

HERITAGE CITATION:

Northbrook Avenue Precinct, Malvern



Figure 1. (R-L, starting at top) 1, 3, 5 & 7 Northbrook Avenue and 1261 & 1263 High Street, Malvern (GJM Heritage, November 2020).

DATE: June 2021

Place type: Residential Precinct	Architect: Various
Construction Date: 1932-37	Builder: Various
Recommendation: Include in the Heritage Overlay as a Heritage Precinct by extending HO440 (currently applied to 1263 High Street) to also cover 1, 3, 5 & 7 Northbrook Avenue and 1261 High Street, Malvern.	Extent of Overlay: See Figure 13

Locality History

The City of Stonnington stands on the Traditional Lands of the Woi wurrung and Boon Wurrung Peoples of the East Kulin Nations. Archaeologists believe that Aboriginal People have been in Victoria for more than 30,000 years. Throughout this long history their relationship with the landscape (where and how they live) has changed according to factors such as climate change, resource availability, and cultural change (Context 2006:10).

The first European settler in the Malvern district was John Gardiner in 1835, a pastoralist from New South Wales who was one of the first overlanders to Port Phillip. He pastured his stock near the junction of Gardiner's Creek and the Yarra River and is the namesake of Gardiner's Creek, Gardiner's Creek Road (now Toorak Road) and both the locality and the Shire of Gardiner (before they were re-named Malvern). The first recorded use of the name Malvern was in January 1854, when barrister Charles B. G. Skinner named his hotel on the corner of Malvern and Glenferrie roads the 'Malvern Hill' after a district in England. The name for the Shire of Malvern was derived from Malvern Hill Estate, a private subdivision in the area dating to 1856 (City of Stonnington [CoS]; Context 2006:34).

The first land sales in the area were held in 1854 and most original Crown grantees subdivided their allotments for resale (Context 2006:41; 2009:4). Gardiner's Road District was proclaimed in 1856 before Gardiner Shire was formed in 1871, which was renamed Malvern Shire in 1878 (CoS). The municipal boundary comprised the current localities of Malvern (previously Gardiner), Malvern East, Glen Iris (south of Gardiners Creek), Kooyong, Armadale (east of Kooyong Road), Toorak (east of Kooyong Road) and Chadstone (west of Warrigal Road). Early directories listed Malvern and Malvern East as the one locality, until 1910.

The former Malvern Shire saw slow population growth to 1881, by which time it totalled just under 2,000 people (Victorian Places). In 1879, the Oakleigh Railway Line was opened along the southern extent of the municipality, through Malvern, Armadale, Toorak and Hawksburn to join the existing line at South Yarra. The arrival of the Oakleigh railway coincided with the start of the land boom, which resulted in considerable urban growth. In the 1880s the district comprised substantial residences on large allotments, as well as pastoral and agricultural holdings (including market gardens and orchards) and commercial development (Context 2006:41, 65-6). During the 1880s boom period, the municipality saw a dramatic increase in population, quadrupling to approximately 8,000 by 1891, and steadily increasing to 10,000 by 1901 (Victorian Places). 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 and subsequently, c1912, Malvern Council began to declare brick areas, where timber houses were not permitted. By 1916 the Council had also fixed a minimum area for individual housing allotments at 6000 square feet, with minimum frontages of fifty feet (Context 2006:128).

The railway line along the northern extent of the municipality was established in 1890 through the Glen Iris Valley from Burnley. Stations were established at Heyington, Kooyong, Tooronga, Gardiner, Glen Iris and

Darling, however, expected residential development in their vicinity stalled during the 1890s following the economic collapse (Context 2006:66). The 1893 *Australian Handbook* (as cited in Victorian Places) described Malvern as ‘an elevated residential suburb’, served by a line of omnibuses from Prahran, with many leading merchants and professional men living in the area in pleasantly situated ‘dwellings of a superior class’. The entry noted that a number of notable mansions had been erected by this date, and that the market gardens and orchards were ‘steadily being reduced, and cut up into building allotments, on which [were] being erected many handsome villas and business establishments’ (Victorian Places). The municipality saw rapid development and urbanisation from 1900 and it was declared a Borough and then a Town in 1901. In 1911 the municipality was declared a City, with a residential population of 16,000 (Context 2006:86; Victorian Places).

The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust was established in 1908, with electric tramlines opening along High Street in 1910-14, Glenferrie Road in 1910-13, to the south along Wattletree Road in 1910-12, and Malvern Road in 1915. The arrival of the tramlines further drove the development of commercial centres in the immediate vicinity and residential development beyond. New train stations were built at Armadale, Hawksburn, Malvern and Toorak between 1908 and 1918, and at Malvern East in 1929 (Context 2006:70-2, 113; Victorian Places).

Residential development during the early twentieth century generally occurred on newly subdivided estates or on nineteenth century subdivisions that had remained partly or wholly undeveloped during the 1890s depression (Context 2009:5). 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’ (Context 2009:128). In the decade between 1911 and 1921 the population in the City of Malvern doubled, from 16,000 to 32,000 residents, and then increased steadily to 43,000 by 1933 (Victorian Places). This population growth saw development spread to the Glen Iris Valley and the outer reaches of the City, in Malvern East. The housing stock in this eastern part of the municipality was more characteristically uniform and unadorned in comparison to housing in Malvern. Kooyong’s development was substantially completed by the end of the 1920s (Context 2006:128, 131).

