

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

House, 16 Somers Avenue, Malvern (HO334)



Figure 1. 16 Somers Ave, Malvern (GJM Heritage, July 2020).

DATE: June 2021

Place type: House	Architect: F L & K Klingender
Construction Date: 1935	Builder: Unknown

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

The house at 16 Somers Avenue, Malvern was constructed in 1935. The land east of Glenferrie Road was previously purchased by Cobb & Co partner, John Wagner in 1886 who developed the Stonnington Estate on this land and constructed his mansion in 1890 (remains at 336 Glenferrie Road). The eastern portion of this large Stonnington Estate was subdivided in 1935 with 26 home sites offered for sale as the 'Stonnington Fields Estate' (Auction notice 1935). It was noted that 'the allotments were designed to meet the requirements for a good type of modern residence' (*Age*, 8 April 1935:13)

Wagner Street (renamed Somers Street by 1940; now known as Somers Avenue), which at this time formed the southern boundary of the Stonnington Estate, was continued to the north to create a new eastern boundary to the reduced estate (S&M).

Architect Frederick L Klingender purchased allotment 2 in Wagner Street at the sale of the 'Stonington Fields Estate' and designed a house for himself to be constructed at the subject site (SHC MB5199). At the time of purchase of the allotment, Klingender was a well-known twentieth century Melbourne architect who had been an Associate of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects from 1891 and was President in 1935-36 (RVIA Journal, May 1935:39). He completed a number of residential designs in Malvern and Toorak, in association with Rodney Alsop (c1905-1921), Robert Hamilton (c1921-25) and with his son, as F L & K Klingender, from 1925.

The house was offered for sale in May 1954 as a 'charming white brick residence' (*Age*, 27 April 1954:2).



Description Summary

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

The house at 16 Somers Avenue, Malvern is situated on the east side of Somers Avenue with a lane forming the southern boundary.

The house at 16 Somers Avenue is a large attic-style house which has a complex terracotta shingled roof with a main longitudinal gable to the south and transverse gables to the north. The roof has a broken pitch to form a front verandah and tall clinker brick chimneys with corbelled cappings punctuate the roof line.

Key Features:

- Large attic-style house in the Interwar Old English style
- Complex terracotta shingle-clad roof with main longitudinal gable to south and transverse gables to north
- Hipped gable roof
- Broken pitch roof to form front verandah
- Tall clinker brick chimneys with corbelled cappings
- Terracotta shingle-clad hipped roof front bay
- Multi-paned, double-hung windows.

Intactness/Integrity

The house at 16 Somers Avenue remains highly intact to its period of construction. The place retains a high degree of integrity and legibility as an Interwar Old English style house.

References

Auction Notice for the Stonington Fields Estate, 1935 (SHC).

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) Plan.

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

Raworth, B., *HO182 Moorakynne & Stonnington Precinct Citation*, 2000.

RVIA Journal, May 1935, p 39.

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&M).

Stonnington History Centre (SHC), item MB5199, Brick Residence, Wagner Street, Malvern for F L Klingender, F L & K Klingender 1935.

The Age.

