

HERITAGE CITATION

Braemar, part of 162-168 Wattletree Road, Malvern



Figure 1. Braemar, part of 162-168 Wattletree Road, Malvern (GJM Heritage, December 2020).

DATE: June 2021

BRAEMAR, PART OF 162-168 WATTLETREE ROAD, MALVERN

Place type: Residential Flats	Architect: Leslie Reed
Construction Date: 1932	Builder: William Munro
Recommendation: Remove from HO156 and include in site-specific Heritage Overlay	Extent of Overlay: Refer to Figure 5

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.

Place History

Braemar, the residential flats forming part of 162-168 Wattletree Road, were built in 1932 to designs by architect, Leslie Reed. The substantial block of flats is located on the south side of Wattletree Road, to the east of the intersection of Wattletree and Glenferrie roads.

By 1901, the property on which the flats are located comprised a large block of land on the south side of Wattletree Road containing a substantial brick house at the north-western corner of the block (see Figure 2). This house, seen in a c.1920 photograph (Figure 3), was a two-storey late-Victorian residence with wrap-around cast-iron verandah, hipped roof and prominent brick chimneys. The residence was occupied by Mrs A C Akehurst, who operated Korowa Girls School at the site from 1900 with her daughter, Miss E A Akehurst (S&M). The school had relocated from nearby Valetta Street and remained at the subject site until 1913, when it moved to its current location in Ranfurly Crescent (*Argus*, 6 December 1934:9). In 1919, Mrs Agnes MacFarlane Zimmer purchased the property and established the Malvern Business College alongside her husband, Arthur (S&M; SHC MB1638). The college ran classes in book keeping, typewriting, business principles, English and short hand during the day and evening for both men and women.

In 1932, the original residence on the site was demolished and replaced with the existing two-storey block of flats. This block of flats, called 'Braemar', was designed by architect, Leslie Reed, and comprised four residential flats. Each flat contained two large living rooms, two bedrooms, a large sleep-out, a tiled bathroom with built in bath and shower, and a private garage (*Herald*, 22 June 1932:13). An illustration of the new flats was featured in an article in the *Herald* (Figure 4), which praised the 'wealth of color [sic] and artistic ruggedness of texture' provided by the building's 'carefully laid' clinker brickwork (*Herald*, 22 June 1932:13). According to the Stonnington History Centre, the block of flats was built by William Munro (SHC MP1638).

The Malvern Business College continued to operate from buildings located to the west and rear of the block of flats until 1941 (SHC MP1638). The entire property, including the 'Braemar' flats, remained in the ownership of the Zimmer family (under the estate of Mrs Agnes Zimmer) until the mid-1960s (Malvern Rate Books). It was purchased by Renfrew Investments of 470 Bourke Street in April 1965 for £30,500 (Malvern Rate Books) and transferred to a strata title in 1987 (Malvern Valuation Field Books). It continues to be used as residential flats.

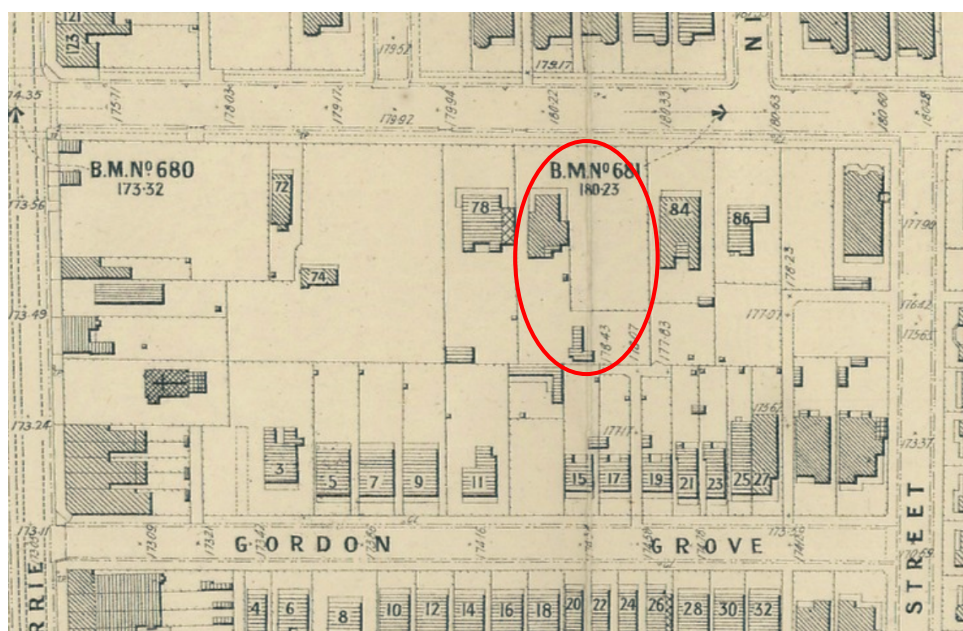




Figure 4. Impression of the residential flats at 168 Wattletree Road, 1932 (*Herald*, 22 June 1932:13)

