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# Helenslea



Helenslea, 181 Kooyong Road, Toorak

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## Location

181 Kooyong Road Toorak, STONNINGTON CITY

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO484

## Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The single-storey bichromatic brick villa at No. 181 Kooyong Road, Toorak is a rare example of the architectural transition between the Victorian and the Federation styles which evolved in Melbourne around the turn of the nineteenth century.

While the plan form is more Victorian as is the joinery, the plasterwork and mantels and grates have typical Edwardian detailing and appear to be highly intact. Interiors of this era are less numerous and are consequently rarer than Victorian or Federation interiors, moreover highly intact ones.

On stylistic and historical grounds it is almost certainly a private commission undertaken by Public Works Department architect Samuel Edward Bindley for his later brother-in-law Walter Murray Buntine.

Elements which are not of any significance are the front fence and gates, semi-circular driveway, side driveway and garage, rear addition (kitchen, informal dining, family room, laundry, store, bathroom and bedroom), swimming pool and cabana.

How is it significant?

No. 181 Kooyong Road, Toorak is of local historical and aesthetic/architectural significance.

Why is it significant?

Historically the subdivision and Walter Murray Buntine's houses are demonstrative of an early subdivision of part of one of the mansion estates, a phase of development which became widespread in the twentieth century and which lead to the breaking up and demolition of almost all of the great mansions which characterised the prestigious nature of the area. The private subdivision of the land from 'Ottawa' by Charles Officer, James Grice and Walter Murray Buntine, all prominent Melburnians, was one of the first expressions of the subdivision of the large estates and by the owner as compared more typically by development company. It is also a rare, almost unique, example of a villa development in the 1890s in this area where and when the mansions still dominated.

It is also an example of a standard of accommodation appropriate for the professional and/or gentleman class in an area which was dominated by the mansions of the super-rich.

It is also almost the last vestige of the late nineteenth century in Kooyong Road between Malvern and Toorak Roads and the immediate environs which were dominated by mansions and which is recalled in real-time by James Paxton.

The architectural characteristics displayed at No. 181 Kooyong Road is a fusion of the characteristics of the Victorian and Federation styles, the latter which was evolving in Melbourne at the turn of the nineteenth century. The design of No. 181 Kooyong Road looks back to the Victorian style but also tentatively embraces the Federation style and in this it is probably more an expression of the owner's (Buntine's) own taste given that the other houses he owned are more clearly expressive of the new Federation style. The house at No. 181 Kooyong Road is a comparatively rare example of a transitional style, firmly rooted in the Victorian Italianate style but experimenting with the new Federation style. It is a signal of a brief era of transition between the two styles of which there are few examples in comparison with the more numerous straightforward Victorian or Federation/Edwardian designs.

The design of this house is a well resolved and carefully designed composition which compares well with examples of similar-sized houses of the same era in Stonnington and comparable heritage precincts elsewhere. It is of a calibre which is indicative of a professional hand (architect) and it is probably the work of Samuel Edward Bindley, and a rare example of his domestic work in an oeuvre domination by schools, barracks and other public buildings.

The interiors are highly original and intact and given that many examples of Federation villas, even fewer with a Federation overlay superimposed over a Victorian form have had their interiors modernised, the interiors are quite rare and there is potential, because of their intactness, to yield further information about historical decorative schemes of the Federation style, about which comparatively little is known presently.

Heritage Study/Consultant Stonnington - 181 Kooyong Road, Toorak, Anthemion Consultancies, 2016;

Construction dates 1888,

Hermes Number 200288

## Physical Description 1

The dwelling was inspected from the street in December 2015 and January 2016.

No. 181 Kooyong Road is a single storey, tuckpointed, bichromatic brick villa, which is L-shaped in plan and with a projecting rear wing and a cellar. Both Victorian and Federation-style features are combined in its design which are demonstrative of the transition between the two eras of architecture.

The plan form is more typical of a Victorian villa than a Federation-style one which may reflect Buntine's personal taste. There is a central hallway with rooms opening off on either side, the principal rooms being at the front and to the west. Unusually the front part of the hallway is more of a vestibule than a hall which would be more typical in a conventional Victorian villa. Behind (west) of the main front wing which is generally square in plan, the hallway opens to another vestibule which was a transition between the main wing and the service area. The stair to the cellar runs off the vestibule. Accessed also from the vestibule are three bedrooms and a bathroom which are located in the original part of the house as per the MMBW plan. Along the south half of the site is a wing which may have retained the south wall of the original rear wing in this location but more likely it is completely new. It contains a kitchen, laundry, store, bathroom, bedroom and an informal dining and family room. A swimming pool abuts the rear boundary. Originally the closet, washhouse and what is likely to have been a shed were located in the south-west corner of the site where the pool cabana is now. Another closet was located in the north-west corner in the corner of a fenced L-shaped yard which was probably a fowl run. At this time 'Genista' to the south had a large fowl run and 'Woodbine' had a cow shed.

The front wing is L-shaped in plan with a transverse ridge running north-south and terminating in another ridge running east-west at the south, above a projecting wing which has a canted bay window beneath a gable, edged in timber bargeboards, and all supported on decorative timber brackets. The apex of the gable is infilled with timber strapwork and stuccoed panels above a deep stuccoed frieze. There is another gablet with less detailing, at the north end of the verandah. In general terms this is similar to the arrangement at No. 177 Kooyong Road. To the north the facade is set back behind an integral timber-framed verandah, where the main roof face continues down over the verandah.

