

IDENTIFIER	HOUSE		
Other/s	Stuart House (former)		
Address	48 Narrak Road BALWYN	Date/s	1926 1937; 1963 (later alterations)
Designer/s	Unknown (original house) Rosenfeldt, Gheradin & Ass (1963 alterations)	Builder/s	Unknown (original house) H Shillico? (1937 alterations)
Theme/s	6.3.2 Creating prestigious residential areas 6.7.1 Making homes for the upper classes	Heritage Group	Residential Building (Private)
		Heritage Category	House
		Heritage Status	-
Intactness	Good	Significance	Local
Condition	Good	Recommendation	Include in HO as individual place



Extent	To title boundaries	Survey date	4 May 2016
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History

This house was erected in 1926 for leading Melbourne wool-broker R A Stuart and his family. The son of German-born brickmaker Ferdinand Schubert and his Australian wife Elizabeth Pelzer, Rolf Allen Stuart (1894-1958) was born in Adelaide as Rolf Alvin Schubert. He began his career in the wool trade in South Australia before gaining further experience in England. On returning in 1914, he settled in Melbourne to take up a position as wool appraiser to the Government Wool Scheme. He anglicised his name in October 1916, presumably due to anti-German sentiment that ran rife during the First World War. Following another stint in England, he returned to Melbourne in 1921 to become a partner with Townsend, Rhodes-Smith & Company. The next year, he bought out his partners and re-badged the firm as Ralph A Stuart & Company, based at 445 Collins Street. At that time, Stuart was unmarried and living alone in Caulfield. He acquired the site for the present house, on the south-east corner of Winmalee and Narrak Roads, in September 1923.

Around 1925, Stuart married Irish-born Aileen Anna Scott Dunwoody (1896-1968). The couple initially took up residence in a flat on Malvern Road, Armadale, while planning to build a grand new house for themselves on the land that Stuart had purchased at Balwyn. As noted by Graham Butler in the *Camberwell Conservation Study* (1991), construction commenced in 1926, although the Stuarts did not take up residence there until early 1928. By then, Ralph and his wife Aileen already had one child: daughter Shirley Margaret, who was born in 1926. Two sons followed: Forster Gordon Stuart (1930-2006) and Rolf Barry Stuart (1932-2009). In 1937, Stuart engaged a builder whose name is recorded as "H Shillico" (possibly Henry Shillito, a carpenter from Armadale who lived not far from Stuart's former residence in Malvern Road) to undertake minor alterations and additions worth £290.

By the early 1950s, residents of the Balwyn house included not only Ralph and Aileen and their children Shirley and Rolf, but apparently also three members of their extended family: Albert Stuart, his wife Addie and their son Albert David. Albert senior died in 1952 and Ralph's daughter Shirley moved out after her marriage in 1954. After Ralph's death on 18 November 1958, ownership of the house (described in his probate papers as "large brick residence containing nine rooms and conveniences, garage, laundry and workshops, sheds, tennis court, etc") passed to his younger son Rolf, who also carried on his father's business interests. With city premises at 357 King Street, the family firm was renamed the Stuart Provident Investment Company Pty Ltd in 1965, but reverted to R A Stuart & Company in 1973.

Rolf Stuart and his wife Margaret remained living in the Balwyn house for many years. In 1963, he engaged architects Rosenfeld, Gheradin & Associates to undertake alterations to the kitchen and laundry at a cost of £1,000. These drawings, and a series of MMBW property sewerage plans covering earlier changes in 1937, suggests that the footprint of the house did not significantly change during the Stuart family's long period of ownership: a substantial double-storey bungalow with north-west facing verandah and a large garage to the south. Subsequent changes to the built fabric have been minor, such as the erection of a new boundary fence (1968) and an additional bay to the garage (1980). Since the 1990s, however, the curtilage of the property has been reduced by subdivision. The Winmalee Road frontage, which once included a tennis court at the eastern end, was carved up to create four new residential allotments (now Nos 134, 136, 138 and 140). The original house, now fronting the side street, was re-designated as 48 Narrak Road. This frontage has also since been subdivided; a new allotment was created at the south end and a new house built there (now 46 Narrak Road) in 1995.

Description

Sited at an angle to the street, the house at 48 Narrak Road is a large attic-storeyed rendered brick bungalow with a prominent gabled roof clad in Marseilles-pattern terracotta tiles, with terracotta finials and a partially rendered chimney. The elevation to Narrak Road is double-fronted and asymmetrical, with a large projecting bay to the left side that incorporates a double-gabled dormer window at the attic level. A stepped verandah, with a gentler hipped roof supported on rendered piers with shaped brackets and face brick plinths, extends across the entire elevation, extending further to the south-west to create a *porte-cochere* to the garage beyond. Canted bay windows open onto the verandah, and the off-centre front entry is marked by a project gabled porch with curved flight of concrete steps leading down to ground level. Gable ends are clad in shingles; those to the sides of the house and dormers have bracketed eaves. Windows have timber-framed double-hung sashes, some with plain leaded glazing. The garage wing, to the south, is similarly detailed with tile-clad gable roof and rendered walls. The additional garage bay, added in 1980, is designed and detailed in a matching style.

A notably large Cypress hedge runs along the Narrak Road boundary, with an arched opening for the driveway. The landscaping to the front garden includes a large Canary Island date palm tree.

