

Name	<i>Highton</i>	Reference No	
Address	65 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury	Survey Date	16 November 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	B
Date	1906	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

To be established on site. This should preferably be done in consultation with the owner.

Intactness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor
Heritage Status	<input type="checkbox"/> HV	<input type="checkbox"/> AHC	<input type="checkbox"/> NT
	<input type="checkbox"/> Rec.	BPS Heritage Overlay	

History

George Doery, a woollen manufacturer of the firm Davids, Doery & Co., owned vacant acres here in 1905-6 until he erected a ten-room brick house in the period 1906-7.¹ By courtesy of the Doery family, *Highton* became the Camberwell Convalescent Home for soldiers during the World War I, reverting to Edward Doery's occupation until it went to Walter H. Buxton in 1923.² Samuel Henry Rye was the new owner-occupier prior to the next decade. Samuel Rye was Managing Director of Buckley & Nunn Ltd from 1934 after starting at Robert Reid & Co. in Adelaide (1907) and working up to manager in 1926. He was also a council member of Camberwell Boys' Grammar School and the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce. Dare Holyman owned it from the mid 1930s, living further east on Mont Albert Road (146), and Camberwell Grammar by the 1970s.³ Holyman was a marine engineer whose travels brought him back to the family firm in 1919, eventually becoming a director and Traffic Manager of Holyman's Airways Pty Ltd (1933) and manager of ANA Freight in 1941.

The house continues to form part of Camberwell Grammar School's Mont Albert Road complex.

(G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, additional research by Lovell Chen, 2005)

Description & Integrity

Highton, 65 Mont Albert Road, of 1906, is now a part of Camberwell Grammar School, housing its music rooms. As with *Roystead* nearby (51 Mont Albert Road, B-graded, q.v., also part of Camberwell Grammar School), *Highton* was designed and sited to take advantage of views to the north, looking away from Mont Albert Road.

Highton's brickwork was painted white or pale grey for some years but more recently stripped back to reveal the original red brick texture and coloration.⁴ The bricks are dense and appear to have survived this stripping well. This house has a complex massing even by Federation standards. This is

focused on a hipped, broadly pyramidal north side roof, breaking into two closely placed gables on the south. Five radial wings of uneven length and detailing spread out from this core: two on the south side, three on the north, forming an X-plan plus an extra wing. Adding to the complexity of its planning, *Highton* also progresses from single storey (flanking wings to the south); two-storey (paired gables over the south entry); to three storeys (north-east wings, verandah and basement). The roof is terracotta tile in a Marseilles pattern, and the chimneys have red brick stacks with strapwork trim and roughcast stuccoed tops.

The north side of the building is dominated by the three upper floor wings, together radiating in an arrowhead pattern. The fronts of each wing are quite plain: flat, plain-coursed brick, with the gable tympanum pushed out over the window bays on the east and north-east wings but replaced with a skeleton frame barge board on the north wing. The north and north-east wings are linked by a triangular terrace/verandah. This is simply treated, with a slat balustrade and some floral detailing, and a plain frieze in shallow segmental arches. Behind this verandah/terrace, the ground floor level of the building appears to have been extensively altered though the details of these changes have not been confirmed. Below the verandah/terrace, access is provided to an assumed basement level via service doors. This lower area also appears to have been altered possibly through infilling and certainly through the alteration of door and window openings. The half-timbered looking cement sheet and strap plank wall along the rest of the north side looks like a later infill. It terminates part way across the original west wing, which is again in plain brick with a flat front and a skeleton bargeboard pulled clear, and a non-original off-centre window. A projecting rectangular bay with a shallow tiled roof frames the composition at the east end. On the upper levels, the windows are relatively plain, being trios of sashes with smaller-paned upper halves and some leadlighting, over long single-piece sills. The north wing's gable end window has a segmental top, but the other windows are all rectangular, suggesting some alteration has occurred. By comparison with the south side, a reasonable amount of alteration has occurred on the north side of the building.

