

A Visit to Norwood

In the first half of the twentieth century, Melbourne families would travel in their recently acquired motorcars into the country or down to the seaside for a Sunday afternoon drive. If they travelled through Brighton and along the Esplanade, they passed one of the best known houses in Melbourne: *Norwood*, at number 100 The Esplanade, Brighton Beach. Car after car would slow down or stop at the gates, so that parents could show their children the imposing building, telling them stories (mostly untrue) of the mysteries of the house. We, however, do not have to gaze from a distance, as we have been invited to visit by Edmund Riches, the long-time owner and my uncle, and we will find all the exciting treasures inside.

The imposing wrought iron gates are supported by massive red brick pillars and have a matching pedestrian gate to the side. We are told that these gates are bigger than those at Government House. On each gate is the crest of Mark Moss, the man who built this extraordinary house in the remarkable boom period of 1880 to 1891.

Through the gates we see *Norwood* itself; imposing, dominating its elaborate nineteenth century garden. Many people referred to it as a castle. On the right side are huge conifers



Norwood
c. 1940

