City of
STONNINGTON

Lang Street Precinct

Prepared by: GJM Heritage (March 2025)

Address: 29-37 & 40-52 Lang Street, South Yarra

Name:	Lang Street Precinct	**Survey Date:**	July 2024
Place Type:	Residential Precinct	**Architect/Designer:**	Alan L Fildes (42-52 Lang St)
Grading:	HO807 - see grading table	**Builder:**	Not known
Extent of the Overlay:	See Figure 26	**Construction Date(s):**	1933-37



Figure 1. 29-37 Lang Street, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 2. 40-52 Lang Street, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, June 2024)

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Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Lang Street Precinct, an interwar residential subdivision containing a collection of duplex flats and semi-detached dwellings dating from 1933-37.

The precinct includes:
- Lang Street nos. 29-37 (odd nos) and 40-52 (even nos)

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

- Two-storey brick duplex flats and single-storey semi-detached dwellings, typical of the Interwar English Domestic Revival and Arts and Craft styles of the 1930s
- Tile-clad hipped roofs
- Parapeted walls to the east side and external stairs to the west side of the two-storey flats
- Detailing including contrasting brickwork and render, decorative recessed, projecting and angled brickwork patterning, stepped brickwork to side parapets and gable end, broad bands of render to walls and decorative brickwork to gable end
- Multi-paned timber-framed and/or groups of sash windows
- Plain brick chimneys
- Low brick front fences at the street boundaries of the two-storey duplex flats at 29, 31, 33, 35, 37 and 40 Lang Street.

The front fences of the semi-detached dwellings at 42-52 Lang Street do not contribute to the significance of the place. The rear additions and alterations to the properties do not contribute to the significance of the place.

How is it significant?

The Lang Street Precinct, South Yarra, is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The Lang Street Precinct has strong associations with the development of the municipality in the interwar period. This period of development transformed the built environment and social character of the area by replacing larger properties and substantial mansion estates with higher density flat and semi-detached developments. This was largely a result of rising labour and materials costs following World War I, which made the cost of maintaining large properties difficult and led to a significant increase in the subdivision of these estates across the municipality to create higher density living. As a highly intact precinct of higher-density residential development of the interwar period, the Lang Street Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington (Criterion A).

The Lang Street Precinct, South Yarra contains a cohesive collection of fine and highly intact representative examples of duplex flats and semi-detached dwellings dating to the interwar period. Drawing on the English Domestic Revival and Arts and Craft styles popular at the time, the buildings display typical features of this period, including the use of face brickwork with tile-clad hipped roofs, decorative brickwork and contrasting render detail, multi-paned timber-framed windows and low brick front fences. The consistent architectural style and detailing, low-scale building forms and materiality presents a highly architecturally consistent and cohesive precinct (Criterion D).

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Historical Context

This place is associated with the following historic theme(s) taken from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (2009):

8 Building suburbs

- 8.1.3 The end of an era – mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century
- 8.2 Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal
- 8.6 Developing higher density living

Contextual History

[The following contextual history is derived from Context Pty Ltd's 'Residential Flats in Stonnington Heritage Citations Project', Final (Amendment C163), 12 August 2013, pp 21-24.]

The building of apartments or residential flats began in Melbourne in the first decades of the twentieth century and gathered momentum after World War I. The war affected patterns of living and social life within Australia and the population boom that followed led to a shortage of housing at a time when there was also a shortage of skilled labour and high material costs. The building of flats was seen as one solution to the problem.

A further impact of World War I particular to the South Yarra area was the rapidly changing socio-economic and employment environment which made it increasingly difficult for mansion owners to afford to maintain these large properties and to retain domestic staff. As Wilde (1999:62) cites from an article in the 18 October 1919 edition of the *Prahran Telegraph*:

> *It was held to be no longer necessary to labour with a house and all the domestic drudgery that entailed when by borrowing Continental ideas, people who could afford it could live in flats. Land has become so valuable the villa of the Victorian days, in a crowded thoroughfare, no longer shows anything like an adequate return of interest on the land's present capital value. It is more profitable to pull the house erected thereon down, and to erect flats.*

As a result, in the early twentieth century many sites were ripe for flat development – for both purpose-built flats and the conversion of single substantial residences into flats – particularly along the network of recently electrified tram routes.