By 1946 the Australian Blue Book (as cited in Victorian Places) stated that Malvern was one of the ‘leading residential suburbs of the Metropolis’. It comprised the substantial homes of many of Melbourne’s leading citizens, in what was termed ‘The Garden City’ due to the number of parks and public gardens. Development in the City of Malvern steadied from the 1930s, with the population averaging 45,000 until the 1990s (Victorian Places). The City of Malvern amalgamated with the City of Prahran in 1994, to form the City of Stonnington.

Precinct History

[Note: the history of Northbrook House and Stables is drawn from Northbrook House and Stables Background Document, revised by GJM 2021, with additional information as cited].

Bounded by the current Malvern Cricket Ground to the west, High Street to the south and Spring Road to the east in what is now known as the suburb of Malvern, the Northbrook Avenue Precinct is situated on land first sold between 1854 and 1858 to speculative buyers ‘A Greeves and others’, as Crown Portion 18 in the Township of Gardiner, Parish of Prahran (Figure 2). Northbrook Avenue was laid out by 1902. Originally called Queens Parade, in 1917 residents wrote to Council requesting the name of the street be renamed Northbrook Avenue (*Malvern Standard*, 20 October 1917:5).

In 1888, at the height of the land boom in Melbourne, auctioneer, real estate agent and land speculator, Donald Munro (son of former Premier of Victoria, James Munro), constructed a 10-roomed, single-storey brick house, called ‘Northbrook’, on 3 acres (1.2 ha) of land he had acquired within this allotment. The house, with frontage to High Street, was designed by prominent architect, Charles D’Ebro. Financial difficulties forced

Munro to sell the property in 1896 and maltster Michael J Daly purchased the 'handsome modern brick villa residence, with stabling, out offices etc on land having a frontage of 300 feet to High Street by a depth of 332 feet along Queen's Parade' (*Age*, 26 Aug 1896:4).

Daly resided at Northbrook until his death in 1929. Following his death, the residence was advertised for sale as either a family home or a speculation for subdivision (*Argus*, 11 September 1929:5). Selling for £9,650, the estate was subdivided as the Northbrook Estate, comprising four allotments with frontages to Northbrook Avenue and four allotments with frontages to High Street (Figure 4). On a reduced allotment of 175 x 332 feet (53m x 101m), Northbrook was offered for sale with potential use as a guest house or entertainment establishment (*Age*, 9 November 1929:15). The individual lots were offered for sale in November 1929. Lots 1 to 4 (those fronting Northbrook Avenue) were sold first, with the first house within the estate, a two-storey brick house with seven rooms, constructed at 3 Northbrook Avenue (Lot 3) in 1932-3 (Malvern Valuation Field Card; Malvern Rate Books). The erection of houses at 1, 5 and 7 Northbrook Avenue followed in quick succession and by 1936 development on the west side of Northbrook Avenue was complete. The two-storey brick duplex at 1261 High Street (Lot 6 of the Northbrook Estate) was erected the same year to designs by architects, Hughes and Orme, who were also responsible for the design of 1 Northbrook Avenue (Malvern Valuation Field Card; SHC). 7 Northbrook Avenue was designed by architect, J W Roberts. The houses in Northbrook Avenue were originally owned by Mrs Violet Miles (1 Northbrook Avenue), Mrs Hannah Lockwood (3 Northbrook Avenue), and brothers Mr Robert Hugh Cornwell (5 Northbrook Avenue) and Mr Henry Cornwell (7 Northbrook Avenue).

The following year, in 1937, a substantial two-storey building was constructed on Lot 5 of the Northbrook Estate, at the corner of Northbrook Avenue and High Street, making development within the precinct complete. Comprising four maisonettes with individual garages, *Colwyn* was constructed for and by owner and builder, S Anwyl, to a design by architect, J.H. Esmond Dorney (SHC, SM). Each maisonette comprised living areas on the ground level and two bedrooms plus a 'sleep out' on the upper level (SHC). The maisonettes were first sold in May 1938 (*Argus*, 30 May 1938:2).

The remaining two lots within the Northbrook Estate, comprising Lot 7 and 9 and fronting High Street, remained part of the Northbrook House land holding (Figure 6). The Northbrook site was acquired by Malvern City Council in 1945 (SHC).