Integrity

Externally, the house appears to remain substantially intact. The documented alterations to the house are either not evident from the street frontage (ie the internal changes to the kitchen and laundry that were made in 1963) or are deemed to be sympathetic in scale and form (eg additional garage bay added in 1980).

Although the original extent of the property has been reduced by subdivision, the house still retains a generous curtilage. While the subdivision of the Winmalee Road frontage necessitated the removal of the cypress hedge that formerly extended right along that side, the portion that still remains along Narrak Road is still a notable element.

Historical Context

This part of Balwyn, centred on Fitzgerald Street, the east ends of Yarrbat Avenue and Winmalee Road, and contiguous portions of Narrak and Union Roads, began to develop as a prestigious residential area in the late nineteenth century. This trend continued into the early twentieth century and peaked during the inter-war period when wealthy Melburnians (including doctors, solicitors, retailers and merchants) built large residences, typically set well back from the street on large allotments. After the Second World War, several of these properties were subdivided for closer residential settlement. Currently retaining its reputation as Balwyn's most prestigious residential address, the area has been somewhat transformed since the 1980s, with many of the original houses extensively altered, enlarged or simply demolished and replaced.

Comparative Analysis

The house at 48 Narrak Road (formerly 136 Winmalee Road) is one of a number of substantial bungalow-style dwellings that proliferated in this prestigious residential area during the later 1910s and 1920s. Some have since been demolished, including those at 90 Yarrbat Avenue (Gawler & Drummond, 1923), architect William Henderson's own house at 112 Yarrbat Avenue (Haddon & Henderson, 1925) and another by an unconfirmed designer at 65 Yarrbat Avenue. Today, this key local phase of inter-war residential settlement is demonstrated by a considerably number of surviving bungalow-style dwellings of above-average scale. These include 137 Winmalee Road (c.1923), 110 Yarrbat Avenue (Clegg & Morrow, 1924), 114 Yarrbat Avenue (c.1925), 144-146 Yarrbat Avenue (1922), 45 Narrak Road (c.1925), 286 Union Road (1920) and 269 Union Road (1926). However, the vast example at 46 Narrak Road stands out as by far the largest and grandest of them all, eclipsing in scale even the two large examples slightly further along Winmalee Road, at Nos 127 (1921) and 150 (1915), both of which are already included on the heritage overlay schedule (respectively as HO421 and HO422).

The house at 46 Narrak Road also stands out when compared to contemporaneous bungalow-style residences along Balwyn's other prestige residential strip, the so-called "Golden Mile" of Mont Albert Road. While the theme of prestigious living is well represented by a number of surviving grand Victorian and Edwardian residences, the bungalow-style dwellings of the 1920s tend to be somewhat smaller in scale, typified by those examples at Nos 88, 166 and 168 Mont Albert Road.

Grading and recommendation

The house at 46 Narrak Road, Balwyn, is an individually significant heritage place in the City of Boroondara.

It is recommended for inclusion in the schedule to the heritage overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme. In order to preserve the Canary Island date palm tree in the front garden, tree controls are also recommended.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

Erected in 1926 for leading Melbourne businessman Ralph Stuart, the house at 48 Narrak Road, Balwyn, is a large attic-storeyed rendered brick bungalow with tile-clad gabled roof, dormer windows, verandah and projecting porch. Originally fronting (136) Winmalee Road, the property was subdivided in the 1990s, which necessitated the removal of the cypress hedge along that side. It was re-addressed to Narrak Road, where the remnant cypress hedge still remains.

The significant fabric is defined as the entire exterior of the house and garage block, excluding the second garage bay that was added in 1980. The Canary Island date palm tree in the front garden is also considered to be significant.

How is it significant?

The house at 48 Narrak Road, Balwyn, satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Boroondara Planning Scheme:

- Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history;
- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

Why is it significant?

The house is significant as one of the largest and grandest 1920s houses to be erected along Winmalee Road, which has long been (and continues to be) acknowledged as one of the most prestigious residential addresses in the area. Developing as an exclusive residential enclave from the late nineteenth century, this part of Balwyn attracted many leading Melbourne businessmen and professionals during the inter-war period. Erected by prominent wool-broker Ralph Stuart (and occupied by his family until the 1980s), this substantial house provides evidence of a key pattern of settlement in one of the region's most prestigious residential addresses (*Criterion A*).

The house is significant as a notably large example of a house in the English Bungalow style that became increasingly fashionable in the 1920s. It is not only notable for its sheer scale but also for its atypical angled orientation (facing north-east, towards what was originally the intersection of its two street frontages), its uncommon double-gabled dormer windows and its unusually substantial attached garage wing. Despite the partial subdivision of its original grounds, the house retains a sizeable curtilage that provides an appropriate setting, enhanced by landscape elements including the Canary Island date palm and the massive cypress hedge that remains a major element in the streetscape (*Criterion E*).

Identified By

Graeme Butler Pty Ltd, *Camberwell Conservation Study* (1991), pp 318-319 [then known as 136 Winmalee Road]

References

Certificate of Title, Volume 4782, Folio 362, created 19 September 1923.

City of Camberwell Building Permit No 7,991, dated 8 January 1937 (and later). Held by City of Boroondara.

MMBW Property Sewerage Plan No 183244. 3 pp, not dated. Held by Yarra Valley Water.

Who's Who in Australia (1927), p 1324.

Graeme Butler Pty Ltd, *Camberwell Conservation Study* (1991), pp 318-319