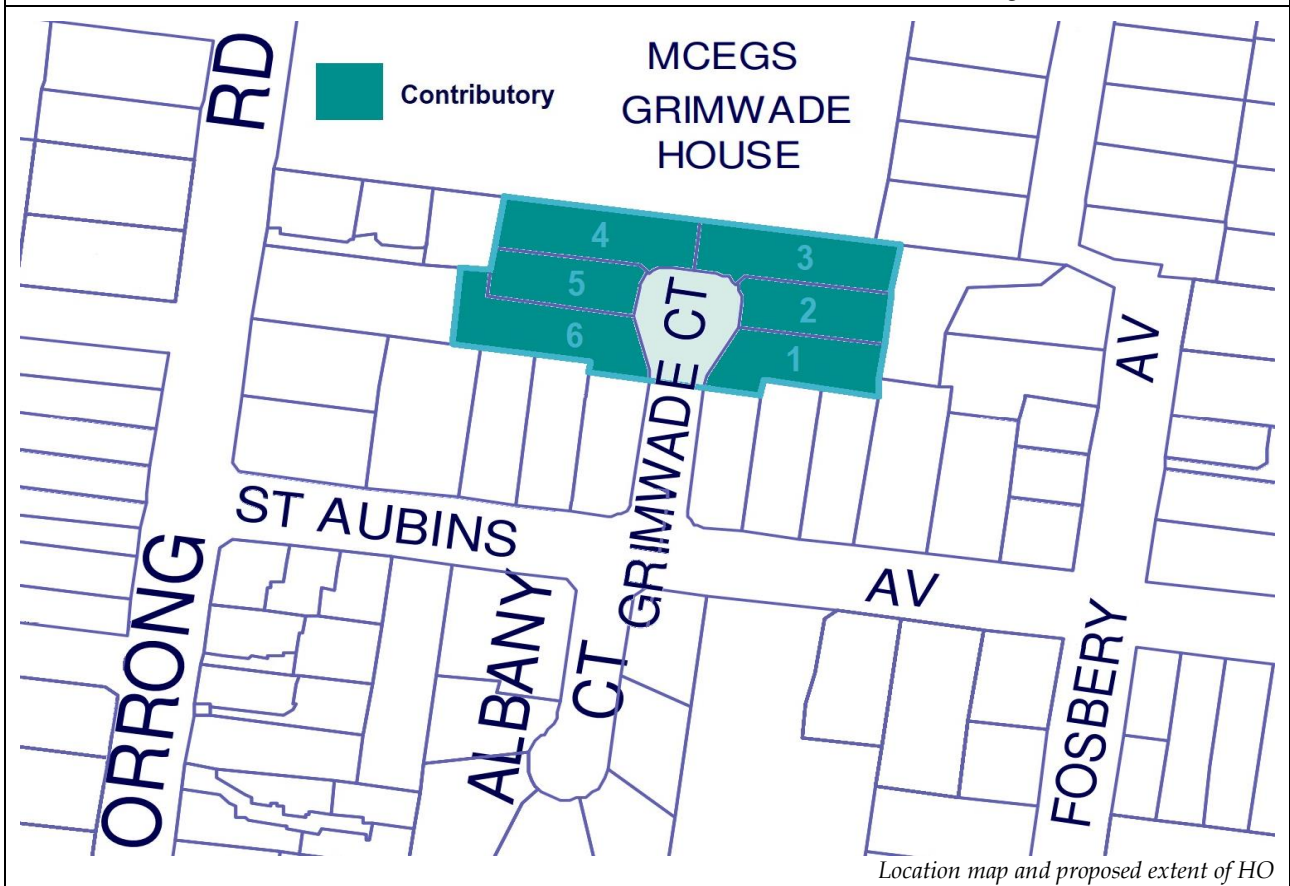


<b>IDENTIFIER</b>	GRIMWADE COURT PRECINCT	<b>Citation No</b>	P04
<b>Other name/s</b>		<b>Melway ref</b>	58 H12
<b>Address</b>	1-6 Grimwade Court CAULFIELD NORTH	<b>Date/s</b>	1935-1940



