, to his last work, Katanga (372 Glenferrie Road), a modified Georgian Revival house built for solicitor Wesley A. Ince in 1933 (Malvern Heritage Study, pp.115–63). Katanga was described as ‘functional, somewhat eccentric and essentially theatrical’ and illustrates the interest of the period in geometric experimentation in architectural forms. This influence can also be seen in the house at 22 Stonnington Place – reputedly, the owners of this house were impressed by Annear’s designs, but chose to engage the provincial firm of Laird and Buchan to ‘achieve their wishes more economically than by using the society architect Annear’ (Malvern Heritage Study, p.345).
In some cases, the designs are in fact the earliest or purest form of particular architectural styles that were later diluted or even changed outright when they gained wider acceptance and usage. One example is the house at 19 Alleyne Avenue (the designer is not known), which is of interest for the way it adopts Far Eastern elements for its detailing that takes the ‘initial Japanese influence on the Bungalow, to an extreme’ (Malvern Heritage Study, p.74). The house at 23 Moorhouse Street, designed by J. F. W. Ballantyne, is described as ‘a refined example of the Prairie School’, which illustrates the direct influence of Walter Burley Griffin (Malvern Heritage Study, p.299).

In the 1940s, ‘50s and ‘60s Roy Grounds and Robin Boyd were creating modern designs to fit in with the difficult topography of the sites. Boyd’s Richardson House (10 Blackfriars Close) is constructed across a creek bed, while Grounds’ Quamby (3 Glover Court, Toorak) is a block of flats that takes advantage of a slope overlooking the Yarra River (Prahran Conservation Study). Grounds’ innovative approach is also demonstrated by his own house at 24 Hill Street, Toorak, which Heritage Victoria (VHR H1963) describes as an experimentation in ‘pure geometry’, an approach he developed starting in 1930. Grounds received the 1954 Royal Victorian Institute of Architects medal for this house, which also included four flats at the rear. As we shall see, Grounds was one of a number of architects who also developed innovative designs in flats that reflected the aspirations and status of residents in the area. The development of flats is discussed in more detail below.

8.4.3 Architects and their houses

Not surprisingly, a number of the architects who contributed to the urban landscape of the study area designed and built their own houses among those of their clients – perhaps to demonstrate their skill and talent to other potential clients. Roy Grounds at 24 Hill Street was one of a number of notable architects who called the study area home. One of the first was Walter Butler who lived in his Edwardian house in Armadale, Duncraig (31 Hampden Road), from 1899 to 1906 (Prahran Conservation Study, pp.15–16) and later shifted to Avalon, an Arts and Crafts house (14 Power Avenue), which remained a Butler family home until 1980 (Malvern Heritage Study, p.309). Richard Butler built his own ‘Old English’ style house at 6 Hopetoun Road in 1925 (Malvern Heritage Study, p.192). Marcus Martin designed himself a Spanish Mission house known as Broome (6 Glyndebourne Avenue) in 1925 (Malvern Heritage Study, p.178).
8.5 Housing the workers

8.5.1 ‘Struggletown’ – working-class housing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century

As we have seen, topography was a major factor determining the pattern of settlement of the study area from the time the Europeans first arrived. The high ground at Toorak and parts of South Yarra was taken for the estates of the wealthy, leaving the low areas for poorer settlers. Much of Prahran was swampy, and effective drainage works were not carried out until after the formation of the municipality. It was here that the poorest residents – those who worked in the early brickyards or carted timber – were housed in rows of wooden cottages. Malone describes the slums of early South Yarra, known as ‘Struggletown’ (like Richmond to the north), but it appears that these were demolished quite early and replaced by cottages in the late Victorian and Edwardian era (Malone, 2000:20).

As Prahran’s industries developed in the nineteenth century, so did housing for its workers. Workers cottages, built by landlords such as Cr Naylor, filled the small side streets of Prahran, South Yarra and Windsor housing workers in local industry and those travelling by train and tram to the factories of Richmond and Collingwood. Although the 1921 Census found that the City of Prahran had the highest concentration of houses twelve rooms or over, it also found that one in four of Prahran’s houses were of four rooms or less (Wilde, 1993:39). Even parts of South Yarra, which gained the reputation as one of Melbourne’s most prestigious suburbs, developed as a working-class area in the nineteenth century along with parts of Armadale. Typically, the houses were of timber or brick, single fronted, some joined as terraces or in pairs, and some free standing with room for a small side path. Many of these small houses can still be seen in small streets running off main roads, such as Surrey Road North off Toorak Road in South Yarra, but many areas were demolished by the Housing Commission of Victoria as part of ‘slum’ clearance undertaken in the post-war era as discussed in the following section.

