

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Glendearg, 196 Wattletree Road, Malvern (HO116)



Figure 1. 196 Wattletree Road, Malvern (GJM Heritage, July 2020).

DATE: June 2021

Place type: House (associated with Wattle Tree Hotel)	Architect: Not known
Construction Date: c1850s	Builder: Not known

Historical Context Summary

The City of Stonnington stands on the Traditional Lands of the Woi wurrung and Boon Wurrung Peoples of the East Kulin Nations. Archaeologists believe that Aboriginal People have been in Victoria for more than 30,000 years. Throughout this long history their relationship with the landscape (where and how they live) has changed according to factors such as climate change, resource availability, and cultural change (Context 2006:10).

The first European settler in the Malvern district was John Gardiner in 1835, a pastoralist from New South Wales who was one of the first overlanders to Port Phillip. He pastured his stock near the junction of Gardiner’s Creek and the Yarra River and is the namesake of Gardiner’s Creek, Gardiner’s Creek Road (now Toorak Road) and both the locality and the Shire of Gardiner (before they were re-named Malvern). The first recorded use of the name Malvern was in January 1854, when barrister Charles B. G. Skinner named his hotel on the corner of Malvern and Glenferrie roads the ‘Malvern Hill’ after a district in England. The name for the Shire of Malvern was derived from Malvern Hill Estate, a private subdivision in the area dating to 1856 (City of Stonnington [CoS]; Context 2006:34).

The first land sales in the area were held in 1854 and most original Crown grantees subdivided their allotments for resale (Context 2006:41; 2009:4). Gardiner’s Road District was proclaimed in 1856 before Gardiner Shire was formed in 1871, which was renamed Malvern Shire in 1878 (CoS). The municipal boundary comprised the current localities of Malvern (previously Gardiner), Malvern East, Glen Iris (south of Gardiners Creek), Kooyong, Armadale (east of Kooyong Road), Toorak (east of Kooyong Road) and Chadstone (west of Warrigal Road). Early directories listed Malvern and Malvern East as the one locality, until 1910.

The former Malvern Shire saw slow population growth to 1881, by which time it totalled just under 2,000 people (Victorian Places). In 1879, the Oakleigh Railway Line was opened along the southern extent of the municipality, through Malvern, Armadale, Toorak and Hawksburn to join the existing line at South Yarra. The arrival of the Oakleigh railway coincided with the start of the land boom, which resulted in considerable urban growth. In the 1880s the district comprised substantial residences on large allotments, as well as pastoral and agricultural holdings (including market gardens and orchards) and commercial development (Context 2006:41, 65-6). During the 1880s boom period, the municipality saw a dramatic increase in population, quadrupling to approximately 8,000 by 1891, and steadily increasing to 10,000 by 1901 (Victorian Places). In the 1890s a number of timber houses were built in Malvern as an economy measure, but some residents complained that wooden houses would degenerate into slums. Concern about this development led to a slum abolition movement and subsequently, c1912, Malvern Council began to declare brick areas, where timber houses were not permitted. By 1916 the Council had also fixed a minimum area for individual housing allotments at 6000 square feet, with minimum frontages of fifty feet (Context 2006:128).

The railway line along the northern extent of the municipality was established in 1890 through the Glen Iris Valley from Burnley. Stations were established at Heyington, Kooyong, Tooronga, Gardiner, Glen Iris and Darling, however, expected residential development in their vicinity stalled during the 1890s following the economic collapse (Context 2006:66). The 1893 *Australian Handbook* (as cited in Victorian Places) described Malvern as ‘an elevated residential suburb’, served by a line of omnibuses from Prahran, with many leading merchants and professional men living in the area in pleasantly situated ‘dwellings of a superior class’. The entry noted that a number of notable mansions had been erected by this date, and that the market gardens

and orchards were 'steadily being reduced, and cut up into building allotments, on which [were] being erected many handsome villas and business establishments' (Victorian Places). The municipality saw rapid development and urbanisation from 1900 and it was declared a Borough and then a Town in 1901. In 1911 the municipality was declared a City, with a residential population of 16,000 (Context 2006:86; Victorian Places).

The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust was established in 1908, with electric tramlines opening along High Street in 1910-14, Glenferrie Road in 1910-13, to the south along Wattletree Road in 1910-12, and Malvern Road in 1915. The arrival of the tramlines further drove the development of commercial centres in the immediate vicinity and residential development beyond. New train stations were built at Armadale, Hawksburn, Malvern and Toorak between 1908 and 1918, and at Malvern East in 1929 (Context 2006:70-2, 113; Victorian Places).

