

PLACE IDENTIFICATION FORM

ADDRESS

27 Auburn Road

TYPE

- Single Residence
- Shop
- Office
- Landscape feature
- View
- Multiple Unit Res.
- Outbuildings
- Industrial Building
- Public building
- Other

TITLE

"Talana"

EXISTING DESIGNATION

HBR [] GBR [] AHC [] NT [] VAS []

STREETSCAPE LEVEL

1 2 [] 3 []
 SIGNIFICANT [] SIGNIFICANT
 STREET TREES KERB & GUTTERS

GRADING

A B [] C [] D [] E []
 KEYNOTE BUILDING []

RECOMMENDED FOR

HBR/GBR AHC URBAN CONSERVATION AREA
 VAS [] PLANNING SCHEME PROTECTION
 CULTURAL LANDSCAPE [] OTHER []

SURVEY DATE *Sep/Dec. 91*

NEG FILE *29.01, 86.31, 32*

Title
Vol.
Fol.

THEME

- Early Settlement
- Mansions
- Victorian Garden Suburb
- Municipal dev.
- 1870s growth
- Garden villas
- Working enclaves
- Commercial Centres
- Edwardian Prosperity
- Interwar Housing
- Flats and Offices

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Date *1899-1900*
 Architect *John Beswicke*
 Builder
 Elements
Mansion house and garden



- Contributing garden
- Landmark tree
- Original or early hard landscape layout
- Original or early fence

NOTABLE FEATURES/SIGNIFICANCE

See attached

INTEGRITY Good Fair [] Poor []
 CONDITION Good Fair [] Poor []

*Also known
 as 1 Harcourt
 St, Hawthorn
 East.*

CROSS REFERENCED INFORMATION

Associated significant garden []

27 AUBURN ROAD

"TALANA"

History

The Village of Rathmines subdivision of Crown Allotment 70 was planned by its owner, James Murphy, in the mid-1850s. It was a large block bounded by the present Burke, Auburn, Rathmines and Barkers Roads, cut neatly in four with Harcourt and Kildare Streets providing access to 112 blocks of about one acre each. The fine views from elevated sites were Rathmines Village's main attraction. There was an increase in house construction following the opening of the new Auburn Railway Station in 1882.¹⁸ Mansion houses were attracted by the wonderful views and large allotments.

In the 1860s the top of Auburn Road, where the view is spectacular still, was known as "Spring Hill" after the vineyard belonging to Thomas Everist, a surveyor.

One grand house in the vicinity has survived remarkably intact. "Talana" at No. 27 Auburn Road (originally listed in Harcourt Street) on the corner of Harcourt Street, was built in 1899-1900 from the designs of the notable architect, John Beswicke.¹⁹ The 1899-1900 Auburn Ward rate book recorded its commencement in the last year of the 19th century. It was listed at this time as a brick house, "unfinished", in Harcourt Street, owned by Mrs. Annie A. Jones, with an NAV of 200 pounds.²⁰ The following year, Mrs. Jones was listed as the owner and James C. Jones, warehouseman, as the occupying tenant. Described as "Talana" a brick house of 13 rooms in Harcourt Street, the property had an NAV of 250 pounds.²¹ It was often regarded as expedient for businessmen during the economic depression which followed the 1880s boom for family properties to be held by the wife rather than the husband. This may be an example of such practice. The turn of the century MMBW drainage plan shows "Talana" soon after its completion. The house seems to face Harcourt Street and there is a large asphalt tennis court on the Harcourt Street side of the property, considerably larger than that of its neighbour in Harcourt Street.²²

John Beswicke, the designing architect, was the son of pioneer squatter, Charles Beswicke, who settled in the Mordiallic area, then Geelong, before coming to Hawthorn. John became Hawthorn's best-known architect during the 1880s boom years, designing the line of grand villa residences in garden settings on elevated sites in Harcourt Street. He also designed the Hawthorn Town Hall and a group of three-storeyed shops in Auburn,²³ and Town Halls at

18. *The Village of Rathmines Area Walk V*, Hawthorn Historical Society, Gwen McWilliam, 1987-88.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Hawthorn RB 1899-1900 Auburn Ward No. 5052.

