

IDENTIFIER	HOUSE	Citation No	HG09
Other name/s	<i>Bundara</i>	Melway ref	69 B5
Address	475 Neerim Road MURRUMBEENA	Date/s	1890
Designer/s	T & H Payne?	Builder/s	Unknown



Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019



Location map and extent of HO

Heritage Group	Residential building (private)	Condition	Excellent
Heritage Category	House	Intactness	Excellent

Thematic context	6.7 Making homes for Victorians
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Recommendation	Include on heritage overlay schedule as an individual heritage place		
Controls	<input type="checkbox"/> External Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Alteration	<input type="checkbox"/> Trees

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

Bundara, at 475 Neerim Road, Murrumbena, is a single-storey double-fronted Late Victorian bichromatic brick villa with a hipped roof, prominent brick chimneys, a skillion-roofed timber-framed return verandah, and a gable-roofed weatherboard rear wing. It was erected in 1890 for shipping agent Edward Swindells, whose large family occupied the property for seven decades. The significant fabric is defined as the exterior of the brick villa and weatherboard rear wing.

How is it significant?

Bundara satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history.
- Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history.
- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

Why is it significant?

At the local level, *Bundara* is significant for its associations with an early and important phase of residential settlement in the suburb of Murrumbeena. Although the railway line was extended through the area as early as 1879, with a station at the junction of Neerim and Murrumbeena roads, further settlement in the vicinity was not encouraged until several large subdivisions were released in 1887-88. While a minor boom of residential (and commercial) settlement ensued, the area was to remain only sparsely developed until late 1910s, when the Boom-era estates finally began to fill out (*Criterion A*). With many of the earlier Victorian houses subsequently demolished for post-WW2 subdivision and higher density development, *Bundara* remains to provide rare evidence of the initial phase of settlement, both along the major thoroughfare of Neerim Road and more broadly across the entire suburb of Murrumbeena (*Criterion B*).

At the local level, *Bundara* is significant as an unusual and substantially intact example of a Late Victorian villa. Of bichromatic red and cream brick construction, it stands out from most other late nineteenth century houses in the area, which are more commonly of timber (often block-fronted) or sometimes rendered brick. While fairly conventional in its expression, with M-shaped hipped roof and double-fronted façade, *Bundara* is distinguished by its ornate chimneys (with rendered strips and heavily moulded cornices) and unusual return verandah with shaped brackets and simple slat frieze instead of the more ubiquitous wrought iron lacework. The early rear addition, in weatherboard with gabled slate roof, is a rare survivor in a house of this age. (*Criterion E*)

History

Bundara, at 476 Neerim Road, Murrumbeena was erected in 1890 for shipping agent Edward Arthur Swindells (1859-1949). Melbourne-born Swindells was employed as the Melbourne manager for the Belfast & Koroit Steam Navigation Company by 1884, and would hold that position for over half a century before his retirement in October 1938 (*Argus* 26/10/1938:12). In October 1889, Swindells married Frances Ada Williams (1871-1949) and the couple purchased vacant land on Neerim Road, Murrumbeena, on which to erect a family home. The site, designated as Lot 6, formed part of a recent subdivision along the south side of the street, just east of the railway station. Rate books confirm that the building was completed by January 1891, when it was first recorded as a four-roomed brick house on Lot 6, Neerim Road, with a Net Annual Value of £35. Although unconfirmed, the house may have been designed by architects T & H Payne of Brunswick, who had called tenders in April 1890 for a "brick cottage, Neerim Road, Murrumbeena Station" (*Age* 26/04/1890:3). The new house was named *Bundara*, which had been the name of the house in Albert Park that Swindells occupied prior to his marriage.

The Swindells family grew to become a large one, even by Victorian standards. By the turn of the century, Edward and Frances had had five daughters and a son (although four died in infancy), followed by a further six daughters born between 1903 and 1912. By then, the family comprised eight surviving offspring ranging in age from newborn Ada to young adults Gertrude and Dorothy, the two eldest surviving sisters, who never married. It is thus hardly surprising that the original four-roomed brick house soon became inadequate. The MMBW plan, dated 1918, shows that a large timber-framed wing had been added to the rear by that time. During this period, Swindells became notably active in local affairs, and was one of the principal agitators for the establishment the Murrumbeena State School, which opened in 1903. He was also a member of the Oakleigh & District Chrysanthemum Society, serving as its Honorary Secretary in 1897-98.