The south side presents two broad-angled wings that converge on a large entry porch. Again the roof geometry is simple and direct, with two transverse pitches converging on to gables, near to a pairing and linked with a stucco parapet inscribed *Highton*. Below this parapet is another balcony, curved this time, again with plain slat balustrading, and below that an imposing porch valance in three bays in a slatted valance. The three doors opening onto the balcony appear to be of recent origins, and the balustrading to the balcony reinstated since the Camberwell Conservation Study was completed in 1991. The porch is supported on five horseshoe arches over turned timber posts. Behind that the front door and two large flanking bays form a broad wall of glass and timber framing. The south elevation's general symmetry is broken primarily by a gabled front on the west wing only, with a tall central window in a stilted arch flanked by two rectangular windows, like components of a Serlian arch spread across the gable bay. The east wing terminates in a half-timbered gable placed directly over a canted bay. A counter-balancing unity is reasserted on the south side with a brick dado below a stuccoed upper walling; this is consistent across the south side.

Other than for the alterations noted above (which are more numerous on the north side), the house appears to be broadly intact externally. Notwithstanding this, it is commented that the unusual and complex form of the building, together with the limited documentation for works, make it difficult to identify all changes that have occurred.

The setting of the building has been extensively altered following its incorporation into the Camberwell Grammar School campus. The original front garden has been replaced by a terraced space between *Highton* and the classroom block to its immediate south. The original drive has been obliterated for the development of this garden and an asphalted car park to the east side, next to Belmont Park. This car park now extends to the north of *Highton* itself, replacing its former garden.

Historical Context

Several large villa estates were located in the area north of Mont Albert Road and east of the railway line at the turn of the twentieth century. Regardless of their street access, these were generally oriented northward to take advantage of the views. Villas included *Highton*, *Roystead* and *Kaleno* (to its west), *Myambert* and *Nowa Nowa* to the east and *Belmont* and *Larino* to the north facing Whitehorse Road. These areas were generally subdivided in the 1920s (Central Park, Belmont Heights and Cotham Hill estates) and developed in the later interwar period.⁵

Comparative Analysis

Highton is a late Federation house, from a time when Australian architects were beginning to react against the complexity of detail in Federation houses at their high tide. At this stage Australian architects began aligning their detailing with that seen in contemporary free style⁶ or Art Nouveau architecture abroad, particularly in Britain and the United States. Hence the brick courses are plain rather than tuckpointed, the window and gable treatments are comparatively plain, and the angled wings are simply shaped, avoiding the detailed and highly episodic shaping of earlier wings in the Federation period. At the same time the general composition is quite complex, as in the manner of 'reforming' houses in this period such as B J Waterhouse's *Brent Knowle* in Sydney (1907)⁷

In plan the house suggests the butterfly form used, in British free style architecture, by Edward Prior's *The Barn*, Devon, in 1896-7, and expressed more quietly in Charles Voysey's *Annesley Lodge*, Hampstead, of 1896. Both rely, compositionally, on central entries placed in a diagonal between two converging wings. Prior's design is symmetrical externally but Voysey's has an asymmetrical composition similar to *Highton*, mainly in fenestration.⁸ At the same time the broad arrow composition of the three converging north wings is closer to an earlier Australian prototype of the free style butterfly or in this case a three-quarter X plan: George Sydney Jones' AE Joseph house at Homebush, NSW, of 1893.⁹ A second formal link to more contemporary free style composition is in *Highton*'s use of closely paired gable peaks, with the massing below each often fusing. This was a recurring element in houses by Voysey, Prior, Baillie Scott and Lutyens, and made a contemporary Australian appearance in Horbury Hunt's *Pibrac* on Sydney's North Shore, 1889-90.¹⁰ In Camberwell, Desbrowe Annear returns to this motif in 1933 with 7 Muriel Street (B-graded, q.v.).

Graeme Butler attributes the design to Inskip and Butler, but this has not been confirmed.

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

CRITERION A: The historical importance, association with or relationship to Boroondara's history of the place or object.

While of interest, the associations of this house with its early owners and occupants are not considered to elevate the significance of the house above others in Boroondara. Though the connection is not of such long standing, as in the case of *Roystead* (B-graded, q.v.), *Highton* is of some historical interest for its association with Camberwell Grammar School.