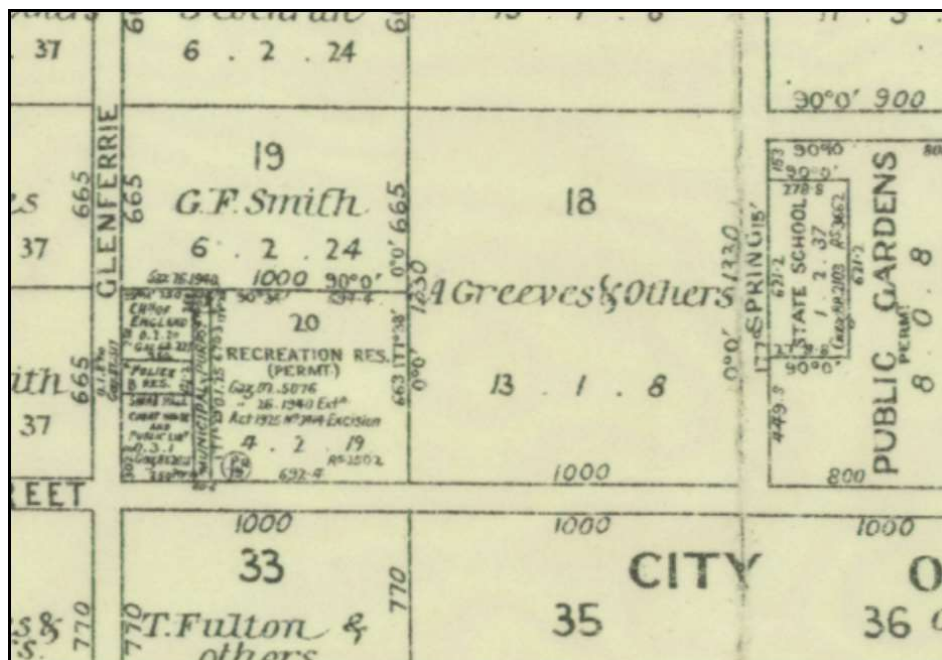


Figure 2. Detail of Parish Plan of Prahran, County of Bourke, showing Crown Portion 18, 1882 (SLV)

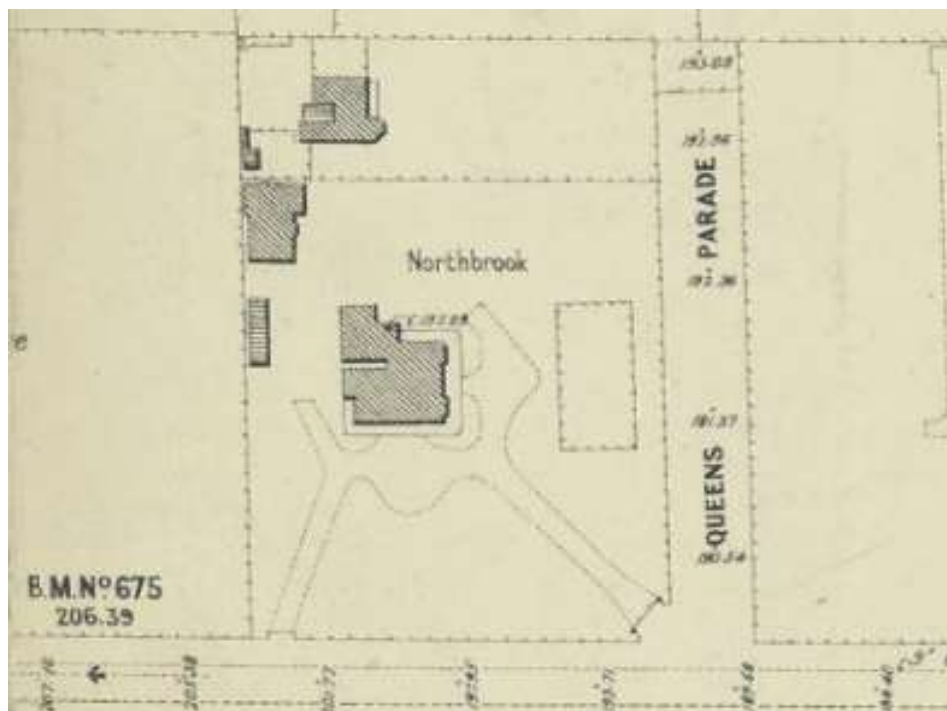


Figure 3. MMBW Base Plan No 59 showing Northbrook House prior to subdivision of the estate, 1902. Northbrook Avenue was called Queens Parade at this time (SLV)

