
Name	<i>Guildford (Montserrat)</i>	Reference No	
Address	26A Wandsworth Road, Surrey Hills	Survey Date	16 September 2005; access 13 December 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	B
Date	1889	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

Intactness Good Fair Poor

Heritage Status HV AHC NT Rec. BPS Heritage Overlay

History

George Jobbins, architect and surveyor, designed this large brick house for his own use in 1888, being listed in residence by 1889, on six allotments of the surrounding subdivision.¹ By 1893, Jobbins had vacated the house, leasing it to Charles M. Robertson.² A variety of occupiers followed in the early 1900s, including William Holmes (Chief Electrical Engineer of the Victorian Railways³), A.D. Groome, Angus McNaughton and Edward Tuck.⁴ Ernest Whitworth was there in the 1920s and Mrs Ellen Wilson in the 1930s.⁵

Jobbins practised from an office in Collins Street and later, Elizabeth Street designing such buildings as the Lonsdale Stores (Lonsdale Street) which was claimed as the first all wrought-iron framed building in Australia (demolished). He was also the favoured architect of the Colonial Bank, designing some 22 branches throughout Victoria (e.g. Kilmore, Northcote and Newmarket).

Phillip Parer, of the noted catering and hotelier family called the house *Montserrat* during this family's tenure (c1906-23).⁶ The Surrey Hills area was reputedly the home of other similarly well-known Spanish immigrants; the Parer family being amongst the most well-known.⁷

The house faced south to Mont Albert Road originally,⁸ however that frontage was excised by a subdivision during the c.1920s, giving the house a Wandsworth Road address. No. 26 Wandsworth Road to the west was a bungalow already completed (now demolished).⁹

A number of alterations and additions have been made to the house in the twentieth century; these are detailed below under Description and Integrity.

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

Description & Integrity

26A Wandsworth Avenue is a single-storey brick residence in an Italianate style with a slate roof ridged in galvanised iron, supported on paired brackets. The roof and its bay tops are almost entirely hipped, save for one small gable-hip facing south. The chimneys have amber brick stacks with heavy stuccoed coping in sandstone and unusually prominent pitched or pyramidal tops to their main stacks. The walls are in an amber Hawthorn brick. The walls are striped with thick stuccoed course lines which spread into heavy quoin arrays, in sandstone according to Graeme Butler's 1991 survey,¹⁰ around each window. The windows are in turn framed by pilasters, creating a quasi-aedicule around each. A return verandah is on the east and south sides,¹¹ originally facing Mont Albert Road, now facing corners of the garden. A smaller verandah, also with cast iron lace, is on the west side screening the bathroom. The main verandah has a roll-topped awning in galvanised iron with a frieze and columns in cast iron, and is framed by two wings projecting to the east and south. These wings are each terminated with a smaller bay, each with three pilasters bracketed out from the base. The cast iron verandah columns are paired, each pair being linked by an unusual miniature balustrade, left open between each column pair. The entrance was originally from the east side of the main verandah.

The house originally had a large courtyard, 15.5 m X 6m, facing Wandsworth Road, which was roofed over and enclosed from an early date,¹² with this space being described by later owners, the Nesbitts, as a ballroom or dance area.¹³ A 'minstrel gallery' was included in the space, which was enclosed at its northern end by a wall (enclosed porch arrangement) facing north to Wandsworth Road and incorporating two distinctive windows. This was subsequently substantially replaced in works undertaken in the late 1980s by architects Bates Smart McCutcheon. The windows themselves have been reused elsewhere on the site (on the garage).

Minor alterations occurred in 1943-44, and a garage was added in 1954. A carport, presumably alongside, was ordered removed in 1957. A new laundry and toilet were added in 1957, and a verandah 'rebuilt' (perhaps repaired?) in 1964.¹⁴

In 1988 new owners began a range of alterations and conservation-related works to designs by architects Bates Smart McCutcheon.¹⁵ As noted above, the non-original lightweight wall at the north end of the ballroom was substantially replaced and a new window with leadlit glass introduced. The iron roof to the ballroom was replaced with grey Colorbond and sections of the earlier slate roof were repaired.¹⁶

Historical Context

The 1909 MMBW Detail Plan no. 72 shows a series of houses facing Mont Albert Road (ie: facing away from Wandsworth Avenue, with a cluster of smaller timber residences in the block bounded by Chertsey and Weybridge Streets and Wandsworth Avenue. Further development occurred in the late Edwardian and interwar periods, with numerous bungalows constructed in the area.