The boom in flat development eventually led to resident protests about flats destroying the character of South Yarra and Toorak and, as a result, Prahran Council passed a by-law in 1933 that placed controls over site coverage and building height as well as construction standards in certain areas. An impact of these controls was that until the postwar era, flat developments in these areas were limited to two-storeys in height and needed to be set within garden settings.

Place History

The land that is now Lang Street was first offered for sale as part of the early Crown land sales in 1849 and 1850. A large tract of land, comprising Crown Allotments 36-38, bound by Punt Road to the west, Gardiners Creek (now Toorak) Road to the north, Chapel Street to the east and Commercial Road to the south, were purchased by Peter Davis, a real estate agent. While the land benefited from having frontages to four major roads, its development potential was limited by a large swamp, known as Clifford's Paddock, occupying the central section and extending south to Commercial Road. Davis quickly sold off the suitably drained land – in particular the higher ground to the north – typically offering smaller farm allotments for sale. Some of these allotments were subsequently subdivided for residential development with narrow streets and small house lots.

Lang Street was fully developed by the end of the nineteenth century, with houses and lots of varying sizes.

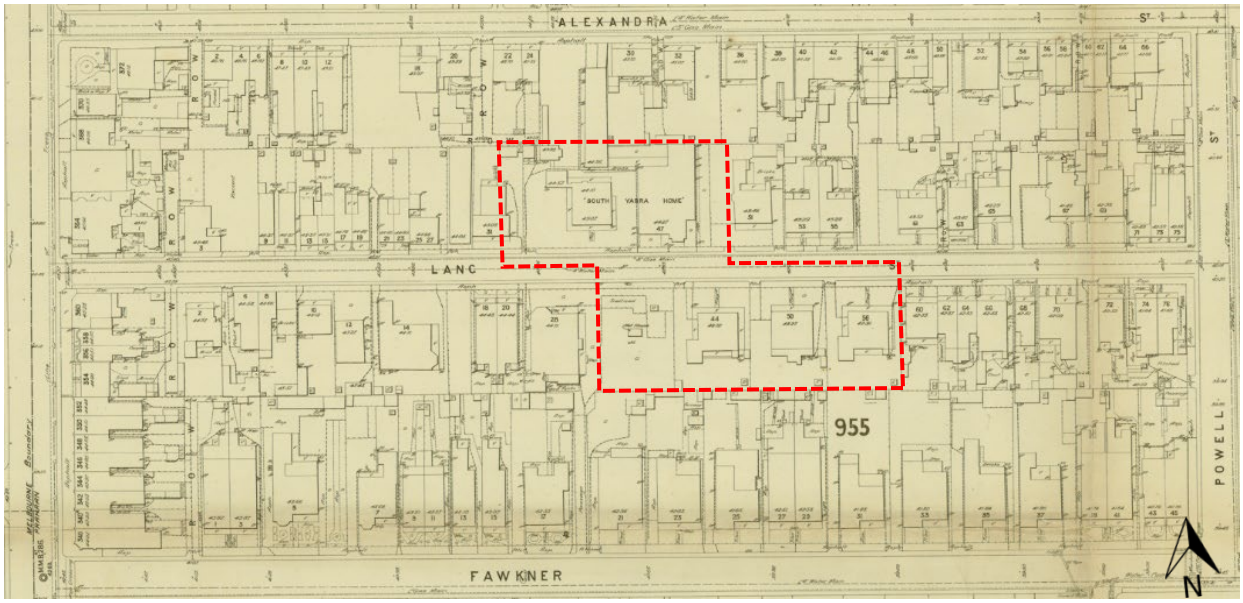
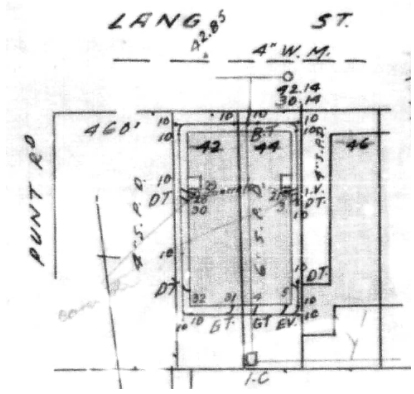


