

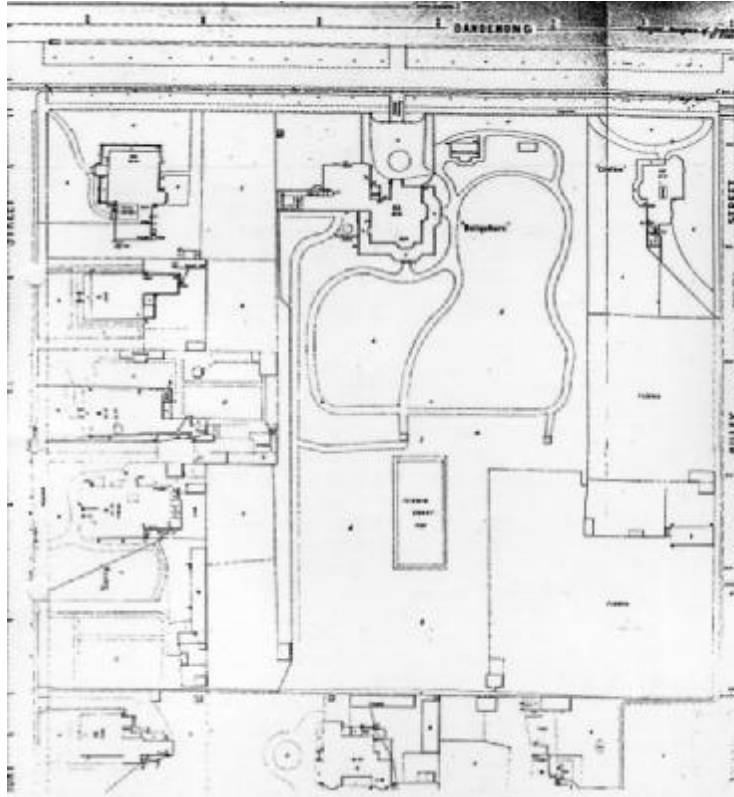
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Ardoch (former Dulquhurn, later Ardoch Education Centre) 226-236 Dandenong Road, St Kilda East

Ardoch is unlike any other flat development in Melbourne. It is certainly the largest built in the inter-war period. I recall visiting a great-aunt who lived there in the late 1950s: the comfortable spacious rooms, light and with natural timbers, set on a village green, verdant and secluded behind its stone garden wall and gates.

Each building has its own identity within the tradition of the English Garden Suburb movement and the English Arts and Crafts architectural style. It was the first time that the grounds of a large nineteenth century house were enlarged and colonised by apartment buildings, the predecessor of the process so familiar today.

The land was subdivided for sale in 1857 as Crown Portions 148B and 154A acquired by John Cook and W. Jones respectively. A 13-roomed two-storied Italianate house Dulquhurn was built for £225 in 1864. Its first owner was the important architect William Wilkinson Wardell (1823-99), who moved there from Powlett Street, East Melbourne (1823-1899). It is not known who designed it.



MMBW Detail Plans for Dulquhurn and Cliefden, 1897

Wardell designed four significant churches in London, in a distinguished architectural practice there over 14 years, before coming to Melbourne for the good of his health in 1858. (These churches are Our Lady of Victories, Clapham (1849-51), Holy Trinity, Hammersmith (1851), St Birinus, Dorchester-on-Thames (1846-47) and Our Lady Star of the Sea, Greenwich, (1846),

Once in Melbourne, Wardell became Chief Architect, then Inspector-General (Head) of Public Works in Victoria. In his private practice 'on the side', he designed St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne (1858-1939), St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney (1865-2001), the Gothic Bank, Collins Street (1883-87) and 14 parish churches, including his finest, St Mary's, East St Kilda (c1897 and its predecessor in 1859) and numerous government buildings in Victoria, such as St Kilda Post Office (1874) and Government House (1872-76).

Wardell lived five years at Dulquhurn until 1869 when it was sold to Edward Keep and Wardell moved to Dalgety Street, St Kilda. Ursula de Jong, historian and Wardell's biographer, has said that:

Wardell's architectural legacy stems from a cultured mind and a devotional spirit. His known buildings and projects testify to his scholarship and lively interest in contemporary architectural practice... the remarkable quality of his buildings... functionalist in their

