

# MENLO



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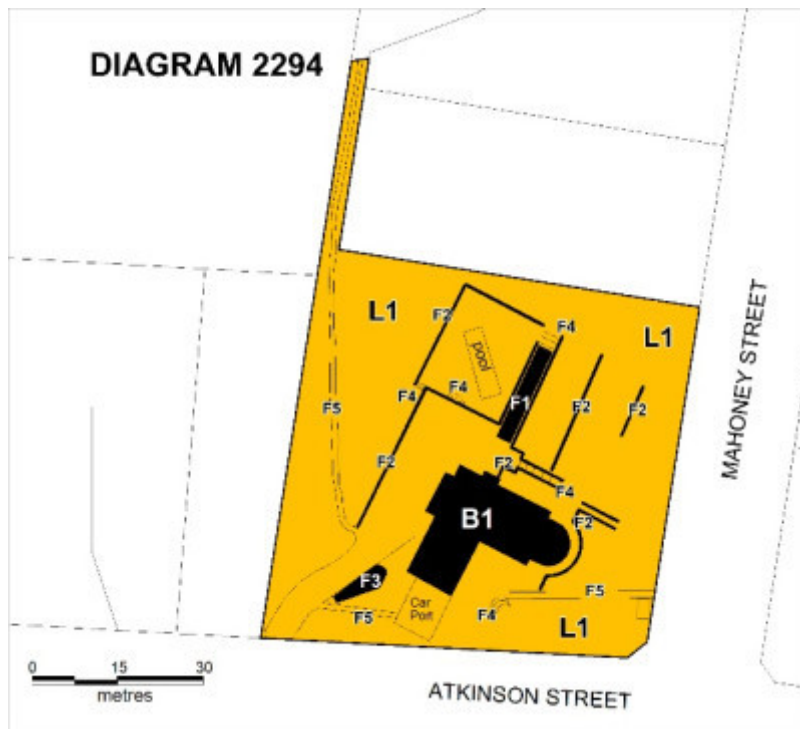
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Menlo Plan

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### Location

17-25 ATKINSON STREET TEMPLESTOWE, MANNINGHAM CITY

### Municipality

MANNINGHAM CITY

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2294

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO203

### VHR Registration

April 5, 2012

### Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

Menlo consists of a two storey brick Inter-war Old English style house with a surrounding garden designed in the early 1930s by the eminent landscape designer Edna Walling. The property is located beside the Yarra River at Templestowe, 15 km east of Melbourne.

The house and the garden were built in about 1933 for the sisters Evelyn and Doris Notcutt. Evelyn had studied horticulture at Burnley Horticultural School, which Edna Walling also attended between 1916 and 1917. The property was then 4.5 hectares and was known as Orwell Park, which appears to have been the name of their family property in Wangaratta. The garden is known to have been designed by Edna Walling, though there are no surviving plans. The stonework was carried out by Eric Hammond, who was the contractor for almost all of her landscaping works. The architect of the house is not known. In the early 1950s the Notcutt sisters subdivided the property, sold off the house and 0.8 ha on the east of the site, and built a new house for themselves on the adjacent property. The old house, renamed Menlo, was owned by the Benjamin family until 1998. In 2000 Menlo underwent further subdivision, and two lots were sold on the northern part of the site where the tennis court had been located. The house and all of the structural stonework of the original Walling garden around it were retained within the Menlo property boundary. The property was sold again in 2008, by which time the condition of the garden had deteriorated but the structural elements were still largely intact.