Figure 3. An 1896 MMBW plan showing Lang Street fully developed during the Victorian period. The approximate precinct boundary, with earlier residences, is indicated (Source: MMBW Detail Plan No. 955, dated 1896)

Three single-storey semi-detached dwellings were built in 1933-34 on the south side of Lang Street at nos. 42-44, 46-48 and 50-52 for owner A T Burgess of 'The Rand,' 29 Marine Parade, St Kilda. Designed by architect Alan L Fildes, each semi-detached pair comprised two four-room residences (Figures 4 and 5) (DP). By November 1934 each semi-detached pair had been on-sold to an individual owner, and each residence let to tenants (RB, 1934-5). Rear additions and alterations have been made to a number of the properties.



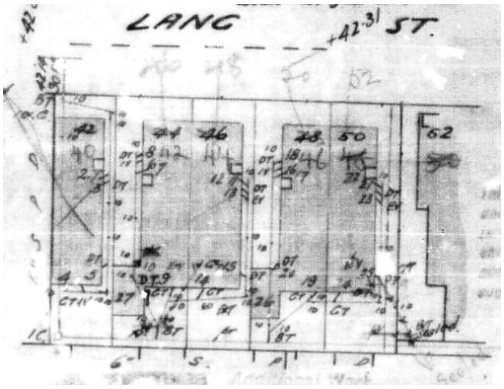


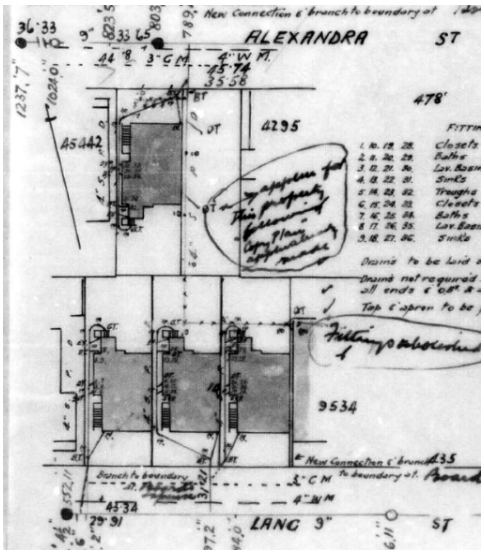
Figure 4. Drainage Plan dated June 1934 showing the footprints of the duplexes at 42-46 Lang Street (Source: DP No. 192217)

Figure 5. Drainage Plan dated August 1933 showing the footprints of the duplexes at the current 44-52 Lang Street (incorrectly numbered on plan) (Source: DP No. 192217)

'South Yarra Home' was a 14-roomed brick residence addressed to 47 Lang Street, owned by the Central Methodist Mission which occupied a large lot on the north side of the street (between 27 and 49 Lang Street) and extended north to Alexandra Street (Figure 3). South Yarra Home was sold to A G Gallagher in 1936 (RB, 1935-6; DP). Arthur G Gallagher was recorded as an investor in the 1936 electoral rolls. Prior, in the 1920s Gallagher was an auctioneer and real estate agent, in business as Mitchell & Taylor, with offices in South Yarra, Windsor and Richmond (Age, 1 Aug 1931:20; 25 Jan 1928:11).

Immediately upon acquiring the property, Gallagher demolished South Yarra Home and developed the land with five two-storey flats facing Lang Street and one facing Alexandra Street to the north (since

demolished) (see Figures 6 and 7). At the same time Gallagher constructed a two-storey block of flats on the south side of Lang Street at no. 40 (see Figure 7).



