

Former M H Baillieu House



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Orrong Road elevation, c1928.



Rear elevation, c1928.



Garden terraces, c1928.



Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 729 Orrong Road, Toorak.

Location

729 Orrong Road TOORAK, STONNINGTON CITY

Municipality

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO510

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Note that the relevant HERCON criteria and themes from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (TEH) are shown in brackets.

What is Significant?

The former M H Baillieu House, 729 Orrong Road, Toorak is a large Georgian revival style house designed by celebrated Australian architect Harold Desbrowe Annear. It was built in 1926 for Maurice Baillieu, a member of one of Melbourne's (and Australia's) best known dynastic families. The house site was created through subdivision of the nineteenth century Trawalla mansion estate.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original external form, materials and detailing, particularly to the facade.
- The high level of external intactness including the unpainted state of face brick elements.
- The legibility of the original built form from the public realm.
- The general absence of modern vehicle accommodation in the front and side setbacks.
- The domestic garden setting - but not the fabric of the garden apart from the following elements surviving from Annear's original garden plan: the terrace and circular steps at the rear of the house and the terrace wall running east-west alongside the sunken garden.

All modern fabric, including recent landscape elements, is not significant.

How is it significant?

The former M H Baillieu House is of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The former M H Baillieu House is architecturally significant as an outstanding and largely intact interwar Georgian revival style house displaying Harold Desbrowe Annear's flamboyant and idiosyncratic approach to domestic design in this idiom (Criterion E, TEH 8.4.2 Functional, eccentric and theatrical - experimentation and innovation in architecture). It is one of the most spectacular of the Toorak town houses designed by Annear in the 1920s for his wealthy clientele (Criterion F).

Hermes Number 197686

Property Number

Physical Description 1

The former M H Baillieu house is a substantial double-storey residence the design of which combines a variety of classically-derived elements to produce an exuberant Georgian revival character. Walls are of pale red brick of an unusual elongated dimension with rendered dressings. The roof is hipped and clad in slate and has broad eaves supported on exposed rafters. The composition of the facade is not strictly symmetrical but achieves carefully balanced asymmetry. All ornament is focused on a central pedimented bay rising above the main entry, which is defined by an arched rendered canopy with a coffered soffit. The entry canopy rests on solid piers with ornamental console brackets and small oval windows to each side. Perched above the entry canopy is a small curved balcony, accessed from a slender window with an elegant swan neck pediment. The main triangular pediment above is adorned with an Adamesque swagged *oeil de boeuf* window. A first floor Venetian window is positioned off axis, to the right of the entry bay, marking the location of an internal stair. This window and others are multi-paned in the Georgian manner. The remainder of the facade is left relatively free of ornament other than brick quoining at the corners. Windows have deep sills and rendered lintels creating a strong horizontal emphasis.

The house is substantially intact in terms of its presentation to the street. An addition to the south side is modestly scaled and detailed to match Annear's design. Urn finials are missing from the front first floor balcony and most window frames on the facade appear to have been replaced, albeit with sympathetically detailed timber framed casements. Various works were carried out in 2008/2009 including demolition of some internal walls and floors, the replacement of most of the rear ground floor windows and a double storey addition at south-east corner of the house.[1]

The property retains its original balustraded front fence and original garage in front setback. The rendered fence on the Robertson Street boundary dates from c2009.

Extensive landscaping has taken place in the garden in recent years. It retains the broad format of Annear's original compartmentalised plan, having three main areas: an open lawn area behind the house, a rear tennis court bordered by a cypress hedge, and a lower sunken garden along the north side of the property. The latter originally had a long stone path flanked by strips of lawn and an herbaceous perennial border, but this area has been almost entirely paved over. A relatively recent aerial photograph shows widespread earthworks in this area and a large swimming pool under construction. The original character of the main lawn has been altered by the construction of a large central ornamental pond and stone paving around the perimeter. The original balustraded terrace and circular steps at the rear of the house appear to remain intact. Annear's plan for the garden shows a complex pattern of concentric paths radiating out from the circular steps. This path layout does not appear on the earliest available aerial photograph of the site (dated 1945) and was presumably never instituted.

[1] City of Stonnington Building File BL 1092/982501/0

Local Historical Themes

The former M H Baillieu house, 729 Orrong Road, Toorak illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006):

6.3 Constructing Capital City Economies

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

8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

8.4.2 Functional, eccentric and theatrical - experimentation and innovation in architecture

The house is of some historical interest for its association with the Baillieu family (TEH 6.3 Constructing Capital City Economies). The house derives additional historical interest as evidence of a major phase of development that took place in the 1920s and 1930s when many of Toorak's grand nineteenth century mansion estates were subdivided to create prestigious residential enclaves (TEH 8.1.3 The end of an era - mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century). It also illustrates the role of large architect designed houses generally, and Georgian revival style houses in particular, as symbols of wealth, status and taste for Melbourne's middle and upper classes of the interwar period (TEH 8.4.1 - Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion).

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/>