Residential development during the early twentieth century generally occurred on newly subdivided estates or on nineteenth century subdivisions that had remained partly or wholly undeveloped during the 1890s depression (Context 2009:5). In 1912 it was reported that 800 houses a year were being built in the (by then) City of Malvern, which boasted 'a progress unprecedented by any other suburb' (Context 2009:128). In the decade between 1911 and 1921 the population in the City of Malvern doubled, from 16,000 to 32,000 residents, and then increased steadily to 43,000 by 1933 (Victorian Places). This population growth saw development spread to the Glen Iris Valley and the outer reaches of the City, in Malvern East. The housing stock in this eastern part of the municipality was more characteristically uniform and unadorned in comparison to housing in Malvern. Kooyong's development was substantially completed by the end of the 1920s (Context 2006:128, 131).

By 1946 the Australian Blue Book (as cited in Victorian Places) stated that Malvern was one of the 'leading residential suburbs of the Metropolis'. It comprised the substantial homes of many of Melbourne's leading citizens, in what was termed 'The Garden City' due to the number of parks and public gardens. Development in the City of Malvern steadied from the 1930s, with the population averaging 45,000 until the 1990s (Victorian Places). The City of Malvern amalgamated with the City of Prahran in 1994, to form the City of Stonnington.

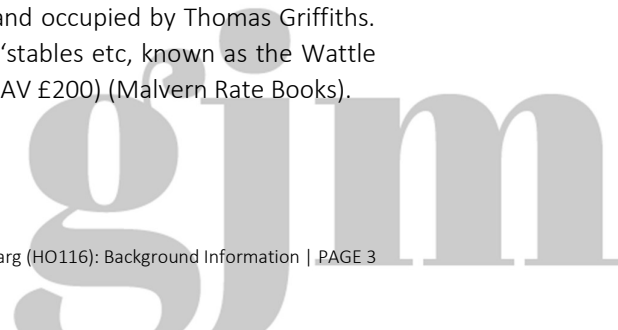
Place History Summary

Sources suggest that the building at the subject site served as the Wattle Tree Hotel. However, evidence doesn't confirm whether the residential-scale building at 196 Wattletree Road served as the hotel or was just associated with the Wattle Tree Hotel. Various references to the Wattletree Hotel in the 1920s indicate that the hotel building itself had been demolished many years earlier (*Australasian*, 2 Aug 1924:17 & *Chronicle (Adelaide)*, 17 Feb 1923:20).

196 Wattletree Road, Malvern, forms part of Crown Portion 62 (Township of Gardiner, Parish of Prahran), a ten acre allotment originally purchased by Robert Soden in 1854 (Figure 3) (McLaren 1987:10). In April 1855 the property was sold to Daniel Campbell and Henry Creswick (Certificate of Title).

In 1856 D Campbell & Co was rated for two houses on Crown Portion 62. The first house was described in the rate books as an eight-roomed weatherboard house 'with stables etc, known as the Wattle Tree Hotel' on 10 acres of cultivated land (Net Annual Value of £100), occupied by Thomas Griffiths. The second house was described as a six-roomed weatherboard house (NAV £80).

The 1858-59 rate books indicate that Crown Portion 62 was now owned and occupied by Thomas Griffiths. The property was described with a 10-roomed weatherboard house with 'stables etc, known as the Wattle Tree Hotel', and a 7-roomed weatherboard house (with a combined total NAV £200) (Malvern Rate Books).



During this period, the Wattle Tree Hotel was the principal venue for local meetings, including a well-attended meeting for the election of members for the newly created Gardiner District Road Board (*Argus*, 11 Nov 1856:5) as well as the Wattle Tree Annual Races and pigeon shooting (*Argus*, 5 Feb 1856:8).

An advertisement published in the *Argus* in December 1858 indicates that the Wattle Tree Hotel was offered for sale, 'containing 13 apartments' with cellars¹ and various outbuildings, 'situated on the middle Dandenong-road'. It also noted that 'with the above hotel, there is a Private Residence, containing seven apartments, with 10 acres of fine rich cultivated land, mostly under crop...'. Thomas Griffiths was named as the person on the premises able to provide particulars for those interested (*Argus*, 10 Dec 1858:8).

The 1859-60 rate books recorded Philip Weis as the owner and occupier of the weatherboard house (described as the 'Wattletree Hotel') on Lot 62 (NAV £200) (Malvern Rate Books, 1859-60).