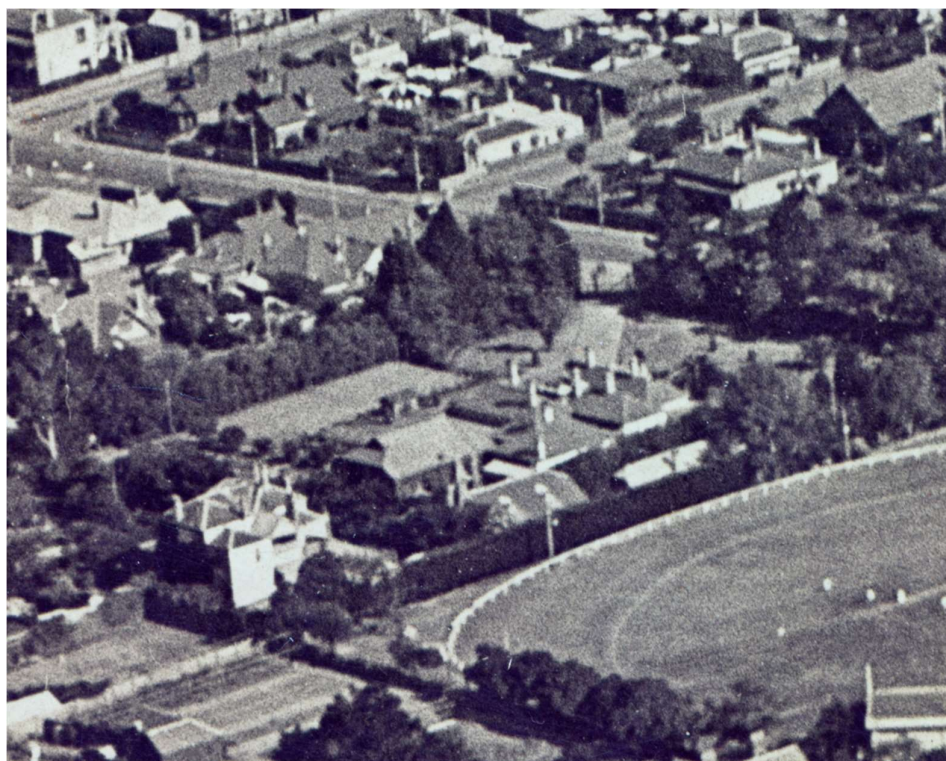


Figure 4. Looking across the Malvern Cricket Ground towards Northbrook House, 1920 (SLV)

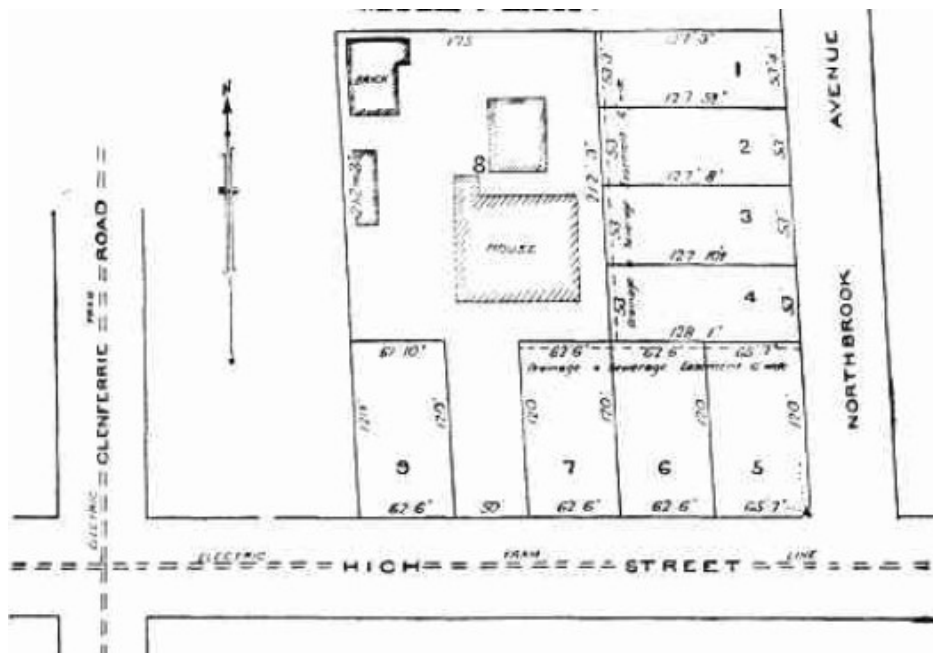


Figure 5. Auction notice for the subdivision of Northbrook Estate, 1929 (Herald, 16 November 1929, p.6)

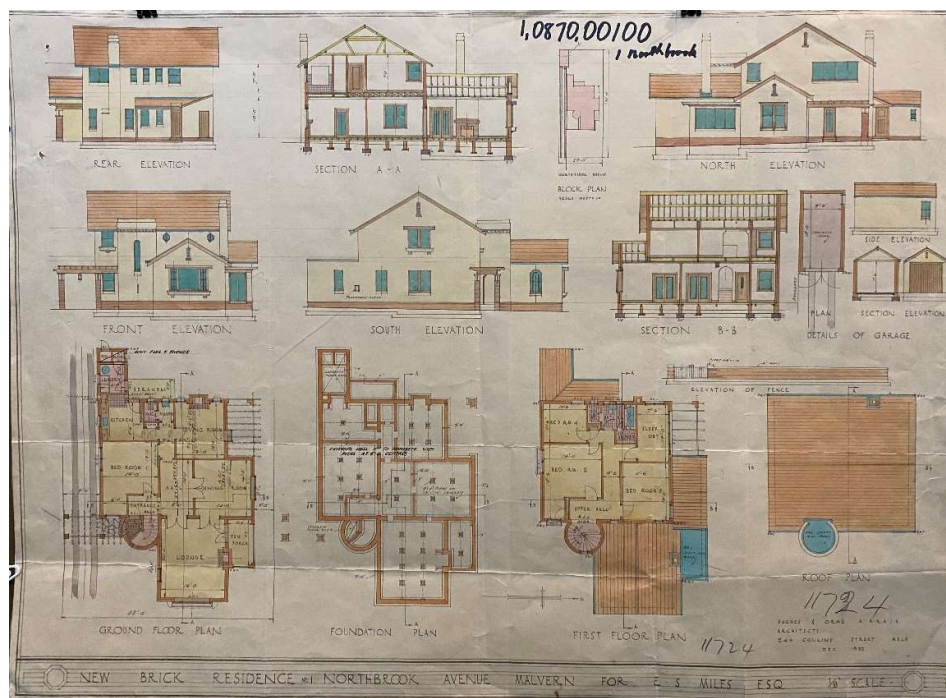


Figure 6. Designs for 1 Northbrook Avenue, Malvern by architects, Hughes & Orme, 1933 (SHC)



