

Park Orchards – VHR nomination attachments

B: Place or object details

Name of place: Park Orchards Estate

Location/addresses & title particulars: Park Orchards (locality), see attached annotated plan illustrating the extent of the nomination.

Road reserves – in their entirety: Arundel Road, Alva Avenue, Aviemore Avenue, Bowmore Avenue, Brucedale Crescent, Brympton Avenue, Camber Avenue, Cawdor Avenue, Colin Avenue, Corriedale Crescent, Craithie Avenue, Daintree Avenue, Dalry Avenue, Daniel Court, Dirlton Crescent, Drayton Crescent, Elgin Crescent, Enfield Avenue, Ennismore Crescent, Euston Avenue, Eversham Avenue, Frogmore Crescent, Gosford Crescent, Granard Avenue, Hopetoun Road, Jura Avenue, Kebun Court
And, to the extent of: 37-51 & 89-93 Gosford Court
2-10 Knees Road
433-711 & 432-712 Park Road

Public pathways (rights-of-way): three paths linking Dirlton Crescent with Brucedale and Ennismore crescents (running off Dirlton Cr roughly to the south, east and west)

Public reserves – Municipal Reserve, 31-32 Dirlton Crescent (Certificate of Title Vol 8249 Folio 349 & Vol 8962 Folio 297)
Iona Grove Reserves, 25 Feversham Avenue (Certificate of Title Vol 8153 Folio 418)
Alan Morton Reserve, 433-483 Park Road (Certificate of Title Vol 7929 Folio 166)

Public-use building – The Chalet, 579-581 Park Road (Certificate of Title Vol 10778 Folio 463)

Title Particulars: apart from the certificates of title cited above, see also Lodged Plans LP11938, LP11939, LP11940, which constitute the original subdivision plan (see attached CD-ROM).

Local Government area: City of Manningham

C: Owner details, as per titles

- Municipal Reserve, 31-32 Dirlton Crescent
- Iona Grove Reserves, 25 Feversham Avenue
- Alan Morton Reserve, 433-483 Park Road
All reserves: The Mayor, Councillors and Citizens of the City of Doncaster and Templestowe (now: City of Manningham), 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster, VIC 3108; tel. 9840 9333
- The Chalet, 579-581 Park Road
Park Orchards Aged Services Property Pty Ltd
Ground Floor, 34 Eastern Road
South Melbourne, VIC 3205

D: Nomination details

Extent of nomination – see attached plan.

Description of place – See also images on attached CD-ROM

The roads have recently been resurfaced (with asphalt) with modern concrete kerbing and gutters. There are concrete footpaths in the central area of the subdivision (across from The Chalet and along Hopetoun Road), otherwise the verges are grassed. There are many mature Monterey Pines along the roads, believed to date to the establishment period of the subdivision (or prior to it). Some of these trees are within the road reserve, while others are on the adjacent private residential blocks. Park Road in front of the The Chalet has been widened several times, encroaching somewhat on the front garden and former entrance drive (parallel to the facade). After the most recent (minor) widening in 2009, a low stone retaining wall was built in front, as The Chalet sits on a rise. The rights-of-way linking the two circular roads are unpared.

The three reserves are all for passive recreation, and contain no infrastructure other than paths and signage. All three are densely planted with trees. The Alan Morton Reserve stretches along the west side of Park Road on the west side of the subdivision. It is full of mature trees – both Monterey Pines and natives – in an appearance of natural ‘disorder’. The Municipal Reserve at the top of the hill bounded by the two circular roads is almost solely planted with semi-mature Monterey Pines (believed to be self-sown). Modern timber sleeper steps lead upward into the reserve. The Iona Grove Reserve has a grassy clearing running roughly north-south along a small valley. On either side are mature Monterey Pines and Poplars, as well as native trees of varying sizes.

The Chalet is a substantial example of a relatively early Spanish Mission building (1927-29). The walls are stucco on timber framing* with hipped tile roofs (punctuated by round metal ventilators) and large, tapered chimneys (also rendered). The building was originally U-shaped in plan, comprising a large front section with lower wings to the rear. The front section is on three levels – a small garage in the raised basement, the ground floor level, and a small upper level with a lookout tower and upper-level deck at the front of the building.

The facade, overlooking Park Road, is dominated by the lookout ‘tower’ and a central projecting entrance loggia with arched openings and decorative curved beam ends (above which is the deck). Windows are of two main types, all of which have multiple lights and are timber: rectangular windows with ledged shutters, and arched windows without. The entrance loggia is reached from either side via neatly laid rubble-stone steps and solid balusters. The chimney breasts and louvered timber window shutters have S-shaped decorative wrought-iron stays, in keeping with the American stylistic influence.

The two public rooms at the front of the Chalet (ballroom and dining room) have high timber wainscoting with plate rails – typical of the 1920s, decorative exposed beams or strapwork on the ceilings with standard plaster cornices. Window and door frames are also varnished timber. There is a mezzanine around the ballroom, with wrought-iron balustrade, and a small stage on the east side.

Condition

The roadways and kerbs are in very good condition, as they have just been reconstructed. The reserves also appear to be in good condition (in particular, the trees are in good health). The Chalet is in good to fair condition. It has been vacant for several years and reportedly housed squatters

* This is according to a description of The Chalet in armed forces’ documents of 1940, cited in the history.

recently. The site has been resecured, and views through the windows (on 18 March 2010) did not reveal any particular damage to the interior fabric.

Integrity

Roads – The layout of roads and their names from the 1926 subdivision plan are highly intact. The only changes from the subdivision plan are as follows: Iona Grove (the short street on the north side of Iona Grove Reserve) has been closed off and incorporated into the reserve; part of Drayton Crescent between Park Road and Enfield Avenue was made into a reserve and the other part renamed Kebun Court; the western end of Ennismore Crescent was closed off and renamed Daniel Court; Pine Avenue was created to intersect the site of the large recreation ground at the corner of Park Road and Euston Avenue; and Hylton Avenue was renamed Knees Road after it was linked to the previously existing section of Knees Road to the north. In addition, when original reserve set aside for the Golf Links was subdivided, a number of streets were extended and new streets linked to original subdivision streets, these are: Gosford Court at the end of Gosford Crescent (and the addresses of southern-most properties of Gosford Crescent changed to Gosford Court), Jura Court created at the south end of Jura Avenue, Tacoma Street created off the south end of Corriedale Crescent, and Curry Road created off the south-west side of Ennismore Crescent. The fabric of the roadways and kerbs, however, have been recently replaced (this work is ongoing).

Reserves – Three of the seven recreation reserves planned for the Park Orchards subdivision were not created, but subdivided into house blocks. These include: ‘Private Recreation Reserve – Swimming Pool’ at the intersection of Aviemore Avenue and Ennismore Crescent; ‘Private Recreation Reserve for Tennis Courts’ between Brympton Avenue and Corriedale Crescent; and ‘Private Park Reserve for Golf Links’ on the south side of Ennismore Crescent (the 1931 golf links were instead located slightly to the north-west, on the area planned for house blocks, as it was closer to The Chalet).

The very large active recreation reserve at the corner of Park Road and Euston Avenue was created as planned, and tennis courts and an oval are visible in aerial photos from 1946. The reserve was subdivided, however, into house blocks on either side of the new Pine Avenue in 1957.

The three proposed reserves that were created, and survive intact are: the ‘Private Park Reserve’ at the south end of Feversham Avenue (Iona Grove Reserve), the oval ‘Private Park Reserve’ at the summit of the hill (Dirlton Reserve) bounded by Dirlton Crescent, and the ‘Private Park Reserve’ along Park Road (Alan Morton Reserve) on the western edge of the subdivision. These reserves were intended as public open space, without any infrastructure (playgrounds, shelters and the like), and have remained so. The Iona Grove and Alan Morton reserves retain mature Monterey Pines, and Iona Grove Reserve also retains mature poplars, all of which are believed to be early plantings. The pines may even predate the subdivision.

The Chalet – The Chalet is highly intact externally, particularly when viewed from the public domain. There is an unsympathetic addition at the rear, enclosing the former courtyard between the east and west wings with a lightweight arched roof. The original ledged timber garage door (at the south-west corner) has been replaced with a modern metal door. The arched openings in the loggia may have originally been open, but are now glazed.



Figure 1. View of the Chalet from the south-west, showing the original garage door and front drive, n.d. (Doncaster Historical Society)

With increased car use in the 1950s, more patrons began parking at the rear (instead of alighting at the front drive). This led to the installation of wide crazy-paved steps to the east-side entrance at the end of a paved-look cement pathway from the rear carpark.