During the inter-war years, the occupation of *Bundara* decreased as the four middle daughters (Marjorie, Mary, Kathleen and Beryl) married and moved elsewhere, while the two eldest (Gertrude and Dorothy) and two youngest (Sylvia and Ada) remained living with their elderly parents. After the respective deaths of Edward and his wife Frances, who died just one month apart in 1949, spinster sisters Gertrude and Dorothy continued to live there until the early 1960s.

Description

The former Swindells House at 475 Neerim Road, Murrumbeena, is a single-storey bichromatic brick Victorian villa with a hipped roof (in the traditional M-shaped section) clad in corrugated galvanized steel, with turned finials to the ridge and three large chimneys with rendered banding, moulded cornices and terracotta pots. Of red brick construction with contrasting cream brick stringcourses and a tuck-pointed finish, the house has an asymmetrical double fronted façade incorporating a return verandah, with a skillion roof supported on turned timber posts with curved and fretted brackets and a simple timber frieze. The front door is set into the side wall at the far end of the verandah return, and there is a plain rectangular window with projecting stone sill and timber-framed double-hung sashes. The street façade had two larger tripartite windows, each with a set of double-hung sashes flanked by solomonic mullions and narrow sidelights.

The rear wing, which projects slightly west of the alignment of the main house, is a weatherboard structure with a steep gabled roof clad in slate.

Comparisons

Although Murrumbeena Railway Station opened in 1879, a decade passed before settlement began in earnest. This was expedited by the release of four large subdivisions radiating from the junction of Neerim and Murrumbeena Roads: the *Murrumbeena Reserve* to the north-east, the *Murrumbeena Railway Station Estate* to the north-west, the *Murrumbeena Estate* to the south-east, and the *Crosbie Park Estate* to the south-west. Offered for sale by auction during 1887-88, these estates saw limited development over the next decade or so. In 1900, the *Sands & McDougall Directory* included fewer than a hundred residential listings in Murrumbeena, with the main hotspots being the east side of Murrumbeena Road (14 listings), west side of Emily Street (7 listings), east side of Dunoon Street (5 listings), north side of Sydney Street (5 listings), north side of Adelaide Street (5 listings), and others in Railway Parade, Melbourne Street, Hobart Road and Kangaroo Road. While the early twentieth century saw further development, MMBW plans from the late 1910s still show only a smattering of dwellings. It was not until the inter-war years that these estates began to fill out. However, many of the earlier houses from the late Victorian (and Edwardian) eras would fall prey to the subsequent phase of post-WW2 development, as their often larger-than-average frontages made them desirable for higher density development such as blocks of flats and villa units.

Today, little physical evidence remains of Murrumbeena's initial phase of late Victorian residential settlement. Amongst the aforementioned hotspots listed in the 1900 directory, only one early house appears to remain along Murrumbeena Road: a neglected but intact rendered brick villa at No 130, with slate-clad roof and asymmetrical façade with return verandah. Only one early house survives on the west side of Emily Street (an unprepossessing and much altered double-fronted weatherboard villa at No 11) and none at all on the east side of Dunoon Street. In Railway Parade, an atypically grander two-storey rendered house (formerly known as *Brimlea*) survives as part of a retirement home at No 22, although it has been greatly altered and engulfed by later additions. A far more intact and distinguished survivor is *Alnick* at No 11, an unusual triple-fronted red brick house in the Queen Anne style, erected 1892-93 for Sir James Patterson, and currently included on the City of Glen Eira's heritage overlay schedule [HO57].

Otherwise, most remaining Victorian dwellings in the area can be found within the former extent of the *Murrumbeena Reserve* estate, bounded by Neerim, Murrumbeena, Dandenong and Hobart Roads. Relatively intact hip-roofed timber villas still stand at 4 Sydney Street, 8 Sydney Street and 21 Brisbane Street (all c1891), with asymmetrical facades, canted bay windows and verandahs. A counterpart with symmetrical façade survives at 14 Melbourne Street (c1890), but has been altered by the addition of an attached garage in a matching faux-Victorian style. Rather more directly comparable to *Bundara* is the double-fronted bichromatic brick villa at 18 Adelaide Street (c1892), with slate-clad hipped roof, arched windows and L-shaped return verandah with lacework frieze.

