

## HERITAGE CITATION

### Residential Flats, 1298 Malvern Road, Malvern



*Figure 1. 1298 Malvern Road, Malvern (GJM Heritage, November 2020).*

DATE: June 2021

## RESIDENTIAL FLATS, 1298 MALVERN ROAD, MALVERN

<b>Place type:</b> Residential Flats	<b>Architect:</b> Not known
<b>Construction Date:</b> 1939	<b>Builder:</b> W H Bruce
<b>Recommendation:</b> Include in the Heritage Overlay	<b>Extent of Overlay:</b> To the extent of the property boundary

### Locality History

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

The residential flats at 1298 Malvern Road, located at the corner of Malvern Road and Shaftesbury Avenue, were built in 1939 by builder, W H Bruce.

A 1902 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) plan of the area shows that the block bounded by Malvern Road to the north, Shaftesbury Street to the east, Ascot Street to the south and Bonview Road to the west was undeveloped at the turn of the century, with the exception of the Wesleyan Church fronting Bonview Road (see Figure 2). By 1935, land to the south of the block had been subdivided, with substantial brick and timber houses lining both Bonview Road and Shaftesbury Avenue. In contrast, the northern portion of the block, fronting Malvern Road, was only partly developed by this time (see Figure 3). The subject property at the corner of Malvern Road and Shaftesbury Avenue remained vacant. The 1934-45 rate books indicate that the site comprised two separate lots – Lot 11, owned by Charles Morris Duke of Camberwell Road, Camberwell and Lot 12, owned by Beatrice Brook of 21 Emily Street, Murrumbeena (Malvern Rate Books).

In c.1938-9, Lot 11 and Lot 12 were purchased by Arthur and Elsie Reed of The Avenue, Moreland for £4,600. The Reeds consolidated the two titles and builder W H Bruce erected a two-storey polychromatic brick residence, comprising four flats, each of five rooms, on the site. Early tenants included Mary Mulcahy, Herman

Weber, an industrial chemist, and Claude West, draper (Malvern Rate Books). The property was described in a 1950 auction notice as:

*A block of 4 delightful ultra modern self-containing flats. Each comprising Lounge, Diningroom [sic], Two Bedrooms, Bathroom, Kitchen, Electric Hot Water Service, Refrigeration, Garage (Age, 5 April 1950, p.11).*

The building was sold four years later in 1954 for £19,300 and again in 1980 for \$190,000 (Malvern Valuation Field Card). The block of flats was then transferred to a strata title in 1986. At this time, Unit 1 sold for \$87,000, Unit 2 for \$80,000, Unit 3 for \$74,500 and Unit 4 for \$77,500 (Malvern Valuation Field Cards). An inspection notice for Unit 4 described the individual apartment as:

*...ground floor flat with large private garden, 1 of only 4 bright, spacious older style apartment presented in sound order throughout...North facing sitting room, separate dining room, 2 bedrooms, kitchen, laundry facilities' (Malvern Valuation Field Card).*

The building continues to be used as residential flats.

### Historical Themes

The place illustrates the following themes as outlined in *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*:

- 6 Building towns, cities and the garden state
  - 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