John Heywood was the second licensee of the Wattle Tree Hotel and during his ownership racehorses were stabled and trained on the property (Raworth 2000:2; *Argus*, 22 Jul 1863:5; *Age*, 26 Aug 1936:14). Horse racing (*Herald*, 26 Jan 1865:2) and pigeon shooting (*Bell's Life in Vic & Sporting Chronicle*, 25 Feb 1865:1) continued as annual events at the property. Heywood was declared insolvent in 1862 (*Argus*, 29 Apr 1862:7)

The Wattle Tree Hotel ceased operation as a hotel c1866 (Raworth 2000:2), however the place was again advertised for sale in 1868. At this time the 10-acre allotment was described as 'situated in the Wattle Tree Road, Gardiner, being house of about eight rooms, lately known as the Wattle Tree Hotel, stabling, seven loose boxes etc, with 10 acres of land' and was subdivided into 6 allotments: 'Lot 1 – the homestead, with whole of the buildings, stables, loose boxes etc and about one acre of land; Lots 2-5 – all with 125 ft frontages to Wattle Tree Road by 330 ft deep; and Lot 6 – a noble paddock of 4 acres 3 roods...'. (*Argus*, 29 Aug 1868:3). In 1869 it was again offered for sale as 'all that 10 acres of land ... being portion 62, parish of Prahran, at Gardiner, on which is erected 2 three-roomed cottages etc, formerly known as the Wattle Tree Hotel' (*Age*, 28 Aug 1869:4).

The original 10-acre allotment was subdivided in 1873 (Raworth 2000). In 1890, Thomas Thompson occupied the subject site, and re-named it Glendearg (History of Wattle Tree Hotel, unpublished research notes at SHC, cited in Raworth 2000:2).

In 1888 the adjoining property to the west, J C Christy's allotment 60, was subdivided and 185 allotments in the Malvern Station Estate were offered for sale (Figure 4) (*Melbourne Punch*, 25 Oct 1888:11). The north-south boundary between Crown Portions 60 and 62 became Glendearg Grove, with the subject place included in the sale as allotment 175. Advertising material for the sale showed the house at the subject site as one of only two buildings existing in the newly-formed estate (Malvern Station Estate sale notice, 1888).

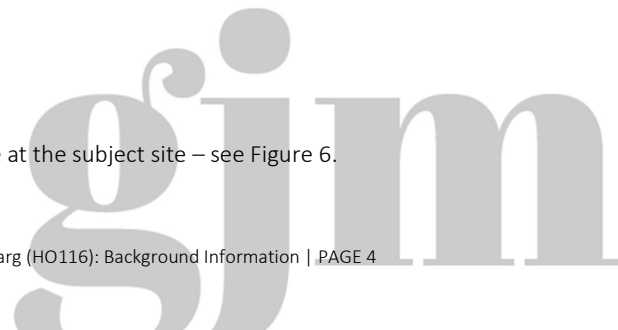
Plans dating to 1901 and 1908 show the extent of the building in the early twentieth century, then addressed as 106 Wattletree Road (Figures 4 and 5).

Description Summary

The following description includes detail contained within 'City of Malvern Heritage Study', Lewis & Aitken, 1992.

The house at 196 Wattletree Road, Malvern is situated on the south side of Wattletree Road, at the corner of Glendearg Grove. Located close to both street boundaries, the house addresses Wattletree Road and both elevations are visible behind a modern picket fence.

¹ Note that MMBW Plan 1718, dated 1908, does not annotate a cellar at the house at the subject site – see Figure 6.



The main attributes of the place are the gabled roof building form, the layout of the two wings, the simple detailing and decoration of the verandah, and simple fenestration including two projecting bay windows to the east.

A mature oak tree (*Quercus sp.*) to the north of the house, within the Wattletree Road setback, contributes to the historic setting of the property.

Key Features:

- Single storey early Victorian timber house
- Corrugated steel roof with two main transverse gables and a smaller central gable
- Broad return verandah to the north and part of the east elevations with concave profile, timber posts and simple timber fretwork
- Two large corbelled brick chimneys placed at the centre of each main gable
- Double-hung windows, some with multi-paned sashes, with simple moulded timber architraves
- Polygonal bay windows to east elevation.

Intactness/Integrity

The house remains highly intact to its period of construction and retains a high degree of integrity.



Figure 2. Western elevation to Glendearg Grove (GJM Heritage, July 2020).

References

Context Pty Ltd, Stonnington Thematic Environmental History, 2006 & 2009 addendum.

J B Cooper, *The History of Malvern, From its First Settlement to a City*, Melbourne, 1935.

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Laceworks Landscape Collaborative, *Malvern Urban Character Study*, 1988.

Malvern Rate Books, Gardiner District.

McLaren, I., *Malvern Crown Land Sales 1840-1879*, 1987.

N Lewis & Associates, City of Malvern Heritage Study, 1992.