Much of the west elevation has been reclad with ridged fibro-cement sheeting, possibly during the Army's occupation. Due to this change in materials, Manningham Heritage Advisor, Willys Keeble, stated in a Heritage Referral of 20 October 2009 that the 'cement-sheet western rear wing ... was added after 1943 with sympathetically matching windows and an arched doorway.' With the benefit of more extensive documentary research, it is clear that this is an original (though reclad) part of the building. An elevation of the building dating to 1927 shows the south face of this wing as part of the original plan, as well as the external stairs into it (see Figure 5, below). In addition, a description of the building from 1929 lists internal spaces 'ballroom, reception and dressing-rooms, kitchens, and lessee's living quarters' (*Argus*, 08/08/29: 2). This complement of rooms corresponds with the annotated sketch plan prepared by the Army prior to leasing The Chalet in 1940, and the west wing is shown on the plan (see Figure 6, below).

The interior is highly intact, as illustrated by photos of the 1940s taken during its occupation by the armed forces in comparison with those taken in 2009 (as well as inspection through the windows in 2010). It retains extensive varnished timber wainscoting, doors and windows, as well as unaltered fireplaces in the public rooms. There are early or original light fittings in the public rooms, including sconces over the fireplaces and hanging lamps (stylised copper-finish hurricane-type lanterns with shades, hung on chains). The location of the kitchen was moved during the army's occupation during World War II, and other functional spaces are believed to have been updated and altered.

Threat

The current owner of The Chalet – Park Orchards Aged Services Property P/L – has submitted a planning application to Manningham Council calling for the demolition of approximately 75% of the south-west (side elevation), the entire north-west (rear) elevation, and about 66% of the intact interior (retaining two public spaces near the front of the building). The Chalet is situated at a bend in

Park Road, so the south-west side elevation and south-east facing facade are equally visible from the public domain. The roof and facade would remain intact.

The proposal also includes the addition of an irregular U-shaped extension to the rear and west side of The Chalet. It is two-storeys high and its footprint approximately six times that of The Chalet – both overpowering it enormously and destroying its garden setting.

Manningham Council has refused this application, and Park Orchards Aged Services Property P/L is appealing the decision at VCAT. The hearing is scheduled for 2 August 2010. Regardless of VCAT's decision, while The Chalet is protected by a Heritage Overlay (HO129), it has no interior controls, so it is likely that any planning application approved in the near future will still include gutting the majority of this highly intact building as well as demolishing some of the original side and rear elevations.

There are no known current threats to the public reserves or road reserves.

E: Background information and nominator's assessment

Certificates of title attached: 8249/349, 8962/297, 8153/418, 7929/166, 10778/463

History:

The Park Orchards Estate was designed in 1926 by licensed surveyor and pioneer town planner Saxil Tuxen, of Tuxen & Miller, Surveyors. The clients were timber merchants and developers John E Taylor and Australia Sharp, with the land owners, Eva Jane Gibb and Minnie Gibb.

Gibbs sisters, Sharp and Taylor

The land where Park Orchards Estate was created was purchased on 12 March 1913 by Eva Jane Gibb, Minnie Gibb, and William Sell. The Gibbs were both listed as widows and resided in Toorak, while Sell was recorded as a 'Fruitgrower' of Doncaster. They purchased a total of 559 acres from Eliza Petty, of the prominent Doncaster orcharding family.¹

The three had formed a partnership in 1911 as orchardists, fruit merchants, exporters, and cool-store proprietors, known as Gibb, Sell & Co. According to Spiller, they had built a cool store and cannery in Mitcham in 1913-14. It seems that Sell was the active partner, while the Gibbs expected to receive a 10-percent return annually on the £20,000 they had invested in the company. Eva Gibb's husband, Daniel Gibb, acted for her and Minnie Gibb in dealings with Sell, until Daniel's death around 1920. The complicated nature of this arrangement led the dissolution of the partnership with Sell by the Gibbs in October 1922, and an ensuing court case. One member of the Gibbs' legal team was Mr JW McComas, who would later be involved in the Park Orchards subdivision as well as acting as the solicitor for the Ranelagh Estate in Mount Eliza.²

By 1923, William Sell was working as an estate agent in East Doncaster, responsible for sales in the Mont View Estate subdivision, Box Hill, among others.³ On 10 May 1923, the future site of Park Orchards Estate was transferred to the sole joint ownership of Eva and Minnie Gibbs. A source from the late 1920s notes that the 'greater portion of Park Orchards is planted with fruit trees, the bulk of

¹ Land Victoria, Certificates of Title Vol 3700 Fol 905 and 913.

² *Argus*, 15/11/1922: 11; 15/12/1922: 4. Spiller, 1977: 3.

³ *Argus*, 12/04/1923: 2.

which are young', so it appears that Gibb, Sell & Co, and later the Gibbs, continued to use the 559 acres for orcharding, and may have even extended the orchards' area from that established by the Pettys.⁴

It is not known precisely how the Gibbs joined forces with John E Taylor and Australias* Sharp to develop Park Orchards as a country club estate, but it may have been via John W McComas. As noted above, the Gibbs had retained McComas' legal services in 1922, while Taylor and Sharp (under the style Sequoia Estate P/L) engaged McComas as their solicitor for the Ranelagh Estate, Mount Eliza, in 1924.⁵ They may have also known each other as neighbours, as they most of them resided in the same area of Toorak: Eva Gibb in Heyington Place, Minnie Gibb on Toorak Road, and John Taylor on Lansell Road.

While the Gibbs retained the title to most of the Park Orchards subdivision (including the site of the Chalet) until 1947 – apart from the house blocks sold to prospective residents – Sharp and Taylor are frequently mentioned as 'owners' of the subdivision. They were also in frequent contact with the Doncaster and Templestowe Shire Council in 1926 and 1927 in this regard (particularly John E Taylor). For example, in August 1926, Taylor paid a bond to council in relation to the subdivision; in March 1927, Sharp and Taylor wrote arranging to meet the shire councillors at the Park Orchards Estate; and in June, Taylor and McComas appeared before the council to discuss a route for public traffic through the estate.⁶ A contemporary article mentions a 'strong syndicate of land subdividers', suggesting the formation of a company, along the lines of Sequoia Pty Ltd at Ranelagh. Another mentions that 'some of the investors' of the Ranelagh Estate were responsible for Park Orchards.⁷ Their legal status in relation to Park Orchards is partially clarified in documentation related to the occupation of The Chalet by the armed forces. A scoping document of 1940 records Sharp and Taylor as its owners 'under Contract of sale'. This is further clarified in a document of 12 April 1943 regarding the potential acquisition of The Chalet from Australias Sharp, John Brown Sharp** (his brother), and John Edmund Taylor 'under Contract of Sale from Eva and Minnie Gibb'.⁸ It is not known if the Contract of Sale extended to the remainder of the unsold allotments at Park Orchards.

Sharp and Taylor were originally timber merchants, with a timber yard at the corner of Johnson and Lorimer streets, South Melbourne. They also owned a timber mill in Tallarook, at what is now Sharps and Taylors Road. Employees placed a tribute in the newspaper upon Taylor's death in December 1943. He was predeceased by Sharp by just three months. Sharp, who at that time resided in Jolimont, was 83 years old when he died.⁹

⁴ Real estate poster 'Park Orchards Doncaster', Coghill & Son Collection, University of Melbourne Archives.

* The existing histories frequently give Sharp's first name as 'Australis'. An agreement with the Commonwealth gives the proper spelling as 'Australias', which corresponds with his death notices in the *Argus*.

⁵ Graeme Butler & Assoc., *Environmental History of the Mornington Peninsula Shire*, 2008: 190.

⁶ PROV VPRS 15136/PO Unit 9, Shire of Doncaster & Templestowe Council Minutes, 03/08/1926: 245; 15/03/1927: 360; 14/06/1927: 407.

⁷ *Argus*, 01/03/1927: 16; 01/11/1927: 19.

** John Brown Sharp was one of the owners of John Sharp and Sons Ltd timber merchants of South Melbourne and saw millers in Woori Yallock. The company held its first annual charity ball for staff at the Park Orchards Chalet in 1929 (*Argus*, 05/11/1929: 12).

⁸ NAA: MP742/1, 259/73/678.

⁹ *Argus*, 18/12/1934: 2; 22/09/1943: 2.