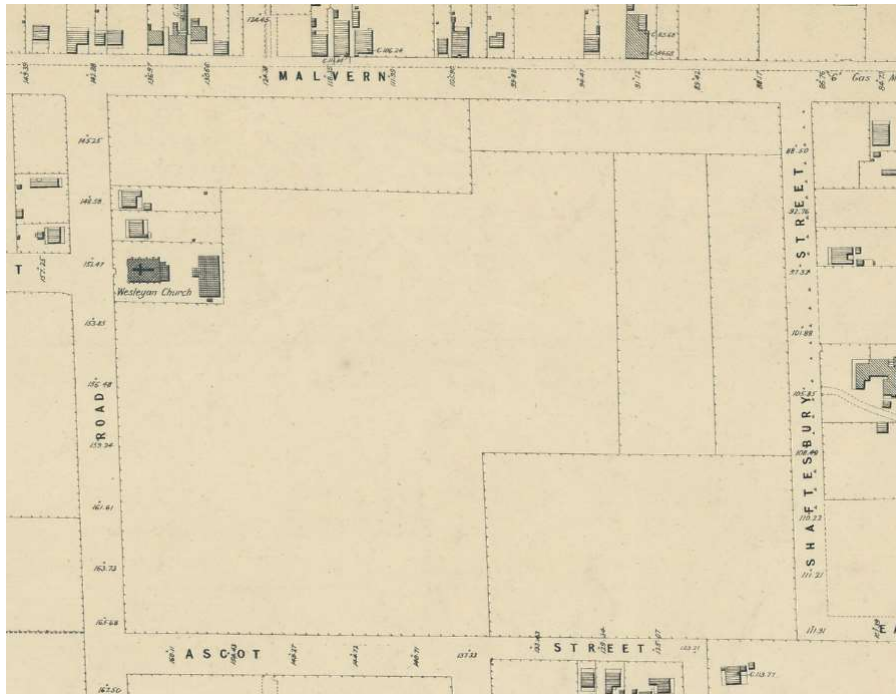


Figure 2. MMBW Base Plan No 59 of Malvern showing the largely vacant block to the south of Malvern Road, 1902 (SLV)

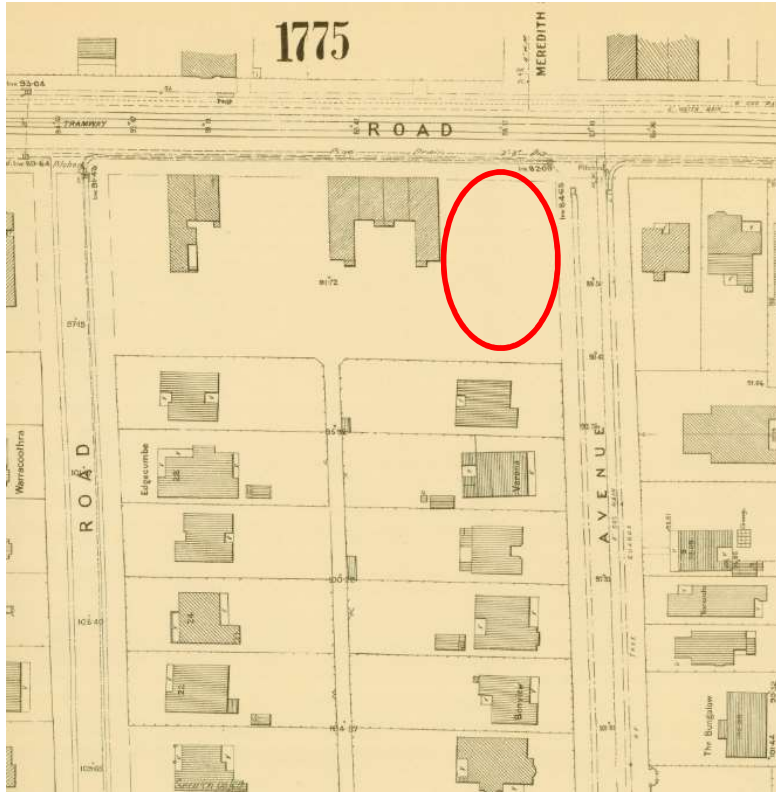


Figure 3. MMBW Detail Plan No 1758 of Malvern showing the vacant land at the corner of Malvern Road and Shaftesbury Avenue (indicated by red circle), 1935 (SLV)

