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# House



20 Wallace Ave, Toorak



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## Location

20 Wallace Avenue TOORAK, STONNINGTON CITY

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO576

## Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 25, 2016

### What is significant?

The villa at 20 Wallace Avenue, Toorak is significant. It was constructed in 1890 and comprises a single-storey house of rendered masonry which combines elements of the Italianate and Swiss Chalet styles. The facade is symmetrically massed and rendered with a high hipped roof, return verandah and gablets to mark the central entrance.

It was occupied from 1931 by William Dunstan (1895-1957) who won the Victoria Cross (VC) for his heroism at Gallipoli. Dunstan became the general manager and director of the *Herald* newspaper. It was later the home of his son, well-known journalist Keith Dunstan OAM (1925-2013). It remained in the Dunstan family for almost thirty years.

It is significant to the extent of its nineteenth century external form and fabric.

The modern additions to the rear and front fence are not significant.

### **How is it significant?**

The villa at 20 Wallace Avenue, Toorak is of local aesthetic significance and rarity value to the City of Stonnington.

### **Why is it significant?**

Aesthetically, 20 Wallace Avenue is a very unusual and creative blend of the Italianate style with Swiss Chalet detailing, illustrating a transition from the Victorian period to the Federation. The treatment of the walls below the verandah is typical of the Italianate style, which so dominated the Victorian era, with rendered masonry, a moulded beltcourse at impost level, segmentally arched windows and doors with hood mouldings. The rendered chimneys with cornices are also typical of that style. The house departs from the Italianate norm, however, in its roof and verandah. Instead of the low-line M-profile hipped roof, typical of the Italianate, it has a striking high hipped roof with a flat top and exposed rafter tails, in keeping with the steep pitched roofs used for Swiss Chalet houses. Other Swiss Chalet features include the use of multiple projecting gables to mark the entrance and to side elevations, ornamented with exposed purlins and decorative eaves brackets. Of special note is the return verandah. The verandah gablet has decorative trusswork, as did the main gables (mostly lost). The timber posts have deeply chamfered sides and nail-head motifs at regular intervals. The deep eaves of the verandah pediment are supported on decorative timber brackets which are a particular identifying feature of the Swiss Chalet style. Between the posts of the pediment and the rest of the verandah are intricate scrolled timber brackets. While not a full-fledged example of a Swiss Chalet, it is a rare example of a Victorian house exhibiting this style both in Stonnington and Victorian more widely. (Criteria B & E)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - City of Stonnington Victorian Houses Study, City of Stonnington, 2016;
Hermes Number	200157
Property Number	

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## **Physical Description 1**

20 Wallace Avenue is a single-storey residence occupying an allotment mid-block on the east side of Wallace Avenue, between Douglas and Jackson streets in Toorak. It has shallow side boundaries and is setback from the street behind a mid-sized front garden and a modern fence. The former residence now forms part of the larger Geelong Grammar School Campus which takes up most of the block between Douglas and Jackson streets. The former front garden has been partially taken up by concrete accessibility ramps.

Constructed in 1890, the building is distinctive for its combination of a Victorian form with unusual detailing, illustrating the transition to eclectic Federation influences. It is symmetrically massed to the front, with a central entrance marked by a small gable to the main hipped roof and a secondary trussed gable to the verandah. The shallow-pitched ogee-profile verandah, clad in corrugated iron, returns on both sides, terminating at projecting gabled wings on the side elevations. The slate-clad roof has a high hip with a flat top (the apex clad in metal). Both the main roof and the verandah have exposed rafter tails to the otherwise plain timber fascia. The tall chimneys are cement rendered with heavy cornices that are typical of the Italianate style, topped with terracotta

chimney pots.

The front gable is dominated by a large circular vent with a geometric pattern incised into the surrounding render finish. It has lost the superimposed decorative truss and finial depicted in the c1970s photograph taken by the Committee for Urban Action (Figure 3). The side gables are steeply pitched and have a picturesque truss superimposed above deeply recessed openings that likely contain decorative glazing. The trusses visible to the south elevation may be incomplete.

Below the eaves, the return verandah appears to be intact and is a distinctive feature of the building. The timber posts have deeply chamfered sides and nail-head motifs at regular intervals. The deep eaves of the verandah gablet are supported on decorative timber brackets, suggesting a Swiss Chalet influence. Between the posts of the gablet and the rest of the verandah are intricate scrolled timber brackets. It appears that they were covered with timber weatherboards in the 1970s and 1980s (see Figure 2 and Figure 3), but have since been re-exposed. The segmentally arched double-hung sash windows have run hood moulds that sit on a continuous moulded stringcourse.

The elevated verandah has had new safety railings installed in a sympathetic manner. Beneath the verandah, the rendered walls have been painted. The rear wings of the house are painted brick.

The former residence appears to be largely intact as viewed and appreciated from Wallace Avenue. Aerials in 2016 show a large addition to the rear of the building that was most likely constructed as part of the conversion to school use.

## Local Historical Themes

This place illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, rev. 2009):

8.2 Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal

8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

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

8.10 The arts

20 Wallace Avenue, Toorak is of historical interest for its association with the Dunstan family. Firstly, Victoria Cross (VC) recipient, William Dunstan (1895-1957) and later his son, Keith Dunstan OAM (1925-2013).

9.3 Developing the private school system

*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/>*