8.5.2 Post-war Housing Commission flats

The Housing Commission of Victoria was established in 1938 to improve the housing conditions of people living in poverty in the inner suburbs. Before World War II the Commission embarked in a program of ‘slum reclamation’ and house construction. In 1946 the Commission acquired the Commonwealth Munitions Factory at Holmesglen in the east of the study area and began mass production of prefabricated concrete housing. This was a cheap and efficient solution to the post-war housing shortage. The factory supplied houses and apartment buildings for the Commission’s housing estates in emerging industrial areas on the fringe of Melbourne such as Doveton, and West Heidelberg, where the estate first served as the Olympic Village for the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956.
In the 1950s concern over the reduction of population in the inner suburbs, as people moved out to the new suburbs on Melbourne’s fringes, provided new impetus for slum clearance – urban renewal as it became known – in the inner areas of Melbourne. The Commission identified several areas in Prahran as in need of renewal, and Council gave its support to the program. One Prahran Councillor was Horace Petty, who was also the Member for Toorak in the Legislative Assembly, and served as Minister for Housing from 1955 to 1961. Petty supported the Commission’s plans to build high rise apartment blocks as a way of renewing Melbourne’s inner suburbs, including Prahran. Despite protests from residents, the first of Prahran’s Housing Commission flats were completed in Essex Street in 1960. The largest of the Commission’s development in Prahran is the Horace Petty Estate, which consists of three twelve-storey blocks and several four-storey blocks, completed in 1967 (Wilde, 1993:75–79). The construction of the Commission estates resulted in the loss of many nineteenth-century workers’ cottages in Prahran and Windsor.
8.6 Developing higher density living

Although the Housing Commission’s high-rise blocks were aimed at retaining the level of high density living already established in Prahran, there was another quite different move to higher density living in the study area, and it began much earlier. This trend began with the conversion of some of the large boom-era mansions to shared accommodation such as boarding houses and flats, and continued with the subdivision of large estates to allow the construction of purpose-built apartment developments that were (initially at least) architect-designed in the most up-to-date styles.

8.6.1 Sharing houses

In 1920 the City of Prahran had 536 registered boarding houses (Wilde, 1993:55). At one end of the market was the exclusive guest house, such as Illawarra, a boom-time mansion made redundant as a family home when the boom collapsed. Illawarra was leased to Mrs Wynne who provided long-term lodgings for five families, each with their own suite. James Paxton, who lived there with his parents from 1909 to 1914, has given a description of life at Illawarra. Guests had their meals in a large dining room, with a separate table for each family, and were served by a butler and three parlourmaids. People dressed for dinner. There was a staff of nine, including two gardeners (Paxton, 1983:19–20). Such guest houses enabled the Paxtons, and other families like them, to maintain their accustomed lifestyle, when for some reason they could not maintain their own establishment.

The guest house, and the slightly more humble boarding house, also provided homes for single people in a time when few people lived alone. Men, in particular, were not expected to cook or perform domestic chores for themselves. In the 1920s Betty Malone’s widowed mother ran a boarding house in Armadale, where guests included single men and men who were raising children as sole parents (Wilde, 1993:57–58). However many women brought up in wealthy families were unable or unwilling to do their own housekeeping, and lived in guest houses (personal comment from this author’s mother, who worked in a guest house in East St Kilda in the early 1940s). Many mansions and large houses in the study area saw service as guest houses or boarding houses including Redcourt at 506 Orrong Road (Malone, 2005:22).