Grimwade Court looking north-west, October 2019



Location map and proposed extent of HO

<b>Heritage Group</b>	Residential building (private)	<b>Condition</b>	Excellent
<b>Heritage Category</b>	Residential precinct	<b>Intactness</b>	Excellent
<b>Recommendation</b>	Include on heritage overlay schedule as a heritage precinct		
<b>Controls</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> External Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Alteration	<input type="checkbox"/> Trees

## Statement of Significance

### *What is significant?*

The Grimwade Court Precinct comprises a cluster of six large detached brick houses built between 1935 and 1940 following the creation of a 1928 cul-de-sac subdivision from the former site of the Victorian mansion, *St Aubins*. The houses, built by different owners who selected their own architects, reflect the fashionable Moderne and Tudor Revival styles of the period. While varying in their articulation and detailing, they are broadly similar in form, scale and setback.

The following houses are deemed to be *contributory* elements in the precinct:

- Grimwade Court: Nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

The significant fabric is deemed to include the exterior of all six original houses (and original garages) as well as original brick walls to driveways and street boundaries, and other elements of the front garden that contribute to the inter-war character of the precinct.

### *How is it significant?*

The Grimwade Court Precinct 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 Glen Eira's cultural history.
- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

### *Why is it significant?*

The Grimwade Court Precinct is historically significant as an exceptional example of an interwar cul-de-sac estate developed on the former site of a Victorian-era mansion. From the 1910s, this pattern of settlement became increasingly common in Melbourne's desirable inner-southern suburbs as demand for residential allotments rapidly outstripped the need for grand mansions in expansive grounds. Characteristically, sprawling Victorian-era properties were nibbled away by subdivision until the original residence remained with a nominal curtilage. Grimwade Court, created in 1928 when the mansion *St Aubins* (originally fronting Orrong Road) was finally demolished, was conceived as a high-end development, taking its name from the adjacent private school. Although subsequent development was delayed by the Depression, the cul-de-sac filled out in the second half of the 1930s as the blocks were snapped up and built upon by wealthy residents (most of whom already lived in the area) who saw a rare opportunity to furnish themselves with a grand residence in an exclusive new enclave. As such, Grimwade Court is quite distinct from contemporaneous cul-de-sac estates more typically created by a single builder/developer who erected all the houses and then sold them off individually. (*Criterion A*)