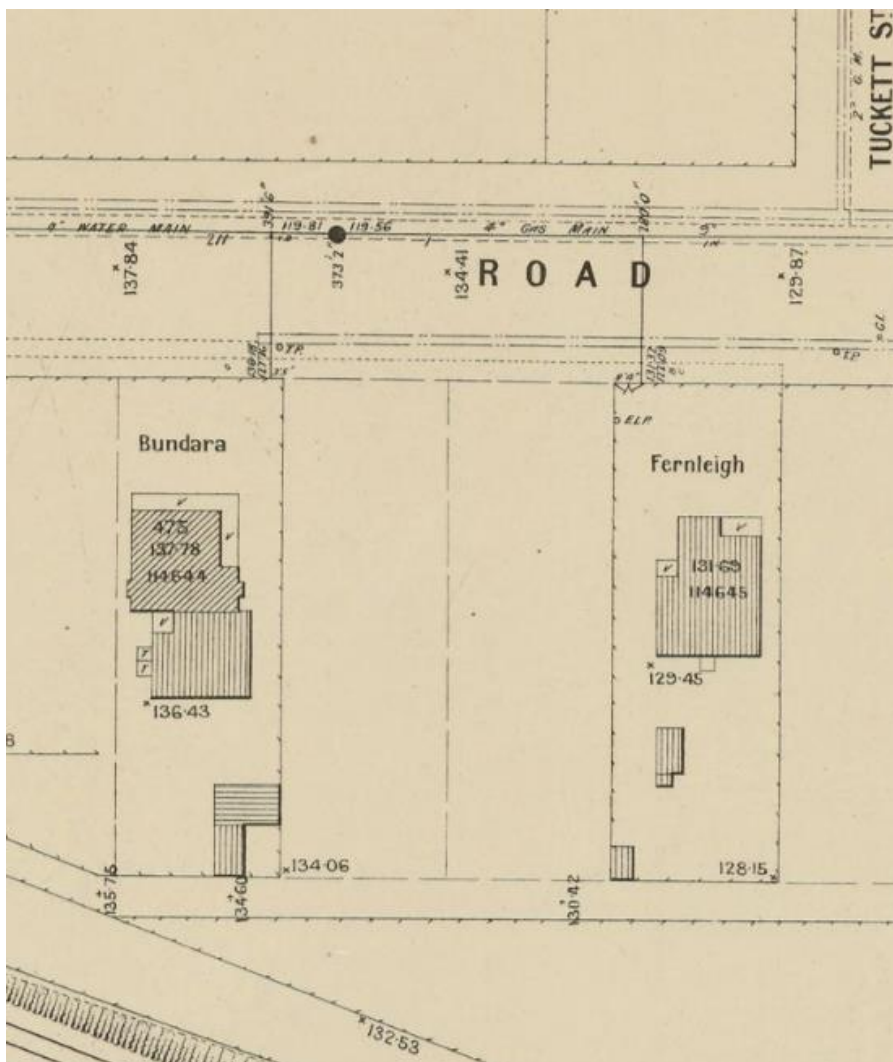
Bundara, at 475 Neerim Road, stands out not only as of Murrumbreena's oldest surviving houses, but also the last of its kind along this particular part of Neerim Road. By 1900, a number of large houses had been erected along this major thoroughfare, typically occupying large sites, although virtually all would be demolished in the post-WW2 era. The casualties included all of the other grand residences on the south side of Neerim Road: those properties known as *The Braes* (No 495), *Yamba* (No 497), *Hazelwood* (No 501), *Onhah* (No 503) and *Fairholm* (No 507). On the north side of Neerim Road, only the gateposts of Dr John Springthorpe's former residence [HO133] remain to demonstrate this phase of late Victorian residential settlement. Otherwise, its nearest counterpart as evidence of early settlement along Neerim Road is a bichromatic brick villa, with asymmetrical double-fronted façade, bullnosed verandah and wrought iron detailing, which still stands, amongst considerably later houses from the twentieth century, at 234 Neerim Road, Carnegie.

References

City of Caulfield Rate Books, various.

Identified by

Nominated by a member of the public.



Bundara (left), as shown on MMBW Detail Plan No 2872, dated 17 October 1919
 Source: Map Collection, State Library of Victoria