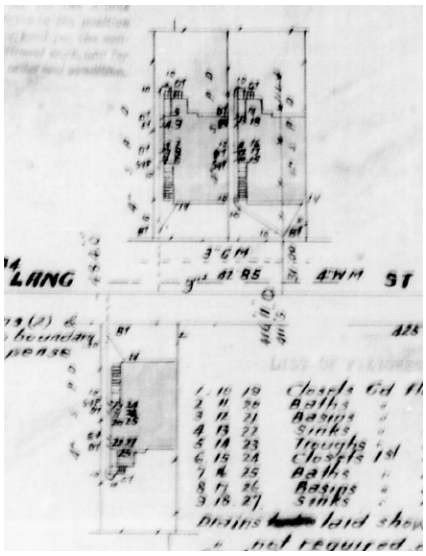


Figure 6. the flats at 29-33 Lang Street, and that at 26 Alexandra Street at top (since demolished) (Source: DP No. 201153)

Figure 7. Drainage Plan dated April 1937 showing the footprints of the flats 35-37, and on the south side at 40 Lang Street (Source: DP No. 201153)

Each flat comprised two residences of four rooms each (RB, 1937-8). By November 1937, each building was under separate ownership (RB, 1937-8).

A 1945 aerial photograph shows the rows of new duplex flats and semi-detached pairs of dwellings (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Detail of the 1945 aerial photograph. The approximate precinct boundary is indicated (Source: Landata Victoria)

Alan L Fildes, architect

Alan Louis Fildes (1909–55) is known to have worked with Oakley & Parkes in 1929 and was active in the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects Students' Society in the early 1930s (RVIA 1929:14; 1930:59).

Fildes took commissions in the early 1930s and is known to have designed the 1932-33 additions at Glenmore Court, 58-60 Carlisle Street, St Kilda (Hermes Record No. 199026). In 1933 *The Herald* published an article on Fildes' conversion of a Victorian residence on Kooyong Road, Armadale into self-contained flats, comprising an additional storey and Spanish Mission style façade (*Herald*, 28 Jun 1933:20). In 1933, Fildes designed the three single-storey duplexes at 42-52 Lang Street, South Yarra.

Fildes partnered with Norman H Seabrook (1906–1979) in 1936 to form the well-renowned practice of Seabrook & Fildes. While Seabrook was the firm's principal designer, Fildes dealt with production and office management (Goad 2002). The firm's most innovative work was produced during the 1930s when they championed modernist designs across a diverse range of building types, taking on residential, institutional, commercial and industrial projects, with their work well published in *Australia Home Beautiful, Art in Australia* and *The Argus* (Phillips 2012:620).

After World War II, Fildes' involvement in the practice decreased and newer associates, among them Eric Atlee Hunt, became prominent in the firm (which continued in various iterations into the 1970s) (Goad 2002).

Description

The Lang Street Precinct comprises a group of duplex flats and semi-detached dwellings on the north and south sides of Lang Street, south-east of the main intersection of Punt Road and Toorak Road and west of the Melbourne to Sandringham railway line. It comprises six two-storey duplex flats (nos. 29-37 and 40 Lang Street) and three pairs of single-storey semi-detached dwellings (Nos. 42-44, 46-48 and 50-52) which are situated on rectangular sites and setback from the street boundary behind front gardens. The semi-detached pairs at 46-48 and 50-52 are accessed by driveways at their western boundaries and pedestrian access at the eastern boundaries. The duplex flats have pedestrian access at the western boundaries, external stairs at the western side of the buildings, parapeted eastern walls and no vehicular access.

Constructed of brick with tile-clad hipped roofs, the buildings are highly consistent in materiality and display a variety of detailing drawing on the Interwar English Domestic Revival and Arts and Crafts styles popular in the 1930s. Detailing includes contrasting brickwork and render, decorative recessed, projecting and angled brickwork patterning, stepped brickwork to side parapets and gable ends, broad bands of render to walls, decorative brickwork to gable ends, multi-paned timber-framed and/or groups of sash windows and plain brick chimneys.

Original low brick front fences line the street boundaries of all the two-storey blocks of flats (nos. 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 40).

