

From

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AROUND MELBOURNE

Mr Fudge Knows His S.E.2

Toorak v South Yarra

DURING the past few years keen social observers have noticed a battle for supremacy between Toorak S.E.2. and South Yarra S.E.1. As a shopping centre S.E.1 unquestionably has taken the lead. It has more expensive and more exotic restaurants. It has more iron lace-work and many more coach lamps to the square mile than S.E.2. It definitely has more cast-iron columns, more olde English fronts and its continental delicatessens out-wurst the continental delicatessens of Toorak.

Last week South Yarra made a major killing. It opened an olde arcade, absolutely up-to-the-minute in its olde worldliness. It has brand new, antique Spanish street lamps, it has gas-style lamp standards, a dear little Florentine fountain that really works with a cherub on top, and flower boxes hung by chains from the upstairs shop windows.

There are 17 shops. Upstairs there is a sort of female reconditioning area where ladies can get everything from a sauna bath to manicure. There's an olde worlde English tavern called the "Outside Inn" which specialises in olde English recipes like the "Smorgasandwich", the "Pizza-berger", the "Tunaberg", and yoghurt at two shillings a glass.

Then there's a puppet shop with puppet dolls for grown-ups, and lots of little gift shops with cute names like "Etcetera" and "Sugar Plum". The South Yarra Arcade was opened by Dame Mabel Brookes, who wasn't letting down S.E.2. She lives in Domain Road, which is definitely S.E.1.

Ah, but if S.E.1 is taking a lead commercially, S.E.2 is still in command as Australia's nicest, and tightest little luxury suburb. Last November, Nareeb, the last of the great Toorak mansions, sold for nigh on a quarter of a million pounds. It had been occupied by two sisters, the late Miss Gertrude Simmons and the still living Miss Nellie Simmons. Their father, Walter Simmons, bought the place for them in 1906 and it hadn't

changed since. It still had the original furnishings, electricity had never been put on and it was lit by gas.

But here was the point, the great old mansion was sitting on five and a half beautiful acres right in the centre of the warm heart of S.E.2. For more than 20 years estate men had been calling almost weekly hoping to get the prize. The man who bought it was Mr H. J. Fudge, a Melbourne builder. To those of us who don't understand these matters the price seems incredibly high. However, could he sell houses at a price to get his money back? But Mr Fudge is a brave and enterprising man and he knows his S.E.2.

About seven years ago he bought some expensive land at Kenley Court just at the back of Nareeb, subdivided it and sold four houses for around £39,000 each. Here he planned to do the same thing on a large scale. Mr Fudge got occupancy on December 1. In the next fortnight I don't think any staunch, breathing Toorakonians failed to look over Nareeb.

Then in February and March the bulldozers moved in. Robin Boyd was appalled at the destruction of the famous old garden and wrote an article headed "The Rape of Nareeb". Now Mr Fudge's plan is becoming more clear. He has divided Nareeb into 20 lots and it will be the richest subdivision yet in Australia.

The first four houses are nearly completed, and although we can't give you the exact prices they are a little more than £40,000 each.

The agents, R. T. Edgar and Son, have no doubt that they will sell all 20 houses. This should mean a gross of over £800,000 and a very good profit for Mr Fudge.

And do you know what Mr Walter Simmons paid for Nareeb when he bought it from James Grice, the chairman of the Victorian Amateur Turf Club back in 1906? He bought it as a going concern estate, house, furniture, the lot. The price was £11,500.

BATMAN

