

Building:	Balclutha	Significance:	B
Address:	17 Como Street, Alphington	Melway Map Ref:	31 C12
Building Type:	Residence	Construction Date:	1889
Architect:	Twentyman and Askew?	Builder:	Unknown



Intactness:		Condition:	
G[x] F[] P[]		G[x] F[] P[]	
Existing Heritage Listings:		Recommended Heritage Listings:	
Victorian Heritage Register	[]	Victorian Heritage Register	[]
Register of the National Estate	[]	Register of the National Estate	[x]
National Trust	[]	Heritage Overlay Controls	[x]

History

In 1885 Thomas Wills' Lucerne Farm, established in the 1840s, was subdivided into the Lucerne Estate by renowned Heidelberg developer, A D Hodgson.¹ Hodgson subdivided the western part of Lucerne Farm in two stages to create Constance, Chamouni and St Bernard Streets, followed by St Gothards and Genera Streets.² At the bottom of the first subdivision, at St Bernard Street, Peter H Fanning, a former Heidelberg farmer, purchased two lots in the name of his wife, Mary Alicia Fanning.

Peter Fanning reputedly came from a farm at Moonee Ponds to the Banyule Estate, at Heidelberg, where he leased a farm from James Graham. From the 1850s to 1878, Fanning was locally active; elected to the Heidelberg Road Board in 1868, the Shire Council in 1871, and to the Shire Presidency in 1877. He took an interest in many municipal matters, including the design and supervision of the establishment of Heidelberg Park, stemming from his private interest in botany and floriculture. Fanning left Heidelberg in 1878, purchasing part of the Berlin Estate, north of Bell Street, in the following year. He became a hotel keeper for a time but, at the age of 62, he retired to Alphington where he built Balclutha, possibly to the design of the architects Twentyman & Askew, in 1889.³ He lived there until his death in 1905; the property was then leased out for the following fifteen years. A subsequent owner was a fruit merchant, Edwin Mason.⁴

Graeme Butler. *Northcote Urban Conservation Study*. 1982.

Description

Balclutha, 17 Como Street, Alphington is a large, single-storey Italianate rendered brick villa. The west elevation has a concave-profile corrugated iron verandah with cast iron posts, grouped at the corners, and an unusual, relatively heavy, cast iron lacework frieze. The verandah wraps around a polygonal bay which has large, floor-length double-hung sash windows. Other windows have semi-circular arched heads; one is Serlian in form. There is a moulded string course at impost level. The four-panelled front door has leadlight side-and highlights. The hipped, slate roof has delicate cast iron lacework ridging and finials, and is penetrated by rendered chimneys with bracketed moulded caps and barrelled tops.

The verandah floor is now of concrete.

The surrounding garden includes mature specimens; apparently, however, most date from this century from Balclutha's second owner who was the fruit merchant, Edwin Mason and his family, who came to Alphington from Auburn, in c.1920.⁵ These plants include *Morus alba* (White Mulberry), *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak) and *Ficus pumila* (Climbing Fig), which covers many earlier grottoes and forms topiary around the entrance. At the rear there were the stables, coach and harness and a pitched yard.

Of the original perimeter fence, only the capped corner and gate posts remain.

Significance

Balclutha is of local historical and architectural significance. It has associations with Peter Fanning, a former Shire President of Heidelberg whose farming activities were important in the early history of Alphington. Architecturally, the house is a particularly substantial and very intact Italianate villa with considerable ornamental detailing and which is situated on a site which is notable for its size. The garden, which retains early plantings, is of importance.

Original Source

Graeme Butler. *Northcote Urban Conservation Study*. 1982.

-
- 1 Lemon, Ch.4, p.6
 - 2 Lodged Plans of Subdivision, 1068, stamped 17/4/86; 1460 Titles Office, Melbourne. Garden, pps.142, 151, 181***
 - 3 MUAI cite MUAC Twentymen & Askew design villa for E Fanning in Prospect Grove, Northcote
 - 4 Garden, pps.91, 108f, 139f, 179. Heidelberg News, 27/5/1905/2; Rate Book 1889, 682; M U Architectural Drawing Collection, SLV; Title information held by Miss Mason.
 - 5 Rate Book 1965, 18065; Victorian Directories: (1930), George Mason (1950), Edwin Mason; Verbal advice from Miss Mason.