Comparative Analysis

Guildford is comparable in terms of scale to other substantial Camberwell houses such as 25 and 36 Alma Road, and *Hazeldene*, 8 Balwyn Road, q.v. (all B-graded), all completed in the same year; *Ericstane*, 136 Canterbury Road, of 1893 or the later *Malford* in Royal Crescent, of 1901.¹⁷ In its planning in particular, it has affinities with 25 Alma Road, in having a large enclosed area to the rear. In general composition and profile *Guildford* typified the last stages of Victorian Italianate, but as Butler observes, it has a richness in ornament¹⁸ that sets it apart from contemporaries. This is seen, particularly, in the pilaster formations of the bay windows; these have a Grecian cast to them that hints at the pervasive legacy of Alexander ('The Greek') Thompson and resembles the classicized rationalism and crisply incised detailing in central Adelaide houses of the period.¹⁹ Though now on a subdivided block, in garden size, too, it resembles 25 Alma Road, and as there, the trees are of long standing. The house has a complex history of subdivision and alterations, but the general direction of the recent alterations has been to return the house much closer to its original form.

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 association of the house with the Parer family is of historical interest but is not considered to elevate the significance of the house.

The house is considered to be of limited historical significance for its association with its designer and original owner-occupier, the architect George Jobbins.

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.

Guildford is broadly typical of a number of large single-storey Italianate designs of the later boom period within Boroondara generally, and Camberwell in particular. Though now on a reduced allotment and addressing a different street frontage, it retains a generous garden setting. The house is relatively intact, other than for alterations of long-standing relating to the enclosure of the courtyard and the creation of a new entry on the north side of the house following subdivision of the original frontage to Mont Albert Road.

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 house is generally richly detailed; of particular interest is the classicising detail around the windows, which is unusual among large single storey Italianate houses of this period.

Statement of Significance

26A Wandsworth Avenue is of local historical and architectural significance. Designed in 1889 by the architect George Jobbins as his own residence, the house is a representative and relatively intact example of a large single-storey Italianate designs of the later boom period, featuring distinctive and rich detailing. Though now on a reduced allotment and addressing a different street frontage, it also retains a generous garden setting. The house is relatively intact, other than for alterations of long-standing relating to the enclosure of the courtyard and the creation of a new entry on the north side of the house following subdivision of the original frontage to Mont Albert Road.

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 Shire of Boroondara Rate Book, 1889-90, 1032; *Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory*, 1888.

² Shire of Boroondara Rate Book, 1894-5, 1335.

³ P. Nicholls (owner), letter 21.1.90.

⁴ *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria* 1901; 1903; 1905; 1906.

⁵ *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria* 1925; 1935.

⁶ See The Knoll, 50 Wandsworth Rd, q.v.

⁷ *Who's Who in Australia*, 1950.

⁸ MMBW Detail Plan No. 72, 1909. The house is labelled on this plan as '*Guildford*'.

⁹ No. 26 was demolished in 1987 and the site redeveloped for a single residence. The house was owned by the Nesbitt family in the c. 1970s and 1980s and was visited at this time by Conrad Hamann of Lovell Chen. *Guildford* was then referred to as 'Nesbitt's' after the owners of the day.

¹⁰ G Butler, City of Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, vol. 4, p. 299.

¹¹ Description based in part on drawings on file. Drawings prepared by Bates Smart McCutcheon, 1988, sourced from City of Camberwell Building File 2043:26A.

¹² The space is shown as roofed on the MMBW Detail Plan No. 72 of 1909.

¹³ The house was owned by the Nesbitt family in the c. 1970s and 1980s and was visited at this time by Conrad Hamann of Lovell Chen. *Guildford* was then referred to as 'Nesbitt's' after the owners of the day.

¹⁴ Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, # 15959, dated 25 November 1943 (unspecified alterations); # 13601, dated 17 February 1954 (garage), # 19836, dated 21 January 1957 (removal of carport). See also Building inspectors' reports, 28 February 1944 ('1 room addition') 8 April, 29 October 1954 (garage); 10 January 1956, 15 May 1957 (laundry and toilet), City of Camberwell Building File 2043: 26A.

¹⁵ Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index: HC Order, no date; and #87077, dated 14 December 1988, and #87368, 6 February 1989.

¹⁶ Bates, Smart and McCutcheon, working drawings of alterations,, TK del., dated September 1988. Drawings sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, #87077, dated 14 December 1988; #87368, dated 6 February 1989. Additional information provided by the owners, April 2007.

¹⁷ G Butler, City of Camberwell Conservation Study, 1991, vol. 4, p. 10 (25 Alma Rd); p. 13 (36 Alma Rd); p. 15 (8 Balwyn Rd); p. 7 (136 Canterbury Rd); p. 253 (23 Royal Cresc).

¹⁸ G Butler, City of Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, vol. 4, p. 299.

¹⁹ Thomson, CR Cockerell and Charles Barry had a pronounced influence on crucial Australian architects, such as James Barnet in NSW and Joseph Reed in Victoria. See, in particular, George Tibbitts, 'The Classical Tradition in Victoria: represented structure and Style', in David Saunders, ed., *Architectural Papers 1977*, Art Association of Australia, Sydney, 1978, and Chris Johnson and Peter Kohane, *James Barnet*, Pesaro, Sydney, 2001. Germany was another source, reflected primarily in JAB Koch's Melbourne buildings of the time. See Peter Kohane, 'Classicism Transformed', *Transition*, 1983.