Key Features:

- Two-storey brick duplex flats and single-storey semi-detached dwellings, typical of the Interwar English Domestic Revival and Arts and Craft styles of the 1930s
- Tile-clad hipped roofs
- Parapeted walls to the east side and external stairs to the west side of the two-storey flats
- Detailing including contrasting brickwork and render, decorative recessed, projecting and angled brickwork patterning, stepped brickwork to side parapets and gable end, broad bands of render to walls and decorative brickwork to gable end
- Multi-paned timber-framed and/or groups of sash windows
- Plain brick chimneys
- Low brick front fences at the street boundaries of the two-storey duplex flats.



Figure 9. Aerial photograph showing 29-37 & 40-52 Lang Street (Source: Nearmap, dated 9 October 2024)



Figure 10. 29 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 11. 31 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 12. 33 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 13. 35 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 14. 37 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 15. 40 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 16. 42-44 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 17. 46-48 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 18. 50-52 Lang Street (Source: GJM Heritage, June 2024)

Intactness and Integrity

The flats and semi-detached residences within the Lang Street Precinct remain substantially intact to their period of construction and retain a high degree of integrity to the interwar period in fabric, form and detail. While the residences have undergone some minor alterations and rear additions to 33 and 35 Lang Street, and 46-48 Lang Street has been overpainted, these changes to do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a cohesive precinct of interwar flats and duplexes.

Comparative Analysis

The Lang Street Precinct is a substantially intact group of interwar residential developments. The precinct comprises six two-storey duplex flats (nos. 29-37 and 40 Lang Street) and three pairs of single-storey semi-detached dwellings (nos. 42-44, 46-48 and 50-52) developed over a four-year period of time between 1933 and 1937, by two developers. They present a cohesive group of stylistically linked duplex flats and semi-detached dwellings, with each group of similar form and detail, drawing on the English Domestic Revival and Arts and Craft styles popular during the 1930s.

The development of residential flats and semi-detached dwellings 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. The requirement for efficient use of labour and materials led to an increased interest in more intensive residential development. Within the City of Stonnington, the affluent suburbs of Toorak and South Yarra were particularly sought after for their proximity to the city and a number of flat and semi-detached developments were constructed in these suburbs in the interwar period. Across the municipality, these developments varied in their scale, layout, planning and architectural expression.

A number of interwar residential precincts are included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme. The precincts that are most comparable to the Lang Street Precinct include St Georges Court Precinct, Toorak (HO348) and Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct, South Yarra (HO382). These precincts contain comparable streets of highly intact flats and semi-detached dwellings dating to the interwar period. Examples of houses, flats and duplexes within these precincts include:

St Georges Court Precinct, Toorak (HO348)

The St Georges Court Precinct comprises a consistent streetscape of two-storey freestanding and semi-detached dwellings constructed in the interwar period. The precinct is significant as an intact, visually cohesive and prestigious interwar subdivision that pursues a consistent stylistic theme despite the involvement of a range of architects. The two-storey residences and maisonettes display Georgian Revival and Mediterranean influences, designed in cases to present multi-residential properties as large and stately residences.



Figure 19. 4 St Georges Court, Toorak (Source: Victorian Heritage Database)



Figure 20. 9 St Georges Road, Toorak (Source: Victorian Heritage Database)



Figure 21. Maisonettes, 11 St Georges Court, Toorak (Source: Victorian Heritage Database)

Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct, South Yarra (HO382)

The precinct comprises a fine and highly intact collection of flats, maisonettes and houses dating to the 1930s. They present as a highly unified group of interwar residences constructed in a range of styles prevalent at the time, particularly the English Domestic Revival and Moderne styles. Despite the variation in architectural detailing, the consistent siting, scale, building forms and materiality – in conjunction with the garden settings and low brick front fences – presents a highly architecturally consistent and aesthetically cohesive streetscape.



