

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**Claremont Avenue Precinct, Malvern (HO156)**



*Figure 1. Claremont Avenue, Malvern (looking south-west) (GJM Heritage, March 2021).*

DATE: June 2021

<b>Place type:</b> Residential Precinct	<b>Architect:</b> Various
<b>Construction Date:</b> Mid 1880s to c1940	<b>Builder:</b> Various

### 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 Wattle Tree 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.

### **Precinct History Summary**

*[The following history is drawn from Bryce Raworth's Citation for Claremont Avenue Precinct, Malvern, 2000, with additional information as cited].*

Prior to the first land sales in 1840, pastoralists occupied what was to become the District of Gardiner. The first pastoralist was John Gardiner, after whom the district was named, who arrived in 1836. When the area was first surveyed it was divided into allotments suitable for gardens, orchards and farms. In 1856 the Gardiner Road District was proclaimed, extending from Gardiners Creek to Kooyong, Dandenong and Warrigal roads.

Bounded by Glenferrie, Wattle Tree, Tooronga and Dandenong roads in what is now known as the suburb of Malvern, the Claremont Avenue Precinct is situated on land first sold between 1854 and 1858 to various speculative buyers as Crown Portions 58-71 in the Township of Gardiner, Parish of Prahran ( *Figure 2*). A house from this early period remains at 196 Wattle Tree Road, on the corner of Glendearg Grove, which appears to have formed part of the Wattle Tree Hotel (HO116).

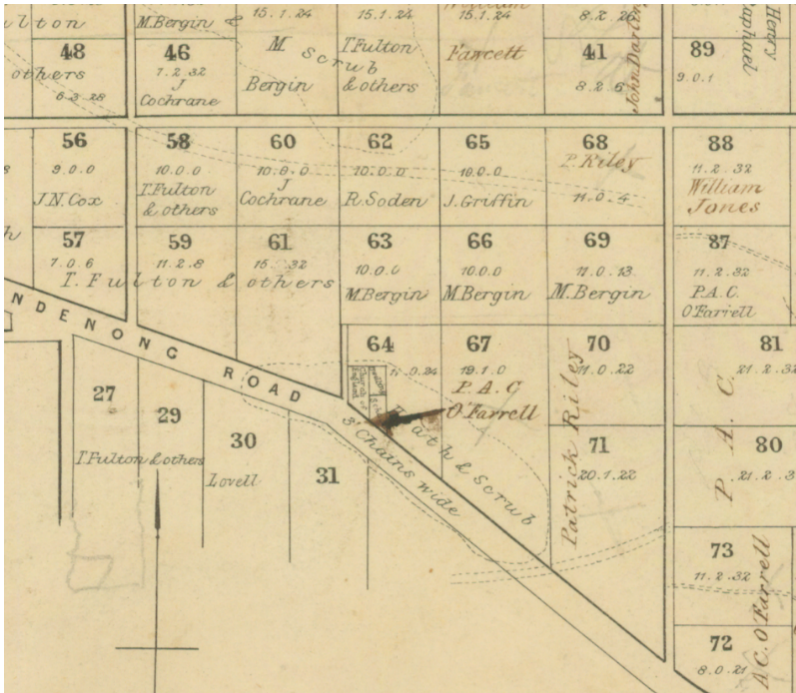


Figure 2. An 1857 'Plan of suburban allotments' in the Township of Gardiner, showing lot 59 to 71 in the precinct area (SLV, Filename dq006642).

The first speculative buyers included the syndicate of Thomas Fulton, Lachlan MacKinnon and Frederick Sargood (the Victorian Freehold Land Society), who purchased lots 58, 59 and 61 adjacent to what was to become Glenferrie Road. Matthew Bergin purchased lots 63, 66 and 69, while lot 60 was sold to John Cochrane and lot 62 to Robert Soden. Adjacent to Tooronga Road, Patrick Riley purchased lots 68, 70 and 71. Speculator Peter Andrew Charles O'Farrell purchased a number of allotments in Gardiner including lot 67 in 1858.