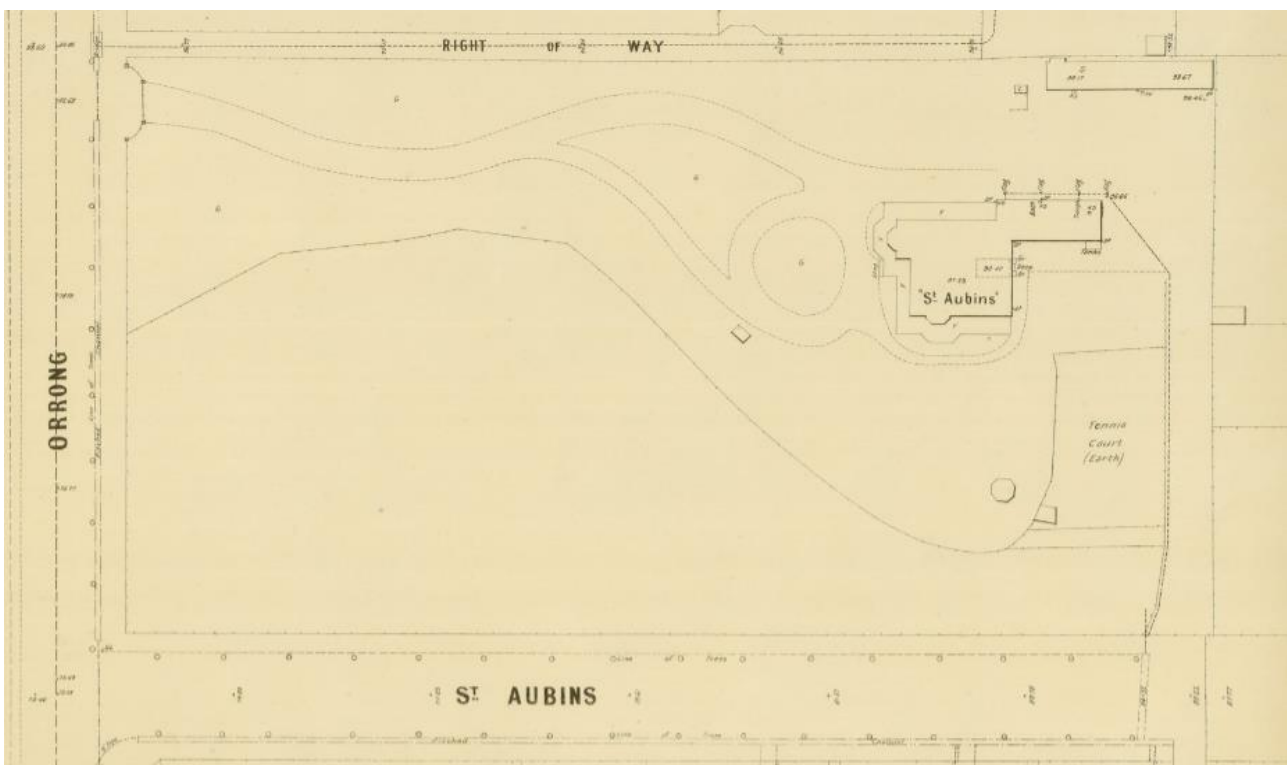
The Grimwade Court Precinct is aesthetically significant as an intact and cohesive cluster group of large detached brick dwellings, erected within a few years of each other in the later 1930s and early 1940s. Although designed by different architects for different clients, the six houses display a notable sense of consistency in their scale (ie double-storey), materials (ie, brick and terracotta tile), articulation (ie, asymmetrical double-fronted facades), setbacks and general sense of grandeur. With four of the houses designed in the Streamline Moderne idiom and two in the Tudor Revival mode, they collectively illustrate the two parallel trends in domestic architecture of the period, favoring progressive and conservative design respectively. Even within the framework of their stylistic similarities, the houses are distinct in their form and detailing. This melding of cohesion and individuality has formed a striking residential enclave, enhanced by the retention of original front walls, driveways, garages and front gardens that, with their expansive lawn areas, garden beds, low plantings and mature trees, remain highly evocative of the interwar period. (*Criterion E*)

## History

*Note: Identifying details of property owners and their families have been deleted as per Council direction*

The site of Grimwade Court, on the north side of St Aubins Avenue, was originally occupied by the eponymous mansion, *St Aubins*, the grounds of which extended all the way to Orrong Road. Built for accountant Henry William Danby, *St Aubins* is first recorded in the rate book for 1880-81 as a twelve-roomed brick house on the west side of Orrong Road. Towards the end of that decade, it was described as “a lovely home, standing in a picturesque position which dominates the heights of Balaclava” (*Leader*, 16/12/1889:11). After Danby died in late 1890, his widow rented the property to others until her own death in 1903. Seven years later, the vast seven-acre property was carved up to form the *St Aubins Estate* (“23 splendid villa sites with frontage to Orrong Road, St Aubins Avenue and Jersey Street”), with the mansion itself (“a substantial and commodious brick family residence”) retained on a smaller block, measuring 300x350 feet, on St Aubins Avenue (*Argus*, 24/09/1910:2). In 1920, the mansion was acquired by clergyman, Robert Horne, who, eight years later, succumbed to inevitable development pressure and sold the property to George Seeley, a builder from Malvern, who clearly intended to raze the mansion and subdivide its grounds for residential use (Certificate of Title, 4298/572).

