# ARCHITECTURAL ODDITIES IN MIDDLE PARK ~ PART 1
By Max Nankervis

143 Kerferd Rd

Because, in the main, Middle Park was developed in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras (say; 1890-1920), there is a certain clarity and similarity of architectural style, as has been noted in earlier articles in this series. The late Victorian more often displayed polychrome brickwork, and a low-pitch slate roof, generally 'M' shaped with a central gutter, often embellished with a semi-hexagonal bay window; while the later and more dominant Edwardian/Federation style was simpler in style with less overall embellishment, most often red-bricked and with red (Marseilles) tiled, high pitched, hipped roofs with projecting gables, although with a mid-height band of colour, generally of stucco rather than coloured bricks. This similarity of architectural style was probably exacerbated by the fact that many (probably most) houses in Middle Park were built as 'speculative' developments as most houses are today. So a builder would build several similar houses, or a terrace of houses for later sale or rent, thus achieving some sort of minor economy of scale.

But, as in every age, there are people who build 'outside the square' or at least the fashionable 'square' of the period. These different buildings or 'oddities'

were most likely specially built for a particular client. After all, a 'spec' builder is unlikely to take a chance on market appeal for a significantly different house. It would appear that, while not common, there must have been some clients who wanted something a bit, or a lot different, or had specific requirements. And so we have a few, but only a few, architectural oddities in Middle Park.

What the author has done is to roughly group these oddities under themes, although some houses may fit into more than one theme, and some may question the grouping.
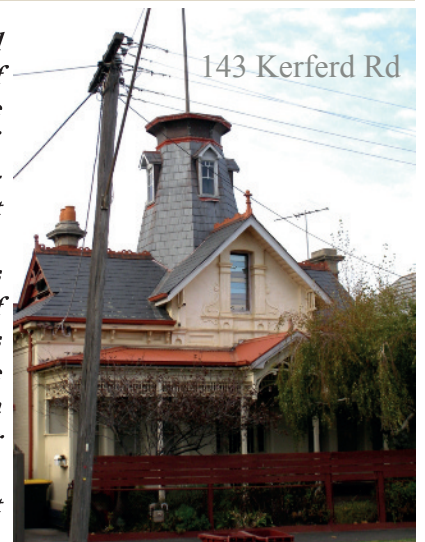
TOWERS

While towers were a common element in larger Victorian houses, they were less common in early 20th century Edwardian/Federation architecture. For example, Como House and Ripponlea, both *National Trust* properties, have significant towers affording spectacular views. In Middle Park, perhaps the best example of a 'tower House' is seen at No. 27 Canterbury Rd, a large Victorian style, but freestanding terrace-form house dating from around 1881. There is no other house which has such a high, projecting tower which affords such views. Just why the owner incorporated such a high tower is intriguing. Perhaps he/she just wanted to be able to see the sea across what would have been levelled sand dunes. The house at 92 Page St also incorporates a tower, which at some stage, appears to have been removed and rebuilt late last century when the house was extensively restored. Three other houses incorporate towers which are largely ornamental; No. 20 Canterbury Rd and the central terrace house, of a set of five, at 35 Kerferd Rd. But those towers might more easily be understood under the next theme; fantasy.   *(Continued next page)*

20 Canterbury Rd | 27 Canterbury Rd | 35 Kerferd Rd | 92 Page St

FANTASY.

No 20 Canterbury Rd incorporates a conical-shaped, semi-tower of a shape/design consistent with many Edwardian houses, although this example is considerable exaggerated. It appears to be the second house on the site, replacing an earlier Victorian cottage. A walk around Kew, Hawthorn Canterbury and Caulfield will elicit many of these circular, tiled, (or slated or shingled) conical semi-towers, which were often located above a corner bay window, or above a tiled verandah. The tower at 143 Kerferd Rd house is also something a fantasy, with some antecedent in American seaside Victorian Architecture (or perhaps French) with its Mansard style roof complete with projecting dormer windows.

