

## Site History

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### Original buildings

In 1874 a landmark tower house known as Ardenne was built at 43-45 Riversdale Road by architect Frederick Wyatt for wool broker and later Belgian Consul Jules Renard. Later in the 1870s two journalists Lauchlan McKinnon and Henry Gullett were in residence. By 1886 the property was owned by sharebroker James Vickery. By 1901 the building had been added to at least twice. Around this time the extensive property comprised the main tower house, conservatory, kitchen wing, wash house, tool sheds, coach house, stable, fowl yards, pigeon house and tennis court set amongst large areas of the garden. By 1905 the property was occupied by Mr and Mrs Paterson and in 1910 by solicitor AR Daly. (Source: Review of B-graded buildings in Kew, Camberwell and Hawthorn, Lovell Chen Architects and Heritage Consultants for City of Booroondara, 2007.)

### Becoming a school

In 1922 the property was acquired with a bank loan of 7,500 pounds by the Brigidine Sisters a Catholic order founded in Ireland. The Sisters were well regarded educators. They were already working in the area: earlier in 1922 they had become responsible for nearby Convent High School in Wattle Road, Hawthorn and had renamed it Lyndale. They needed to live locally and needed more space for schooling. So within two days of purchasing 45 Riversdale Road they moved in and moved Lyndale School across to the newly acquired grounds and house which promptly became a convent.

Within a year increasing student numbers warranted the building of a high school on site adjacent to the convent which cost 3,000 pounds. It was opened by Daniel Mannix Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. In those days, Lisson Grove 'was a pleasant street with a mixture of grand and dilapidated houses of Victorian and Edwardian vintage, interspersed with paddocks where horses grazed.' (Source: Women of Strength and Gentleness, Morna Sturrock, 1995.) The school name Lyndale was retained until 1950 when it was renamed Kilmaire. The name included Celtic prefix 'Cill' which is like a church or monastery, and 'maire' meaning Mary: Kilmaire the College of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. (Morna Sturrock, 1995.) The Brigidines purchased adjoining properties numbers 38 and 40 Lisson Grove. Number 38 was known as Austral and was built in 1883. The property had been owned by Victorian Premier William Shiels MLA and probably remained the home of his surviving wife Elizabeth until her death in 1954. (The Argus, Melbourne 1954.)

Various major educational buildings were added to the school by the Sisters up until closure of Kilmaire in 1994. Such buildings included double story wings of classrooms, a main hall, tennis courts and a chapel adjacent to the convent. Remains of an original building at 40 Lisson Grove were once part of a house owned by the family of Sir Ninian Stephen who himself went on to become a judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria, Justice to the High Court of Australia and Governor General of Australia. Other significant landmarks include two beautiful

oak trees which the Brigidine Sisters planted as part their tradition. A number of the buildings and some remaining furnishings also bare an emblem of the Sisters which is the cross of Saint Brigid.

### **Transfer to Erasmus Primary School**

The site was sold in 1996 to the founders of Erasmus School of Primary Education. The Brigidine Sisters were pleased that the site would continue to be used to educate children.