
Rockley Road Precinct

Location

Rockley Road SOUTH YARRA, Stonnington City

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO146

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Rockley Precinct is significant for the manner in which it illustrates the process of the transformation of the 1840s estates along the river between Chapel Street and Williams Road into a prestigious residential area - for the topography which inspired the paintings of Charles McCubbin - for the manner in which the 1937 Como Park Estate responded to Alexandra Avenue and how Melbourne's new attraction to the river created a new urban identity - the unique subdivision design, especially the linking of Rockley Road with Alexandra Avenue by means of a pedestrian walkway .

- the landscaping of the walkway which adopts an approach to urban design that has more in common with harbour-side Sydney suburbs of this era - the contribution of the landscape of the escarpment to the character of the walkway - the high quality and diverse architectural character, principally examples of the inter-war and pre-First World War period which reflect the history of the development and subdivision of Little Rockley, both through the consistent residential character dating from the 1908 Howey Estate, and the more diverse character resulting from Como Park Estate - the contribution of noted designer and landscaper Eric Hammond, architect Verner Fick, architect and developer Howard Lawson, and the influence of Edna Walling .

- for the, informed patronage of Clara Strang and H. H. Henderson and the occupancy by noted graphic designer Gert Selheim - the unusual residential character comprising detached houses, semi detached houses and flats set on large garden allotments with mature landscaping, especially those on the escarpment - - the enclosing

avenue of Planes which links the Toorak Road parkland entry to the significant portion at the northern end of Rockley Road - the overall scale and width of the street, and the position of the urban conservation area on the crest of a hill.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - Rockley Road South Yarra Heritage Overlay Citation HO146, Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd, 2005; Stonnington - Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992, Nigel Lewis & Graeme Butler & Associates, 1992; Stonnington - Conservation Review City of Prahran Volume 3: Urban Conservation Areas, Context Pty Ltd, 1993;
Construction dates	1905,
Other Names	Centred on Rockley Road, South Yarra,
Hermes Number	30775
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Rockley Road is a residential locality characterised by the street plantings of large Plane trees which integrate the diverse elements within the whole streetscape from Toorak Road. The road dates from the subdivision of the Little Rockley Estate in 1908, which created Rockley Road. It is defined by housing from two distinct phases, post 1908 and post 1937, as well as by the redevelopment for flats in the post 1960 era in much of the street. The entry to Rockley Road from Toorak Road is flanked by two parks associated with the 1908 subdivision and overlain with subsequent plantings more typical of the post Second World War period.

However, a coherent sequence of post Federation and inter-war houses and flats remain at the northern end of Rockley Road, and extending back a short distance along the eastern side. These create an interesting grouping that reflects the architectural styles and taste of the post 1908 and post 1937 phases of subdivision, and are now included in the Rockley Precinct Heritage Overlay. The precinct commences on the crest of the hill and slopes gently to the north, and includes the steep escarpment above the river.

The dominant character of the Rockley Precinct is created by the dramatic escarpment and its mature landscape character, the walkway, the architectural qualities of the building stock and associated landscaping, and the enclosing avenue of Plane trees within Rockley Road. The houses and flats within the HO area are all visually separated on large allotments with mature trees creating a garden suburb character. The diverse architectural styles range from buildings that characterise the post Federation period, the Arts and Crafts cum English Domestic Revival styles and Moderne styles. The area serves to illustrate and demonstrate the diversity of architecture that was popular during the early twentieth century period.

The houses that remain from the 1908 Howey Estate subdivision are Nos 36, 38, 40, 42, and 44 all contribute to the significant character of the Rockley Precinct. These were mainly built as detached brick villas of a style common throughout the eastern suburbs in a post Federation style. One is from the interwar period, while another modernist house is from the Post World War II period.

The walkway, most of the houses, and all the semi-detached houses and flats of the 1937 Como Park Estate provide key components of the significant character of the Rockley Precinct, and are in a relatively intact condition.

The public walkway comprises a series of concrete steps that links the northern end of Rockley Road to Alexandra Avenue. The walkway has the most distinctive landscape character where it climbs the escarpment adjacent to the two flanking Rockley Road properties, the semi-detached pair at No 56, and the house at No 51.

Their entrances face the walkway and have their main pedestrian entrances off it. This makes the walkway the principal street frontage for these properties, and these houses are designed to face the walkway and not Rockley Road. This relationship is reinforced by the related design of the terraced landscaping of these properties, as well as their fences and mature trees. This provides a rich landscape character to the escarpment adjacent to the walkway.

There is sequence of concrete steps and landings, with raised planting beds on the west side, occupying the western half of the 3.6 metre wide walkway reservation. These are mainly constructed with Lilydale brown stone retaining walls which link with the design and materials of the terraced landscaping of N051. By contrast, the almost level lower section mainly derives its character from views along it. The lower section of the walkway adjacent to the Alexandra Avenue houses has now been reduced in width when the planting beds were incorporated into the adjacent property to the west. It is *now* only the 1.8 metre width of the pavement, and is faced by paling fences.

No 49 Rockley Road is a block of modest clinker brick and tiled roof flats of an interwar design character but few features of individual significance.

No 51 Rockley Road, *La Palaise*, is a large house is of a very high quality picturesque English Domestic Revival design, unusual for its combined Arts and Crafts and Moderne influences.

The key features of No 51 house are the asymmetrical building form, steep hipped roof with terra cotta shingles, massive chimneys, richly detailed clinker and manganese brickwork and surprisingly, steel framed windows. It also had some unusual and distinctive detailing. The massive roof is a local landmark visible from Alexandra Avenue and from across the Yarra River. Its terraced garden with mature trees provides a strong linkage with the walkway landscape, and has the character of the work of Edna Walling.

No 52 is a block of three semi-detached clinker brick tiled houses of an English Domestic Revival cum Arts and Crafts style. It has many similarities with No 56, but because it is on level ground, it has a more regular configuration and a less exciting landscape character.

No 54 is a block of flats in red brickworks and, render and concrete, with the trademark rounded corner windows found in Stratton Heights and other flats by Howard Lawson of his later Moderne period. The principal side elevation faces toward the walkway over No 56. It also has the roof top terrace and perforated baluster design of Lawson's other flat projects.

No 56 comprises two semi-detached houses, each facing the walkway and set on different levels as the site plunges steeply. It is built of matching materials and shares many common design details with No 52. Both also share several unusual brickwork details with No 51, built the following year. The large northern chimney provides a landmark to the escarpment. Both Nos 52 and 56 have wide eaves, hipped terra cotta roofs, and simple but well proportioned fenestration. The building demonstrates English Domestic Revival characteristics with Arts and Crafts influences.

The two houses in Alexandra Avenue within the precinct have been subject to alterations, but still contribute to the interwar residential character of the walkway.

Local Historical Themes

8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion 8.1.3 The end of an era - mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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