These lots were further subdivided into smaller lots and on-sold. Subsequent owners included Charsley (of 'Pine Hill' north of Wattletree Road), who purchased part of lot 61 in 1862, lot 62 in 1864 and lots 63, 66 and 69 two years later. Robert Hunter, farmer, purchased lots 63, 66 and 69 in 1873. The same year, Glendearg Grove south of Hunter Street was surveyed as a government road. Although two acres of land were reserved for the Church of England at the corner of Glendearg Grove and Dandenong Road, lot 64 was not sold until 1871 when it was purchased by merchant Thomas Alway. Lot 61 was divided into four parcels and sold as separate allotments, all of which were purchased by Frederick Collier Christey in 1868.

The subdivision and development of these allotments was stimulated by the extension of the railway line from South Yarra to Oakleigh in 1879 (*Weekly Times*, 5 Apr 1879:16) as part of the project to connect the suburban network with the country rail service to Gippsland. Constructed parallel to Dandenong Road, the railway line forms the southern boundary of the Claremont Avenue Precinct, with Malvern Station built just east of Glenferrie Road. This had an immediate impact on the previously isolated district and resulted in a growth in both residential and commercial development, particularly in the vicinity of the station, which coincided with the suburban land boom that followed in the 1880s.

Land directly north of the station, close to Glenferrie Road was the first to be subdivided, with Chandlers Road, Gordon Grove and Evandale Road created in 1885. Detached weatherboard villas were soon constructed in these streets by speculators, while polychromatic brick villas were constructed at the west end of Railway Road (now Claremont Avenue), which extended east from Malvern Station to Tooronga Road.

Malvern Station Estate was created east of this initial residential development. A total of 185 allotments were offered for sale in c1888, advertised by Munro & Baillieu (Figure 3) (*Melbourne Punch*, 25 Oct 1888:11; Malvern Station Estate sale notice, 1888). At that time Munro and Baillieu were Melbourne's most successful

auctioneers and estate agents. Donald Munro, the son of landboomer and Premier James Munro, was later elected Malvern Shire President.

Local developer William Valentine Bailey purchased a number of allotments in the Malvern Station Estate and in c1895 proceeded to build several houses in Claremont Avenue. William V Bailey was a Malvern Councillor from 1900-6 and Mayor in 1903-4. He also developed Bailey's Garden Estate in c1900, forming Bailey Avenue and Valentine Grove, Armadale, just east of the precinct.

In terms of the development of streets within the precinct, Glendearg Grove north of Hunter Street was partly laid out prior to 1888, and reportedly completed in 1890. The same year Claremont Avenue (originally Railway Road) was created east of Glendearg Grove. Soudan Street (originally Commercial Road) and McKinley Avenue (originally Malvern Avenue) were created at the peak of the land boom in 1888. When Thomas Alway's lot 64 was subdivided, plans were lodged in 1889 for Rushmead Street and Raleigh Street. Hunter Street which had been surveyed north of portion 64A in 1871, was created in 1886.

In March 1890, an allotment on Glendearg Grove at the corner of Hunter Street was purchased for a Methodist Church. Money was borrowed to purchase the land and to erect a weatherboard church. The present brick church building was built in 1904 and enlarged in 1918. The original timber building was replaced by a brick hall, while a new Sunday School was built in 1928, designed by architect Alec Eggleston.