Leslie Reed, architect

The following includes detail from Built Heritage Pty Ltd “Leslie J W Reed”, included in the Dictionary of Unsung Architects, www.builtheritage.com.au.

Leslie Reed was born in Malvern in 1893 and lived and practiced in the area for most of his life. Little is known of his education or training; one of his earliest recorded projects is the Morton-Ray Masonic Temple on Dandenong Road in Malvern East, which he designed in 1922. Reed registered as an architect the following year, at which time he cited a number of recently completed projects, including a block of residential shops in Elwood and alterations to a showroom in Flinders Lane. His practice was primarily focused on residential projects and he employed a range of architectural styles in his designs, including California Bungalow, Spanish Mission and Tudor Revival. By the 1930s, Reed’s practice had expanded to include residential flats, including Elvada at 358 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (1933), 202 Punt Road, Prahran (1936) and Taurea at 90 Toorak Road West, South Yarra (1937), and small industrial projects, where he largely embraced the Moderne style.

Reed continued to practice after World War II, moving from the Malvern area to Ringwood in the late 1950s and taking on the design of single residences in the developing post-war suburbs. He died in 1964 at the age of 71.

Historical Themes

The place illustrates the following themes as outlined in *Victoria’s Framework of Historical Themes*:

- 6 Building towns, cities and the garden state
- 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

Description

Braemar is situated on the south side of Wattletree Road, to the east of Glenferrie Road. It shares a site with two large two-storey c.1970s flats which are L-shaped in plan and are located to the west and to the rear of Braemar.

Braemar comprises a two-storey building of brick construction that is H-shaped in plan and set back from the front (north) boundary beyond a (later) garden wall and hedge. The setback provides a communal garden area from which all four apartments are accessed. Vehicular access is via the driveway to the west of the building, shared with the c.1970s flats.

The building has a hipped terracotta-tiled roof with a single, short centrally placed chimney – featuring a single corbel and a capping course in moulded (coved) brick – and projecting timber-lined eaves. At the central recessed bay to the principal (north) elevation, the eaves also feature exposed rafters. This recessed bay is a distinctive feature of the property, and both the ground and first floor levels of the bay are treated with loggias. Two concrete stairs with rendered balustrades flank the loggias, with side wings projecting beyond these. The arrangement is highly symmetrical.

The clinker brick walls are richly decorated, with semicircular arches emphasised with narrow bricks at the windowheads of the first-floor level and the loggias. Similar narrow bricks are also applied to the windowheads of the ground floor level as a soldier course. The arched upper sections of the first-floor windows are infilled with a tile laid in a basketweave pattern, and a herringbone brick panel is framed in moulded bricks at the first-floor loggia balustrade. Moulded bricks are also used to create a capital detail at the columns of the loggias. Where most windows feature an angled brick sill, some project beyond the wall and are supported on brick corbels.

The fine detailing extends to the timber-framed windows, where small windows, and the upper sashes of double hung windows, feature diamond-shaped fenestration with figured glass triangular panes around a clear central pane. The side (west) elevation features a decorative bay of timber-framed windows and timber-shingle panelling.

Key Features:

- Symmetry across principal (north) elevation
- H-shaped plan form
- Central loggias at ground and first floors, flanked by pairs of external stairs, and centrally placed low chimney
- Decorative brickwork details, including herringbone brick and basketweave tile panels
- Semicircular arches to loggia and first-floor windowheads
- Timber-framed windows, including diamond-pattern window fenestration and figured glass
- Terracotta-tiled hipped roof with projecting eaves
- Face brick walls
- Setback and garden setting to principal (north) elevation.

Intactness/Integrity

Braemar at part of 162-168 Wattletree Road remains highly intact to its original construction in 1932. Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

Comparative Analysis

Braemar at 168 Wattletree Road is of note as a fine and highly intact example of an interwar residential flat development built in the City of Stonnington. It is one of a substantial number of residential flats/maisonettes that were constructed in the municipality in the interwar period.