21. *Ibid.* 1900-1901 No. 5052.

22. MMBW Detail Plan Hawthorn No. 1560. (1900-1901).

23. McWilliam, *op. cit.*

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Brighton, Malvern and Essendon.²⁴

Description

Talana is amongst the most elaborate Queen Anne residences in Melbourne.

Executed in the required red brick, the decorative embellishments are in render and rough cast, overlaid with timber. The house is extremely large. Its two storey height is emphasised by an extra high ground floor, a raised plinth above ground level, and the large hipped roof. Although the house has a basic gable wing, two co-ordinate point form, it departs from the standard Queen Anne pattern in several areas. The principal facade to Harcourt Street has overlaid on the basic form, a tower and entry porch gable feature; the return verandah is a highly individual design. The corner bay expression in the verandah is atypical and the gothic tracery in the tower window unusual on a Queen Anne design.

The roof is clad with Marseilles tiles. Given their date, these are probably of imported French origin along with the cappings and griffin.

Although the building addresses the corner site with its corner balcony, the principal facade is clearly Harcourt Street. The grounds provide an appropriate context for the building but do not contain a garden which makes a contribution on its own.

Assessment

This is the last of Beswicke's designs for Harcourt Street mansions. It shows a dramatic move away from the earlier conservative Italianate mansions, but in consistent Beswicke fashion incorporates a highly individual approach for the style type and areas of opulent decoration which set the design apart from its contemporaries. In similar fashion to Beswicke's best Victorian period mansion, "Rotha", where Beswicke has exaggerated the gabled bay, this building exaggerates the corner with an octagonal verandah turret and reflected verandah form with opulent decoration. The juxtaposition of arched entry porch, three stage tower and half timbered bay also distort the standard Queen Anne forms pioneered by Ussher and Kemp from the early 1890s.

Like the main Queen Anne practitioners, Ussher and Butler, Beswicke might well be horrified to have his building identified as Queen Anne.²⁵ Nonetheless, this title still serves as the best description of a domestic style, which took some of the features of the Queen Anne and developed them in a Melbourne context, in search for an Australian style.

Ussher's work falls into two categories, the gabled design - usually a two storey form and the hipped design where gables on two co-ordinate points project from an overall hip - usually a single storey form. Beswicke's design

²⁴. *Victoria and its Metropolis*, ed. Alexander Sutherland, 1888, Vol. 2, p. 512.

²⁵. Tibbetts, G. "The So-Called Melbourne Domestic Queen Anne", *Historic Environment* Vol. 2, No. 2, 1982.

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at "Talana" is unusual as a two storeyed hipped design. In general, Ussher's largest houses e.g. Dalswaith in Kew of 1900, adopt the gabled designs. These houses fall into the mansion category. It is the single storey designs which usually apply to large houses, rather than mansions which had developed into the most distinctive Australian style, and which, by the time this building was constructed, were most popular e.g. Hedges Residence, 1897 in Canterbury and Clarke's Residence in Toorak of 1897.

Given the Harcourt Street location, Beswicke has required a mansion house impression, and cleverly combined the principles of both Queen Anne types. This is a rare example as such.

This building comes towards the end of Beswicke's career, but shows the architect inventively handling even the most up to date styles. It is a fine example of his flexibility.

Significance

State

1. A highly individual adaptation of the Australian style in the Queen Anne, at the height of its popularity.
2. A rare example of the overall hipped roof type, adapted to two storey mansion house form.
3. Illustrative of the inventive work of Hawthorn's great architect Beswicke.
4. A substantially intact mansion which is a landmark in Auburn Road and Harcourt Street. The last of Beswicke's mansions here, and the gateway building to the mansion house precinct in Harcourt Street.





27 Auburn Road