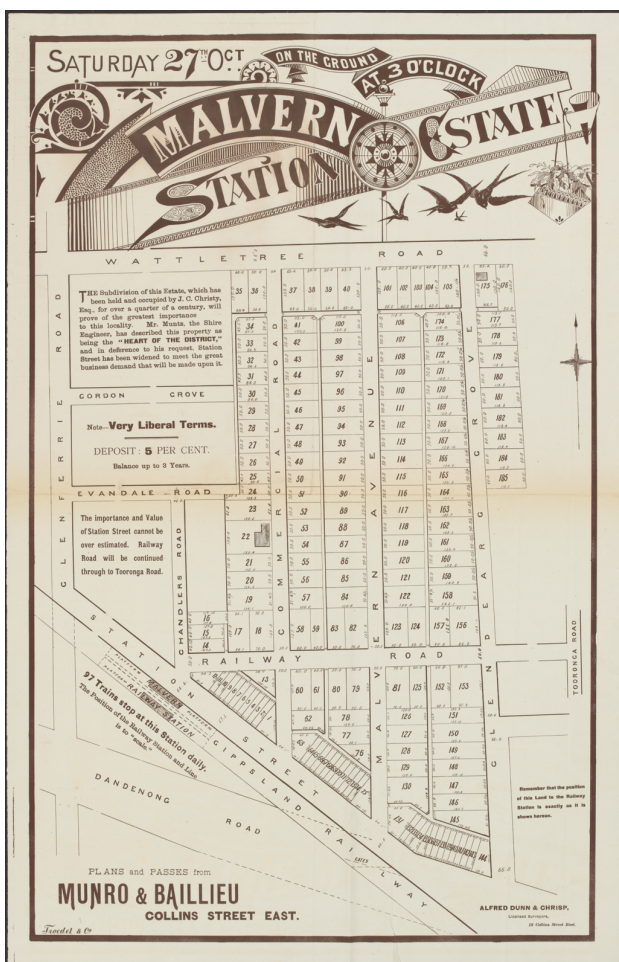


Figure 3. Sale Notice for Malvern Station Estate, dated c1888 (Source: SLV).

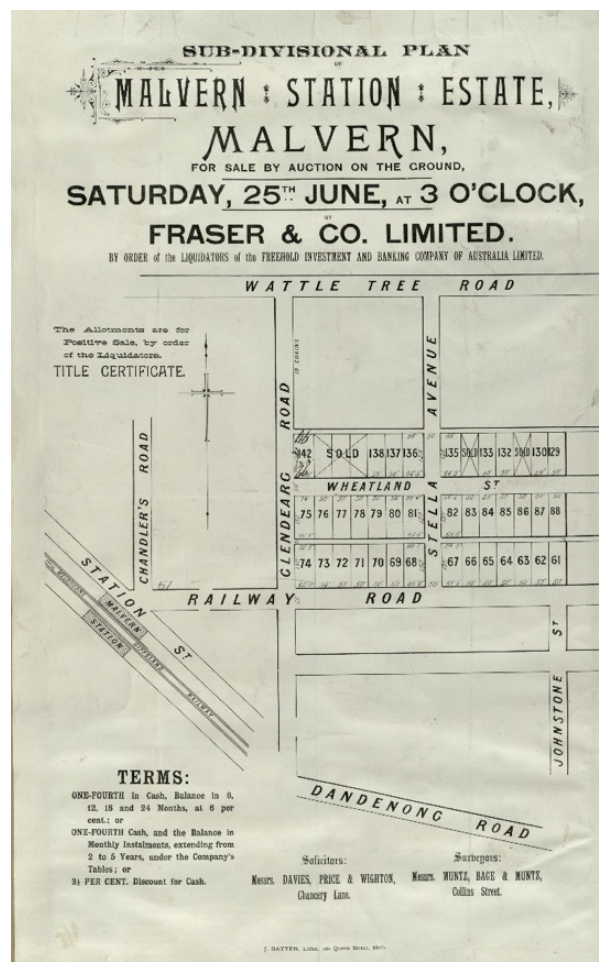


Figure 4. Sub-divisional plan of Malvern Station Estate, Malvern, dated 18--? (SLV, Filename ha000118).

The 1880s boom years came to an end, and with the severe economic depression of the 1890s many companies, building societies and banks went into liquidation. Development in the area slowed and land often remained vacant in this decade. Munro & Baillieu's partnership was dissolved during this period and following the liquidation of Davies' Freehold investment Company in January 1892, the liquidators Fraser & Co auctioned a section of the Malvern Station Estate (Figure 4).

Streets in the eastern portion of the precinct were not formed until 1899, when plans were lodged for Staniland Street (known as Stella Avenue until 1928), Wheatland Road and Claremont Avenue between Glendearg Grove and Tooronga Road.

The 1901 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plan of Malvern (Figure 5) clearly shows the late-nineteenth century development at the western end of the precinct, and the formation of streets to the east and south-east, with less occupancy. A substantial number of houses in the east and south-east portions of the precinct were subsequently built in the first decades of the twentieth century, encouraged by the gradual improvement in the economy and by new and improved public transport. The 1908 MMBW plan (Figure 6) shows development in the south-east portion of the precinct, particularly Finlayson Street, following the upturn in the economy.

Constructed by the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust in 1909, a tram service commenced operation in Wattletree Road in 1910, connecting Tooronga Road to the commercial strip in Glenferrie Road. The regrading and duplication of the railway line through Malvern, and the associated opening of a new two-storey station on a central platform in 1914 (VHR H1575 Citation) further improved access for those living in the vicinity.