The development of residential flats and maisonettes in Melbourne gained in popularity following World War I. This was the result of a number of factors, including a shortage of skilled labour, the high cost of building materials, and the difficulties associated with maintaining large estates (Sawyer 1982:33). The requirement

for efficient use of labour and materials led to an increased interest in flat/maisonette development. Shared services and land were considered an attractive prospect for investors.

Wealthy, inner-city suburbs that were infused with character and sited close to public transport and shops were popular locations for flat and maisonette development. Within the City of Stonnington, the highly affluent suburbs of Toorak and South Yarra were particularly sought after for their proximity to the city and a number of substantial flat/maisonette developments were constructed in these suburbs in the 1920s and 1930s. These were often of a grand scale and designed by prominent Melbourne architects.

Flat and maisonette development was popular across the entire municipality in the interwar period, with substantial numbers of these developments also constructed in the suburbs of Prahran, Windsor, Armadale, Kooyong and Malvern. Often of a more modest scale than the 'luxury flats' constructed in Toorak and South Yarra, these developments varied in their scale, layout, planning and architectural design. In keeping with the strong culture of patronage between architects and owners, many of the flats and maisonettes constructed in Stonnington in this period were designed by well-known Melbourne architects.

Within the City of Stonnington, a number of interwar residential flats/maisonettes remain to demonstrate this historic theme and examples of these are included in the Heritage Overlay on an individual basis. Those that are comparable to Braemar include:

- Hillingdon, 383 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (1919), HO436
- Basford Flats, 203 Dandenong Road, Windsor (1919-20), HO433
- Mont Clair, 321 Dandenong Road, Prahran (1921 & 1926), HO434
- Silverton Flats, 698 Orrong Road, Toorak (1927), HO445
- Quantox Flats, 9 Church Street, Toorak (1928-29), HO431
- Koonoona Flats, 754 High Street, Armadale (1933), HO439
- Colywn, 1263 High Street, Malvern (1937), HO440
- Granada Flats, 537 Orrong Road, Armadale (1939), HO444

These properties vary in scale and form and demonstrate a broad range of architectural styles, reflecting the diversity of this building type within the municipality. They are recognised for their high levels of intactness and fine detailing, and as well-designed examples of particular architectural styles.

In a similar manner, Braemar is a well-designed example of an interwar residential flat development and retains a high degree of integrity to clearly demonstrate the characteristics of this building type. Designed by notable architect, Leslie Reed, it is a fine and highly intact example of a residential flat built in the City of Stonnington in the interwar period.

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

Braemar is illustrative of the suburban development of Malvern in the interwar period when a number of residential flats/maisonettes were constructed across the suburb. This type of development was largely a result of increased labour and materials costs following World War I. The impetus for the efficient use of labour and materials led to an increased interest in flat/maisonette development, where shared services and land

were considered an attractive prospect for investors. The flats known as Braemar clearly illustrate this important phase of development of Malvern and the City of Stonnington more broadly.

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

Braemar is a fine and highly intact representative example of an interwar residential flat development in the City of Stonnington. It displays typical features of this building type from this period in Malvern and across Stonnington more broadly, including a substantial two-storey form set on a large site, setbacks to the street frontage to provide a garden setting for the building, face brick walls with fine detailing, and tile-clad hipped roofs. Braemar is notable as a well-resolved example of a residential flat development designed to appear as a single residence, which was a particularly desirable characteristic of this building type in the interwar period.

Criterion E: Importance in displaying particular aesthetic characteristics

Braemar is a well-considered and carefully detailed example of a residential flat development that displays characteristics of the Interwar Mediterranean style. Designed by architect Leslie Reed, the design – with its symmetrical H-shaped plan form and distinctive central arcaded loggia at both the ground and first floor levels of the principal elevation, together with the use of distinctive architectural elements, including textured clinker bricks, herringbone brick patterning, terracotta roof tiles and diamond-pattern glazing, and set within a garden setting – presents a picturesque composition of this architectural style.

Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the place be removed from HO156 (Claremont Avenue Precinct) and be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme on a site-specific basis.

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?	No
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	No

Extent of the Recommended Heritage Overlay

To the extent of the property boundary to the north and east, to the extent of the rear fenced enclosure to the south, and to 3m to the westernmost eaves-line of the 1932 building, as shown in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5. Recommended Extent of Heritage Overlay

References

Built Heritage Pty Ltd “Leslie J W Reed”, included in the *Dictionary of Unsung Architects*, www.builtheritage.com.au.

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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T Sawyer, *Residential flats in Melbourne: the development of a building type to 1950*, 1982.

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