In late 1928, a plan of subdivision was gazetted for a small estate of eight allotments: six fronting to a new cul-de-sac (named Grimwade Court, after the adjacent private school, *Grimwade House*), and two corner blocks to St Aubins Avenue (Lodged Plan No 12,737, dated 01/11/1928). However, work appears to have progressed slowly, doubtless stymied by the onset of the Depression. Little had been achieved by April 1930, when the City of Caulfield’s annual statement of accounts for the previous year noted a deposit lodged by Messrs Sealy, Lee & Company for drainage works at Grimwade Court and St Aubins Avenue (*Prahran Telegraph*, 17/04/1930:2). The first block of land to be sold was Lot 1, on the east corner of Grimwade Court and St Aubins Avenue, which was acquired in early 1932 by an engineer, who promptly built a house thereon.



*Figure 1: Excerpt of MMBW Plan (1902), showing H W Danby’s estate, St Aubins prior to early twentieth century subdivision, and demolition of mansion to create Grimwade Court  
 Source: Map Collection, State Library of Victoria*



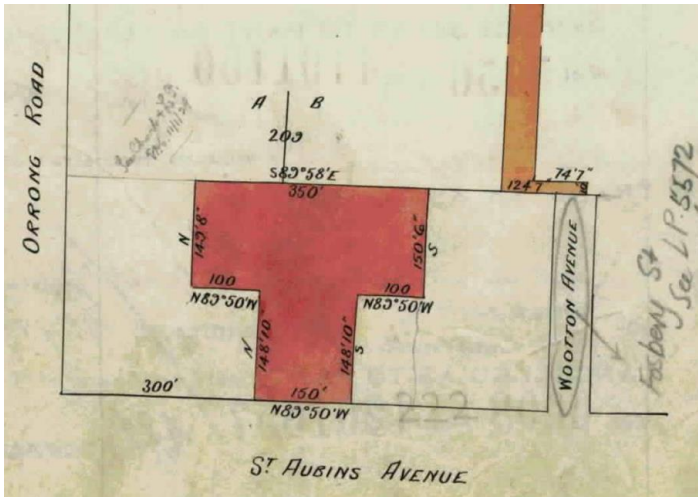


Figure 2: The reduced curtilage of *St Aubins* at the time of its purchase by Robert Horne in 1920  
Source: [www.landata.com.au](http://www.landata.com.au)

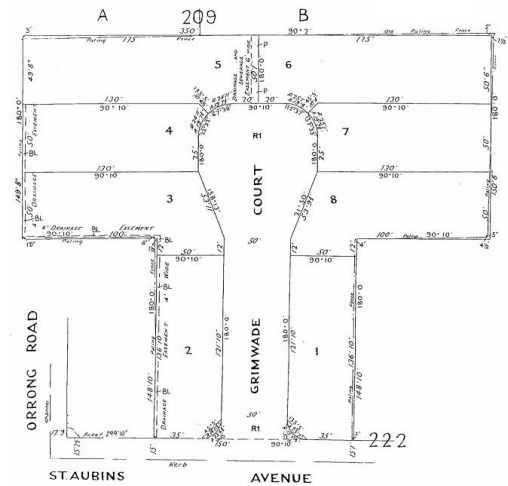


Figure 3: Detail of Lodged Plan No 12,737 (1928), showing layout of Grimwade Court  
Source: [www.landata.com.au](http://www.landata.com.au)

There would be no further development until after 1934, when the developers prepared to sell off the remaining vacant blocks. It was at this time that the adjacent private school, *Grimwade House*, took belated exception to the appropriation of its brand. In a written complaint to the City of Caulfield, the school insisted that, as its name acknowledged the Grimwade family's donation of the site it now occupied, "it would detract from the significance of the memorial if neighbouring places were allowed to bear similar names" (*Argus*, 05/09/1934:17). The Town Clerk pointed out that the name had been approved by Council "three or four years earlier" (ie, when subdivision was first gazetted), while one Councillor quipped that "there might be better sales if the name were changed to Gloucester Court". Although it was resolved that the developers be approached to submit an alternative name, nothing clearly came of the matter: Grimwade Court it remained. In December 1934, the first of the remaining allotments was sold: Lot 2, on the west corner of St Aubins Avenue, which was acquired by a prospective homebuilder. Early the following year, tenders were called for construction of a single-storey brick dwelling on the site, designed by architects R M & M H King (*Argus* 29/05/1935:3, 20/06/1935:13).