Figure 22. 19 Coolullah Avenue, South Yarra (Source: GJM Heritage, 2024)



Figure 23. 2 Quamby Avenue, South Yarra (Source: GJM Heritage, 2024)



Figure 24. 4-6 Quamby Avenue, South Yarra (Source: GJM Heritage, 2024)

Like the Lang Street Precinct, the above examples contain streetscapes of substantially intact dwellings dating to the interwar period, which illustrate the significant suburban development in the City of Stonnington during this period. Residences within these precincts display characteristics typical of the interwar period, including features of the English Domestic Revival, Georgian Revival, Arts and Craft, Moderne and Mediterranean styles. The resulting interwar streetscapes in these precincts display a high degree of integrity and are generally consistent in scale, materiality and detailing and have a distinctive architectural character.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Planning Practice Note No. 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018), modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: *Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (historical significance).*

The Lang Street Precinct has strong associations with the development of the municipality in the interwar period. This period of development transformed the built environment and social character of the area by replacing larger properties and substantial mansion estates with higher density flat and semi-detached developments. This was largely a result of rising labour and materials costs following World War I, which made the cost of maintaining large properties difficult and led to a significant increase in the subdivision of these estates across the municipality to create higher density living. As a highly intact precinct of higher-density residential development of the interwar period, the Lang Street Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington.

CRITERION B: *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (rarity).*

N/A

CRITERION C: *Possession to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (research potential).*

N/A

CRITERION D: *Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).*

The Lang Street Precinct, South Yarra contains a cohesive collection of fine and highly intact representative examples of duplex flats and semi-detached dwellings dating to the interwar period. Drawing on the English Domestic Revival and Arts and Craft styles popular at the time, the buildings display typical features of this period, including the use of face brickwork with tile-clad hipped roofs,

decorative brickwork and contrasting render detail, multi-paned timber-framed windows and low brick front fences. The consistent architectural style and detailing, low-scale building forms and materiality presents a highly architecturally consistent and cohesive precinct.

CRITERION E: *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).*

N/A

CRITERION F: *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.*

N/A

CRITERION G: *Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing cultural traditions (social significance).*

N/A

CRITERION H: *Special association with the life or works of a period, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Stonnington's history (associative significance).*

N/A

Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the properties be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme as a Heritage Precinct known as the *Lang Street Precinct* (HO807).

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

External paint controls *Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?*	No
Internal alteration controls *Is a permit required for internal alterations?*	No
Tree controls *Is a permit required to remove a tree?*	No
Solar energy system controls *Solar energy system controls apply?*	Yes
Outbuildings and fences exemptions *Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?*	Yes – front fences (nos. 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 40)
Victorian Heritage Register *Is this place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?*	No

Prohibited uses may be permitted *Can a permit be granted to use for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?*	No
Aboriginal heritage place *Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the* Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?	No
Incorporated Plan *Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?*	No

Gradings of individual properties within the precinct are recommended as follows and as shown in Figure 27:

No.	Address	Grading
29	Lang Street	Contributory
31	Lang Street	Contributory
33	Lang Street	Contributory
35	Lang Street	Contributory
37	Lang Street	Contributory
40	Lang Street	Contributory
42-44	Lang Street	Contributory
46-48	Lang Street	Contributory
50-52	Lang Street	Contributory



Figure 25. Grading map.

Extent of Overlay

To the extent of the property boundaries as shown in Figure 26.



References

Australian Electoral Rolls.

Context Pty Ltd, *Residential Flats in Stonnington Heritage Citations Project, Final (Amendment C163)*, 12 August 2013.

Drainage Plan (DP) Nos. 201153, 9534,192217.

Goad, Philip, 'Seabrook, Norman Hugh (1906–1978)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/>, published first in hardcopy 2002, accessed online 30 September 2024.

Herald.

Hermes Database record no. 199026 – 'Glenmore Court, 58-60 Carlisle Street, St Kilda, Port Phillip City.'

Landata Victoria (LV), Landata Victoria, Central Plan Office, Historical aerial photography.

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan No. 955, City of Prahran, 1896.

Nearmap.

Phillips, Christine, ‘Seabrook & Fildes’ in P Goad & J Willis, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne, 2012, pp 620-21.

Prahran Rate Books (RB), South Yarra Ward, as cited.

Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA), *Journal of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects*, Vol. 27, No. 4 September 1929; Vol. 28, No. 3 July 1930.

The Age.