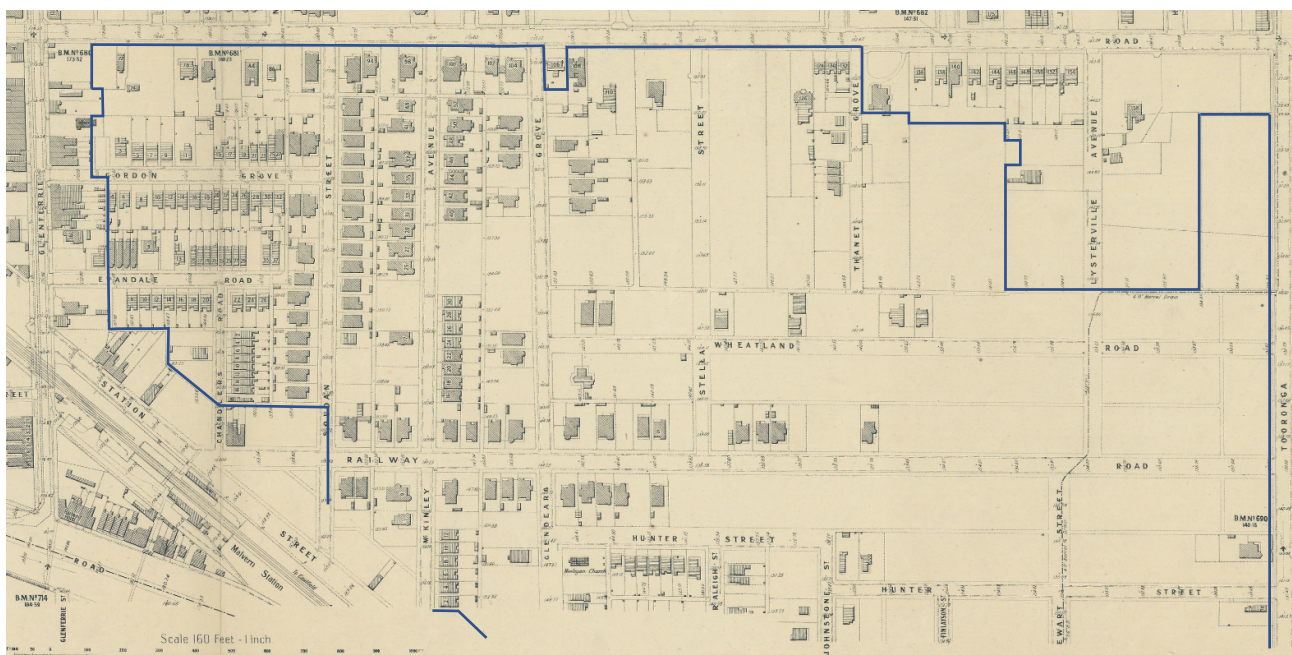


Figure 5. Development of the northern part of the precinct (general precinct area in blue) by 1901 (MMBW Plan No. 61, dated 1901).