For women who needed to support themselves, running a guest house was a respectable way to earn a living, and convenient if they had children at home. While guest houses and boarding houses were run on a business footing, many people rented out spare rooms, or shared houses with other families, as way of covering costs in times of economic hardship. Win Vears, who grew up in Armadale in the 1930s, remembered that many of the large houses in her neighbourhood were used as rooming houses, or were shared by more than one family as a way of making ends meet during hard times. Armadale then had a reputation as a poor area. Most of the houses have since reverted to single-family dwellings (Wilde, 1993:55–56; Vears, recorded interview 5 July 2000, MECWA).
8.6.2 Developing apartment living

The first apartment buildings or flats began to be constructed in Melbourne in the first decades of the twentieth century. In many municipalities, restrictive building codes were enacted to control or stop this new form of development, ostensibly for safety reasons (though there may have also been social overtones, as we shall see below). The municipalities of Prahran and St Kilda were two that allowed and, to a certain extent, encouraged flat development to occur. 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.*

One of the first purpose-built flats in the study area (and indeed the whole of Melbourne) was Fawkner Mansions, built on the corner of Punt and Commercial roads in Prahran for George Fairbairn (Jnr) in 1912. There seems to have been some cynicism regarding the venture, because the flats were nicknamed ‘Fairbairn’s Folly’, but the apartments were occupied by professional and semi-professional families. It later became a nurses’ home for the Alfred Hospital (*Prahran Conservation Study*, p.8; Malone, 1999:19).
However, widespread development of purpose-built flats did not really begin until the 1920s when the last of the remaining big estates in South Yarra and Toorak began to succumb to what Wilde (1999:40) describes as ‘the combined pressures of probate, depression and profit’. Among the first were those built by architect/property developer Howard R. Lawson on part of the old Avoca estate bounded by Punt and Domain roads, Alexandra Avenue and the South Yarra railway bridge. In 1922 Lawson began designing Californian Bungalow-style maisonettes capable of conversion to flats, some of which remain in the area. After the Depression Lawson began building multi-storey blocks, including Beverley Hills, which was set in landscaped gardens with a swimming pool. By 1935 Lawson had built 175 flats in his subdivision, and local residents were beginning to object to further development. Lawson subsequently limited his blocks to three storeys. According to Tibbits (1983:37–38), Lawson’s subdivision is a unique precinct of apartment blocks integrated with well-landscaped sites.

Apart from changing the physical character of the suburbs, the flats also changed the social mix by encouraging more single people to live within the area. Until the development of flats, the accommodation choices for single people were very limited, and the new form of accommodation provided additional freedom, particularly for unmarried women. This even led to rumblings of concern among some social commentators that flats would undermine the family and lead to the downfall of society.

However, not all flats were designed with single people in mind. Flats also became fashionable for the wealthy in Toorak and South Yarra as a way of living in a prestigious suburb without the bother of a large house and garden or servants, although some flats did include a servant’s room, such as Denby Dale in Kooyong (Malvern Heritage Study, p.168). Flats in Toorak were therefore spacious and designed for families, rather than single people. Caringal, at 3 Tahara Road, which was designed in 1948 by John W. Rivett, even had a children’s playground on the roof. Its eighteen flats were all let before building was completed (Prahran Conservation Study, pp.3, 36–39).

In not all cases did the subdivision of estates lead to loss of the original houses – in some cases the old houses were retained and adapted by architects. One example is Coronal, a boom-era mansion in Waverley Road, Malvern, that was built in 1890 for Joseph Fielding Higgins, who lost possession in the 1890s depression. In 1909, it was purchased by Henry Lewes who in 1939 engaged the architects R.M. and H.M. King to convert the house to three apartments plus ‘an intriguing bachelor eyrie in the top of the tower’. The conversion was featured in the September 1939 edition of Australian Home Beautiful (Malvern Archives).
The extent of flat development in Toorak and South Yarra 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 World War II there were almost as many flats in Toorak Ward as houses (Wilde, 1999:64–68).

8.6.3 Architect-designed apartments

In response to resident protests about flats destroying the character of Toorak, developers began building apartment blocks and maisonettes designed to emulate mansions. One such building was Arthur Barnes’ block of flats on the corner of Glenferrie Road and Monomeath Avenue, built in 1922. In 1933 Joseph Plottel designed four flats and a maisonette on the corner of Toorak Road and Evans Court. Maisonettes were a popular way of making two houses look like one large house. As we have seen, this strategy had been employed by Lawson – the small 1938 subdivision in St George’s Court included three maisonettes (Raworth, 1997). Another strategy to counter criticism was to employ a leading architect to design the building – one example was Walter Burley Griffin, whose Langi flats were built on the corner of Toorak and Lansell roads in 1926 (Tibbits, 1983:38).

The strong tradition of patronage previously described resulted in similarly innovative approaches to apartment design. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the design of apartments began to demonstrate the influence of European modernism. Frederick Romberg was one of a number of émigré architects, and is recognised for introducing European modernism to Victoria, in particular its application to flat construction. In 1942 he designed Glenunga Flats, which ‘broke new ground in the manner that compact flat development was arranged’ (Malvern Heritage Study, p.205).