In 1922 Sharp and Taylor founded the development company, Sequoia Pty Ltd, to purchase the Nyora Estate. By 1924 they had also purchased adjoining blocks and owned a total of 770 acres, which became Ranelagh Estate, designed by Walter Burley Griffin in association with Saxil Tuxen.¹⁰

The pair were also managing directors and major shareholders in the timber company John Sharp and Sons Ltd. In 1926 the board of directors announced that the company would sell its six-acre site in South Melbourne to General Motors Ltd, for use as an automotive assembly plant and administrative premises, and the company would be wound up in two or three years. The reason behind the decision was the post-war slump in the timber market. This was due both to reduction in supply (from Australian and American sources) as well as demand, as concrete and steel began to supplant timber in many buildings.¹¹ This general decline in the profitability of the timber business may have been the driver behind Sharp and Taylor's diversification into suburban development. They were also able to combine their two businesses by growing and harvesting timber on unsold land within Ranelagh and Park Orchards.¹²

Yet another name in common between the Ranelagh Estate and Park Orchards was art critic and gallery director, James Stuart (JS) MacDonald.¹³ He was, presumably, engaged by Sharp and Taylor to provide picturesque descriptions of the natural beauties of both estates, which are found in the respective advertising prospectuses of 1925 and 1926.¹⁴

*Saxil Tuxen**

Saxil Tuxen (1885-1975), surveyor, town-planner, and planning advocate was born on 11 December 1885 in Kew, Victoria, son of August Martin Julius Tuxen, surveyor, and his wife (and cousin), Elisabeth Tuxen. Under his father's tutelage, Tuxen received his license to practice as a civil municipal surveyor in 1907 in Melbourne.

Father and son showed an interest in planning reform predating the rise of Australia's Town Planning Associations in their 1909 paper 'Subdivision of Land', which advocated a centralised planning approvals system for Victoria. Saxil worked in his father's firm until August's death in 1911, at which point the business continued solely under Saxil's name.

Tuxen was to become a fervent advocate of reform not only in professional practice, but also in society as a whole, particularly through application of new town planning ideas. The 1914 Town Planning lectures of Charles Reid and William Davidge, which Tuxen attended in Melbourne, saw him become a founding member (and ultimately an honorary life member) of the Victorian Town Planning Association. His planning work for private developers, beginning with the 1916 'Hill-top

¹⁰ Context P/L, *Ranelagh Estate Conservation Management Plan*, 2009: 11.

¹¹ *Argus*, 25/11/1926: 12; 30/11/1926: 16.

¹² David Nichols, *Leading Lights: The promotion of Garden Suburb Plans and Planners in Interwar Australia*, PhD, Deakin University, 2001: 127. Letter to Union Trustee Co of Australia from John Sharp and Sons, 06/11/1944, Box 59/33, Kauri Timber Collection, University of Melbourne Archives.

¹³ Serle, 'MacDonald, James Stuart (1878-1952)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 10, 1986: 251-2.

¹⁴ Context P/L, *Ranelagh Estate Conservation Management Plan*, 2009: 8.

* The following section on town planner Saxil Tuxen has been prepared for this nomination by Dr David Nichols. It is drawn from his PhD dissertation *The promotion of Garden Suburb Plans and Planners in Interwar Australia*, Deakin University, 2001, which deals at length with Tuxen's work as surveyor and nascent town planner.

estate' at Mont Albert, was perhaps his first project to demonstrate a responsiveness to landscape distinct from the grid pattern.

In 1918 Tuxen designed the extensive Merrilands Estate in Reservoir, Melbourne for the developer T. M. Burke. A crafted melange of world's best practice features – including distinct zones for business, recreation, education and governance – the estate was a financial success for Burke, and Tuxen would later be employed by other landholders to produce plans for the Leslie and Keon Park Estates to its immediate east and south-east. Thirty years later he would also be employed by the Peter Lalor Housing Co-operative to design what is now the core of Lalor, to Merrilands' north.

In 1919, citing Merrilands as an exemplar, Tuxen presented a paper on 'Suburban Subdivisions' at the First Victorian Town Planning Conference and Exhibition in Ballarat. It was no doubt this, and his strong presence in the Town Planning Association, that led Chairman of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission, Frank Stapley, to invite Tuxen to serve as a technical expert on the Commission (1923-1929). Fred Cook, the Commission's surveyor and draughtsman, had previously worked in Tuxen's office, and Tuxen's and Cook's design 'signatures' are prominent across the MTPC's 1929 plan.

Tuxen worked assiduously to promote the MTPC's agenda. In 1925, using funds left to him by a Danish relative, he journeyed to the USA. Here he photographed numerous examples of important urban features for potential incorporation into the future Melbourne, paying particular attention to open spaces, streetscapes and building heights. From this, he wrote lectures – some of which were broadcast on radio – and newspaper articles about subjects of specific relevance to the planning movement, including parks and open space, the Yarra river and its environs, and public transport.

Due to the additional (unpaid) time spent working on MTPC business, Tuxen took on a partner, George Miller. The pair worked as surveyors on Ranelagh, Mount Eliza, credited to Walter Burley Griffin (1923) in tandem with Tuxen and Miller. Park Orchards (1925), in Melbourne's north-east was designed by the partnership for the same vendor.

The Great Depression, and the (related) failure of the MPTC's report to effect change, were disillusioning for Tuxen, and he would later regard this period with bitterness. His business suffered a slump; his rising interest in social causes flowered from his American experience and the deprivation he witnessed around him in the early 1930s. He worked with F. Oswald Barnett and the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Father Tucker, and in 1936 prepared maps indicating substandard housing in Melbourne for Barnett's Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board. He continued to work with both Barnett and Tucker until the end of the 1960s; Barnett considered him 'a good chap'.

Tuxen and Miller studied the effects of coastal erosion, in the hope of interesting government in a program to assist unemployed labourers. Tuxen was president of the Victorian Institute of Surveyors in 1932-33, and over the same period published a series of articles for the Institute's magazine on the topic 'Design of Sub-division in Victoria'. In 1938, Tuxen and Miller were winners of a competition to design a street plan for the second section of Fishermens Bend, Port Melbourne, also known as Garden City. This, and Tuxen's earlier street plan for the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Carrum Downs, are evidence both of Tuxen's strong interest in the social and environmental benefits of planned areas, and the fact that he was commissioned to produce them is evidence of his own standing within the planning and wider community.

Tuxen's planning work for suburban subdivisions is recognisable throughout Melbourne. His designs are empathetic to topography and strive to be both attractive and economical. He was accommodating of the requirements of those who commissioned his work: Burke's desire to minimise bridge crossings on the creeks at Merrilands, for instance, and Taylor and Sharp's desire to limit entry points into Park Orchards. He was a strong advocate of extensive park space and open areas in his planning and this, along with his graceful sweeping curved roads – which he considered to be a hallmark of an accomplished surveyor – can be seen as trademarks.

Country club estates

Park Orchards was advertised as a 'country club estate', where purchase of a residential block of land would provide membership of the Park Orchards Country Club, whose members could avail themselves of shared facilities including golf links, tennis courts, swimming pool, playing field, and club house. These facilities would be funded by regular contributions from all members/owners and would provided them with 'the facilities for enjoyment ... [which] will be much more extensive than the wealthiest in the land out of any single purse would care to attempt'.¹⁵ In this sense, the importation of the country club estate concept from the United States was considered a 'democratic one', which allowed the upper-middle and even middle classes to enjoy the same benefits as British landed gentry on their country estates.¹⁶ The clubhouses were seen as 'substitutes for the private country homes of England.'¹⁷

In the US, the country club estate was considered an important part of suburban development from the 1890s. The purchase of a house block within the estate would provide membership for the owner (and family), with access to shared facilities including a clubhouse and sporting facilities (often a golf course). The most successful examples incorporated not only shared community facilities but also retail facilities for residents. Early adoption of the concept in Australia was not for permanent residential communities, but holiday resorts. These include Emerald, Ranelagh and Park Orchards country clubs in Victoria.

The Emerald Country Club was established in 1921, with the first clubhouse housed in Carramar, the former Carl Nobelius home. A purpose-built clubhouse designed an Arts & Crafts style was built 1928-29 to a design by Cowper, Murphy & Appleford.¹⁸ The land adjacent to the golf course was subdivided in 1931, and retains many houses that date from the early days of the estate (the earliest from 1928).¹⁹ The Emerald Country Club may have inspired both Ranelagh and Park Orchards, though the Club House and early residences were built at the same time as those at Park Orchards.

The Ranelagh Country Club Estate (VHR H1605) was created 1922-26 to a subdivision plan by Walter Burley Griffin and Saxil Tuxen for Australia's Sharp and John Taylor. Ranelagh Estate was envisaged as a place where professional people would build their holiday houses, with recreational facilities, parks and internal reserves provided. Each purchaser was automatically a member of the Ranelagh Club which was the custodian for the reserves and parks. A clubhouse was initially established in an

¹⁵ *An Idea of Park Orchards*, promotional brochure, c1926 [collection of Doncaster Historical Society].

¹⁶ R Moss, *Golf and the American Country Club*, 2001: 61.

¹⁷ *Argus*, 01/11/1927: 19

¹⁸ A tender notice is found in *Building and Construction and Cazaly's Contract Reporter*, 14/02/1928: 43. The *Argus* (25/10/1928: 14) notes that 'The construction of the clubhouse is well advanced, and it should be completed in three months.'