But other houses sometimes incorporated elements of what must have been an owner's fantasy, even in some of the more recent "infills" or rebuilds. Take, for example, the pair of terrace houses at 85 Canterbury Rd. These houses, with their heavy pillared, two-story "classical", even "Palladian" Corinthian colonnaded upper level verandas, recall the heavy, elaborate fenestration of Boom-style architecture of the 1880s (Compare, for example, *Rochester Terrace* in St Vincent Place). Yet these Canterbury Rd houses were built only in 1986. In some ways they even pre-date in style the very earliest Middle Park "Victorian" houses at the northern end of Canterbury Rd between Kerferd Rd and Wright St.

85 Canterbury Rd

Along similar architectural lines, but built closer to the period it emulates, is *Paragunyah* at 168 Canterbury Rd. With its intriguing name, emblazoned in very large font on its elaborate parapet, this house does not appear on the MMBW maps of post 1895, and so must have been built after that date. It first appears in *Sands & McDougall* about 1898, at a time when the general architectural style was Edwardian/Federation. Very different from any other house in Middle Park, it displays Victorian attributes – but not quite. The colonnaded veranda across the doubled-front facade, has square, rather than the round "classical Greek (*Ionic, Corinthian and Doric*) columns, the main entrance door off-is set to one side (to allow for a grand front room), and the verandah is surmounted by a dominant parapet and pediment with a sort of crest (rather than the more common set-back over the main house wall). In many ways is perhaps more reminiscent of Spanish American continents architecture.

168 Canterbury Rd

Another example of what appears to be someone's architectural fantasy can be seen in a pair of relatively small scale terrace houses at 212/213 Beaconsfield Pde. This pair, probably based on a Victorian pair, may have been originally built in the form they are now with a castellated parapet, emblazoned with the name *Newcastle*. But given the style of some other window treatment alterations, are more likely early 20th century changes.

212/213 Beaconsfield Pde

In the next edition Max Nankervis explores terraces and some other architectural oddities

Hon. Alexander Fraser, Minister of Crown, and Councillor and Mayor of St Kilda

Alexander Fraser (1802-1888) was born in Aldourie, near Inverness, Scotland, the first of the ten children of John Fraser, farmer, and his wife, Ann. He left Scotland in 1827 to work in London. In 1831 he married Mary Glannon (1811-1877), and in the following year they sailed for Sydney in the Rubicon. Because his wife was ill, they disembarked in Hobart, where he began business as a coachmaker. Attracted by the preaching of the Rev Turner, he joined the Melville Street Wesleyan Church. In 1839 he invested in a pastoral property near Sunbury. When the gold rushes disrupted Hobart's economy, Fraser took his family to Bendigo in 1852 and the next year he started business in Melbourne as an auctioneer and mercantile agent.

Fraser lived in St Kilda, and in 1857 was elected to its first municipal council; he became Chairman in 1859, and Mayor in 1864-5. In the Legislative Council he represented North Western Province from 1858 until he retired in 1881. He consistently supported attempts to reform the council by widening the franchise and increasing the number of members. A convinced free trader, he opposed any increase in tariffs on imports into Victoria. He was minister of Public Works in the Francis Government from 1872 until 1874.

Fraser's faith in education was evidenced by his long superintendency of the St Kilda Wesleyan Sunday School and his support for the establishment of Wesley College. He was one of the Wesleyan members of the 1866 Royal Commission on education which recommended the incorporation of denominational schools into a national system, and whilst a member of the Francis ministry he guided through the Upper House the 1872 Bill introducing free, compulsory and secular education to Victoria. An active churchman, he held most important offices in the Wesleyan Church and for 30years was treasurer of the supernumerary fund, which he helped the Rev Daniel Draper to found. Dour and pious, Fraser was conscientious in fulfilling his political duties. He presided at numerous meetings and laid countless foundation stones until illness confined him to bed, two years before he died at his home, Aldourie, in St Kilda.

Extract with thanks to Dr Rob Grogan, from his book:

Colonels, Colonials and Councillors: The Origin of Street Names of South Melbourne, Grogan, R; Cygnet Books, 2007.

Mystery Heritage Object
Where is the pipeline located?
Where does it start and end?

Last Edition Mystery Heritage Object

As you walk along the Canterbury Rd Urban Forest, close to the alignment of Nimmo St., you will come across this nondescript rectangular object.