Notice of Sale, Malvern Station Estate, 1888.

Raworth, B., *Claremont Avenue Precinct Citation*, 2000.

Stonnington History Centre (SHC), History of Wattle Tree Hotel, unpublished research note
The Australasian.

The Argus.

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Historic Images and Plans

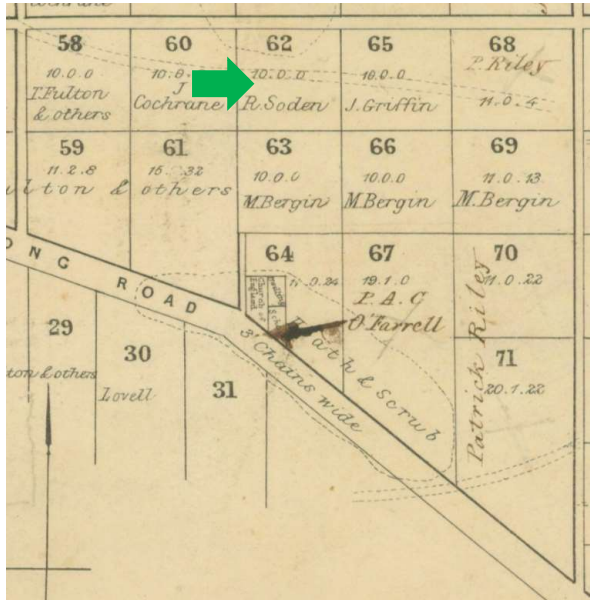
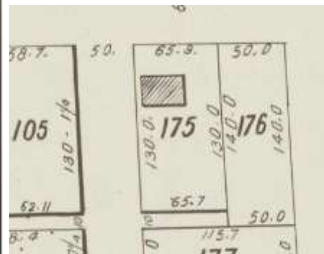


Figure 3. Crown Allotment 62, for which R Soden received the Crown Grant – indicated by the green arrow (Source: Plan of Suburban Allotments at Gardiner, Parish of Prahran, County of Bourke).



Figure 4. Sale Notice for Malvern Station Estate, 1888. The detail shows a footprint of a building at the subject site, addressed as allotment 175 of the subdivision (Source: SLV)



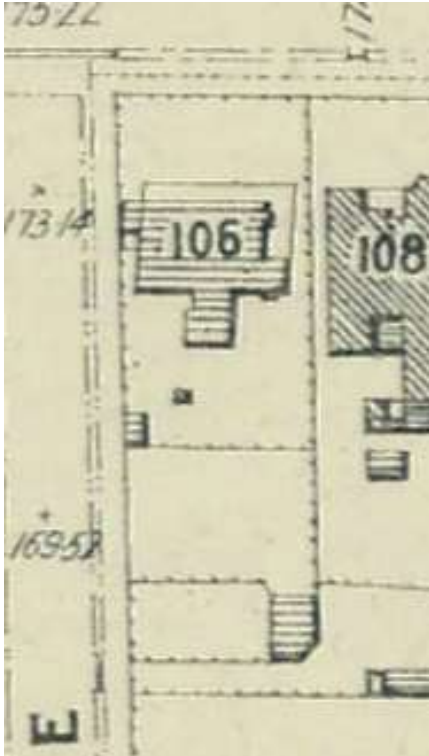


Figure 5. Detail of MMBW Plan No 61, dated 1901. The subject site was addressed as 106 Wattletree Road. (Source: SLV)

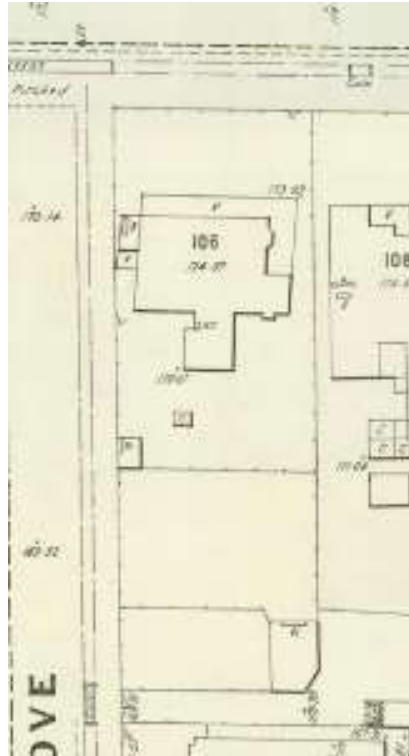


Figure 6. Detail of MMBW Plan No 1718, dated 1908. The subject site was addressed as 106 Wattletree Road. (Source: SLV)