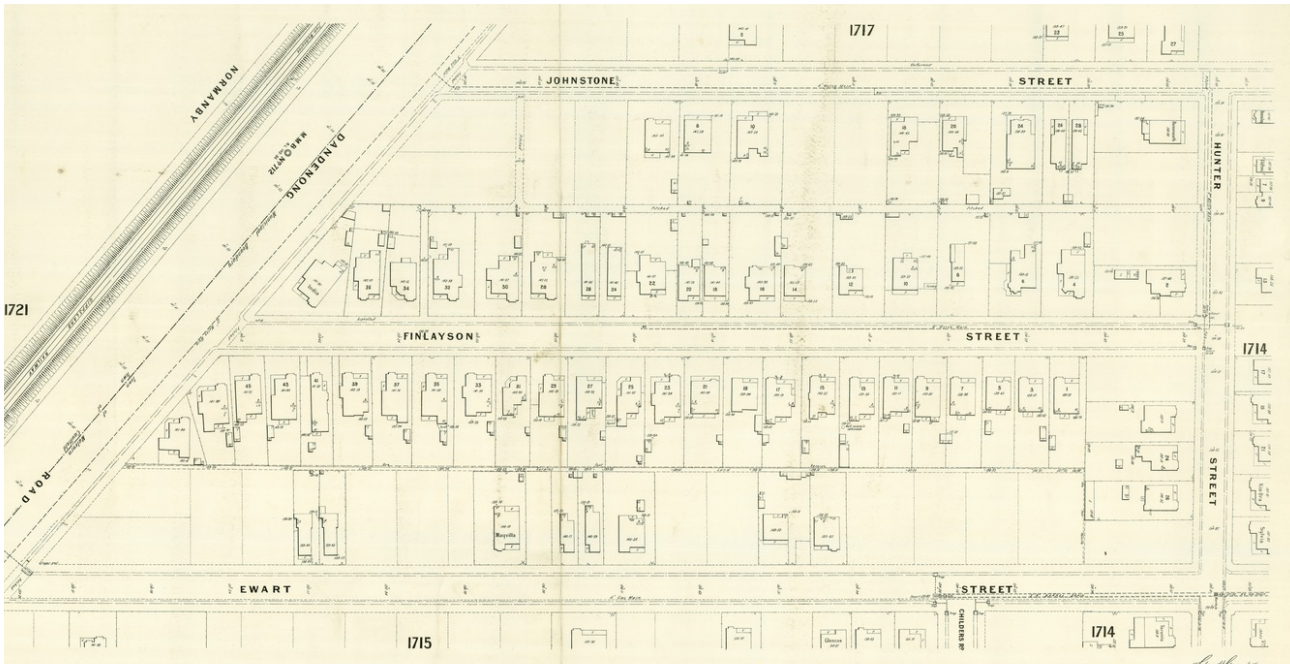


Figure 6. Development along Ewart, Finlayson and Johnston streets, the south-east portion of the precinct, by 1908. North is right (MMBW Detail Plan No. 1716, dated 1908).

In 1910, a Baptist Church (currently the Slavic Evangelical Baptist Church) was built by local architect and builder George Ballantyne, on the northern corner of Tooronga Road and Claremont Avenue (the Foundation Stone describes Ballantyne as both architect and builder), with an adjacent Sunday School constructed in 1927 (Foundation Stone).

Malvern was declared a City in 1911 as development in the area spread eastward, and the population of the municipality increased. By the mid-twentieth century, the precinct had been completely developed, as evidenced by 1947 and 1948 MMBW Plans for Malvern (Figure 7 - Figure 8).

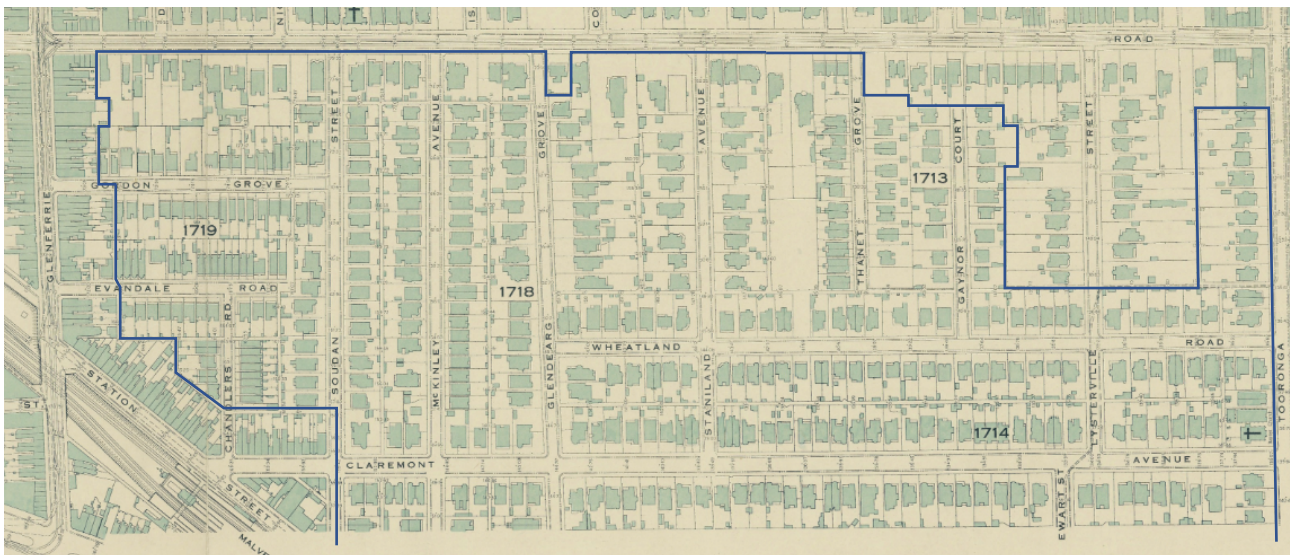


Figure 7. The dense development of the northern part of the precinct (general precinct area in blue) by 1948 (MMBW Plan No. 61, dated 1948).