¹⁹ Context Pty Ltd, *Cardinia Shire Heritage Studies Review*, Vol 3, 2008: 48.

existing mansion on the site (Nyora). Ranelagh's golf course was sold off (the site now occupied by The Peninsula School), but it retains its beach hut.

Taylor and Sharp then went on to develop their 'alpine resort' – Park Orchards Country Club Estate from 1926. David Nichols cites the Park Orchards plan as a 'distillation of the various important elements of the Country Club community'. It was a planned community centred on its shared public buildings and recreational facilities, making it an exclusive settlement in regards to non-members, but democratic within the circle of members/residents.²⁰ The Chalet was built as the "community centre" of Park Orchards in 1928-9. A 9-hole golf course followed in 1931 (later subdivided for house blocks). The golf course had its own clubhouse, further south from The Chalet, which does not survive.

Other early country clubs noted in Victoria are the 1925 Peninsular Country Club in Frankston and Moondai Country Club of the late 1920s between Buxton and Marysville. Both, in fact, comprised only a clubhouse and golf course, without any related residential/holiday development for club members. The Peninsular clubhouse was replaced in 1967. It is believed that the Moondai Golf Links is now the Marysville Community Golf & Bowls Club (956 Buxton-Marysville Road). It also has a modern clubhouse (c1970s).

Park Orchards Estate subdivision

As their role in creating the country club estate at Ranelagh drew to a close, Sharp and Taylor quickly began their next project: Park Orchards. The subdivision plan was developed in 1926 and lodged with the planning authority in March 1927.²¹ As discussed above, the Gibb sisters had owned the land since 1913 and used it for fruit growing and pine groves. They may have been moved to change its use by the dissolution of their partnership with William Sell in 1922, as he had been the active partner in their orcharding and cool-store business.

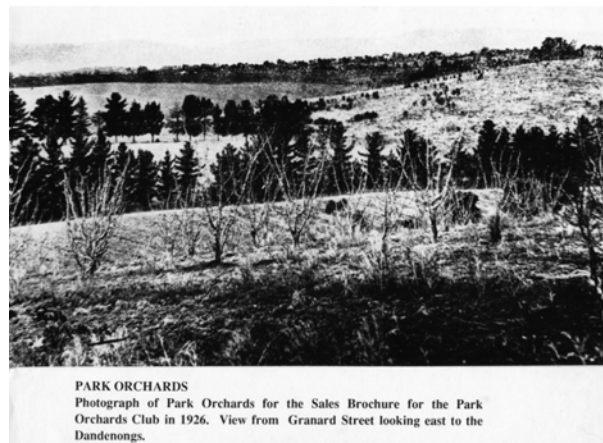


Figure 2. Fruit trees and rows of Radiata pines in existence prior to the creation of Park Orchard Estate. (Doncaster Historical Society)

²⁰ D Nichols, 'The provision of public amenities in private subdivisions, 1900-1930' (paper presented at International Planning History Society Conference, Chicago), July 2008: 7.

²¹ A survey plan, dated 29 September 1926 and signed by Saxil Tuxen, shows the central area of the subdivision as depicted in the 1927 lodged plans. This plan is from the private collection of Caroline Radisich (PORA member).

It is not known if Sharp and Taylor were prevented from engaging the Griffins, along with Saxil Tuxen, again for the Park Orchards Country Club Estate, due to their departure for Sydney. In any case, advertising material for the new estate indicates that Tuxen's name 'was itself well-known amongst potential homebuyers at this time'.²² Tuxen was an important and prominent member of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission and appeared regularly in the media (professional journals, radio and newspapers) discussing town planning ideas on the MTPC's behalf throughout the 1920s.

The curving streets of Park Orchards create the sort of 'picturesque streetscape' Tuxen had first employed in his Hill-Top Estate, Mont Albert, in 1916. He continued in this vein for undulating sites, including his Eastern Gardens Estate, Balwyn, of 1918. At the time, it was noted that: 'The contour of the country has been turned to the best advantage' for Eastern Gardens. Tuxen is considered to have made 'a complete break from the grid style' with the extensive Merrilands, Reservoir, of 1918. He also introduced planned zones (educational, commercial, public, residential) with Merrilands, though the facilities foreseen were not realised.²³

Park Orchards adheres to Tuxen's professed core principles of planning, which he espoused early in his career as an advocate on behalf of well-planned subdivisions. Park Road is its 'backbone', which he contended should be included in all subdivisions to 'open up the area so as to give the most direct egress'.²⁴ He was also assured that 'close study must be made of the natural beauties and defects' of a site; 'If the former can be accentuated and the latter hidden it will make the estate much more pleasing from a residential point of view.'²⁵ He later wrote evocatively of the potential for town planning to accentuate and showcase natural beauty, for instance in his long piece on the value of planned landscaping and parks at all points of the Yarra River.²⁶

Tuxen saw value in frontage continuing 'round a graceful curve' for a result 'not only pleasing, but economical';²⁷ yet while he also believed that 'nature works in curves, the contours [of a site] following sinuous lines' he felt that curves 'to be graceful must have a reason'.²⁸ Park Orchards furnished, it is to be assumed, such a reason: one of the more unusual features of Tuxen's plan for Park Orchards are the concentric circuses. While the circus street form was seen in Melbourne since the 19th century – for example, St Vincent's Place, Albert Park, and the plan for St Albans (two concentric circles), both of which would have been known to Tuxen – its use here is made unusual because it encircles a large hill. By this means it creates attractive vistas from the hilltop. The suburb is generally predicated on car ownership and was possibly the first urban area in Australia to be planned on this basis, Tuxen having suggested in 1919 that 'practically all the traffic' in cities would 'be of this type'.²⁹ Once within the estate, however, three walkways were planned (and eventually executed) to provide convenient pedestrian access between the outer circle and inner/upper (Dirlton Crescent).

²² Nichols, *Leading Lights*, 2001: 129.

²³ Nichols, *Leading Lights*, 2001: 94-95.

²⁴ Tuxen, 'Suburban Subdivisions' *First Victorian Town Planning Conference and Exhibition*, 1919 p. 42

²⁵ Tuxen, 'Suburban Subdivisions' *First Victorian Town Planning Conference and Exhibition*, 1919 p. 43

²⁶ Tuxen, 'What we might do with the Yarra', *Melbourne Herald*, 27 November 1926 p. 17

²⁷ Tuxen, 'Town Planning and the Working Man', *Australian Home Beautiful* 1 September 1927, p. 28

²⁸ Tuxen, 'Suburban Subdivisions' *First Victorian Town Planning Conference and Exhibition*, 1919 p. 42

²⁹ Tuxen, 'Suburban Subdivisions' *First Victorian Town Planning Conference and Exhibition*, 1919 p. 43

The design was not only responsive to the topography of the 'alpine' site, but to the existing trees. A contemporary news source noted that: 'Roads are to be laid out between the lines of well-grown pines'. In a practical move, the fruit trees left from the orchards would also be preserved on house blocks for use by purchasers.³⁰ At the time he was working on Park Orchards Tuxen wrote in *Australian Home Beautiful* advocating trees in subdivisions opining that they 'take little care, but produce a wonderfully softening effect.'³¹



View of one of the Pine Avenues on the Estate.

Figure 3. Pine avenue, probably along Park Road, Arundel Road or Dalry Road, c1926. (An Idea of Park Orchard)

Apart from the 'Garden suburb' plan of picturesque curved road, large house blocks, and the provision of public reserves, the Park Orchards plan was distinguished by the plans for community facilities (in the new country club mode). At the time it was considered 'one of the first attempts made in Melbourne to infuse the idea of community settlement into suburban land selling'.³² This was via the creation of facilities to be used primarily by residents (sports fields, swimming pool, tennis courts, parkland and golf links), as well as the layout of roads which minimised access points from outside the estate (unlike Ranelagh where there are many).

In addition to the land survey, early development of the estate included the creation (or extension) of Park Road, Arundel Road and part of Dalry Road, the construction of The Chalet, and creation of tennis courts and a cricket oval by late 1929.³³ Because of this, early allotment sales were almost all in the north-east quarter of the estate, between The Chalet (at the intersection of Park and Arundel roads) and Berringa Road on the eastern boundary. In the first five years (1927-32), only 14 allotments of a total 654 sold, the disappointing result influenced by the Depression. By the outbreak of World War II, a total of 22 allotments had been sold.³⁴

³⁰ *Argus*, 08/03/1927: 13.

³¹ Tuxen, 'Town Planning and the Working Man', *Australian Home Beautiful* 1 September 1927, p. 28

³² *Argus*, 08/03/1927: 13.

³³ *Argus*, 18/09/1929: 28.

³⁴ Land Victoria, Title Certificates Vol 5317 Folios 332 & 333.