Figure 7. Illustration of 1 Northbrook Avenue, Malvern by architects, Hughes & Orme, 1934 (Herald, 14 February 1934, p.19)

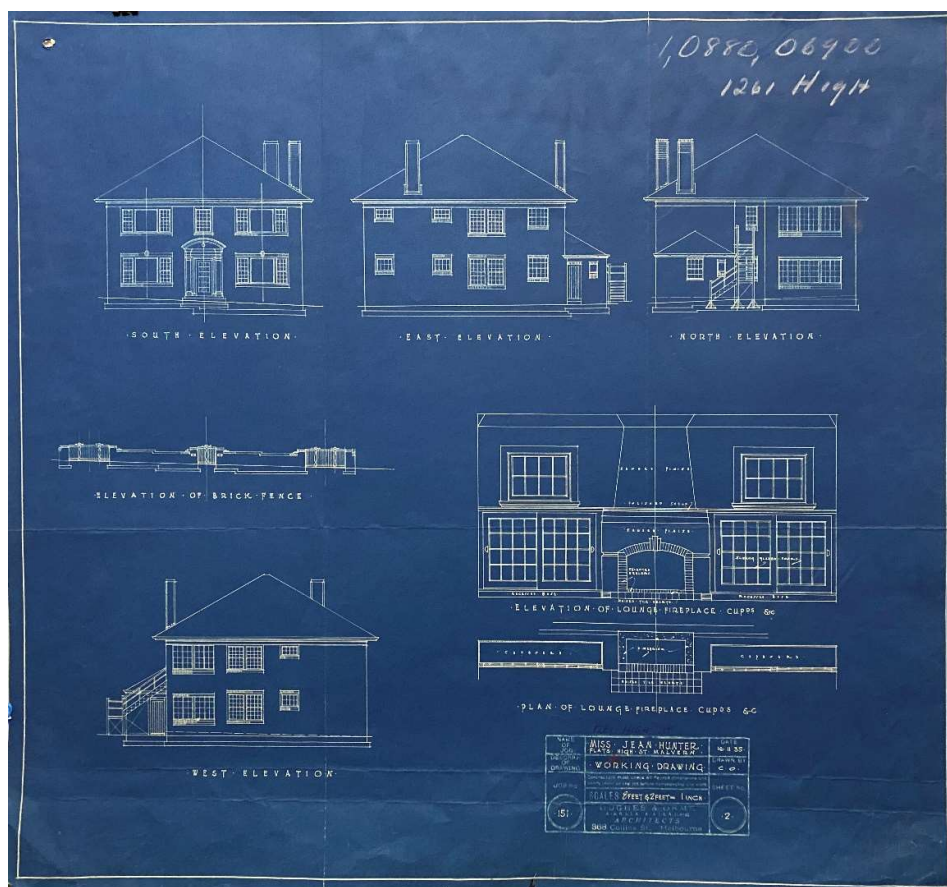


Figure 8. Designs for 1261 High Street, Malvern by architects, Hughes & Orme, 1935 (SHC)

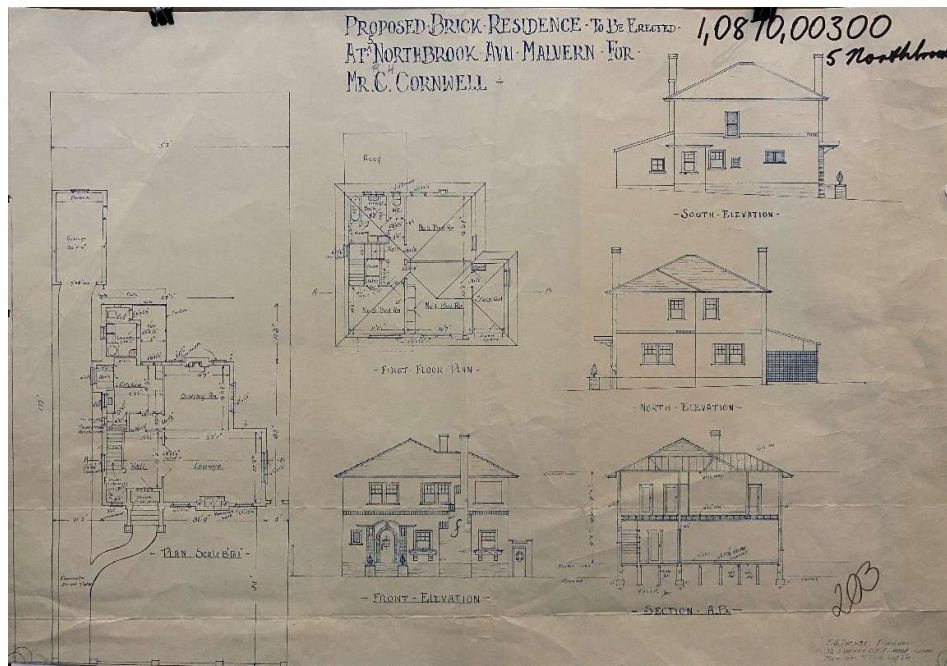


Figure 9. Designs for 5 Northbrook Avenue, Malvern, no date (SHC)