During 1935, in anticipation of further construction, work resumed on formalising the subdivision. In February, surveyors Tuxen & Millar called tenders for the removal of 500 cubic yards of sand at Grimwade Court (*Argus*, 02/02/1935:13). In August, the MMBW included Grimwade Court in a list of new subdivisions shortly to be connected to the mains water supply (*Argus*, 28/08/1935:20). It was also during this year that the first allotment in the cul-de-sac property, Lot 6 (3 Grimwade Court) was sold. Its new owner was an engineer, who promptly had a two-storey brick house erected thereon, by builder Stewart Handasyde (*Age*, 26/11/1935:18). In December, the five remaining vacant blocks on the subdivision were acquired by Hume Investments Pty Ltd, a property development company. Finally, early the following year, the City of Caulfield called tenders for the construction of Grimwade Court itself (*Argus*, 01/02/36: 27).

The second half of the 1930s saw all five remaining vacant blocks in Grimwade Court sold and developed with grand two-storey brick residences. All of these are likely to have been architect-designed, although not all have been conclusively attributed. During 1936, a commercial traveller engaged architect Clive Lord to design a house on Lot 5 (4 Grimwade Court) in the Tudor Revival style. A building permit was issued in March 1937, and construction (by Pollard Brothers) duly ensued. Many years later, the widowed owner recalled Lord's fastidious attention to detail ("He came out to check things every single day... I doubt many architects do that now."), noting that he personally selected each individual brick from the kilns (*Age*, 07/02/1983:23).

In late 1937, architect W H Merritt called tenders for a two-storey brick residence in Grimwade Court (*Age*, 16/10/1937:15). Located on Lot 8 (1 Grimwade Court), it was commissioned by a skin merchant. The adjacent house at Lot 7 (2 Grimwade Court) duly followed. This was designed for a grazier by architect Walter Mason, and erected by builder R B Hallett. Upon completion, both houses were lauded in the daily press, with illustrated profiles in the respective architectural columns of the *Herald* (15/06/1938:15) and *Argus* (11/05/1939:10) newspapers. The grazier's elegant Tudor Revival residence, which he named *Green-Halt*, was also the subject of a five-page feature article in the popular journal *Australian Home Beautiful* (01/08/1939:17-21), in which it was praised as "a modern home in an Old World setting". With the article appearing some time after completion of the house, it could be noted that "the garden already shows great promise of beauty. Crazy paths run here and there through green lawns and terraces formed of Broadford stone give a welcome break in the scheme".

The last two vacant blocks in the estate, Lots 3 and 4 (Nos 6 and 5 Grimwade Court) were developed during 1940, with both sites purchased by prominent Jewish businessmen. The house at No 6, for which a building permit was issued in February, was commissioned by a manufacturer and erected by builder Norman Dess. The adjacent house at No 5, for a merchant, duly followed. Its designer/builder remains unconfirmed.

Thus, by the start of 1941, all eight of the allotments in the Grimwade Court subdivision had been purchased and developed. The estate's original residents represented a group of typical middle-class middle-aged professionals. At the time that they took up residence, the males were aged from their late thirties to early fifties and held white collar jobs such as engineers, agents, manufacturers, and a commercial traveller. Most of the couples had been married for some time, although the couples at Nos 1 and 2 had only recently wed when their new houses were completed. Several of the other couples had previously resided elsewhere in the area, variously in Caulfield, Elsternwick or Elwood.