Menlo now comprises a two-storey brick house and surrounding garden on a 0.45 ha site sloping down to the Yarra River. The house is in the south-east corner of the site, and is approached by the main drive, bordered by a low stone wall and curved garden borders, past a raised stone pond and opens out to a wide gravel terrace bordered by low stone walls which provides a forecourt to the ground storey of the house. The garden is divided up into a series of terraces with stone retaining walls and steps. The dominant architectural structure in the garden is an elaborate pergola of grand proportions with typical Walling-style stone pillars supported on each side by stone retaining walls and topped with sawn timber. This is aligned with the main entrance to the house. The swimming pool below the main terrace was added by the Benjamin family. An outstanding tree is a rare mature White Swamp Oak (*Quercus bicolor*) which overlooks the swimming pool and main terrace and frames the views towards the river. From this terrace a wide stone staircase leads up through several smaller terraces, where the gardens retain Walling's dense plantings of Magnolias, Camellias, Malus, Buddleja, Cotoneaster, Viburnum, Philadelphus and Spiraea species. On the first terrace there is an open strip of lawn bordered by a row of citrus trees (Cumquat, Grapefruit, Orange and a rare Chinese Bitter Orange). The rear courtyard is the most altered section of the garden, although some paving, curved steps, retaining walls, a tea tree fence and the remains of a rose garden remain, and the plantings are reminiscent of Walling's style. To the north-west is a 'wild' area without any structural elements, on a steep slope with a pathway leading down to the river.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Kulin Nation.

How is it significant?

Menlo is of historical, aesthetic, and scientific (botanical) significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Menlo is historically significant as an early example of a highly structured garden designed by Edna Walling, one of Australia's most important and influential garden designers of the twentieth century. She was also a popular writer, talented photographer and important landscape critic and conservationist. Menlo is one of the finest and most intact of Walling's structural gardens, in which stonework structures dominate the design and divide the separate compartments. The stonework in the garden was constructed by Eric Hammond, who was the sole contractor for almost all her jobs. The garden has been subdivided from its original 4.8 ha to 0.45 ha, but the area around the house retains all of the original structural elements and plantings.

Menlo is aesthetically significant as a demonstration of Edna Walling's design skills, in both the structural elements and use of plants. Walling is renowned for her use of stone, which she used to give structure to the garden and was then softened with dense plantings. This is demonstrated on the steeply sloping site at Menlo by

the formal structures such as the stone pillars and timber pergola, stone walls, paving and steps. The long and substantial pergola, the wide formal steps and retaining walls, and the straight and curved steps in the garden are of exceptional craftsmanship and quality, rarely seen in other gardens in Victoria. The wild garden to the west demonstrates the importance of such areas as a contrast to the more structured parts in Walling's garden designs. Menlo is significant for the association between the house and the garden, which was always important to Walling.

Menlo is of scientific (botanical) significance for its collection of Edna Walling's signature plants, including *Pittosporum*, *Syzygium*, *Acmena*, *Waterhousea*, *Magnolia*, *Camellia*, *Malus*, *Buddleja*, *Cotoneaster*, *Viburnum*, *Syringa*, *Cydonia*, *Crataegus*, *Berberis*, *Kolkwitzia*, *Rosa*, *Buxus*, *Wisteria*, *Philadelphus* and *Spiraea* species. The Chinese Bitter Orange is rare, and the mature White Swamp Oak, *Quercus bicolor*, is of an outstanding size and rare in Victoria.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive

Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

## Landscape

- \* The process of gardening, including mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead shrubs and replanting the same species or cultivar, disease and weed control, and maintenance to care for existing plants.
- \* Repairs, conservation, and maintenance to hard landscape elements, buildings and structures, fountains and monuments, steps, paths, paths and gutters, drainage and irrigation systems, edging, fences and gates, and pergola.
- \* Removal of dead or dangerous trees and vegetation, works to maintain fire safety and to conserve significant buildings and structures and emergency works, provided a report is submitted to the Executive Director within 21 days.
- \* Replanting the same plant species which conserves the significant landscape character and values including specimen trees, avenues, rows, shrubberies, flower beds, and lawns, provided a list and plan is submitted to the Executive Director for approval.
- \* Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373-1996.
- \* Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970-2009
- \* Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or services, outside the canopy edge of significant trees in accordance with .AS4970 and on the condition that works do not impact on archaeological features or deposits.
- \* Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*
- \* Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.
- \* Repainting the same colour of previously painted surfaces

Interior works: Works to the interior of the house are permit exempt.