Another prominent architect exploring apartment design in the study area was Roy Grounds, who was later to form a partnership with Romberg. Grounds designed four blocks of apartments starting with Clendon (1939–40) and Clendon Court (1940–41) that demonstrated the Australian modern style of architecture and Grounds’ exploration of geometric forms. These were followed in 1941 by Moonbria in Mathoura Road, and Quamby in Glover Court. The latter was designed was designed to take account of a steeply sloping site, the curving street frontage and the fan-shaped allotment (Prahran Conservation Study). As we have seen, Grounds was later to design his own residence and four apartments at 24 Hill Street, Toorak. The influence of these buildings can be seen in aforementioned Caringal in Tahara Road, Toorak, which at six storeys would have been considered high-rise at the time.

8.6.4 Apartment development in the post-war era

In the 1950s the approach to flat building changed when a pro-development Prahran Council encouraged it on a large scale, and little attention was given to aesthetics in design or the effect on the landscape. The western part of the study area was close to the city and attracted professional and business people. That Toorak or South Yarra was still a prestigious address is reflected in the rents for the time – almost double that for a flat in neighbouring Richmond. During the 1960s residents began to note with alarm the number of old houses in Toorak and South Yarra being replaced by apartment blocks of ever increasing heights. These new flats, together with the Housing Commission developments, restored the population of the City of Prahran to its pre-World War II level by 1971, but the growing trend towards living alone meant that further high density housing stock was needed to increase population levels in inner suburbs (Wilde, 1993:80–83).
iii Robert Hamilton’s Denby Dale in 1938.
[SLHC Reg. No. 5005]

civ (top) Walter Burley Griffin’s Langi apartments, Toorak Road, Toorak.
[SLHC Reg. No. 13257]

cv San Jose, at corner of Wattletree Road and Burke Road, Malvern.
[SLHC Reg. No. 9536]
Until 1969, there were few planning controls regulating the construction of apartments – so long as the plans complied with the Uniform Building Regulations that regulated the area of the building in relation to the size of the block, the development could proceed. Wilde (1999:81–82) notes that by 1960 councillors had resigned themselves to pointing out that they had no power over development proposals, providing they were in accordance with the UBR’s. Both Prahran and Malvern Councils passed by-laws in the post-war period attempting to limit flat development (as early as 1938 Malvern Council restricted flats to two storeys, with no more than four on one allotment), but to little avail as State Government policy at the time was generally in favour of higher density development (Wilde, 1993:66; Foster, 1999:75–5). The consequence was a number of high-rise apartment developments up to ten stories in height, in Toorak and South Yarra particularly along Toorak Road.

In 1969 local government authorities were finally given powers to develop their own town planning controls, and Prahran Council was one of the first to do so. Council commissioned a firm of town planners – Perrott, Lyon, Timlock and Kesa – to prepare a Residential Zoning Plan and Code. The resulting ‘Perrott Plan’ as it became known, set out height limits for various parts of the City of Prahran, with recommendations that flats in the high parts of Toorak and South Yarra be limited to 20 storeys. The plan prompted a huge public outcry, which will be explored in Chapter 10. The outcome was the restriction of flats to three storeys (See Wilde, 1993:88–95).

In the early 1980s, in response to further pressure for development and the Metropolitan Strategy produced by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, Prahran Council set maximum building heights as six storeys away from main roads. At the same time Singapore businessman Jack Chia proposed to redevelop the entire stretch of Chapel Street from Toorak Road to the river, including the old brickworks and Electrolux sites, with a huge luxury residential, hotel and commercial development, reaching to eighteen stories. After lengthy negotiations with Council, the State Government stepped in and gave approval for the scheme. By this time Jack Chia had withdrawn from the project because of financial difficulties. Eventually a modified version of the original plan, now known as Como Centre, was built (Wilde, 1993:114–19; Malone, 2000:8–9).