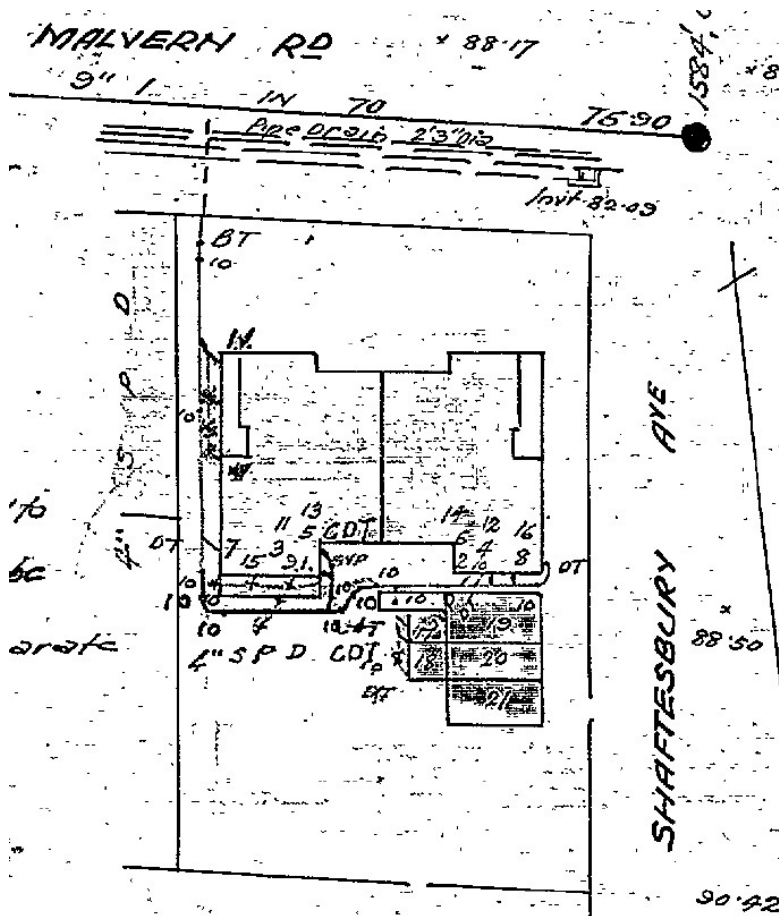


Figure 4. Property sewerage plan showing the layout of the building at 1298 Malvern Road, 1940 (Yarra Valley Water)





## Description

The flats at 1298 Malvern Road are situated on the southwest corner of the intersection of Malvern Road and Shaftesbury Avenue. The site extends to an unnamed laneway at the rear (south) boundary.

The building comprises a two-storey brick structure that is H-shaped in plan and set back from the two street boundaries behind a low, red brick garden wall with a capping detail of a course of diagonally-laid bricks (built contemporaneously with the flats). The setback provides for a garden setting for the building, with access to the four separate entries via paved paths.

The building itself features a hipped roof clad in terracotta tiles, with projecting timber-lined eaves. A single chimney, simply dressed with a cream-brick capping, penetrates the roof and appears to be shared by all four apartments. A striking feature of the principal (north) elevation, addressing Malvern Road, is a central parapeted bay, flanked by the two projecting side wings, that hosts a highly decorative pilaster that steps out from the main plane of this elevation for four brick-depths, and curves up and over the parapet. This pilaster element, and the flanking side wings, set up a highly symmetrical arrangement across the elevation. Despite these vertical elements, a horizontal emphasis is achieved through the arrangement of the windows, the window fenestration, and the string courses and banding of the polychromatic brickwork. A single recessed balcony is visible at the east (Shaftesbury Avenue) elevation. Front windows are steel-framed casement sets, side windows are timber-framed double hung and all entry doors and staircases are recessed in deep porticoes.

At the rear of the property, four separate garages are accessed from Shaftesbury Avenue. The polychromatic brickwork of the garage facade is similar to that of the main building, suggesting these are the structures shown at the rear of the flats on the Property Sewerage Plan at Figure 4. Two established Norfolk Island Pines dominate the rear garden at the southern boundary.

### Key Features:

- Symmetry across principal (north) elevation
- H-shaped plan form
- Simple overall massing with low-pitched hipped roof form and projecting eaves
- Terracotta tiled roof and decorative polychromatic brickwork
- Central parapeted bay and pilaster element
- Separate entries to apartments, with recessed doors and staircases
- Original windows
- Setback to north (Malvern Road) and side (Shaftesbury Avenue) boundaries
- Original decorative low garden wall and garden setting
- Original garages to rear.



Figure 5. Garages to Shaftesbury Avenue (GJM Heritage, November 2020)

### **Intactness/Integrity**

The flats at 1298 Malvern Road remain highly intact to their original construction in 1939. The original garages to the rear of the property (accessed from Shaftesbury Avenue) remain intact. Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

### **Comparative Analysis**

1298 Malvern Road is of note as a fine and highly intact example of a residential flat development built in the City of Stonnington. The building is one of a substantial number of residential flats/maisonettes that were constructed in the municipality in the interwar period.

The development of residential flats and maisonettes in Melbourne gained in popularity following World War I. This was the result of a number of factors, including a shortage of skilled labour, the high cost of building materials, and the difficulties associated with maintaining large estates (Sawyer 1982:33). The requirement for efficient use of labour and materials led to an increased interest in flat/maisonette development. Shared services and land were considered an attractive prospect for investors.