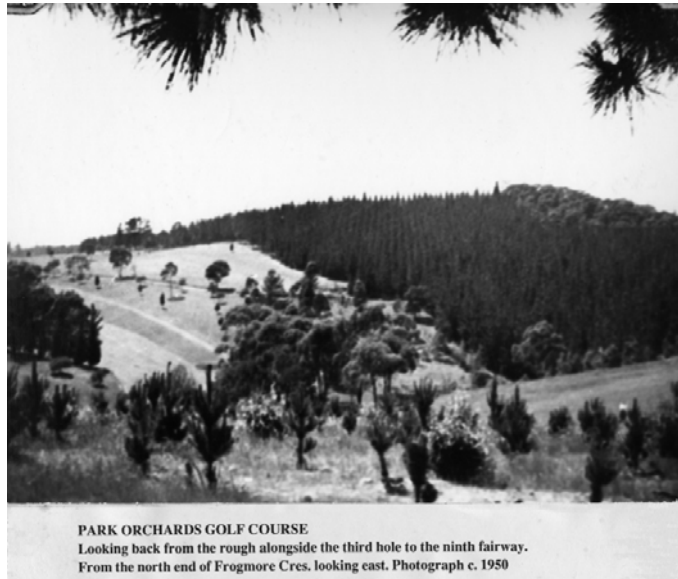


Figure 4. The Park Orchards Golf Course, c1950. (Doncaster Historical Society)

When it became apparent that house blocks in the south-west quadrant of the subdivision would be very slow to sell, the location of the golf links was moved from the south side of the circuses to overlap with planned roads and house blocks. The 9-hole course, created in 1931, reached as far north as the intersection of Brucedale Crescent and Aviemore Avenue.³⁵ In the decade it was created, it was touted as ‘one of the most delightful nine-hole courses in the hills’. Guests could also play tennis, and enjoy ‘dancing, music or table games in The Chalet, where meals are also served.’³⁶ A golf clubhouse was constructed on the south side of Park Road (No 614), just east of Hopetoun Road. A report from 1995 notes that the golf clubhouse ‘was removed in recent years’.³⁷ The golf course itself survived until the 1950s.

The Chalet

The Chalet, at the intersection of Park Road and Arundel Avenue, was designed as the Park Orchards Country Clubhouse in 1927 and built in 1928-9. It is an imposing rendered building with a tile roof in the Spanish Mission style. It is the only community facility to survive from the original plan, apart from the reserves. Tennis courts and a sporting oval on a large recreation reserve at the corner of Park Road and Euston Avenue disappeared after the creation of Pine Road through the reserve in 1957. It seems the bowling green and swimming pool planned there were never realised.

The same year that the subdivision went on sale, 1927, plans were announced for the construction of a ‘country clubhouse’, complete with an elevation of the building we see today. It was to house a dance hall (with a dais and inglenook) separated from a cafeteria by sliding doors, lounges, cloakrooms, and kitchens. The roof was to be covered with colour-blended tiles, and the walls finished with tinted stucco. An elevated site was chosen and an ample verandah and lookout tower provided to take advantage of the views.³⁸

³⁵ Compare subdivision plan with 1947 aerial photograph (attached).

³⁶ Sun News-Pictorial, ‘Park Orchards: A Picnic Golf Course’ in *Golf Courses of Victoria*, [1935-6]: 47.

³⁷ Murphy, ‘Celebrating 25 Years, 1970-1995. St Anne’s Park Orchards’, 1995: 5.

³⁸ *Argus*, 01/11/1927: 19.

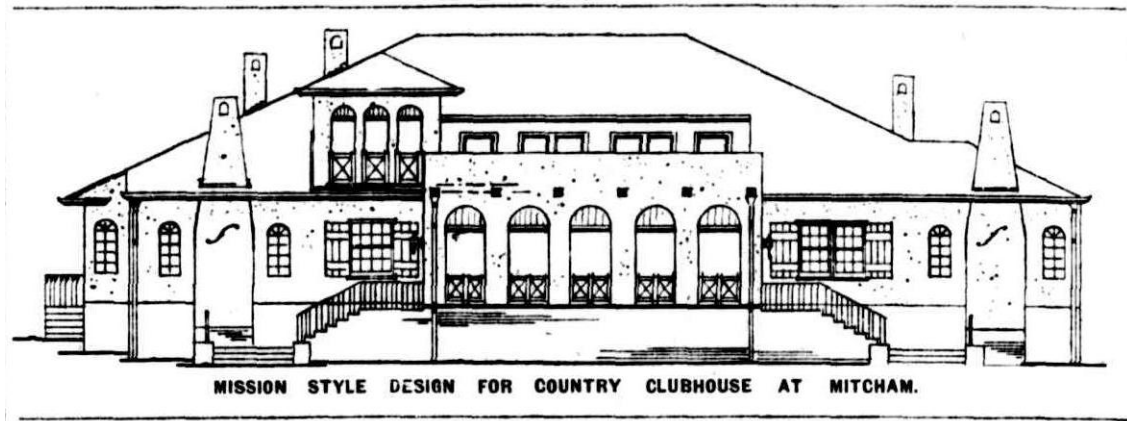


Figure 5. Front elevation of The Chalet as planned (and built). (*Argus*, 1 Nov 1927: 19)

The Chalet was built at a cost of over £2,000.³⁹ In August 1929 a tender notice appeared for the 'newly erected' Chalet, which contained a 'ballroom, reception and dressing-rooms, kitchens, and lessee's living quarters'. It was foreseen that The Chalet would serve both Country Club residents as well as daytrippers. At the time, Park Orchards offered a cricket ground and tennis courts, as well as a picnic ground.⁴⁰

Little more than 20 allotments were sold of over 500 in the subdivision by 1940. When the armed forces inspected The Chalet in August 1940, they found it to be 'unoccupied except for occasional social gatherings and limited service of meals to golfers on week-ends'. It still retained its original furnishings.

³⁹ NAA: MP742/1, 259/73/678, 'Park Orchards Property, Ringwood', dated 22/08/1940.

⁴⁰ *Argus*, 08/08/1929: 2.

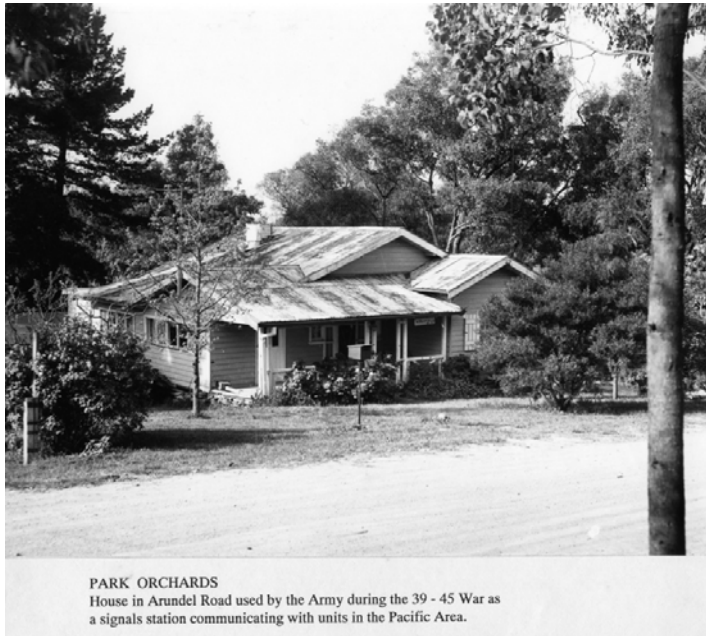


Figure 7. An early Park Orchards Estate house, requisitioned by the Army. (Doncaster Historical Society)

In all, the army acquired 6 acres, along Park Road and Arundel Road, and reportedly left behind them excellent roadways as well as improvements to The Chalet (including connection to MMBW water mains and power lines).⁴¹

⁴¹ Information gathered by local historian Graham Tamme from NAA: MP742/1, 259/73/678. Spiller, 'History and Development of Park Orchards', 1977: 4 (unpublished Ms, held at Doncaster Historical Society).