The building is of historical significance for its ability to demonstrate the pattern of siting of large villa houses on the rise to the north of Mont Albert Road. The siting of the building facing away from Mont Albert Road and north toward the view is similar to that of *Roystead* (q.v.), but is more readily discernible from Mont Albert Road. Unlike *Roystead*, *Highton* is visible from Mont Albert Road (having the nearest classroom block sited to one side rather than directly in front), and there is equally no visual obstruction between *Highton* and Camberwell Grammar's north boundary.¹¹

CRITERION E: The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

Highton is among the more interesting examples of Federation era houses in Boroondara. It extends radial tendencies in the general Federation plan and shows clarity in applying Federation detail. While not as refined in its resolution as some, the building has innovations that commend it on different grounds. Principal amongst these is the planning of the building; *Highton* is of wide interest for its use of a radial 'butterfly' plan on the Mont Albert Road elevation and a five-winged plan in total. Similarly, its pairing of gables in its north and south elevations reflects a contemporary Arts and Crafts-influenced form.

Statement of Significance

Highton is of local historical and architectural significance. The building is of historical significance for its ability to demonstrate the pattern of siting of large villa houses on the rise to the north of Mont Albert Road, facing away from Mont Albert Road and north toward the view. It is also of historical interest for its association since the 1970s with Camberwell Grammar School. Architecturally, *Highton* is among the more interesting examples of Federation era houses in Boroondara. It is of particular

significance for its unusual planning, employing a radial 'butterfly' plan on the Mont Albert Road elevation and a five-winged plan in total. The design employs a range of simplified late Federation detail and is generally intact externally.

Grading Review

Unchanged.

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme.

Identified By

G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study, 1991.

References

General: G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study, 1991.

Specific:

¹ Town of Camberwell Rate Books, 1906-7, 525; 1905-6, 490.

² *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, 1920; 1923; Camberwell Library File A3 (1933) STR; City of Camberwell Rate Book, 1922-3, 2092.

³ *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, 1928; MMBW Drainage Plan Application # 51870; Details sourced from Camberwell Building Index # 5428, dated 27 August 1935; # 49197, dated 27 May 1971.

⁴ See the illustration in Graeme Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, v.4, p. 191.

⁵ Refer G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, citation for Precinct 18, v. 2.

⁶ Alastair Service argues the case for *free style* as a descriptive term for Arts and Crafts –influenced architecture outside the conspicuously Gothic, or contemporary renderings of the Renaissance or Baroque. *Edwardian Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1977. He describes *free style* variously as 'free or non-historicist design (p. 6); conspicuously *free* versions of earlier British styles (p. 13); related to *organic* design and plans that would link houses physically to their immediate area through climatic recognition, materials, or form (p. 20, 42); free asymmetrical planning and composition (p. 46). *Architectural Design* used the term interchangeably with 1900s Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts in a special number in 1979, though the same magazine saw Charles Jencks' confusing adaptation of it as a term for Classicist design in 1982. *The free manner*, as contemporaries in Australia were calling it as early as 1890s, already pervaded Federation architecture's planning and composition and a general desire to both express region and escape architectural rules and formulae. The shift after 1900 was to make to system plainer in its results. Apperly et al. refer to *Federation Free Style* as a term for larger public buildings of the time: *Identifying Australian Architecture*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1989, pp. 136-9, but the concept pervaded contemporary architecture across a wide range of adaptations in design.

⁷ 'Brent Knowle' in Robert Irving et al., *Fine Houses of Sydney*, Sydney, 1986.

⁸ See Alastair Service, *Edwardian Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1977, pp. 24-7, 31, 90-1, 94. Here, Service notes three Prior designs in this butterfly or X-plan mode, along with related butterfly designs by Ernest Gimson and Detmar Blow, and some Baillie- Scott designs followed the pattern. The Free Style distinction is important since the common predecessor was arguably Norman Shaw's X-planned *Chesters* in Northumberland, 1889-91. This was a Baroque Revival house externally, as was Lutyens' *Papillon Hall*, Leicestershire, of 1903. See Service, pp. 64, 90.

⁹ See Conrad Hamann, 'Forgotten reformer: the architecture of George Sydney Jones, 1865-1927', *Architecture Australia*, October 1979.

¹⁰ See Peter Reynolds et al., *John Horbury Hunt: Radical Architect 1838-1904*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Sydney, 2002, pp. 140-1. This was extended in John Sulman's 1899 addition to *Pibrac's* south side. Hunt's designs were widely known in Australian architectural circles and the architecture- rather than the personality behind it- was certainly admired.

¹¹ Apart from two high chain-link fences.