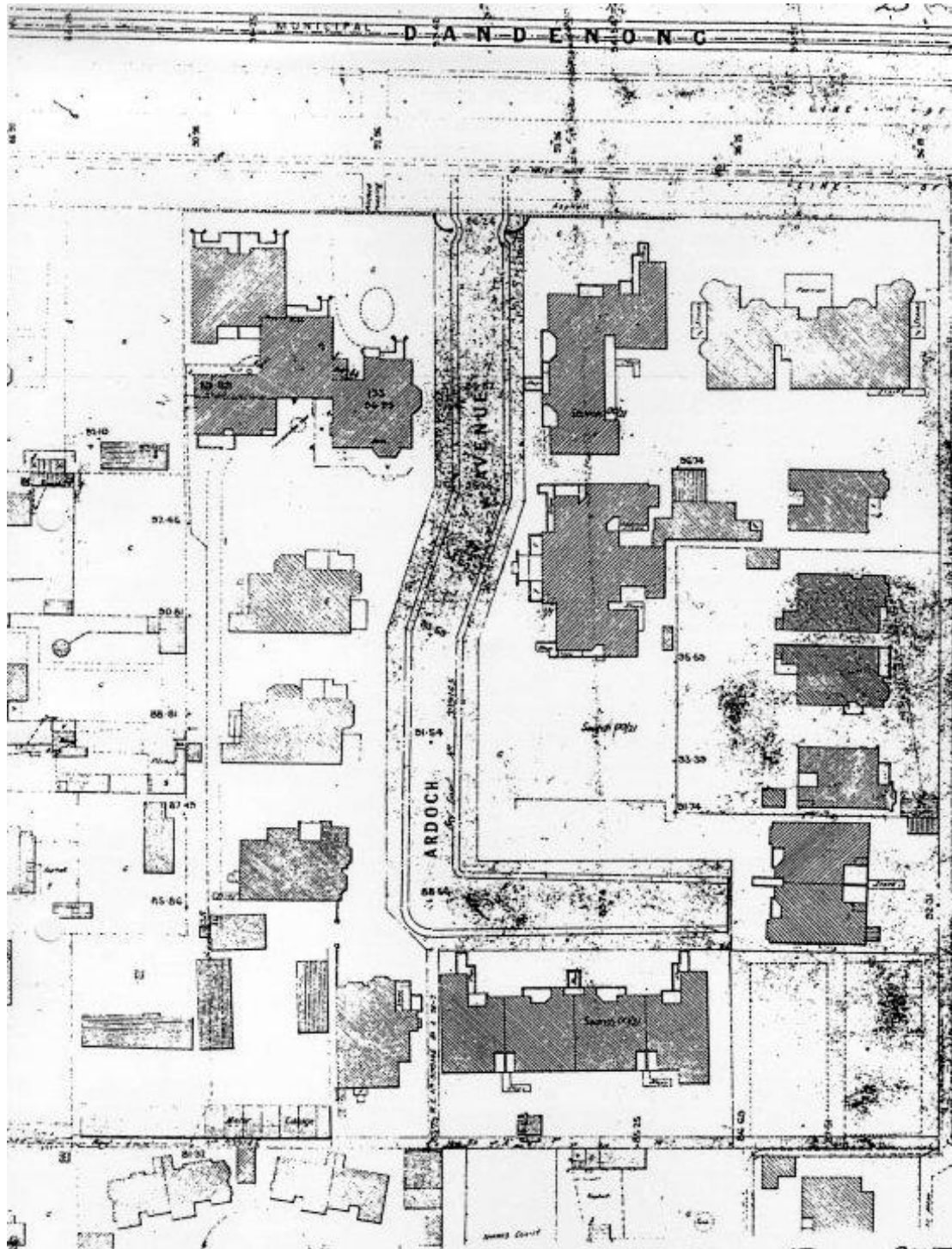
planning, structurally sound, commendable in their attention to massing and bulk, visually pleasing in their proportions, and notable for their considered and beautifully executed details.

Four years later, Dulquhurn was extended to 16 rooms by its next owner, William Wilson, another person whose names conveniently begin with W! That year, a 12-roomed house Cliefden, went up next door to the east, for John Spence, merchant. A survey plan shows the lavish landscaping of Dulquhurn, in 1897 with front turning circle flower bed, conservatory, tennis court, sweeping serpentine paths, to the west a ballroom (?) wing and to the south-east a large horse-paddock and stables on Pilley Street. Cliefden is smaller but still had its own paddock.

Wilson's widow, Amy, sold Dulquhurn to George Buchanan in 1907. In 1920 it was bought by Alexander Mackie Younger of Caulfield, the builder and developer of Ardoch. He already had plans approved by Council to convert Dulquhurn to flats. By 1923, they were tenanted as 'Ardoch'. Ardoch is a small village in Scotland, about 15 kilometres north of Perth on the road to Dunkeld. Indeed Wilson, Dulquhurn, Younger, Buchanan, as well as Ardoch could all be Scottish. Beyond that, the source of the name is not known.