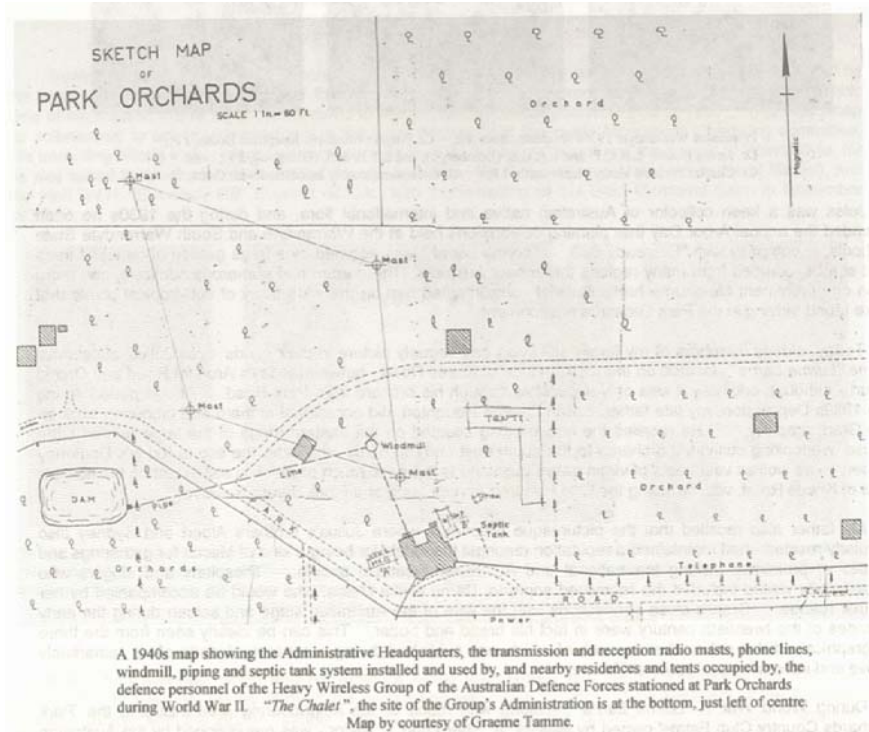


Figure 8. Sketch map showing layout of Army facilities (M Houghton, 'Jules Grant of *Lorma Larna*', Warrandyte Historical Society, 2010)

After the Signal Camp was relocated, the Army proposed to acquire the site of The Chalet, as well as adjoining allotments 203-206 and 223-225 in April 1943. This sale was not finalised until October 1947.⁴²

In August 1944, the Army moved the so-called School of Eastern Interpreters from Mt Martha to Park Orchards. This was a 'spy school' whose students were trained in underground methods, espionage and intelligence. Each student was given a new identity at the beginning of the course and had to build a cover story to fit. A total of 122 students, from Australia, Britain, Malaya, Holland, Indonesia, France and Canada, were trained at the school. Many of them were ethnically Asian; enabling them to go undercover in Malaya, China and other Japanese-occupied areas. Students learned background information about the country where they would be operating, as well as cipher and foreign languages. Classes were held in The Chalet, while student bunks and workshops were housed in simple timber huts behind it, left by the Army Signals Camp. The site was closed in August 1945.⁴³

Post-war development

After John E Taylor's death in 1944, probate to his will was granted to Wilfrid McRae Howitt, a Melbourne chartered accountant, and Norman Fountain, a pastoral manager in Birchip. Subsequently a half-share of all the remaining Park Orchards land was transferred to the pair on 26 March 1947.⁴⁴ On that same date the other half went to The Union Trustee Company of Australia Ltd

⁴² NAA: MP742/1, 259/73/678. Land Victoria, Title Certificate Vol 7738 Folio 060.

⁴³ Craig Brown, *Special Operations Australia*, www.specialoperationsaustralia.com, accessed 19/02/2010.

⁴⁴ *Victorian Government Gazette*, No 130, 09/08/1944: 1935. Land Victoria, Title Certificate Vol 7734 Folios 103, 105, 107, 109, 111.

and Leonard Roberts Stillman, a Melbourne solicitor, who were the executors of Australia's Sharp, who also died in 1944.⁴⁵ As early as October 1944, the Union Trustee Company was selling Radiata pine timber felled as part of a 'thinning out scheme at the plantations at Park Orchards' to John Sharp & Sons Pty Ltd. Correspondence notes that John Sharp & Sons was considering purchase of the Park Orchards land at this time.⁴⁶

The estate, comprising 603 allotments and 55 acres of unsubdivided land (presumably the public reserves) was sold at auction on 10 December 1946, with the transfer finalised on 2 July 1947. Apart from the land, the following improvements were included in the package: six timber houses, pine plantations, apple and pear orchards, and the 9-hole golf course.⁴⁷ The entire parcel was purchased by Robert Leslie Montgomery, Ernest John Leslie Edmonds and Kenneth Matheson Hope McGillivray, all listed as Directors, at 309 Bourke Street, Melbourne. This address corresponds with the headquarters of the Edments' jewellery store, established there in 1895 by Alfred Edments.⁴⁸ Presumably the three purchasers were directors of Edments or its provident fund. This corresponds with Spiller, who states that 'the Estate was purchased by Trustees of Edments Provident Fund (Edments the jeweller) with the idea of turning it into a rest and recreation area for staff members'. While Edments staff were reported to have used the golf course and the Chalet for social functions, a staff rest home was never built, and the property was entrusted to estate agents Willmore and Randell in 1951 and finally subdivided into residential blocks (in accordance with Tuxen's plan).⁴⁹

By 1951, there were just 25 families living at Park Orchards, and over the next 10 years the area filled with houses, with sales taking off rapidly from June 1952. Apart from residential purchasers, in 1952 Western Builders Pty Ltd purchased what is now the Alan Morton Reserve on the west side of the estate, presumably to harvest the pine trees. The same year they sold it on to Australian Berry Baskets Company, who used the timber for strawberry punnets, and the like, retaining it until 1975. Spiller states that the company bought land from Sharp & Taylor in 1932 for this purpose, but no evidence of this was found in the land titles. It is possible that the Berry Baskets Company purchased rights to timber, or leased land for this purpose.⁵⁰

Pine Avenue was created in 1957 (LP41939), replacing the extensive recreation area at the corner of Park Road and Euston Avenue, which had contained the cricket oval and tennis courts, with 16 new residential blocks. An alternative reserve was created to provide some of these planned facilities at the corner of Park Road and Aviemore Avenue (lots Nos. 488-491, 503-505) and remains in community use today. This reserve adjoins the Park Orchards Primary School, kindergarten and community house.

⁴⁵ *Victorian Government Gazette*, No 125, 26/07/1944: 1863. Land Victoria, Title Certificate Vol 7734 Folios 102, 104, 106, 108, 110.

⁴⁶ Letter from Union Trustee Co of Australia to John Sharp and Sons, 06/11/1944, Box 59/33, Kauri Timber Collection, University of Melbourne Archives. NB: This letter also indicates that the Union Trustee Co was acting in the interests of the 'former partnership of Sharp & Taylor'.

⁴⁷ See sale map and advertising posts 'Park Orchards Estate, Mitcham' real estate map, SLV, Haughton Collection.

⁴⁸ Land Victoria, Certificates of Title, Vol 7734 Folios 102-111. N Sidney, 'Edments, Alfred (1853 - 1909)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 8, 1981: 412-413.

⁴⁹ L Spiller, *History and Development of Park Orchards*, 1977: 6.

⁵⁰ Land Victoria, Title Certificate, Vol 7926 Folio 166. Spiller, 1977: 6-7.

Most of the residential blocks were sold by 1960. The Education Department opened the Park Orchards Primary School in 1961, in response to concerted lobbying by the Park Orchards Ratepayers Association (PORA). A small shopping strip, tennis club and other community amenities were established during the 1960s, making Park Orchards 'a viable, leafy suburb'. Greenfields development was still ongoing in the late 1970s, at which point the old golf course (which closed during the 1950s and was overgrown with pines and native trees) was sold off for residential blocks. The strong community spirit and extent of residents' engagement was highlighted again in the early 1970s in a successful campaign to preserve an area of natural bushland just north of the subdivision.⁵¹ Today, housing stock primarily dates from the 1950s through 1970s, with the final undeveloped blocks selling in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Chalet of 1928-9 is the most prominent exception.

After the Army relinquished The Chalet and the land around it, it was sold to Daisy and Wesley Jones in May 1948.⁵² The Jones ran a cabaret there until the mid-1950s. As the premises did not have a liquor license, patrons reportedly concealed their own bottles of grog under the tables, which they consumed in discrete cups. The Edwards family purchased The Chalet in 1956, which they turned into a French restaurant and function venue. The Edwards were responsible for opening up some rooms inside as well as enclosing the rear courtyard.⁵³

While The Chalet no longer had its strict clubhouse status in the post-war period, it continued to serve as an informal community centre, where local weddings, family celebrations and other community activities were held until its recent closure. Among other things, it was the venue for the inaugural meeting of the Park Orchards Ratepayers' Association (PORA) in April 1954, and used by PORA for its general meetings for 39 years until its closure. It also served as a Mass Centre for Park Orchards' Catholics from 1965-70, with 70-100 people attending each Sunday. This was a 'true community effort', as local carpenter Andy Milton built the altar, which was delivered to the site in an old van each Sunday morning by Joe Titotto (who had once worked at the Park Orchards golf course).⁵⁴

⁵¹ Spiller, 1977: 6-7. David Nichols, 'Post-war suburban 'reconstruction' and the democratised 'frontier' in the civic and recreational buildings of Beaumaris and Park Orchards', *Australia Planner*, Vol 44, No 3: 41.