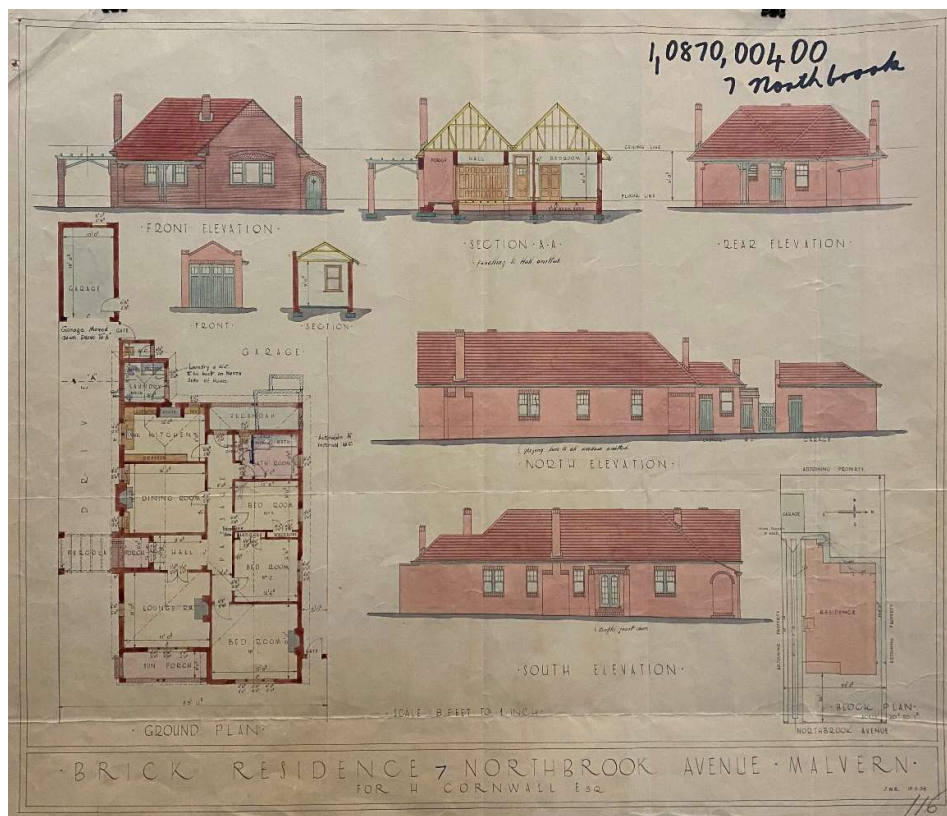


Figure 10. Designs for 7 Northbrook Avenue, Malvern by architect, J W Roberts, 1934 (SHC)



Figure 11. Detail of aerial showing Northbrook House and houses with frontages to Northbrook Avenue and High Street, 1945 (Landata)



Figure 12. Building Malvern Library, 1957. Rear of Northbrook Avenue houses can be seen (SHC)

Description

Northbrook Avenue Precinct, Malvern is situated to the east of Glenferrie Road at the corner of High Street and Northbrook Avenue. It is a small interwar residential precinct which comprises two properties on the north side of High Street (nos. 1261 & 1263) and four properties on the west side of Northbrook Avenue (nos. 1, 3,

5 & 7). All residential buildings were constructed between 1932 and 1937 and include four houses, one duplex and one block of four masionettes (Colwyn) at the corner of High Street and Northbrook Avenue.

All buildings are of substantial brick construction with tiled roofs and they display characteristics of a range of interwar styles. These include Georgian Revival (1261 High Street), 'Prairie School' inspired design (1263 High Street), and variations of the English Domestic Revival style (Northbrook Avenue houses). Characteristics of the streamlined Moderne style are evident in particular elements and detailing at 1 Northbrook Avenue and 1263 High Street.

1261 High Street

The duplex at 1261 High Street is a two-storey brick building with tile-clad pyramidal roof form and broad, timber-lined eaves. The principal (south) elevation is symmetrical with central entrance and multi-paned double hung window above, and flanking sets of windows (with fixed central sashes and multi-paned double hung side windows) at both ground and first floor level. Flush soldier brick courses line the sills and heads of window openings and a broken segmental pediment, supported on ribbed pilasters, surrounds the central entrance.

A high brick wall has been constructed at the front boundary at a later stage.

1263 High Street

The following description for this place is from Context P L, 'Residential Flats in Stonnington', 2013.

Colwyn Flats, 1263 High Street, Malvern, is a large two-storey building at the corner of High Street and Northbrook Avenue, with the principal facade to Northbrook. There is a private garden on the High Street side, concealed behind a hedge. There is a lesser setback on the Northbrook Avenue side. The entire site is bounded by a low rendered fence with a clinker brick plinth and piers. Clinker brick steps lead to the main entrance on Northbrook Avenue.

The building has wide eaves, and a long hip roof clad in Marseille tiles. It has three projecting hip-roof bays, at either end of the Northbrook elevation, and at the centre of the High Street elevation. Chimneys are plain, with square, rendered shafts. The walls are finished in smooth render with banded tapestry brick accents and a clinker brick plinth.