The verandah is paved with tessellated tiles and has a bluestone edge. The valence is cast iron and the soffit appears to be lined with probably beaded boards. The timber framing may have been reconstructed.

The visible roof faces are clad with grey slate and have terracotta cresting. The internal faces appear to be corrugated steel. Two large chimneys are visible from the front and which have decorative corbelled brick caps and brisk strapwork below and terracotta chimney pots. Not visible from the street are four more chimneys. It appears that there were seven originally - the one to a bedroom on the south side appears to have been demolished when the rear addition was constructed. In seven of the rooms in the main wing and also in the front vestibule are chimney breasts.

The facade walls are constructed from tuckpointed red brick and splay out at the bottom approximately three courses above a bluestone plinth. Dark brown Hawthorn bricks have been used for the visible window voussoirs, and most probably for all door and window voussoirs, and for a decorative band running at sill height and below the voussoirs. Window and door sills are bluestone and the window sills have scalloped decorative panels beneath. Side and rear walls appear to be plain red brick and the window opening are conventional.

The canted bay window has a pair of vertically-oriented, timber-framed sash windows in the central bay and similar single windows in the side bays. In the facade there is a single window adjacent to the entrance door and a pair further north. The entrance doorcase is timber with a sidelight above timber panelling and a plain glazed highlight above. The door is a typical timber, four-panel door. At the north end of the verandah there is also a bay projecting slightly which appears to be original and which contains a half-glazed, two-leaf door.

From the plan form the dwelling appears almost completely intact insofar as the main front wing is concerned other than for partial demolition of a wall between what is now a formal sitting room and a dining room on the south side.

There are two vehicle entrances from Kooyong Road which are connected by a "circular" drive. There appears to be a car port along the side driveway past the bay window.

The interiors are very much as described by James Paxton. The ceilings of the principal rooms, at least the entrance vestibule, drawing room and dining room, are set out in moulded panels and with moulded cornices below, frieze areas above presumed timber picture rails. The entrance vestibule also has a decorative, simple "carved" timber screen at the west end separating the rear part of the hall. In the north-west corner is an angled chimney breast with a decorative arch in which the original decorative timber mantel and tiled cast iron grate would have been located. The lower portion of the walls have a panelled dado and deep moulded timber skirtings and the principal doors have moulded timber architraves and overdoors and what appear to be single-leaf six-panel doors.

This room may have always been a bedroom. The single-leaf, four-panelled door on the left leads to an ensuite which is in the same location as a bath shown on the MMBW Plan. A kitchen sink is also marked compared with a lavatory (basin) at Nos. 175 - 179 Kooyong Road and No. 68 Albany Road. This may be a mistake by the MMBW surveyor or might indicate that the house was "subdivided" into separate flats at that time. The cornice, picture rail, joinery, mantel, grate and hearth all appear to be original but the flat ceiling may have replaced an original panelled ceiling or it may be original in the Victorian style.

The drawing, now sitting, room retains its panelled ceiling, deep cornice, picture rail and all or some of the deep moulded timber skirting. The wall at the rear has been partly demolished to connect to the abutting room. The angled chimney breast in an arched niche, finished with a moulded edge, keystone, corbels and chamfered corner below is unusual but also is indicative of an original high quality interior. The timber mantel, grate and hearth appear to be original.

The dining room has retained its decorative plasterwork (strapped ceiling, central square "rose", deep cornice with what appears to be an openwork band) and a presumed timber picture rail. The varnished timber mantel, cast iron grate and tiled hearth, all appear to be original as do the floor boards and the deep moulded timber skirting and timber architraves. While the cast iron grate is more of an Edwardian style the hearth tiling appears more Victorian. The stained timber window joinery and varnished door architraves and skirting may be an original decorative finish.

The plaster cornice, decorative vent covers, picture rail, window joinery, mantel, grate, hearth, skirting and floor boards all appear to be original. The ceiling may have always been flat and not panelled out.

Like the exterior of the dwelling, the interiors have a fusion of typical Victorian and Edwardian detailing and appear to be highly intact. They are of interest in demonstrating the transition between the two styles and the continued availability of Victorian mouldings, joinery and hardware. Interiors of this type are not numerous and are consequently rare. That this dwelling appears to be highly intact enables it to shed some light on architectural taste and fashion around the turn of the nineteenth century. The interiors also demonstrate the high level of appointment and comfort which was appropriate for the professional and/or gentleman class and in comparison with the more elaborate mansions which were still the main residential form in this area when this house and its neighbours were constructed.

The house was described by one of the real estate agents as:

*A magnificent late Victorian family home (c1896) situated on a substantial landholding of 1,475 sqm/15,877 sqft (approximately), showcasing grand proportions, spectacular original elegance and expansive family dimensions in a rare single level context.*

*Framed by a wide circular drive and tessellated verandah, the dramatic reception hall introduces equally impressive sitting and formal dining rooms and a stately library or billiards room, all with open fireplaces, soaring ornate ceilings and polished timber floors.*

*A well appointed European granite kitchen, family dining area and spacious living room open out to a deep north oriented private garden with heated pool and gazebo. The breathtaking main bedroom with open fireplace,*

*travertine ensuite and walk in robe is matched by four additional bedrooms with OFPs, a study or 6th bedroom and two bathrooms.*

*Superbly appointed with hydronic heating, air-conditioning, alarm, video intercom, powder-room, laundry, box room, basement wine cellar, carport, auto gates and 4xOSPs. Dimensions: Frontage 24.38m X 60.53m.*

*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/>*