

Name	House	Reference No	
Address	622 Riversdale Road, Camberwell	Survey Date	18 November 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	A
Date	1892	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

Intactness ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

Heritage Status ☐ HV ☐ AHC ☐ NT ☐ Rec. BPS Heritage Overlay

History

Graeme Butler has suggested that Thomas A Moody may have been the mortgagee for the construction of this ten room brick house in 1892.¹ Moody was a publisher, by occupation, working for F.A. Thompson and Co., wholesale newsagents of Little Collins Street.² He had moved to Camberwell from Liddiard Street, Hawthorn.

J. Charlesworth was the architect for the house, the design for which was published as 'Villa Residence Camberwell,' in the *Building and Engineering Journal* of 31 October 1891.³

Early occupants of the house included Thomas Press manager of the Rosella Preserving Co. in North Melbourne, who took the house for the first 3 years of the twentieth century, and Lindsay Russell, a civil engineer, who succeeded him.⁴

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

Description & Integrity

622 Riversdale Road is a double-fronted brick residence with a return verandah, perched on a steeply banked site overlooking Riversdale Road. The roof is of terracotta tile in a Marseilles pattern, hipped in the main body and framed with a gabled wing at the north-east corner. It is punctuated by corbel-topped chimneys. The verandah roof is integrated into the main roof, and is in turn punctuated by a corner tower with a prominent and distinctive cupola, heavy enough to read as a distinct event in the general design. The gable is half-timbered, as is the drum for the cupola, through this has arched tops to the half-timbering detail. The wing below the gable is in two broad surface textures, having red brick on the lower walls and a heavy-looking stuccoed dado on the upper, subsuming the upper window lights into its surface with two smooth stuccoed dividers in masonry. The window is topped

with the Collegiate Gothic drip moulding, and the upper panes are chamfered at the top to reveal shallow scrolling.

Few alterations have been made to the house. It was converted to medical rooms in 1954,⁵ but has since reverted to a residential use. Alterations and additions were made to a design prepared by architect Robert Sands in 2002; these are generally not visible from the street and the original front section of the building has been retained.⁶ Earlier applications to build a new fence were approved in 1995.⁷

Historical Context

By the beginning of the twentieth century the MMBW Detail Plan No. 76 (date unknown) shows this section of Riversdale Road had been substantially developed for residential purposes, with the building stock a mix of brick and timber and with some larger villa residences. A small number of larger residences (probably Victorian) are shown on more substantial allotments and set back from the street.

Comparative Analysis

With a construction date of 1892 (and its design published late 1891), *Kantara* is early in the emergence of Australian Federation architecture. It follows the seminal *Elderslie*, at 15 Alma Road (q.v.) by only a year, and has an integral verandah roof and dramatized corner tower expression that is usually only seen in much later Federation designs.⁸ Certainly its clearest local comparisons, Ussher and Kemp's *Travancore* at 608 Riversdale Road (A-graded) and Richard Bate's house at 633 Riversdale Road (B-graded)⁹ are signatures of Federation design. But these date from 1900-1 and 1906-8 respectively. The verandah details at *Kantara* are in cast iron- but that is a sustained local characteristic and widely seen in generally much later Tara Estate buildings around Camberwell Station. *Kantara's* main bay detail is both individual and progressive, referring to the division of upper windows by flat-fronted masonry seen in HH Richardson's American architecture of the early and mid-1880s, and typifying Australian architects' conversion of Richardson's rugged stone textures to stuccoed masonry in aedicules. Though its origins are not known, the layout of the garden, with simple brick-pier gate and curving entry path, is characteristic of Federation garden design in its response to a banked site. The treatment remained popular for three more decades, as seen in the related landscaping of 1920s houses in the curve of High Street Glen Iris, or on other main roads.¹⁰

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.

The historical associations of this house with early owners and occupants are of interest but are not considered to elevate the significance of the place.

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.

Kantara shows all the frontal characteristics of an Australian Federation house, but does so in the earliest period of Federation architecture. As an early expression of the new Federation architecture, it is paralleled by relatively few other published designs. The design draws together a range of generally compatible themes; of particular note are the integral verandah roof and dramatized corner tower (cupola) expression, both usually only seen in much later Federation designs, and the detailing to its main bay.

Statement of Significance

Designed in 1891 by little-known architect, J Charlesworth, *Kantara*, 622 Riversdale Road, Camberwell, is of local historical and state architectural significance as an early example of Australian Federation villa design. *Kantara* shows all the frontal characteristics of an Australian Federation house, but does so in the earliest period of Federation architecture. As an early expression of the new Federation architecture, it is paralleled by relatively few other published designs. The design draws together a range of generally compatible themes; of particular note are the integral verandah roof and

dramatized corner tower (cupola) expression, both usually only seen in much later Federation designs, and the detailing to its main bay.

The building is intact as viewed from the street and has a sympathetic garden setting which may retain elements of an early garden layout.

Grading Review

Review to A.

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 No reference is provided for this. G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, vol. 4, p. 232.

² *Sands and McDougall Melbourne Directory*, 1894

³ *Building and Engineering Journal* 31 October 1891, illustration entitled *Villa Residence Camberwell*, J Charlesworth, Architect.

⁴ Shire of Boroondara Rate Books, 1900-1, 290; WD Wise (publisher), Victoria Post Office Directory, 1900, Shire of Boroondara Rate Books, 1901-2, 308; Shire of Boroondara and Camberwell Rate Book, 1902-3, 325; 1904-5, 328.

⁵ Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, # 13920, dated 7 April 1954.

⁶ Details sourced from the City of Boroondara Building Index, BS-1092/981061/0, dated 9 September 2002; permit files 40/408/17717/Planning -223.3033.622 (temp.)

⁷ Details sourced from the City of Boroondara Building Index, Consent to construct a 2.3 m high fence, dated 22 November 1995; Permit 6300, for a new fence, dated 18 December 1995.

⁸ Graeme Butler has observed that it could pass for a mainstream Federation house of ten years later. G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, v. 4, p. 232.

⁹ See Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, pp231, 236.

¹⁰ *Kantara* invites comparison with the emerging garden patterns in the Federation manner, published that year in the building journals: among them Beverly Ussher's *Cottage by the Sea* at Queenscliff, and Arthur Fisher's 1892 house in St Kilda. *Building and Engineering Journal*, VIII, 184, 9 January 1892. Cited by George Tibbits in Ch. 4 of Trevor Howells' *Towards the Dawn: Federation architecture in Australia*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1989, see also Conrad Hamann, 'Nationalism and reform in Australian architecture, 1880-1920', *Historical Studies*, October 1979.