The Northbrook (east) elevation is symmetrically arranged, with a central entrance and breakfronts at either end. The building is given further vertical emphasis by giant-order pilasters with abstracted tapestry brick 'capitals' below the eaves, both to the breakfronts and the central part of the wall. Between the pilasters are tapestry brick spandrels. The projecting breakfront bays have curved corners that stop short of the eaves.

The wide, nearly flat eaves, intricate pilaster capitals, and framing of the breakfronts with masses that stop short of the eaves all show the influence of the Prairie Style, and are particularly reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple (Chicago, 1906). A bay of giant-order pilasters beneath wide, flat eaves are also seen in Wright's designs such as the Dr John Storer House in Los Angeles of 1923.

The entrance is set below a curved concrete hood supported on massive curved corbels, and the doorway is outlined in tapestry brick 'quoins'. Above the entrance hood are render fins which step upward suggesting the Jazz Moderne. Windows are a mix of eight-over-eight double-hung sashes and eight- and twelve-pane casements.

The High Street elevation repeats the breakfront with curved corners and giant-order pilasters, but the rest of the wall is much simpler. The door is set under a flat roof supported on a pier.

At the rear of the site there are garages, entered both from High and Northbrook streets. They are rendered with a smaller version of the fin decoration from over the building entries. The garage doors have been replaced.

The only other alteration noted is the overpainting of some of the brick fence piers.

1 Northbrook Avenue

The house at 1 Northbrook Avenue is a two-storey building with rendered walls set on a brick base (overpainted). The tile-clad roof comprises a transverse gable over the rear two-storey section and a perpendicular gable over the projecting single-storey front bay. A prominent parapeted circular tower, containing the entry porch, is located at the junction of these two gables. Window openings have angled heads, and include a tripartite group at the front gable, a tall window in the tower and faceted circular windows. The main windows have applied frames and projecting incised curved horizontal elements both above and below, the latter supported on corbelled brick brackets.

A fence with clinker brick base and random stonework above, and a pair of wrought iron gates, lines the front boundary and the central driveway strip is paved in random stonework.

3 Northbrook Avenue

The house at 3 Northbrook Avenue is a two-storey building of face clinker brick with tile-clad, broad-eaved hipped roofs, comprising a main pyramidal form and subsidiary hipped bays to the front and rear, and two tall chimneys. The principal (east) elevation is asymmetrically composed with gabled entry porch, a variety of window types and classical detailing.

A fence built from a variety of clinker and textured bricks in horizontal, vertical and diagonal patterns, a pair of metal gates and a single gate, line the front boundary.

5 Northbrook Avenue

The house at 5 Northbrook Avenue is a two-storey brick building with tile-clad hipped roof forms. The asymmetrically composed principal (east) elevation comprises two prominent elements – a tall, rendered chimney with stepped breast and random brick highlighting, and a porch with segmental arched canopy. Double hung windows with multi-paned upper sashes punctuate the principal elevation.

A low clinker brick fence, with a pair of wrought iron gates, lines the front boundary.

7 Northbrook Avenue

The house at 7 Northbrook Avenue is a single storey building of face clinker brick with tile-clad longitudinal hipped roof and tall rendered chimneys. The asymmetrical principal (east) elevation comprises a large side gable, with flush segmental arched brick feature panel above a tripartite window set, and an adjacent porch.

A low clinker brick fence, with a pair of wrought iron gates, lines the front boundary.

Key Features of the Precinct

- Strong Interwar character demonstrating a variety of Interwar architectural styles
- Consistent front setbacks within respective streetscapes
- Brick construction, both face clinker brick and rendered, with tiled roofs
- Predominantly hipped roof forms
- Predominantly asymmetrical front elevations
- One and two-storey scale

- Tall prominent chimneys
- Predominantly original fences and gates, including some highly distinctive brickwork
- Garden settings.

Intactness/Integrity

The residences within the Northbrook Avenue Precinct retain a high degree of integrity to the interwar period in fabric, form and detail. While the residences have undergone some minor alterations and additions, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a finely detailed and picturesque precinct dating to the mid-1930s.

Comparative Analysis

The Northbrook Avenue Precinct is of note as a representative and highly intact group of 1930s houses and maisonettes, typical of suburban development that occurred in suburbs such as Malvern, Malvern East, Toorak and Armadale in the interwar period. This section of Northbrook Avenue and High Street developed over a short period of time, after the subdivision and sale of land in the Northbrook Estate in 1929. This precinct of substantial one and two-storey houses and maisonettes displays a consistency of scale, and distinctive architectural character which draws on a range of styles popular during the interwar period, including English Domestic Revival and Georgian Revival.