8.7 Creating public landscapes

Hoddle’s plan of subdivision for the western part of the study area (the entire City of Prahran and the north-western part of the City of Malvern) did not provide for any reserves for public use or open space. A few reserves were provided in the later plan for the Gardiner section on the eastern side, including the Town Hall and Court House reserve and two water reserves – one around a spring near the corner of what is now High Street and Spring Road, and the other at a water hole on Gardiners Creek at the end of High Street. Neither the early settlers nor their local councils had much interest in creating public landscapes before the 1880s. Consequently, the parks and pleasant open spaces that are now a feature of the study area were acquired gradually by the two municipalities. The sites were generally areas of land that were not suitable for commercial or residential development. Parks were initially proposed in the interests of public health, but beautifully landscaped public gardens soon became a source of municipal pride. Local pride was particularly evident in the Malvern municipality, which sometimes styled itself ‘the Garden City’. In the late twentieth century local residents took up the cause for the natural environment, and this is reflected in the most recent parks.
8.7.1 Creating leafy suburbs

The study area’s reputation as one of Melbourne’s pleasant leafy suburbs must be attributed, initially, to the creation of private gardens on the large estates of the wealthy. People living in their own private park had little need of a public park. Even after most of the large Toorak estates were broken up by developers, the suburb retained its rural character. A 1932 article in *Australian Home Beautiful* eulogised the ‘wide and winding roads, verdant with the foliage of ancient trees and virgin bush … (of) Melbourne’s most fashionable suburb’. The writer remarked that Toorak was the place where the ‘venerable gum’ was not removed to make way for a fence; rather the usual practice was to build the fence around the tree (cited in Malvern Heritage Study, p.297). Exotic as well as indigenous trees have remained from the old estates, to become part of the modern landscape. McDougall (1985:35) noted an old oak from the Orrong Estate that still stood in St John’s Church grounds in 1985. Council street tree planting programs have enhanced the overall appearance of Toorak and many other parts of the study area.

An early suggestion that trees would beautify the street environment was made in 1877 by Prahran Councillor William Bowen. This idea was shared by some Prahran property owners who offered to pay half the cost of the trees in their street. However, Council would initially only consider planting trees along Dandenong Road, to match those already planted on the St Kilda side. It is uncertain when the trees were actually planted, but a photograph (see photograph cvi) dating from c.1900 shows a row of fairly young trees on the south (St Kilda) side of the road. Another view in Malvern (reproduced in Cooper, 1935) dating from c.1900 shows semi-mature pine trees. According to Cooper, the councils of Prahran, Malvern, St Kilda and Caulfield co-operated to develop Dandenong Road as a pleasant tree-lined boulevard.

cvi (below) Two views of Dandenong Road showing the development of landscaping. Below is a c.1900 view looking east toward Wattletree Road showing trees on the south side planted by St Kilda Council. The c.1920 view to the left shows the landscaping carried out after the construction of the tramway in 1911. (StHC Reg. No. 211 and 1372)

After their initial reluctance, Prahran Council began planting and maintaining street trees throughout the municipality, particularly Toorak, and by 1923 had planted 6000 trees. In 1932, the Council decided to commence ‘a liberal scheme of tree planting in the residential streets with the object of beautifying and enhancing the appearance of those parts of the City, which lend themselves to treatment of this kind’ (Wilde, 1999:26). The principal trees were oriental planes and golden poplars. Despite the privations caused by the Depression, council, with the assistance of unemployed labour, continued to plant upwards of 600 trees a year during the 1930s. Alexandra Avenue was designed as a fine boulevard connecting Prahran with Melbourne. When the trees were planted along the section from Punt Road to the railway bridge, the rock was blasted to allow room for roots and drainage of the trees. On the river side of the avenue, four rows of poplars, willows and eucalypts were planted (Cooper, 1924:297–300). By the end of the 1930s Prahran had taken on ‘a leafy and shady appearance’ and so many trees had been planted that Council ‘no longer bothered to keep count’. However, the spread of trees was not uniform across the municipality. Wilde (1999:33) notes that:

*The oldest and biggest species were mainly in the streets of the east. … The narrower streets of Windsor and Prahran seldom provided sufficient room for the splendour of a mature oak or plane. The result was a pattern of street trees, which served to emphasise the social and economic diversity of the city.*
According to Cooper (1935:167), the Malvern Council ‘always had a sense of the picturesque’. In 1881 Council offered residents tree-guards to encourage them to plant trees along the roads in front of their properties, and also undertook to provide the trees – oaks, elms, aspens and poplars – and labour for their planting. Council established its own nursery for propagating trees and plants for Malvern’s streets and parks. Thomas A. Pockett OBE, Curator of Parks and Gardens in the Malvern municipality from 1888 to 1918, is credited with planting ‘many miles of street trees’ (Malvern Archives). By the late 1920s, 118 miles of Malvern’s streets had been planted with trees. Malvern Council claimed to be the first in Victoria to plant jacarandas, which became popular street trees in other suburbs besides Malvern.