Wealthy, inner-city suburbs that were infused with character and sited close to public transport and shops were popular locations for flat and maisonette development. Within the City of Stonnington, the highly affluent suburbs of Toorak and South Yarra were particularly sought after for their proximity to the city and a number of substantial flats/maisonettes were constructed in these suburbs in the 1920s and 1930s. These were often of a grand scale and designed by prominent Melbourne architects.

Flat and maisonette development was popular across the entire municipality in the interwar period, with substantial numbers of these developments also constructed in the suburbs of Prahran, Windsor, Armadale, Kooyong and Malvern. Often of a more modest scale than the 'luxury flats' constructed in Toorak and South Yarra, these developments varied in their scale, layout, planning and architectural design.

Within the City of Stonnington, a number of interwar residential flats/maisonettes remain to demonstrate this historic theme and examples of these are included in the Heritage Overlay on an individual basis. Those that are comparable to 1298 Malvern Road include:

- Hillingdon, 383 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (1919), HO436
- Basford Flats, 203 Dandenong Road, Windsor (1919-20), HO433
- Mont Clair, 321 Dandenong Road, Prahran (1921 & 1926), HO434
- Silverton Flats, 698 Orrong Road, Toorak (1927), HO445
- Quantox Flats, 9 Church Street, Toorak (1928-29), HO431
- Koonoona Flats, 754 High Street, Armadale (1933), HO439
- Colywn, 1263 High Street, Malvern (1937), HO440
- Granada Flats, 537 Orrong Road, Armadale (1939), HO444

These properties vary in scale and form and demonstrate a broad range of architectural styles, reflecting the diversity of this building type within the municipality. They are recognised for their high levels of intactness and fine detailing, and as well-designed examples of particular architectural styles.

In a similar manner, 1298 Malvern Road is a well-considered and carefully designed example of a residential flat development and retains a high degree of integrity to clearly demonstrate the characteristics of this building type. It is a fine and highly intact example of a residential flat built in the City of Stonnington in the interwar period.

### **Assessment against Criteria**

Following is an assessment of the place against the recognised heritage criteria set out in *Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (August 2018).

#### ***Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history***

The flats at 1298 Malvern Road are illustrative of the suburban development of Malvern in the interwar period when a number of residential flats/maisonettes were constructed across the suburb. This type of development was largely a result of increased labour and materials costs following World War I. The impetus for the efficient use of labour and materials led to an increased interest in flat/maisonette development, where shared services and land were considered an attractive prospect for investors. The flats at 1298 Malvern Road clearly illustrate this important phase of development of Malvern and the City of Stonnington more broadly.

#### ***Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments***

The flats at 1298 Malvern Road are a fine and highly intact representative example of an interwar residential flat development in the City of Stonnington. The flats display typical features of this building type from this period in Malvern and across Stonnington more broadly, including a substantial two-storey form set on a large site, setbacks to the street frontages to provide a garden setting for the building, individual garages, face brick walls with decorative detailing, and tile-clad hipped roofs. The flats at 1298 Malvern Road are notable as a well-resolved example of a residential flat development from the interwar period in Malvern.

#### ***Criterion E: Importance in displaying particular aesthetic characteristics***



The flats at 1298 Malvern Road are a well-considered and carefully detailed example of a residential flat development designed in the Moderne-style. The design – with its symmetrical composition and low-pitched tile-clad hipped roofs, together with the use of distinctive architectural elements, including contrasting cream and dark-brick horizontal banding and vertical central pilaster element, and set within a garden setting – presents a picturesque composition of this architectural style. The matching low brick fence to the two street frontages and original garages to the rear contribute to the integrity and setting of the place.

**Grading and Recommendations**

It is recommended that the place be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme as a locally significant heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Stonnington Planning Scheme:

External Paint Controls?	No
Internal Alteration Controls?	No
Tree Controls?	No
Outbuildings or Fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-3?	Yes – brick fence to Malvern Road and Shaftesbury Avenue; garages to Shaftesbury Avenue
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	No

**Extent of the Recommended Heritage Overlay**

To the extent of the property boundary, as shown in Figure 6 below.



Figure 6. Recommended Extent of Heritage Overlay

**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.
- Malvern Rate Books.
- Malvern Valuation Field Cards.



Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Base Plan No. 59, 1902.

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan No. 1758, 1935.

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

Sands and McDougall Directories (S&M).

T Sawyer, *Residential flats in Melbourne: the development of a building type to the 1950s*, 1982.

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

Yarra Valley Water Property Sewerage Plan, 1940.