Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: 719 Toorak Road, Kooyong
Address: 719 Toorak Road, Kooyong

HO Reference: HO344
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 24 March 2022

Designer: Francis J. Davies
Builder: Unknown

Year of Construction: 1919



Photograph of 719 Toorak Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO344.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Mansion

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most 'designed' suburbs – houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as a local heritage place on the HO.

Controls:	☐	External paint colours	☐	Internal alterations	☐ Tree controls
	☐	Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐ Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 719 Toorak Road, Kooyong is significant. The form, scale and detailing of the Spanish and Elizabethan inspired interwar building from 1919 is of local heritage significance. The front fence and gate, landscaping and later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

719 Toorak Road is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

719 Toorak Road has aesthetic significance as a highly intact, unique and distinct example of a Spanish and Elizabethan inspired interwar building, characterised by projecting render swagged parapets, profiled chimneys, an arched portico, timber multi-paned windows and pitched tiled roof. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	The place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	719 Toorak Road has aesthetic significance as a highly intact, unique, and distinct example of a Spanish and Elizabethan inspired interwar building, characterised by projecting render swagged parapets, profiled chimneys, an arched portico, timber multi-paned windows and pitched tiled roof.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	The place does not meet this 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 the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	The place does not meet this criterion.

H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	Very little is documented on Francis J Davies. The place does not meet this criterion.

Description

• Physical Analysis

719 Toorak Road, Kooyong is a double storey yellow roughcast structure with a distinctive design which draws on Spanish and Elizabethan influences with two distinct hipped roof wings. The front façade and main structure are distinguished by projecting swagged parapets facing both corner façades. The parapets are scalloped and framed by projecting piers on each side with a quatrefoil motif painted white in the centre of the parapet. There are several corbelled roughcast chimneys extending from the roof with the main wide chimney projecting from the east elevation.

The parapet form is repeated at the ground floor porch, which extends across the south elevation and projects out on the eastern side to form a porte cochere. The porch has repeated arched openings set on square doric columns with moulded reveals and quatrefoil motifs. Apart from the parapets, the building has wide eave overhang with a glazed terracotta tile roof that may be a later alteration.

The rectangular windows on the structure vary in size and all have concrete sill. There are some remaining original nine pane timber double hung sash windows. It appears that most of the larger windows and full-length windows at the north façade overlooking the backyard and pool have been replaced with aluminium frame windows. A set of windows and French doors penetrate the principal parapet panel facing Toorak Road. There are windows of a Moorish style on the ground floor living room.

The grounds of the property are highly and have a high wall street boundary. The house and new boundary wall are finished in a yellow ochre cement or lime finish. There is a pool in the backyard with terracotta tiled flooring surrounding it. The street entrance off Avenel Road is defined by a black wrought iron fence and a grey stone paved flooring. There is a garage fronting Avenel Road that has in a sympathetic roof form and yellow roughcast with a white garage door.

719 Toorak Road is located on the junction of Toorak Road and Avenel Road adjacent to the Sir Robert Menzies Reserve. It is close to the Kooyong Railway Station, Kooyong commercial area and several sports and recreational spaces north of the train line.

719 Toorak Road, Kooyong is currently as used as a residential property and is considered to be in good condition aside from the yellow roughcast which appears to be deteriorating in some areas. There have been several major alterations and additions and the property is considered to be of moderate integrity.

• Alterations and Additions

- Replacement of the terracotta tiled roof.
- New gutters and downpipes.
- Aluminum frame windows.
- New boundary wall (1992).
- Original cypress (*Cupressus*) hedge removed (1992).

- Gate added.
- Stone paved driveway added.
- Sympathetic garage addition.
- Addition of a swimming pool.
- Addition of an antenna to the roof.

History

Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

The suburb of Kooyong was historically associated with the estate of solicitor Peter Ferrie, who purchased land from Crown Portion 21 in June 1840. This portion comprised sixty acres of land bounded by Glenferrie Road, Gardiners Creek, Avenel Road, and Toorak Road. Ferrie lost his property due to financial constraints in 1843, and the property was taken up by many different owners over a period of twenty years. In 1865, it was purchased by James Fergusson. A lithographer by trade, Fergusson constructed a palatial property of fourteen rooms with auxiliary outbuildings and gardens. This building was later demolished in 1854. All sixty acres of the original grounds were subdivided, making way for the streets of Kooyong.

In 1890 the new railway line to Glen Iris cut a swathe through both the Glen Ferrie Estate and land owned by nurseryman William Bailey in present day Elizabeth Street, cutting off the flood-prone river flats. Chinese market gardeners continued to use the land between the railway and the creek well into the 20th century. Today, Kooyong is characterised by a mixture of Federation/Edwardian and Interwar private residences.