It had a purpose and it wasn't the only one of these along the urban forest walk. Brian Carter, South Melbourne's Parks and Gardens Director had them constructed, complete with a lockable hinged metal lid, so that local school children could discover bugs and other creepy fauna and also to conduct bug counts. Brian pioneered the nature study boxes at the time they were constructed in the mid 1970's. Sadly, due to the lack of ongoing maintenance, these nature study boxes have all but disappeared.
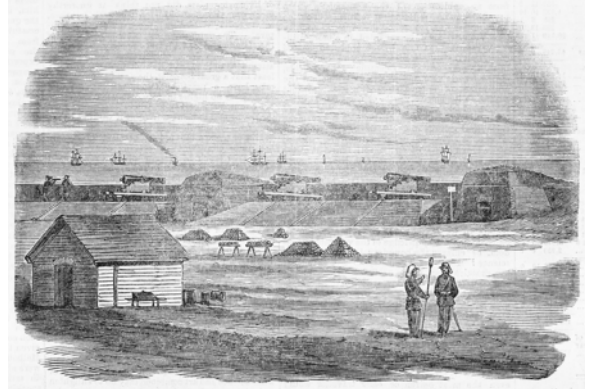
THE EMERALD HILL BATTERY

By Edward Boyle

Britain was at war with Russia in the Crimea from 1853 to 1856. There was a fear that warships of Russia's Pacific Fleet could enter Port Phillip Bay, sail on to Hobson's Bay, and hold gold-rich Melbourne to ransom. In 1855 Victoria's colonial government took its first step to protect Melbourne's port. Two batteries were built. One was at Point Gellibrand, Williamstown, and the other was 4,000 yards away on the beach at the end of present-day Kerferd Road. The two batteries were equipped with old, muzzle-loading 68-pounders which had an effective range of 2,000 yards, so the plan was to catch any marauder in a cross-fire. Soon after in 1856 the first ship of Victoria's colonial navy, the composite sail-steam sloop HMCS Victoria, arrived from Britain. In 1860 the two batteries were upgraded with more guns, bluestone ramparts, and barracks. As well two more batteries were built, one near the Sandridge Lagoon and the other at west St Kilda. A rudimentary military road from the Sandridge battery to the west St Kilda battery was to become the proposed Marine Parade and finally, during the 1880's, the grand Beaconsfield Parade. The battery at the end of Kerferd Road was manned by the part-time, volunteer members of the Emerald Hill Battery unit under the direction of members of the British Royal Artillery until 1870, and then under the direction the full-time Victorian Artillery unit.

Apart from the ongoing fear of Russia there was also concern about other European colonial powers, notably France and Germany. The Sandridge Lagoon, Emerald Hill and west St Kilda batteries became surplus to needs by the late 1870's and were dismantled. By 1870 the Fort Gellibrand fortification had 24 80-pounders and 6 long-range, breech-loading 300-pounders. Victoria's colonial navy began a rapid expansion with the arrival in 1868 of the old converted man-of-war HMVS Nelson as a training ship, and the state-of-the-arts monitor, HMVS Cerberus, in 1871. With the availability of long-range guns and land-based torpedoes, forward defence at the Heads became viable. By the mid 1880's forts at Queenscliff, Point Nepean and Swan Island had been completed, and soon after another battery was constructed at Fort Franklin near Portsea, creating the 'Gibraltar of the South'. Following these new defence arrangements the Emerald Hill Battery unit was disbanded in 1883.

1863 illustration of the Emerald Hill Battery, courtesy of the State Library of Victoria.

It Happened in…

1863 (December) A flood of unexampled severity occurred flowing by Albert Road through the park, the water cutting a passage to the sea.

1931 Diphtheria epidemic tragically affected Middle Park Central School (Middle Park Primary School) causing death of several students.

1987 The last train service on the St Kilda line ran on Friday the 31st July with the light rail officially operating on Saturday 21st November 1987.

Source: 'The Heart Of Middle Park' Chronology

The Middle Park History Group is supported by The City of Port Phillip

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Forthcoming general meetings: **3rd June 2013, 5th August 2013**

Committee meetings: **1st July 2013** AGM: **2nd September 2013**

Meetings are held in the Mary Kehoe Centre, 224 Danks St, Albert Park at 4.30 pm.
(Notification will be sent to you prior to the meeting listing agenda items)