⁵² Land Victoria, Title Certificate Vol 7738 Folio 060.

⁵³ *Doncaster-Templestowe Historical Society Newsletter*, Sept. 1982: 6.

⁵⁴ Michael Murphy, 'Celebrating 25 Years, 1970-1995, St Anne's Park Orchards. St Gerard's Warrantdyte', 1995.

Comparison:

The three most pertinent comparisons for Park Orchards (including The Chalet) are as: 1) an early country club estate; 2) an example of Saxil Tuxen's subdivisions; and 3) The Chalet as an early Spanish Mission-style building.

Country Clubs

Emerald Country Club of 1921 is the first known country club estate to be established in Victoria. It seems, however, that it comprised only the clubhouse (Carramar, Carl Nobelius' former home) and golf course in the early years. A purpose-built clubhouse, in an Arts & Crafts style, was finally constructed in 1928-29. At this same time the residential section of the estate began its development, with the earliest known houses dating from 1928 and 1929, though this land was not subdivided until 1931. The subdivision is modest in size, and the road alignments were dictated by the hilly site. Five new streets were created: Lakeside Drive, Sycamore and Oak avenues, and Poplar and Elm crescents. There are eight known early houses surviving, two of which were designed by architects Cowper, Murphy & Appleford (who also designed the clubhouse). The golf course also survives.

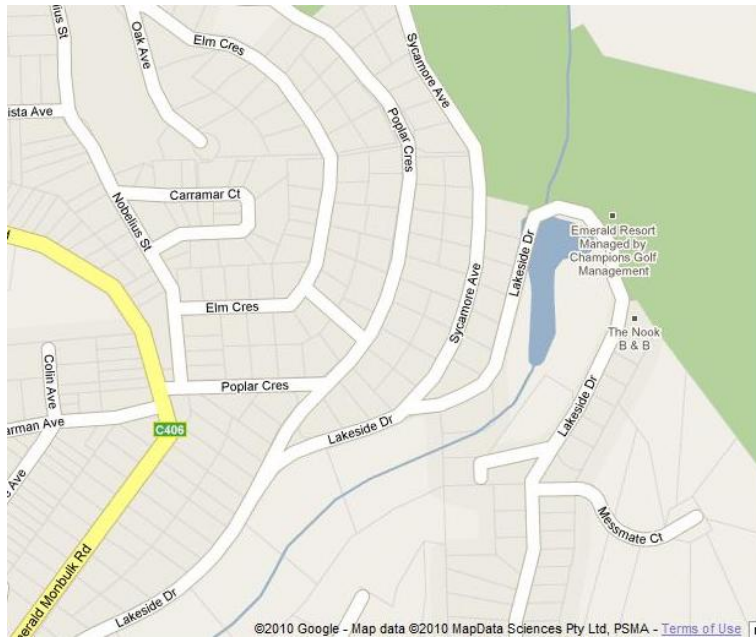


Figure 9. Plan of the Emerald Country Club Estate of 1931. (Google Maps, 2010)

The Ranelagh Country Club Estate (VHR H1605) was created shortly after the Emerald example (1922-26). The residential subdivision, designed by Walter Burley Griffin with Saxil Tuxen, was an integral part of the development from the start. The curvilinear layout of the roads, while informed by the topography, is much more mannered than at Emerald as it followed the geometrical design principles of the Griffins. Like Emerald it retains about a dozen early (late 1920s and '30s) houses, concentrated at the north (beach) end of the subdivision. Like Park Orchards, the majority of the roads were not created until the 1960s, when most of the residential blocks sold. The Ranelagh Club was originally housed in the pre-existing mansion, Nyora. Around 1960 the Club erected its own

clubhouse, which is still in Club use today. The golf course at Ranelagh closed in the late 1950s and has been built over.⁵⁵

In comparison with Emerald, Park Orchards Country Club was officially established slightly later, though the purpose-built clubhouse, first private residences and street layout were established at the same time. In scale, Emerald is much more modest. In terms of intactness, Emerald Country Club retains a number of early architect-designed weekenders as well as its golf course, while Park Orchards does not.

In comparison with Ranelagh, Park Orchards Country Club was the successor development by Sharp and Taylor. It began in 1926, as their involvement at Ranelagh was drawing to a close. The subdivision is on a similar scale, and features smoothly curved roads that reflect and enhance the topography of the hilly site. Both are generous in their provision of public open space and amenities, though only Ranelagh has internal reserves, which were a trademark of Walter Burley Griffin. Like Emerald, Ranelagh also retains a selection of early houses. Park Orchards, however, retains an original public building – The Chalet – while Ranelagh does not. Neither retains their golf course.

Other early country clubs created in Victoria in the 1920s, such as the Peninsular Country Club and the Moondai Country Club, were in fact only golf clubs, and did not include surrounding residential development in the American country club mode.

Saxil Tuxen's subdivisions

Town planner Saxil Tuxen was responsible for the physical design of a far greater area of Melbourne than any of his cohort and of any civic authority up until the 1950s (when the Housing Commission overtook him). Tuxen's estates are recognisably the work of a practitioner well-versed in best-practice planning of the 1920s, and often contain unique and innovative features responsive to the terrain. He began to introduce curved roads, in response to hilly terrain, in 1916 at the Hill-top Estate in Mont Albert. His legacy is only being re-evaluated now, removing him from the shadow of Walter Burley Griffin, which whom he collaborated on the plan of Ranelagh Estate and Country Club. Tuxen deserves recognition for his impact on Melbourne's form and his role as a leading town planner of his day. In the State context, Tuxen was significant for his innovative subdivision designs and as a town planner of eminence, being a foundation member of the Victorian Town Planning Association and a technical expert with the Melbourne Metropolitan Town Planning Commission.

In the opinion of planning historian, Dr David Nichols, the Park Orchards Country Club Estate is the finest surviving example of a complete, realised example of Saxil Tuxen's work. While Tuxen personally considered the plan for the Merrilands subdivision (of 1919) in Preston the best exemplar of his work, its execution was compromised both by the developer and by Preston Council's redevelopment of parts of it in later years. Similar things happened to his other large subdivision in Reservoir: Leslie Estate. While Tuxen's plan for Park Orchards was not fully realised until the 1950s, it remained faithful to his plan. Park Orchards is also unique for being the only one of Tuxen's subdivisions that retains one of the many public buildings that he planned for in his subdivisions (The Chalet). Almost all of the open spaces planned by Tuxen are also intact, as are the three footpaths that link the concentric circular drives.

⁵⁵ Context P/L, *Ranelagh Conservation Management Plan*, 2009: 41-42, 54-55.

Nichols has also called Tuxen's work at Park Orchards one of the most unusual planned suburbs in Australia. This is due to the circular arrangement of roads integrated with the hilly topography, creating numerous vistas. Also because it is one of the first subdivisions for which car ownership is assumed, and one in which exclusivity is built into the design – there are minimised access roads into the estate (and they were originally closed off with gates). This is in contrast to the Ranelagh Country Club Estate, where there are many access points. The planned 'geographical' exclusivity of Park Orchards has created a 'place apart', which has influenced the creation of a strong community consciousness through to the present day. As early as 1927, Park Orchards was celebrated as 'one of the first attempts made in Melbourne to infuse the idea of community settlement into suburban land selling'.⁵⁶

Spanish Mission style buildings

The Chalet is a fine example of a Spanish Mission building, which appears to have been designed by an architect or craftsman-builder.⁵⁷ The design was first published in *The Argus* in November 1927, which places it in the first wave of Spanish Mission buildings in Victoria. It was built in tinted stucco with hipped tiled roofs, multi-paned windows, arched loggias, decorative projecting beam ends, and large Spanish or Arts & Crafts inspired tapered chimneys. The Chalet was designed to be viewed 'in the round' within a garden setting. Early lawn and shrub beds survive in front and on the east side of the building. The interiors are highly intact and are characterised by varnished Blackwood wainscoting and window and door surrounds.

The Chalet is a relatively early Spanish Mission style building. The design is similar to that of a large residence, and can be compared to large houses such as Prime Minister Stanley Bruce's 'Pinehill' at Frankston (now the Frankston Golf Course; VHR H1998). This large villa was designed in 1926 by Sydney architects Prevost, Synnot and Rewald in association with architect Robert Bell Hamilton. The external walls were finished in pinkish-beige stucco, the roof is of vari-coloured terracotta pan tiles, and there is simple arcading beneath decorative projecting beam ends. The earliest houses in the Spanish Mission style in Victoria that could be identified in the HERMES database was 762 Orrong Road, Toorak, designed by Irwin & Stephenson in 1924 (Stonnington, HO90), followed by 6 Glyndebourne Ave, Toorak, designed by MW Martin in 1925 (Stonnington, HO264). The only other residential Spanish Mission building found on Hermes built prior to 1930 is The Belvedere, designed in 1928 by architect WH Merritt in St Kilda (VHR H812). The great majority of Spanish Mission houses and other buildings date from the 1930s.