Alex Younger (c1882-1952/53) was brought up in Coldstream and later lived in Wingrove Street, Fairfield. He built houses in Separation Street, Northcote (c1909) and after buying a mansion in North Road; Caulfield (c1912-13) progressively developed speculative housing in its grounds (1913-33) and lived in the old house for 30 years. Nearby Younger Avenue is named after him. He built houses in Caulfield, over 100 in Sandringham and subdivided in Toorak (including Viewbank), Malvern, Kew (Mackie and Younger Courts), Cheesman Avenue, Hawthorn and at Blairgowrie.

During the 1920s, he converted mansions into guesthouses, flats and rooming houses, including Nangunia (or Charterfield, Charles Webb was architect), 478 St Kilda Road, Warwillal, Glendordra, Cowabea, and Eaton Square, in St Kilda Road. No other blocks of flats than Ardoch have been identified.



MMBW Ardoch Plans, 1935

The layout and design of Ardoch is generally in an English Arts and Crafts and Bungalow manner. The composition appears to be influenced by innovative English urban design,

such as Hampstead Garden Suburb, laid out in 1907 by Sir Raymond Unwin of Parker & Unwin. Unwin also planned Letchworth Garden Suburb (1904) also north of London, in whose design the present profession of town planning began. These suburbs include groups of housing in a timeless, free and comfortable neo-vernacular architecture arranged around green open space, with walkways often separated from vehicles. It is interesting that Robert Freestone's book *Model Communities. The Garden City Movement in Australia* does not mention Ardoch, yet Ardoch with its humane and pleasant garden setting of high density flats is clearly significant in the history of multi-unit development in Melbourne, if not Australia.

Younger extended Ardoch (house) to achieve six self-contained flats, each with separate entries. He inserted Ardoch Avenue and in 1922 built blocks B6 and B7, generously with only one flat on each floor. They are asymmetrical, with bay windows and separate rear servants' access. And B4 has verandahs at front and rear to catch morning and afternoon sun.



Typical Ardoch bungalow, 2002

In 1924, Cliefden was bought by Sydney surgeon Dr George Armstrong and demolished. Up went B1, with two large and a small flat on each floor, bay windows and octagonal corner towers, with plans drawn by R. McDonald of 145 Collins Street. The site plan showed a proposed tennis court and laundry building. In 1925, Armstrong acquired Younger's entire property. In 1928, A. Clissold designed another two blocks of flats, B8 and B9, similar to B6 and B7, but with maids' rooms. Clearly Dr Armstrong sought a more genteel tenant. Until 1938, B3 even had a restaurant and until 1949, a billiards hall. But in 1938, B3 became flats also. The 1938 work is said to be by architect Harry N. Winbush.

Buildings B2 and B5 also appear to be 1928-38. In 1951-54, the security and convenience of a caretaker's flat was added, with garages. But in 1949, the CML Assurance Society Limited purchased Ardoch as well as the three separately owned bungalows in Pilley Street, renaming the estate Ardoch Village, yet saving on maintenance, and so its condition deteriorated.

From 1930, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt (1894-1965) and his wife, Mary Alice ('Mas') Evatt (1898-1973), kept a flat at Ardoch. Evatt was then a judge in the High Court of Australia. He had been Attorney General and Minister for External Affairs in Prime Minister John Curtin's Labor war-time government, Deputy Prime Minister in the Ben Chifley government and became President of the United Nations.

Mas Evatt was a distinguished Australian artist. Ballarat Regional gallery mounted an important retrospective exhibition of her work in 2002. Their apartment was furnished with Fred Ward designs and her own art collection. She was curious about all forms of contemporary art, and used their frequent travels overseas to pursue that interest.

In June 1977, in an imaginative government gesture, the property of 53 flats in 2.8 hectares was bought by the Victorian Education Department as a secondary school for 350 pupils. The stables and bungalows were demolished for temporary classrooms. The Department's intention was for a 'homely' domestic atmosphere for the school, particularly for disadvantaged children, including a homeless children's programme. Building B2 remained flats, to retain a liveliness on the site after hours. The Department Regional Office occupied B1, B3 and B10 and the school was in B4-B9. The school was praised as 'reaching out to disadvantaged and...difficult children'. Historian Gillian Upton recalls singing as she entered the gate each morning.

Barde Gregory, now a successful architect, was a student at Ardoch:

It would be hard to imagine any different to the indelible effect the Ardoch environment had on students, teachers and visitors alike. Classes in the Townhouses, play and relaxation in the gardens and lawns contributed greatly to the informal and caring approach the school arrived for.

In 1992, the Kennett government's 'rationalisation' closed the school, relocating pupils to Windsor Secondary College Campus. Ardoch was added to the Victorian Heritage Register

in 1993. It was picked up by the Urban Land Authority. It has now reverted to privately owned apartments. With a venture partner, it was refurbished and expanded to comply with heritage permit conditions, for a satisfying profit.

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