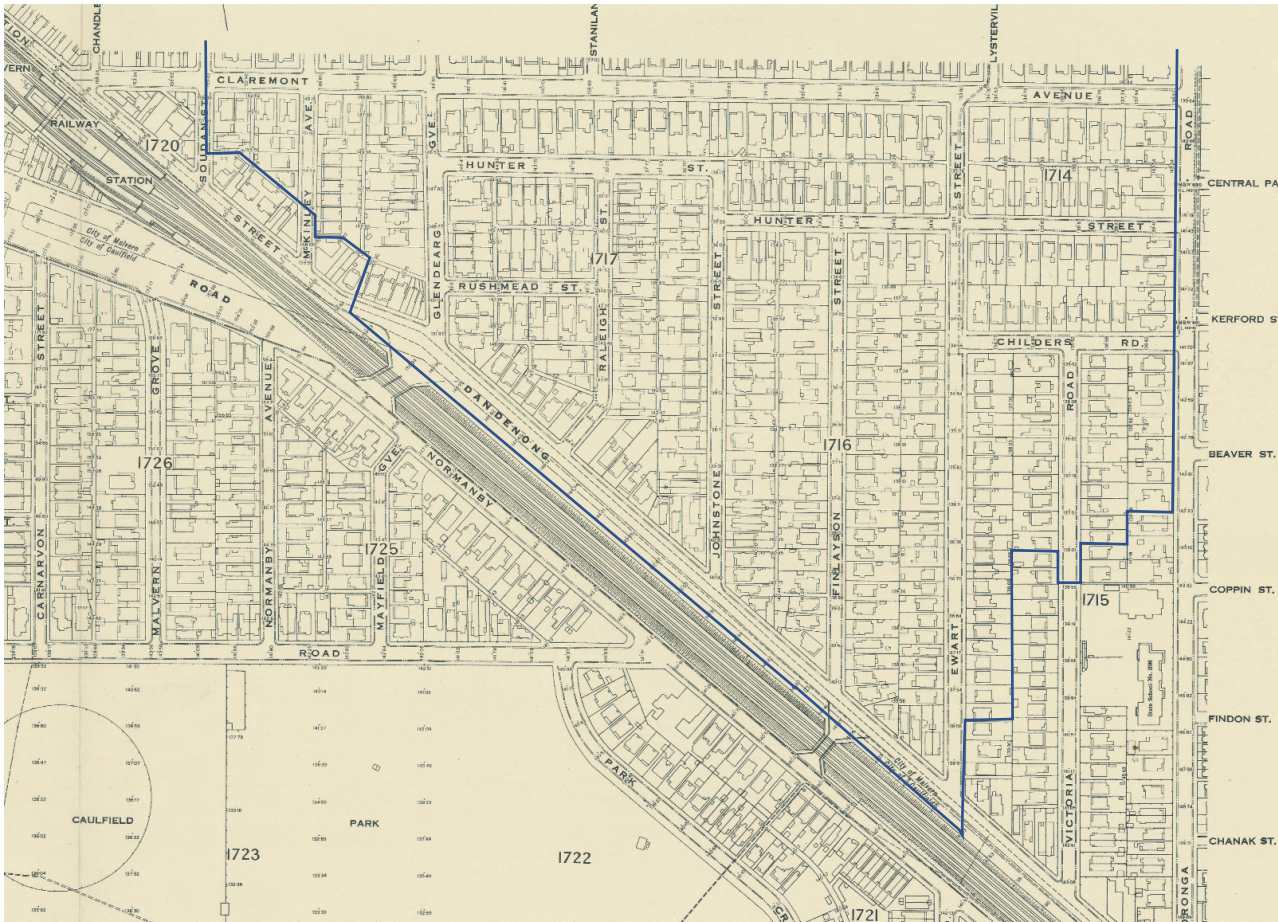


Figure 8. The southern part of the precinct (general precinct area in blue), south of Claremont Avenue, in 1947 (MMBW Plan No. 62, dated 1947).