A number of comparable precincts are included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme including the Alexandra Avenue Precinct, South Yarra (HO122), Linden Court/Jessamine Avenue/Kenleigh Grove Precinct, Prahran (HO141), Montalto Avenue/Stradbroke Avenue/Clendon Road/Toorak Road Precinct, Toorak (HO143), Kooyong Precinct, Kooyong (HO181), Huntingfield Road Precinct, Toorak (HO347), St Georges Court Precinct, Toorak (HO348), Coolgardie Avenue Precinct, Malvern East (HO350) and the Heatherleigh Place Precinct, Malvern East (HO357). While a number of these precincts are larger in area than the Northbrook Avenue Estate Precinct, they contain comparable streets of highly intact houses dating to the interwar period. Of most relevance are those smaller precincts that cover a single streetscape:

Huntingfield Road Precinct, Toorak (HO347)

Huntingfield Road Precinct developed through the 1934 subdivision of two nineteenth century estates located near the intersection of Toorak and Kooyong Roads in Toorak. Developed by architect Arnaud Wright and his partner, Edith Overell, the precinct contains a consistent streetscape of largely intact two-storey houses designed in the Georgian Revival style by a number of prominent architects. The intactness, quality of design and the surrounding trees and gardens contribute to the significance of the place as a fine and distinctive example of residential development in the interwar period in Toorak.

St Georges Court Precinct, Toorak (HO348)

St Georges Court is a small cul de sac located off St Georges Road in Toorak. The precinct, developed as a result of the 1938 subdivision of a large Federation property in St Georges Road, comprises a substantially intact streetscape of houses and maisonettes dating to the interwar period. A number of the houses within the precinct were designed by notable architects, including Marcus Martin & Tribe, A. Mortimer McMillan and Billson & Mewton and the place is significant as a fine and representative example of residential development in the interwar period in Toorak.

Heatherleigh Place Precinct, Malvern East (HO357)

Heatherleigh Place Precinct is located in a small cul de sac off Orville Street in Malvern East. Developed by a single building company for a middle-class clientele, the precinct comprises a highly intact and consistent

streetscape of single-storey houses dating to the interwar period and is significant as a fine and distinctive example of residential development in the interwar period in Malvern East.

Conclusion

The above comparative examples all contain streets of highly intact houses dating to the interwar period, which illustrate significant suburban development in the City of Stonnington in the mid-twentieth century. These houses – both modest and large – display characteristics typical of the interwar period. The resulting interwar streetscapes in these precincts display a high degree of integrity and are highly consistent in both scale and architectural character.

The Northbrook Avenue Precinct is comparable in quality to these precincts. The Northbrook Avenue Precinct contains substantial houses and maisonettes which were all built in the 1930s. These houses contribute to a streetscape of high integrity, uniformity of scale, and distinctive architectural character.

Assessment against Criteria

Following is an assessment of the place against the recognised heritage criteria set out in *Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (August 2018).

Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history

The Northbrook Avenue Precinct is illustrative of the suburban development of Malvern in the interwar period when a substantial number of residential flats/maisonettes and individual residences were constructed across the suburb. This was largely a result of rising labour and materials costs following World War I, which made the cost of maintaining grand Victorian and Federation-era mansions difficult and led to a significant increase in the subdivision of large estates across the municipality. The Northbrook Avenue Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington.

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments

The Northbrook Avenue Precinct is a fine and highly intact example of a cohesive middle-class interwar residential precinct. Together these houses display typical features of a variety of architectural styles popular in Malvern and across Victoria more broadly in the interwar period, including English Domestic Revival, Georgian Revival, Moderne and the Prairie Style. These include predominantly two-storey building forms, clinker brick and rendered brick walls, tiled roofs, hipped roof forms, prominent chimneys, generous front gardens and brick front fences.

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

The Northbrook Avenue Precinct forms a unified group of predominantly architect-designed residences dating to the interwar period. The consistent application of high-quality materials and detailing, such as prominent chimneys, face clinker and rendered brick construction and masonry fences (some with highly distinctive brickwork), in conjunction with their garden settings, presents a highly picturesque streetscape.

Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the place be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme as a locally significant heritage precinct. It is recommended that HO440 (currently applied to 1263 High Street) be extended to also cover 1, 3, 5 & 7 Northbrook Avenue and 1261 High Street, Malvern. The gradings of properties within the precinct are as follows:

Address		Grading
1 Northbrook Avenue		Contributory
3 Northbrook Avenue		Contributory
5 Northbrook Avenue		Contributory
7 Northbrook Avenue		Contributory
1261 High Street	<i>Also 1/1261 High Street</i>	Contributory
1263 High Street	<i>Also known as 1-4/1263 High Street</i>	Significant

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Stonnington Planning Scheme:

External Paint Controls?	No
Internal Alteration Controls?	No
Tree Controls?	No
Outbuildings or Fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-3?	Yes – fences to 1, 3, 5 & 7 Northbrook Avenue and 1263 High Street
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	No

Extent of the Recommended Heritage Overlay

To the extent of the property boundaries, as shown in Figure 13 below.



Figure 13. Recommended Extent of Heritage Overlay with proposed grading

References

Built Heritage, *Balwyn and Balwyn North Heritage Study*, August 2015.

Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, 2006 & 2009 addendum.

J B Cooper, *The History of Malvern, From its First Settlement to a City*, Melbourne, 1935.

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Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan No 59, Malvern, 1902.

N Lewis & Associates, *City of Malvern Heritage Study*, 1992.

Parish Plan of Prahran, County of Bourke, 1882.

Stonnington History Centre (SHC).

The Age.

The Argus.

The Herald.

Victorian Places, 'Malvern' & 'Malvern East', <http://www.victorianplaces.com.au>.