Some of Grimwade Court's original residents remained there for a short period. The man who built the first house in the cul-de-sac in 1935, had already sold it by 1940. The owner of No 5 died in 1942, followed by the owner of No 4 in 1946, although the latter's widow continued to live there. The families at Nos 1, 2 and 6 would all remain in residence well into the post-WW2 era. By the mid-1960s, only the houses at Nos 2, 4 and 6 retained their original occupants, and only the widowed owner of No 4 by the mid-1970s. The last of the Grimwade Court's original residents, she finally sold her house in the early 1980s, after nearly fifty years in residence.

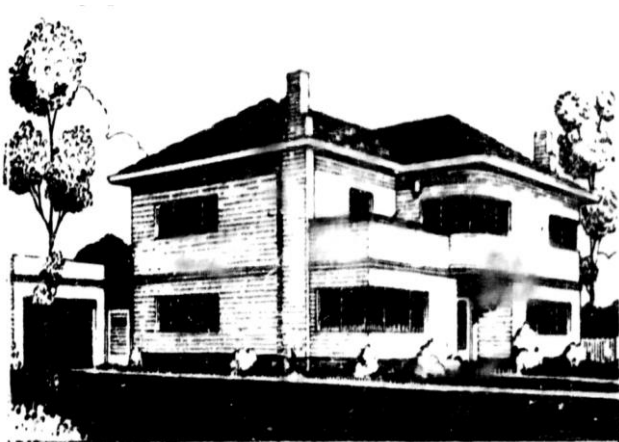


Figure 4: The Moderne-style house at 1 Grimwade Court (W H Merritt, 1937-38)  
Source: *Herald*, 15 June 1938

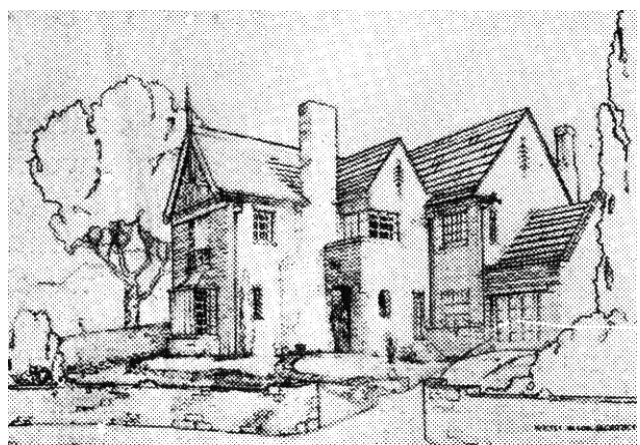


Figure 5: The Tudor Revival house at 2 Grimwade Court (Walter Mason, 1938-39)  
Source: *Australian Home Beautiful*, Aug 1939

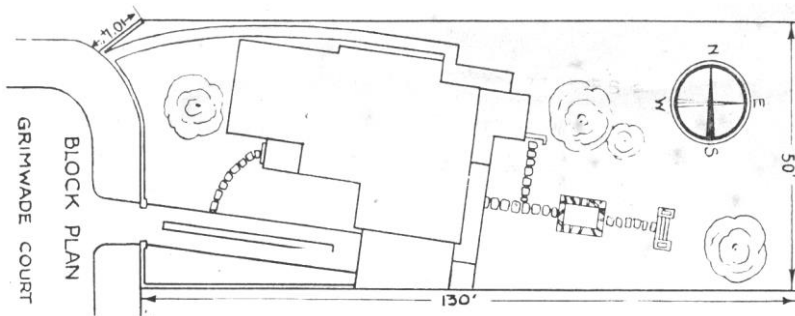


Figure 6: Site plan of the grazier's house at No 2, showing original garden layout to front and rear.  
 Source: *Australian Home Beautiful*, Aug 1939

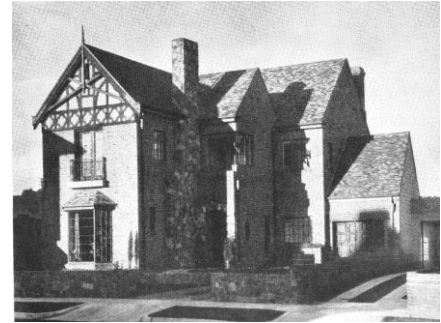


Figure 7: Early photograph of the grazier's house at No 2.  
 Source: *AHB*, Aug 1939