Place History

719 Toorak Road, originally listed as 37 Toorak Road, was designed by Francis J. Davies for Mrs. Roberts, widow of William Roberts, in 1919. A fellow of the Royal Institute of Victorian Architects (FRIVA), Davies is controversially known for designing W.D. & H.O. Wills (Aust.) Ltd.'s five story interwar tobacco warehouse at 411-424 Swanston Street, Melbourne, following the 1925 collapse of his original building design that killed four workmen and injured at least three others (The Herald 1925, 1).

While there is little known about the house during its initial years, a Sands and McDougall directory reveals that occupancy was taken up by Stephen F. Roberts by 1925 (Sands & McDougall 1925). Although difficult to confirm, it is likely that Stephen F. Roberts bore a relation to Mrs. Roberts. A key change during the property's early history includes the 1919 addition of an adjoining motor garage (Lewis and Aitkin 1992). Occupancy by the Roberts family ended after a decade.

In 1928, emerging neurologist and art collector Leonard Bell Cox and Nancy Compson Cox (née Trumble) purchased 719 Toorak Road (Sands McDougall 1930). Educated at Wesley College and the University of Melbourne, Leonard Cox had a lasting friendship with Sir Robert Menzies, and is notable for his significant contributions to neurological literature (Schwieger 1993). As an avid art collector, he also helped establish the National Gallery Society of Victoria, which he was president of in 1952. In 1935, the residency whereby the house was officially re-listed as 719 Toorak Road, Kooyong. Throughout their thirty-three year occupancy at the house, both Leonard and Nancy Cox were noted for their major philanthropic contributions to public causes.

Leonard and Nancy Cox moved out of the house in 1962 and, by the mid- 1960s, Geelong sportsman and engineer F. A. V. Goldstone had taken up residence. Known modifications during the late 20th century included the removal of a mature cypress (*Cupressus*) hedge and low rendered wall, and the subsequent insertion of a high boundary wall in 1992 (Lewis and Aitkin 1992).

Comparative Analysis

719 Toorak Road is the only residence by Francis J. Davies afforded heritage protections in Victoria. No other dwellings designed by Davies have been identified through desktop research. The following comparative analysis is based on an assessment of the architectural style and quality of the building within the City of Stonnington.

Comparative examples include:

- **Thanes, 13A Monaro Road, Kooyong (HO83 / VHR H0953).** Designed by Walter Richmond Butler, the dwelling called 'Thanes' is of 'architectural significance as an extraordinary example of the Arts and Crafts freestyle, with distinctive Elizabethan influences, and as perhaps the most unusual Arts and Crafts residence constructed in Victoria' (VHR H0953). Both dwellings are characterised by Elizabethan influences, in particular the projecting render swagged parapets. The buildings differentiate in their overarching styles, however, with 719 Toorak Road taking on more Spanish Mission influences and Thanes taking on more of Arts and Crafts influences.
- **546 Orrong Road, Armadale (not currently listed)**. Although this property is not protected by a HO, it shares some important similarities with 719 Toorak Road as a Spanish Mission interwar era dwelling. Importantly, both residences include swagged parapets and a porte cochere with repeated arched openings set on square columns with moulded detailing. Although they are of different scales, they are both considered to be highly intact and illustrative examples of the Spanish Mission style.
- **61 Clendon Road, Toorak (individually significant in Montalto Avenue Precinct (HO143)).** 61 Clendon Road consists of an interwar dwelling with some Spanish Mission influences. Both buildings share the same scale, hipped roof form and materiality, however 719 Toorak Road presents as a more unique building owing to the swagged parapets, porte cochere, profiled chimneys and cement render detailing.

By means of the above comparative examples, it is clear that 719 Toorak Road is an intact and high-quality example of an interwar era dwelling with both Spanish Mission and Elizabethan influences. The building is architecturally unusual and unique within the municipality.

References

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images



North east view of upper level storey (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



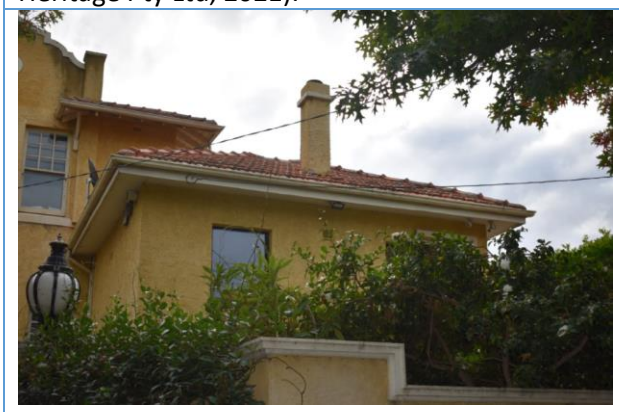
View of east elevation behind the front gate (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



North east view of porte cochere (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View of east elevation scalloped parapet (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of chimney and built form of the addition (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

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