⁵⁶ *Argus*, 08/03/27: 13.

⁵⁷ Architects' tender notices in *Building & Construction and Cazaly's Contract Report* were checked from June 1927 through September 1929 (dates chosen in relation to contemporary newspaper mentions), but no likely notice was identified.

Assessment against criteria:

A. *Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history.*

Park Orchards Estate and The Chalet played an important role in Australia's defences during World War II. The Chalet and a number of other buildings (private weekenders) were requisitioned by the Army to serve as an Army Signal Camp from 1940 to 1942. The Army also brought in two large portable buildings, erected on either side of The Chalet. This same infrastructure, with The Chalet as the focus, was used for the top-secret 'School of Eastern Interpreters', which trained operatives for espionage and counter-espionage work in the Pacific theatre of the war.

B. *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history.*

Park Orchards is one of the most unusual planned suburbs in Australia. This is due to the circular arrangement of roads integrated with the hilly topography, creating numerous vistas. Also because it is one of the first subdivisions for which car ownership is assumed, and one in which exclusivity is built into the design – there are minimised access roads into the estate (and they were originally closed off with gates).

Park Orchards Estate is also a rare example of a large subdivision by Saxil Tuxen which is substantially intact. His other subdivisions comparable in size and complexity, such as Merrilands in Reservoir, have been substantially altered either in their execution or after establishment. In particular, the road reserves are almost entirely intact and fully executed, about half of the public reserves survive, as does The Chalet – the sole public building planned by Tuxen to be realised.

C. *Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history.*

D. *Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments.*

Park Orchards is a representative example of an early country club estate in Victoria. Its development took place concurrently with that of Emerald Country Club (whose golf course was established first), and followed immediately on Ranelagh Country Club, which was the work of the same developers – timber merchants Sharp & Taylor.

The Chalet, the original clubhouse of 1928-9, is a representative example of a substantial and early Spanish Mission building. It is distinguished by its highly intact interior which features extensive use of varnished Blackwood, original lighting fixtures, and decorative wrought-iron details.

E. *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.*

The undulating landscape of Park Orchards is showcased by Saxil Tuxen's sensitive subdivision plan. In particular, it highlights the hill at the south-central part of the subdivision, by crowning it with two concentric circles.

The extensive mature Radiata pines, which remain from the previous use as a pine plantation, are a distinctive feature of the landscape and provide information on one of its pre-subdivision uses. When the Estate was planned, the pines were retained both for their economic value as well as their visual contribution to the 'alpine' character of the subdivision. They are complemented by mid-20th century native trees planted by Park Orchards Estate residents.

F. *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.*

The design of Park Orchards Estate demonstrates the skill of surveyor and planner Saxil Tuxen in his work using garden suburb principles. The plan is distinguished by its responsiveness to the topography and its apparent combination of classical (the concentric circles) and informal elements (the irregularly curved roads), which are resolved on the ground into an integrated whole marked by multiple picturesque vistas. Apart from the aesthetic aspects, Tuxen also provided for the social and recreational needs of future residents, by incorporating recreation reserves throughout the Estate as well as the clubhouse at its heart.

G. *Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.*

The Chalet has been the heart of the Park Orchards community since its creation. Creating a sense of community was an express purpose of the Park Orchards plan, and The Chalet played a central role in this respect. The Chalet was initially created as the clubhouse, where residents could take their meals, pass the time reading or playing games, and attend dances and other events. It passed into private hands in the late 1940s and was run as a cabaret, then restaurant and function centre. Though no longer an official clubhouse, it still served the same function – as an informal community centre – until its closure early this century. It was the home for nearly 40 years of the Park Orchards Ratepayers' Association – the organisation which has concentrated the efforts of residents to improve the amenity of their suburb since 1954.

H. *Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*

Park Orchards was the work of leading interwar town planner, Saxil Tuxen. While he has long been overshadowed by his collaboration with Walter Burley Griffin, his legacy is now under re-evaluation. Tuxen deserves recognition for his impact on Melbourne's form and his role as a leading town planner of his day. In the State context, Tuxen was significant for his innovative subdivision designs and as a town planner of eminence, being a foundation member of the Victorian Town Planning Association and a technical expert with the Melbourne Metropolitan Town Planning Commission.

Statement of cultural heritage significance:

What is significant?

The Park Orchards Estate, comprising the road reserves, the public reserves and The Chalet (the former clubhouse). Park Orchards was planned as a country club estate by timber merchants and developers Sharp and Taylor, in association with land owners the Gibb sisters, who had used the land for orchards. The subdivision plan was the work of surveyor and planner Saxil Tuxen. The subdivision plan was lodged in 1927, shortly before a design for the Spanish Mission Chalet was released. The Chalet was constructed in 1928-9, and limited roads and tennis courts were created at the same time.

Residential allotment sales were slowed by the onset of the 1930s depression, and much of the subdivision was given over to a 9-hole golf course in 1931 (also laid out by Tuxen). The Chalet and the houses on the estate were requisitioned by the Army for the duration of World War II, first as a Signals Camp, and later for the School of Eastern Interpreters – which trained spies.

The remainder of Tuxen's subdivision plan was faithfully realised from the 1950s, when residential development began apace. The Chalet remained an informal community centre until its recent closure.

How is it significant?

Park Orchards Estate is of historic and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Park Orchards is of historical significance for its associations with surveyor and planner Saxil Tuxen's (1885-1975) work. Apart from the almost entirely intact road reserves, there are three public reserves planned by Tuxen, as well as the central public building: The Chalet. While many of Tuxen's more ambitious subdivisions provided reserves for many public-use buildings, this is the only one to be realised. Tuxen was a leading interwar planner, who introduced elements of Garden City design, including curvilinear roads, as early as 1916. He was well-versed in best-practice planning of his day, and often included unique and innovative features in response to the terrain. He was responsible for the design of most of Reservoir (in the form of the Merrilands, Leslie and Keon Park estates), making him responsible for the physical design of a far greater area of Melbourne than any other planner or council of his day. He was also a founding member of the Victorian Town Planning Association and a technical expert to the Melbourne Metropolitan Town Planning Commission in its infancy.

Park Orchards is also of historical significance as a representative example of an early country club estate, a planning concept adopted from the United States in the early 1920s. It is one of two such country clubs in Victoria that retains its original clubhouse (The Chalet). The purchase of a block of land for a weekender provided membership in the club, and thus access to a wide range of shared recreational facilities far beyond the means of a single owner. At the time it was considered a 'democratic' concept that would allow the middle-class access to the pleasures of the English country house, hitherto reserved for the upper classes. While internally democratic, the country club was exclusive and generally closed to outsiders. This aspect was fundamentally integrated in Tuxen's plan, which limited the access roads into the estate, making a place apart. As intended by Tuxen, the

original clubhouse, The Chalet, has remained the heart of the Park Orchards community since its construction, serving as an informal community centre until its recent closure.

Park Orchards is of historical and aesthetic significance as the finest surviving example of a complete, realised example of surveyor and early town planner Saxil Tuxen's work. In particular, the road reserves are almost entirely intact and fully executed, about half of the public reserves survive, as does The Chalet – the sole public building planned by Tuxen to be realised. The plan of the estate demonstrates Tuxen's skill in his work using garden suburb principles. It is distinguished by its responsiveness to the topography and its unusual combination of classical (the concentric circles) and informal elements (the irregularly curved roads), which are resolved on the ground into an integrated whole marked by multiple picturesque vistas. Also because it is one of the first subdivisions for which car ownership is assumed, and one in which exclusivity is built into the design.

Park Orchards is of aesthetic significance for its surviving country clubhouse, The Chalet. The Chalet is a representative example of a highly intact and early Spanish Mission building, designed in 1927 and completed in 1929. It was designed to be seen in the round within its prominent garden setting on a corner site. The walls are finished in textured stucco, with hipped tile roofs, multipaned windows, arched loggias, projecting beam ends, large tapered chimneys, and wrought-iron decorative details. The interior is highly intact with extensive Blackwood panelling (unpainted), delicate glazing details to windows and internal doors, and wall and light fixtures in the public rooms.

It is also of aesthetic significance for its remnant Radiata pines in the road reserves and public reserves, which survive from the former pine plantations, lend Park Orchards a distinctive 'alpine' character as well as adding another layer to a complex cultural landscape in illustrating one of its pre-subdivision uses (that of a pine plantation).