Partly consequent to this low rate of ownership turnover, the properties in the Grimwade Court estate remained significantly intact well into the 1970s. Towards the end of that decade, the single-storey house at 3a St Aubins Street, erected in 1935, was sold and demolished for construction of a small-scaled block of flats. Its counterpart on the opposite corner, at No 5, would also be razed for redevelopment. However, the six original houses that radiate around the cul-de-sac of Grimwade Court have since remained as a virtually unaltered streetscape.

#### Historical summary of houses

Address	Date	Designer	Builder
1 Grimwade Court	1937	W H Merritt	Unconfirmed
2 Grimwade Court	1938	Walter Mason	R B Hallett
3 Grimwade Court	1935	Unconfirmed	Stewart Handasyde
4 Grimwade Court	1937	Clive Lord	Pollard Brothers
5 Grimwade Court	1940	Unconfirmed	Unconfirmed
6 Grimwade Court	1940	Unconfirmed	Norman Dess

*These two houses, originally part of the cul-de-sac estate, have since been demolished*

3 St Aubins Avenue	1935	R M & M H King	Unconfirmed
5 St Aubins Avenue	1932	Unconfirmed	Unconfirmed

#### **Description**

The Grimwade Court Precinct comprises six detached pre-war dwellings clustered around the northern end of the short cul-de-sac known as Grimwade Court. Two others houses that formerly occupied the corner blocks, flanking the entrance to Grimwade Court at Nos 3a and 5 St Aubins Avenue, both have been demolished; the buildings that currently occupy these two sites are not included within the boundaries of the precinct.

Although the six houses were built at different times by different owners, who employed different architects and builders, they are broadly similar in date, scale, form and materials. Built between 1935 and 1940, the houses are all large double-storey brick residences of decidedly grand character, with a consistent setback and streetscape presence. Except for one with a rendered finish (No 3), they are of face brick construction, variously cream (No 1, 5, 6) or dark red clinker (Nos 2, 4). Facades are double-fronted and asymmetrical, and roofs are variously hipped or gabled, clad in terracotta tiles. Some of the houses have partial flats roofs, concealed by low parapets.





Figure 8: 1 Grimwade Court  
(WH Merritt, 1937-38)



Figure 9: 2 Grimwade Court  
(Walter Mason, 1938-39)



Figure 10: 3 Grimwade Court  
(architect unknown, 1940)



Figure 11: 4 Grimwade Court  
(Clive Lord, 1936-37)



Figure 12: 5 Grimwade Court  
(architect unknown, 1940)



Figure 13: 6 Grimwade Court  
(architect unknown, 1940)

Stylistically, the houses are demonstrative of the two fashionable trends in residential architecture at the time: the progressive Moderne (Nos 1, 3, 5 and 6) and the more conservative Tudor Revival (Nos 2 and 4). The examples in the Moderne mode incorporate such typical details as projecting curved bays (No 3, 5, 6), stringcourses (Nos 1, 5), portholes (No 3), balconies or sun decks with simple metal balustrades (No 1, 3, 6), and corner windows (Nos 1, 3, 5 and 6), often with curved or faceted glazing in steel-framed sashes. The two Tudor Revival houses have steeper roofs with prominent chimneys, canted bays and smaller windows with double-hung sashes, enlivened by multi-paned glazing (No 2) or shutters (No 4). The house at No 2 has a half-timbered gable end and feature stonework to the chimney and entry porch.

All six houses have their original brick garages, set well from the street at the end of long driveways, most of which retain the characteristic concrete paved finish. Boundaries between properties, and to the street, are marked by low masonry walls, either in face brick or uncoursed stonework. Front gardens tend to remain evocative of the pre-war period, with lawns bordered by low shrubs and hedges, incorporating mature deciduous trees and hard landscaping such as paved steps, pathways and retaining walls.