## Theme

6. Building towns cities and the garden state 9. Shaping cultural and creative life

Construction dates	1933,
Architect/Designer	Walling, Edna,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	Orwell Park,
Hermes Number	5567
Property Number	

## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

**Edna Margaret Walling** (1895-1973)

La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, H96.150/278

Edna Walling was born in York, England, moved to New Zealand in 1912 with her family, and to Melbourne in 1914. She studied at the School of Horticulture, Burnley, and in 1917 began work as a gardener around Melbourne. She was asked by an architect to plan a garden, with more commissions following, and by the early 1920s she had built a flourishing practice in garden design. She developed a sophisticated style, which attracted an equally sophisticated clientele, and rapidly became the leading exponent of the art in Victoria, and her reputation spread to other States. Her regular gardening columns (1926-46) in *Australian Home Beautiful* and other magazines enhanced her reputation and extended her influence.

Walling's design idiom matured in the mid-1920s and changed little during her career. To some extent, she emulated the styles of Spanish and Italian gardens and the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll in Britain. The gardens she created typically exhibited a strong architectural character. For clients in the wealthy suburbs of Melbourne and on country estates, her designs included grand architectural features - walls, pergolas, stairs, parterres, pools and colonnades - woven into a formal geometry; but she always found a space for a 'wild' (unstructured) section. As her standing increased, she took up commissions in South Australia and New South Wales.

For clients with more modest means, Walling's approach was more relaxed, relying on curving lawns and garden beds to give the illusion of greater space. But rarely were there no stone walls or other structural features. Whether the garden was big or small, she created a succession of 'pictures'. Her mastery of plants and their visual and ecological relationships was impressive. Her gardens, no matter how formal, were clothed by a soft and consistent palette of plants. She favoured greens and used other colours sparingly, mostly in pastel tones or white. For many clients she produced an exquisite water-colour plan of the garden as a means of conveying her proposals. Most of her gardens were constructed by Eric Hammond.

In the early 1920s Walling had acquired land at Mooroolbark where she built a house for herself, known as Sonning. Here she lived and worked, establishing her nursery and gathering around her a group of like-minded people for whom she designed picturesque 'English' cottages and gardens. She named the area Bickleigh Vale village, and it remains an extraordinary experiment in urban development.

By the 1940s Walling's was a household name and she capitalized on her popularity by publishing four successful books: *Gardens in Australia* (1943); *Cottage and Garden in Australia* (1947); *A Gardener's Log* (1948); and *The Australian Roadside* (1952). Her influence on twentieth century gardening in Australia was enormous. The visual impact of the hundreds of gardens she created, her extensive writing, and the respect she commanded from those with whom she worked, including Glen Wilson, Ellis Stones and Eric Hammond, had a considerable effect on the next generation. In the 1980s and 1990s she was to become almost a cult figure for many Australian gardeners and a number of books were published about her work.

#### Select Bibliography

P. Watts, *The Gardens of Edna Walling* (Melbourne 1981)

B. Hall and J. Mather, *Australian Women Photographers 1840-1960* (Melbourne 1986)

T. Dixon and J. Churchill, *Gardens in Time* (Sydney 1988)

T. Dixon and J. Churchill, *The Vision of Edna Walling* (Melbourne 1998)

Edna Walling papers (State Library of Victoria)

#### HISTORY OF PLACE

The house and garden at Menlo were constructed for the two Notcutt sisters, Evelyn and Doris. The two sisters feature in the social pages of the *Argus* up to the 1940s. Evelyn Notcutt was a graduate of the Burnley Horticultural School (*Argus* 15 August 1941), which Edna Walling also attended in c1914-6. It is not known when Evelyn attended Burnley, but it could have been about the same time as Walling. Both sisters were also active in the early kindergarten movement, Doris being vice-president of the Lady Gowrie Kindergarten at Carlton, and Evelyn being treasurer of the Keele Street Free Kindergarten and also was involved in the establishing of vegetable plots at the various kindergartens run by the Kindergarten Union.

