
Name	House	Reference No	
Address	7 Muriel Street, Glen Iris	Survey Date	20 September 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	B
Date	1932	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

Intactness Good Fair Poor

Heritage Status HV AHC NT Rec. BPS Heritage Overlay

History

Mrs Linda Eloise Gair of 44 Alfred Road, Burwood owned two allotments of land in Muriel Street, Allotment 37 and 38, in 1931.¹ In 1932 she commissioned builder T.F. Crabbe to construct a two-storey brick house on those allotments.² The fourteen roomed house was designed by well-known architect Harold Desbrowe Annear and was estimated to cost £2,384.³ Linda Gair continued to reside at Alfred Road leasing 7 Muriel Street to Mrs Caroline Louisa Gair.⁴ Caroline had been living at Alfred Street with Linda and Mackay Gair.⁵ Caroline continued to occupy this property until the early 1940s when it was sold to Lawrence E. Tewksbury and she moved back to Alfred Street to live with Linda and Geoffrey Hugh Gair, a solicitor.⁶

The eastern part of this once extensive property was subdivided (date unknown) and Gair Court was formed. From this date, the house was given a Muriel Street address and was approached from what was originally its rear. Relatively recently, a large two-storeyed addition has been constructed on the south side of the original house.

(G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, 2001, additional research by Lovell Chen, 2005)

Description & Integrity

The Gair house was one of several half-timbered, two and three-storey houses designed by the architect Harold Desbrowe Annear, who completed several other houses in Kew in the 1920s.⁷ It is possibly the last house fully attributable to Desbrowe-Annear. Originally it was approached by a long driveway through a huge front garden that ran from 45 Alfred Road, 200 metres away, but this front garden was later subdivided around a new street, Gair Court, and the site boundary was cut right back to the immediate east side of the house.⁸ The house now has the street address of 7 Muriel Street, a cul-de-sac to the immediate west. The house is screened by a brick fence added in 1969.⁹

The main wing of the residence (albeit originally the rear elevation) is two-storey with an additional attic storey remaining the dominant element in views to this property from Muriel Street. This wing presents as a transverse gable (actually double-gabled) with smaller gable projecting forward to the west. The upper levels are half-timbered right round and marked by tall, plain brick chimneys, while the ground floor is surfaced in tan unpainted stucco. The roof is in terra-cotta Marseilles pattern tiling, simple and unglazed. The double-gabled form of this wing is visible in views to the property from the south (Hartwell Sports Reserve). Windows are multi-paned. The single-storey wing which extends south of this main wing, and parallel with Muriel Street is thought to be original but has been modified.

As noted above, a large gabled extension has been constructed on the south of the original house, fronting the Hartwell Sports Ground. This addition obscures (at least in views from the sports ground) much of the original paired gable south front which is marked by an interesting diagonal crossing pattern of timber beams across a plaster façade. The additions also reduce the visual command the Gair house once had over the neighboring park.

Early garages, c.1942, were demolished and replaced with steel carports in 1984.¹⁰

Historical Context

When constructed, the Gair house would have been a noticeably large and imposing residence in an outer suburban area characterized by more modest dwellings on standard allotments. As noted above, its grounds have now been extensively subdivided and developed.

Comparative Analysis

The Gair house is one of a series of eclectic houses with conspicuous half-timbering and projecting upper stories from later in Annear's career. These were typified by *Westerfield*, the Grimwade house at Frankston, 1924, and *Westridge*, the Lane-Poole house, Yarralumla, ACT, 1927, similar in plan to the Gair house.¹¹ The living and dining rooms were entered from a short hall through sliding doors, an arrangement seen as radical open planning in Annear's Eaglemont houses of 1903, in particular the second Chadwick house, and in the McGeorge house at Alphington, 1910.¹² The half-timbering motif also compares with houses by Alsop & Klingender in the Toorak area, and with houses by Marcus Barlow and Robert Hamilton in both Toorak and Boroondara, as at 92 Mont Albert Road, 1926 (A-graded), or 6 Myambert Avenue, Balwyn, 1935 (B-graded).¹³ The Gair house differs from these in having a major subdivision, and in now being entered from the rear of its site. But the house is, as with most Desbrowe-Annear houses, designed to be seen and experienced in the round, and does not seem especially disadvantaged by its present orientation. The bold crossing pattern in the original south gables' half timbering recalls Desbrowe-Annear's Eaglemont houses and his use of half-timbering in more experimental ways than his contemporaries. The paired gable also evokes notable free style houses such as Horbury Hunt's *Pibrac*, at Warrawee, NSW, of 1889-90,¹⁴ and later Edwardian and Federation free style houses, seen locally in *Highton*, 65 Mont Albert Road, of 1906 (B-graded).¹⁵

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

CRITERION D: The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as a part of a class or type of places or objects.