### Comparisons

Grimwade Court is indicative of a recurring trend in Melbourne's inner southern suburbs in the late 1930s: the creation of cul-de-sac residential estates on sites formerly occupied by Victorian mansions. Reflecting a typical pattern, these mansions originally stood in expansive grounds that were gradually whittled away by subdivision in the early twentieth century, leaving the house itself on a greatly reduced curtilage by the 1930s. As these grand residences became less desirable as modern family homes, some were converted for other uses (such as flats, school or hospitals), and others simply demolished so that what remained of their grounds could be carved up for new houses or apartment blocks.

Not surprisingly, the phenomenon of the 1930s cul-de-sac subdivision was most strongly evident in the most desirable inner bayside suburbs, where demand for higher density living soon outweighed the demand for large grand residences, but became increasingly less evident further afield, as such development pressure subsided. Thus, while examples proliferate across St Kilda and Elwood, they are less common in Brighton, Elsternwick and Caulfield, and rarer still (if not entirely unrecorded) further afield in Sandringham, Bentleigh, Carnegie and Murrumbeena.

Within what is now the City of Glen Eira, cul-de-sac subdivisions of this type are concentrated in areas adjacent to the former City of St Kilda: St Kilda East, Balaclava and that part of Caulfield west of Kooyong Road and north of Glen Eira Road. A few examples are recorded further south in Elsternwick, notably Sandham Court (c1935) and Callista Court (c1937), and there is an atypical example in Crompton Court, Caulfield South (c1930). All three courts are characterised by modestly-scaled single-storey houses of similar form and design. In a few cases, the estates have been confirmed as the work of a single developer/builder who built houses that were sold, on completion, as a “house and land” package. This contrasts with Grimwade Court, where vacant sites were sold to individuals who then commissioned their own architects independently.

While at least half a dozen comparable 1930s cul-de-sac estates can be found in St Kilda East and Caulfield’s western fringe, virtually all of them now exhibit decreased cohesion due to subsequent redevelopment. Examples such as Avoca Grove (1932), Lockerbie Court (1936), Pullman Court (1937) and Malonga Court (1939) retain only a few of their original houses (or apartment blocks), interspersed with larger-scaled post-WW2 counterparts. Sidwell Court (1932) is perhaps the only such estate that retains all of its original houses; although it is duly noted to be an exceptionally short cul-de-sac, (effectively, a minor kink from the curve of Sidwell Avenue) with only three houses therein. It was undertaken by Dickson & Yorston, the leading local building/development firm responsible for several cul-de-sac housing estates in the area, including the aforementioned Avoca Grove as well as the celebrated and notably earlier Lempriere Avenue (1927).

To date, the only inter-war cul-de-sac housing estates on the City of Glen Eira heritage overlay schedule are the substantial and pioneering example at Lempriere Avenue, St Kilda East (HO74) and two smaller and slightly later ones at Crompton Court, Caulfield South (HO17) and Bruce Court, Elsternwick (HO86). All three are quite different to Grimwade Court, not only for being earlier in date (ie, initiated in the late 1920s and completed by the early 1930s) but also for being conceived by a single developer/builder as an estate of middle-class dwellings of similar design and form. By contrast, the surviving houses in Grimwade Court date from the later 1930s and were grander in scale and more sophisticated in design, being individually commissioned by more well-to-do residents who engaged leading architects to design in the two fashionable styles of the day: the conservative Tudor Revival and the progressive Moderne.

## References

Lodged Plan No 12,737, dated 1928.

“Garage and the house”, *Argus*, 20 June 1935, p 13.

“Caulfield home planned around entrance hall”, *Herald*, 15 June 1938.

“Old English style for new home”, *Argus*, 11 May 1939, p 10.

“Green Halt: Modern home in Old World setting”, *Australian Home Beautiful*, Aug 1939, pp17-21.

## Identified by

City of Glen Eira (2 Grimwade Court also individually identified by Andrew Ward)