The property was originally called Orwell Park (which appears to have been the name of the family property in Wangaratta, see *Argus* 25 August 1931) and was on 11.75 acres (4.8 ha) of land beside the Yarra River at Templestowe, with the land sloping down towards the river and with views over the valley, which was then less heavily treed. A letter from the shire secretary, dated 23 September 1933, makes reference to the planting of trees on the Notcutt property indicating that planning for the garden was then in progress. There are no surviving garden plans for Menlo, but it is known to have been designed by Edna Walling, and is typical of her structural gardens and of her plantings. The stonework was done by Eric Hammond, who was responsible for most of Walling's stonework. The double storey Old English style brick house was built at about the same time as the garden, but the architect is not known. The house is set on the south-east corner of the block and the land slopes down behind it north-west towards the Yarra River.

In the early 1950s the Notcutt sisters subdivided their estate, said to be because the house and large garden became too much for them to manage. They sold off 2 acres, including the house and the bulk of the garden known today as Menlo, and moved next door to number 15, where a house, also called Orwell Park, was designed for them by Kevin Borland (now demolished). Today 15 Atkinson Street is said to retain some of Edna Walling's 1930s design for the Notcutts, including the twin stone pillars which are believed to have once marked the entrance to the Menlo estate (mentioned in a report on Menlo by Melissa King in HV file).

The 2 acres subdivided off was sold to the Benjamin family, who renamed it Menlo. They were sympathetic to the integrity of the original design and owned it until 1998, when it was again sold. In January 2000 an application was received by Manningham Council for a three lot subdivision. Two lots were sold on the northern part of the site where the original tennis court was located, and houses were subsequently built on them. The house and the structural stonework of the original Walling garden were retained within the new property boundary. The property, now consisting of only 0.45 ha of land was sold again in 2008.

## Assessment Against Criteria

### a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Menlo is historically significant as an early and intact example of a highly structured garden designed by Edna Walling, one of Australia's finest and most influential garden designers. Her articles in *Australian Home Beautiful* from 1926 and her books made her work known around Australia. The stonework in the garden was constructed by Eric Hammond, who was the sole contractor for almost all of Walling's gardens.

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.

Menlo is of scientific (botanical) significance for its collection of Edna Walling's signature plants, including *Pittosporum*, *Syzygium*, *Acmena*, *Waterhousea*, *Magnolia*, *Camellia*, *Malus*, *Buddleja*, *Cotoneaster*, *Viburnum*, *Syringa*, *Cydonia*, *Crataegus*, *Berberis*, *Kolkwitzia*, *Rosa*, *Buxus*, *Wisteria*, *Philadelphus* and *Spiraea* species. The Chinese Bitter Orange is rare, and the mature White Swamp Oak, *Quercus bicolor*, is of an outstanding size and is rare in Victoria.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

Menlo is aesthetically significant as a demonstration of Edna Walling's design skills, in both the structural elements and her use of plants. The garden has been subdivided from its original 4.8 ha to 0.45 ha, but the area around the house retains all of the original structural elements and plantings. Walling is renowned for her use of stone, which she used to give structure to the garden and was then softened with dense plantings. This is demonstrated on the steeply sloping site at Menlo by the formal structures such as the stone pillars and timber pergola, stone walls, paving and steps. The long and substantial pergola, the wide formal steps and retaining walls, and the straight and curved steps in the garden are of exceptional craftsmanship and quality, rarely seen in other gardens in Victoria. Menlo is significant for the association between the house and the garden, which was always important to Walling.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

Menlo is associated with its designer, Edna Walling, Australia's most significant landscape designer, who dominated garden design in Victoria for over forty years from 1920.

## **Plaque Citation**

Designed in the early 1930s by the eminent garden designer Edna Walling, this is one of the finest and most intact of her structural gardens, in which stonework dominates. It retains a collection of Walling's signature plants.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 2294 held by the Executive Director, being all of Lot 1 on Title Plan PS504963

2. All the building marked B1, and features marked F1-5 on Diagram 2294 held by the Executive Director.

General: The landscape, the mature trees, the paths, the driveway.

B1 House

F1 Pergola

F2 Stone retaining walls (all stone retaining walls on the site)

F3 Pond

F4 Stone steps (all stone steps on the site)

F5 Pathways (all pathways on the site)

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*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.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*