Some species were found to be a nuisance, particularly the plane and golden poplar, which broke up pavements, and some of these trees were replaced with other species. Malone mentions the liquidambars that were planted in Dunraven Avenue soon after its formation in 1922 (Strahan, 1989:48–9, Malone, 2004:39).

8.7.2 Public health and municipal pride

The early establishment of Toorak as a fashionable suburb, where land was an expensive commodity, helps to explain the fact that little land in that part of the study area has been acquired for public open space. Toorak’s only public parks are Brookville Gardens, adjacent to the Toorak Primary School, and the tiny W.M. Dane Park, on a slope adjacent to Heyington Station (see Chapter 9). Brookville Gardens were developed on low-lying land on the Hawksburn Creek, which was acquired by Prahran Council in 1906 (Malone, 2002:53).

Prahran Council concentrated its early program of parks and gardens in the more populous Prahran and Windsor areas, where it was believed residents needed open space for fresh air and recreation. In the 1880s Prahran Council floated a loan to purchase land for public parks. This met with considerable opposition from ratepayers, who thought that public health would be better served if their rates were spent on well-kept streets and clean back lanes. Nevertheless, Council proceeded, in secret, to buy three properties – the Orrong Pottery at Armadale, a block at Grattan Street, Prahran, and a block in High Street owned by an absentee landlord and used for grazing cows. In August 1885 the three sites, known respectively as Toorak Park, Prahran Reserve (now Grattan Gardens) and Victoria Gardens, were declared open ‘to public use as pleasure grounds and places of recreation’ by Lady Loch, wife of the Governor (Cooper, 1924:287–94).
The Victoria Gardens were designed in the traditional English style by Como’s former gardener, William Sangster, who was making a name for himself as one of Melbourne’s leading landscape designers. Mayor George Taylor bestowed his wife’s name on the Gardens, and presented the gates and a statue of the Winged Victory. The Victoria Gardens became a focal point for family and community celebrations, school picnics and fundraising concerts. A group called Friends of the Victoria Gardens renovated the gardens before World War I and added a glasshouse, lily pond and fountain. In the 1930s the gardens were redesigned by Edna Walling. The gardens became run-down after World War II, and it was not until 1989 that restoration works, again by the Friends group, began (Malone, 2001:20–3; Wilde, 1993:35).
Princes Gardens were established on the site of the Furneaux and Goodbody sawmill and timber yard, purchased by the Prahran Council in 1906 as a playing space for the children of poorer families. It was low lying and probably flood prone. Initially it was called the Malvern Road Gardens but the name was changed in 1921, after a visit by the Prince of Wales. In 1923 the park was doubled in size with the addition of land purchased along the west side of Essex Street, and a donation of land in Walker Street by Dafydd Lewis. In 1924 a wading pool and children’s playground were constructed, and the gates were brought from the mansion Illawarra and installed at the entrance. Later the Prahran swimming pool replaced the wading pool and skateboard ramps were added to the play area (Malone, 2001:13–14; Wilde, 1993:16–17).

In Malvern early public support for gardens seemed stronger than it was in Prahran, which may be attributed to the influence of curator Pockett. After residents protested against the intended sale of the water reserve in High Street, Council acquired the site for pleasure gardens. Malvern Public Gardens, opened in 1890, were laid out by Pockett, who was renowned for his chrysanthemums. The spring was transformed into a pond with a grotto and fountain (Strahan, 1989:39–40).

In 1906 Council purchased eighteen acres on the corner of Burke and Wattletree roads, Malvern East, for a new park. This area was still largely rural and fences had to be built to keep out straying livestock. Suburban development had commenced with the building of houses on the nearby Gascogne Estate, and was to increase with the opening, in 1910, of the new electric tramline. Central Park was conveniently situated at the Wattletree Road tram terminus. Once again the gardens were laid out by Pockett, and Council built a Tudor style kiosk in 1911, followed by a bandstand in 1916. The bandstand was a venue for concerts, including performances by the Malvern Tramways Band, formed 1911 (Nigro and Foster, 1994). The band predates the formation of the well-known Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Band, which had strong associations with Wattle Park in Box Hill.