## Description Summary

Claremont Avenue Precinct, Malvern is situated to the east of Glenferrie Road, between Wattletree Road and Dandenong Road, and extending east to Tooronga Road. It is a large residential precinct, predominantly Federation in character, with some Victorian, and a smaller amount of Interwar, development. The precinct clearly shows the transition period from mid-1880s Victorian house design in the west of the precinct, to Federation house design in the east and south-east, from c1900 to the late 1910s.

Three broad sub-precincts, each with distinct characteristics, are identifiable within the boundaries of the Claremont Avenue Precinct. The first sub-precinct comprises rows of late Victorian cottages, both timber and brick, lining the streets to the west of the precinct, close to Malvern Railway Station and Glenferrie Road. The second sub-precinct comprises the more substantial houses of the Claremont Avenue Precinct, with generous setbacks, built in the early twentieth century. These are located to the east of the area of concentrated Victorian development, particularly in streets such as Claremont Avenue, Glendearg Grove, Staniland Avenue and Wheatland Road. The streets between these two sub-precincts, such as Soudan Street and McKinley Avenue, contain collections of both Victorian and Federation houses, although a small number of Victorian houses are located throughout the precinct. The third sub-precinct comprises the eastern and south-eastern part of the precinct, where rows of more modest timber Federation houses line streets such as Johnston, Finlayson and Ewart Streets.

Small numbers of infill Interwar houses, located in streets such as Cummins Grove and Gaynor Court, also make a contribution to the precinct.



Non-residential buildings which make a contribution to the precinct include:

- Former Methodist Church built on land purchased in 1890 at the corner of Glendearg Grove and Hunter Street. The present church was built 1904 and enlarged in 1918, and the adjoining Sunday School hall was built in 1928 to designs by architect Alec Eggleston.
- Former Baptist Church built at the corner of Tooronga Road and Claremont Avenue in 1910 (*Malvern Standard*, 25 June 1910:2), designed and built by local architect and builder G F Ballantyne (Foundation Stone describes Ballantyne as both architect and builder), with an adjacent Sunday School in 1927 (Foundation Stone).
- Shops, 117-125 Station Street which appear to date to the early part of the twentieth century.

One place with an individual Heritage Overlay is located at the boundary of the precinct:

- Glendearg (part of the former Wattletree Hotel), 196 Wattletree Road, Malvern (HO116).

Non-contributory buildings in the precinct include post-war multi-storey flats and houses.

#### *Key Features*

- Strong Victorian and Federation character with some Interwar development
- Consistent single-storey scale
- Modest-sized allotments with consistent front setbacks within streetscapes
- Predominantly detached houses
- Predominantly timber or face red brick construction with some polychromatic brick walls
- Corrugated steel, slate or terracotta tile-clad roofs
- Gabled and hipped roof forms
- Predominantly asymmetrical front elevations, with some symmetrical double-fronted Victorian elevations
- Projecting front gable ends, typically with simple half-timbered gable ends and bay windows
- Front verandahs, either convex in profile or an extension of the main roof
- Decorative cast ironwork or timber fretwork to verandahs
- Prominent chimneys, some highly decorative
- Double hung windows
- Some original fences
- Tree-lined streets
- Bluestone access laneways to the rear of properties
- Remnant bluestone kerb and guttering in some streets
- Community and commercial buildings.



Figure 9. Looking south along Ewart Street, Malvern (GJM Heritage, March 2021)



Figure 10. Looking north-east along Claremont Avenue, Malvern (GJM Heritage, March 2021)

## 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.

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plans: No 61, Malvern, dated 1901 & 1948; Detail Plan No 1716, dated 1908.

*Melbourne Punch*.

Raworth, Bryce, Citation for *Claremont Avenue Precinct*, Malvern, 2000.

Sale Notice for Malvern Station Estate, 1888.

*Weekly Times*.

Victorian Places, 'Malvern' & 'Malvern East', <http://www.victorianplaces.com.au>.