The house is representative generally of the larger Tudor-flavored houses in Camberwell of the 1930s, and though its site has been subdivided, and is now viewed from the rear, the house itself is relatively intact and remains distinguishable from its added south wings.

The house is of additional interest as one of a series of eclectic houses with conspicuous half-timbering and projecting upper stories from later in architect Harold Desbrowe Annear's career.

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.

The Gair house is unusual in having a split gable, and in the bold diagonal patterning in its half-timbered south elevation.

Statement of Significance

The former Gair residence, 7 Muriel Street, Glen Iris, is of local historical and architectural significance. The house is representative generally of the larger Tudor-flavored houses in Camberwell of the 1930s, and though its site has been subdivided, and is now viewed from the rear, the house itself is relatively intact and remains distinguishable from its added south wings. The house is of additional interest as one of a series of eclectic houses with conspicuous half-timbering and projecting upper stories from later in architect Harold Desbrowe Annear's career. It is unusual in having a split (double) gable, and in the bold diagonal patterning in its half-timbered south elevation.

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 City of Camberwell Rate Books, 1931-32, 30701, 30700.

² Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, # 2613, 1932.

³ Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, # 2613, 1932.

⁴ City of Camberwell Rate Books, 1932-33, 30676; Electoral Roll, 1936.

⁵ *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, 1933, City of Camberwell Rate Books, 1931-32, 30700.

⁶ *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, 1945; Electoral Roll, 1945; Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, # 15612, 2 November 1942.

⁷ See Harriet Edquist, *Harold Desbrowe-Annear, a Life in Architecture*, Melbourne: Miegunyah, 2004, Catalogue of Works, pp. 257-278. These included five projects in Kew: the Springthorpe Memorial, 1897-1900, p. 259, a house in Princess Street, Kew, 1910, demolished, p. 262; 16 Raven Street, Kew, 1912, p. 264; Boatshed and workshop, Kilby Road, 1914, p. 266; 107 Sackville Street Kew, 1924, p. 273. In Hawthorn: 124 Power Street, Hawthorn, 1912, demolished, p. 264, 108 Barkers Road, 1913, burnt out and demolished, p. 264; Tower Street, 1917, p. 269.

⁸ See Harriet Edquist, *Harold Desbrowe-Annear: a Life in Architecture*, Melbourne, Miegunyah, 2004, esp. pp. 167-8, and p. 278. The house is second last in Edquist's listing of Desbrowe-Annear's projects; the last, Dr Lear's house and surgery at Preston, has been claimed by one Ross Farrow as his own design.

⁹ Details sourced from City of Camberwell Minute Sheet, dated 22 June 1970 (report on fence), and The City of Camberwell Building Index, #45384, dated 3 June 1969 (fence).

¹⁰ Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, #2623, April 1932; #15612, 2 November 1942 (garage additions), and #75778, dated 19 June 1984 (steel garages).

¹¹ Edquist, 162-4, 164-167.

¹² Robin Boyd, *Victorian Modern*, Melbourne: Students' Society, RVIA, 1947: 'Annear and the Half-brick'. H Edquist, *Harold Desbrowe-Annear: a Life in Architecture*, pp. 65-6, 73.

¹³ G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, vol. 4, pp. 194, 212.

¹⁴ Max Freeland, 'John Horbury Hunt 1838-1904', in Howard Tanner, *Architects of Australia*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1981, p. 84.; Peter Reynolds, Lesley Muir and Joy Hughes, *John Horbury Hunt: Radical Architect 1838-1904*, Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2002, pp. 140-1. This was later worked on by Sulman and Power.

¹⁵ G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, vol. 4, p. 191-2, graded B, and a possible attribution to Samuel Inskip and Walter Butler.