During the 1920s Malvern Council purchased a number of other sites throughout the municipality and established small parks, sports grounds and children’s playgrounds.
8.7.3 Transforming swamps into parks

In 1921 Prahran Council bought 35 acres of the Como estate from the Armitage family. This former lagoon was still swampy and subject to frequent flooding. The original intention was to have a park with native trees and bird sanctuary, but Como Park was eventually developed for sports activities. The use of native trees was unusual for its time and it was originally called 'The Australian Park' (Hubbard 1992:28). In the 1930s the land was regraded, with some of the soil being used to build up Alexandra Avenue, which (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4) was being made at the time. The new Como Park was opened by the Governor, Lord Huntingfield, on 24 October 1934 in the presence of 7000 people. Como Park became a popular picnic and sporting venue (Fox, 1996; Malone, 2000:1–2; Wilde, 1993:16, 28). At about the same time, Rockley Gardens were created from what had been a swamp at the bottom of Rockley Road (Hubbard 1992:28).

The site of Hedgeley Dene Gardens was acquired by Malvern Council for drainage purposes when the Hedgeley Dene farm was subdivided for sale in 1911. The land followed a small watercourse and was full of holes. Council used it as a rubbish tip for a number of years before developing it as a park in 1921. Curator F.L Reeves designed a romantic landscape, which included a lake – presumably from an existing waterhole – with an island and rustic bridges, and a mixture of exotic and native trees and shrubs (Cooper, 1935:229–30; Strahan, 1989:42–44).

8.7.4 Transforming Gardiners Creek

The flood plain along the Gardiners Creek was of little use for residential or commercial development. Malvern Council purchased parcels of land over the years from 1904 to 1934 under the Gardiner Valley Improvement Scheme, envisaging a charming boulevard stretching from the Yarra River to Scotchman’s Creek at Oakleigh. The vision was never fully realised, but a number of areas were developed by Council as sports grounds, beginning with the Malvern Municipal Golf Links, which as we have seen led to major changes to the course of the creek.

The creek, having been cleared of vegetation, was subject to increased flooding and erosion, and various attempts at flood alleviation were made by draining swamps, re-aligning the creek and stabilising the banks. Exotic plantings of oaks, elms and willows created the character of an English park. The threat to these parklands in the 1970s and ‘80s by the (Monash) Freeway, then known as the Arterial Road Link, provoked considerable public protest. A number of pressure groups were formed, the most vocal being the Gardiners Creek Valley Association. This was the era of increased awareness of conservation issues among Australians, as the bush and its natural flora and fauna were under threat from development or commercial exploitation in so many parts of the country. The natural environment of Gardiners Creek Valley had long been lost, but attempts were made to recreate the environment of pre-European settlement with indigenous plantings and re-forming of the creek banks. However, existing exotic trees remaining from the gardens of neighbouring houses demolished for the freeway were retained (Cooper, 1935:168–70; Strahan, 1989:6–11).

In an attempt to compensate for the loss of open space caused by the construction of the freeway, the State Government made part of the old Outer Circle reserve available for a park, and ‘Victoria’s first urban recreational forest’ was re-planted with local indigenous vegetation (Strahan, 1989:255). This is discussed in Chapter 9.
Building suburbs

HERITAGE

The theme of *Building Suburbs* is illustrated by a variety of places that have important heritage values. These values are sometimes expressed in tangible ways, such as by surviving physical fabric (buildings, structures, trees, landscapes etc.), but are also apparent in the associations and meanings embodied by the place for different communities. This chapter provides a summary of values associated with these places and provides a representative list. For further examples, reference should be made to the heritage studies and reports listed in the bibliography.

*Creating Australia’s most prestigious suburbs and Living in and around Australian houses*

The places associated with these themes provide important evidence of how wealthy people of means lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is illustrated not only by the size and opulent design of the houses, but also in details such as servants’ quarters, stables, outbuildings and the gardens and grounds, which were all intended as an expression of wealth and status.
The places associated with these themes provide vivid evidence of the dramatic phases of ‘boom and bust’ associated with land speculation in Melbourne. This is illustrated in various ways from the Victorian mansions set within reduced allotments surrounded by later subdivision, to the estates laid out in the nineteenth century that were not fully developed until well into the twentieth century.