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



Historic Images and Plans

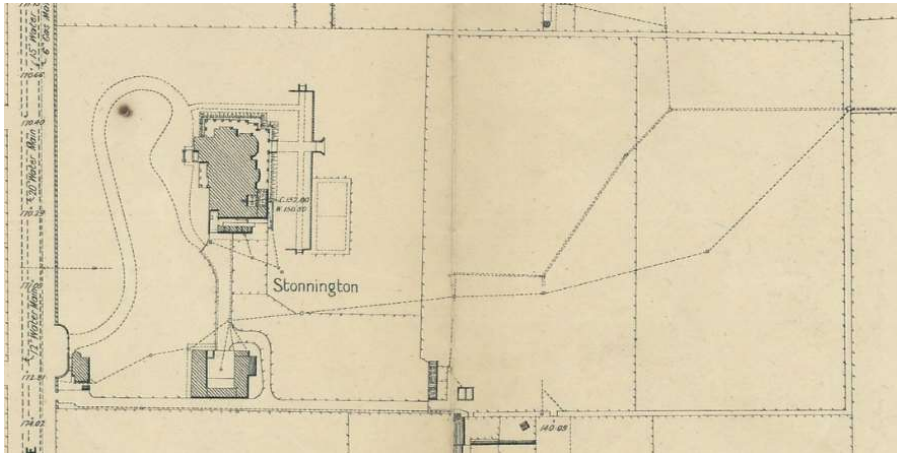


Figure 2. Detail of MMBW Plan No 59 Malvern, dated 1902, showing the extent of the Stonnington Estate before subdivision of the eastern part of the large allotment. (Source: SLV)

SATURDAY, 6th APRIL, 1935
 AT 11 AM O'CLOCK ON THE 6th APRIL 1935

**Stonnington Fields Estate
 MALVERN**

**26 Choice 26
 Residential Lots**

of Varying Reserves and Depths.
 Attractive Sites—Beautiful Views.

THE STONNINGTON FIELDS ESTATE, MALVERN, is a choice residential estate of 26 choice residential lots of varying reserves and depths, situated on the Malvern Road, Malvern, and is a most desirable investment. The lots are situated on the Malvern Road, Malvern, and are a most desirable investment. The lots are situated on the Malvern Road, Malvern, and are a most desirable investment.

C. J. and T. HAM Pty. Ltd., 14 Oxford Street, Melbourne

Figure 3. Auction notice for the Stonnington Fields Estate, 1935. (Source: SHC MH608)

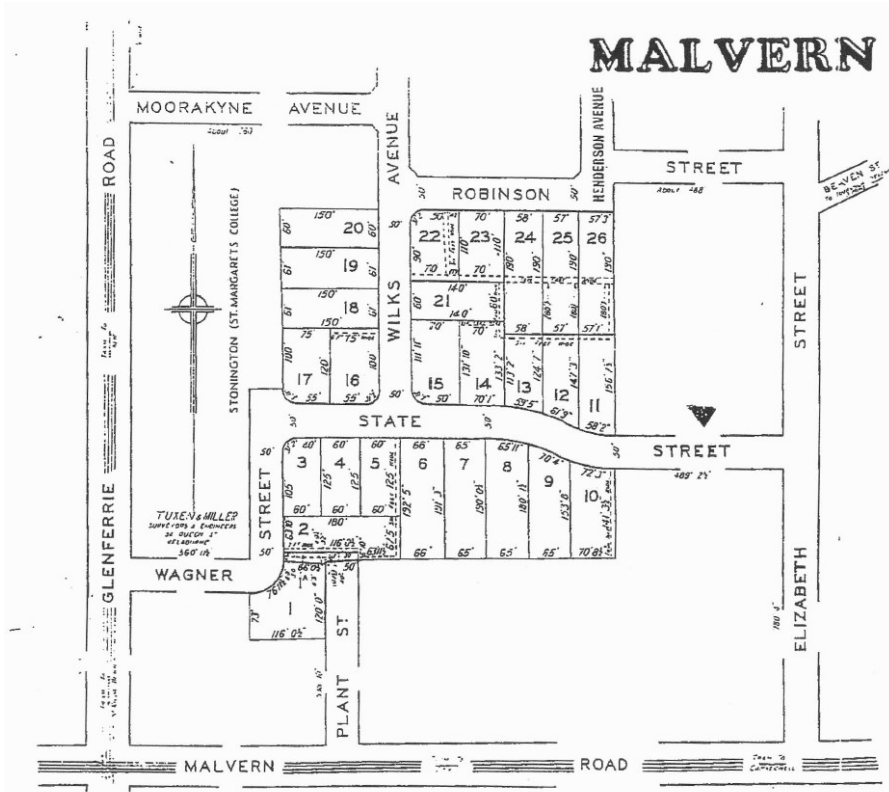


Figure 4. Detail of Stonnington Fields Estate, Malvern, auction notice 6 April 1935 (Source: Raworth 2000:8)



Figure 5. Brick residence Wagner Street, Malvern for F L Klingender, FL & K Klingender, 1935 (Source: SHC MB5199)