Examples of heritage places associated with these themes include:

- *Como*, 16 Como Avenue, South Yarra
- *Stokell*, 49–51 Adelaide Street, Armadale
- *Beaulieu* (now part of St Catherine’s School), Heyington Place, Toorak
- *Glyn*, 224 Kooyong Road, Malvern
- *Merriwee Crescent*, as former carriage drive for *Moonga*
- House, 11 Russell Street, Toorak. (an example of an inter-war villa with a maid’s room).

**Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal**

The study area is notable within metropolitan Melbourne and contains many examples of houses and residential neighbourhoods that illustrate what made Melbourne ‘marvellous’ during the nineteenth century, as well some of the finest expressions of the ideal of Edwardian and inter-war garden suburbs in Australia. These suburbs represent the aspirations of the residents and the municipalities of which they formed a part.

Examples of heritage places associated with this theme include:

- Hawksburn and Williams roads, South Yarra, illustrates different forms of housing on low and high ground
- *Grandview Grove*, Prahran, a middle class Victorian enclave
- *Gascoigne and Waverley Estates*, Malvern East, middle class Federation era estates
- *Malvern Meadows Estate*, Malvern East, a post-war suburban estate.
Creating Australia’s most ‘designed’ suburbs

The study area contains a rich and comprehensive legacy of almost every type of urban residential buildings that illustrate the changing styles in domestic architecture in Australia from first settlement until the present day. The study area is notable for both houses of individual or innovative aesthetic or design merit, as well as precincts with important historic character.

The study area provides evidence of the strong culture of patronage that developed in the study area between architect and garden designers and their often wealthy clients, which encouraged design ideas to be explored and challenged. This patronage, which has few parallels in Victoria and even Australia, has resulted in the study area containing many examples of housing that are notable, innovative, or simply unusual examples of their style and type.

Examples of heritage places associated with this theme include:

- Little Milton (house and garden) 26 Albany Road, Toorak
- Greenwich House (now Chinese Consulate), Irving Road, Toorak
- Cranlana (house and garden), 62 Clendon Road, Toorak
- Katanga, 372 Glenferrie Road, Malvern
- Denby Dale apartments, 424 Glenferrie Road, Malvern
- House, 16 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak
- Richardson House, 10 Blackfriars Close, Toorak
- House, 19 Alleyne Avenue, Armadale
- St George’s Court streetscape
- Architect’s houses include Walter Butler’s house, Duncraig, 31 Hampden Road, Armadale, 6 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak (Marcus Martin), and 24 Hill Street, Toorak (Roy Grounds).

Housing the workers

The study area provides evidence of the strong connection between social status and geography in society creating a pattern of larger and more prestigious housing on higher ground contrasted with the smaller working-class housing on the low ground, a pattern that can be interpreted even today.

Examples of heritage places associated with this theme include:

- Many areas of workers’ cottages were demolished by the Housing Commission of Victoria in the 1960s. Intact groups survive in Tyrone Street, Prahran, Palermo Street, and Surrey Road North, South Yarra, McIwrick Street and Frederick Street, Windsor
- HCV Horace Petty Estate
- Cambridge Street, Armadale.
Developing higher density living

The study area illustrates the development of higher density living in Melbourne. It is of particular interest for providing historic evidence of how apartment living was developed initially for middle and upper income people as an alternative to having a large house or mansion, before coming a more widely used form of accommodation in the post-war era.

Examples of heritage places associated with this theme include:

- Illawarra Court, Toorak
- Redcourt, 506 Orrong Road, Armadale
- Fawkner Mansions, corner of Punt and Commercial roads, Prahran
- Howard Lawson apartment precinct, South Yarra – Beverley Hills, Stratton Heights, etc.
- Architect-designed apartments include Langi (corner of Toorak and Lansell roads, Toorak), Roy Grounds’ trio of apartments Clendon, Quamby and Moonbria, Caringal (3 Tahara Road, Toorak) and Tsoshaan, 777 Malvern Road, Toorak
- Other examples include San Jose, cnr. Wattletree Road and Burke Road, Glen Iris.

Creating public landscapes

This illustrates the efforts made by the Prahran and Malvern municipalities to provide adequate open space and how this was often linked to broader concerns about public health, flooding or simply municipal pride. That the Prahran City was able to carry on tree planting during the depression provides an indication of the importance of the measure during that time.

Examples of heritage places associated with this theme include:

- Orrong Road
- Dandenong Road and Alexandra Avenue
- Central Park
- Como Park
- Hedgeley Dene Gardens
- Malvern Public Gardens
- Victoria Gardens.