

Camberwell Conservation Study 1991  
**BUILDING CITATION**

**Shrublands,  
22 Balwyn Road**



National Trust of Australia (Class/Rec.):  
Classified

NTA File Number: 1795

Study Grading: A

Precinct: 25.00 Streetscape: 2

Construction Date: 1861-3..

First Owner: Carter, Ernest

Architect: Flanagan, Leonard

**History**

The local Road Board's assessment of this property began in 1861-2 when a dentist, vigneron, and road board member, Ernest Carter, occupied and owned a house and land in Delany's Road: the nett annual value was £80<sup>1</sup>. By 1863-4, the value had increased by 50% and, four years later (possibly because of a four year revaluation cycle), by 66%<sup>2</sup>. Four years on, again the value increased by 40%<sup>3</sup>. For the first time, in 1872-3, the land is quantified as at 60 acres and the address modified to Canterbury Road<sup>4</sup>. A small increase in value occurred in 1875-6 until, in 1884-5, it decreased<sup>5</sup>: the previous year the land had been subdivided, the house yard reduced to 8 acres and the address changed to Balwyn Road<sup>6</sup>.

In the period 1883-4 John Hindson, a merchant, became the new owner-occupier retaining 13 allotments of what had been termed the "Shrublands Estate"<sup>7</sup>.

Camberwell historian J. Alex Allan stated that the house was built in 1863, ten years after Carter

appeared in Melbourne commercial directories as consulting in Russell Street. Earlier in 1876, the property had been advertised for auction by Gemmell Tuckett and Co. as

*"...The Beautiful Residence of Ernest Carter Esquire. The house (erected after plans by Mr. Flanagan architect) is most substantially built of brick, stuccoed...with balcony supported by chiseled stone columns..."The house was built on two levels with 12 main rooms, a basement and coach houses. It possessed generously sized rooms and servants' quarters whilst the 60 acres...was beautifully laid out (about 16 acres in garden, vineyard and orchard)..."*<sup>1</sup>.

There were fruit trees and rare shrubs. Despite this glowing description, the property appears to have not sold. It was readvertised for sale or lease in 1883, and after its sale to Hindson, he commissioned architect, William Wolf to design "extensive additions..." in 1889<sup>2</sup>. In parallel, the valuation rose from 350 to £600 over the period of 1888- 90<sup>3</sup>. Not surprisingly for the time, Hindson was forced to sell all but two of his thirteen allotments and continued to live in what was described in 1898, as an 18 room house until well into this century<sup>4</sup>.

Alice Hindson, John's widow, donated the house in 1924 to the Anglican Church, after the family's long association with St. Barnabas' Church in Balwyn Road<sup>5</sup>.

St. Martin's Home for Boys, which had been initiated five years earlier at Auburn, moved there and took the new name of St. Johns, opening there by 1926<sup>6</sup>. The construction of a new but matching dining room, hospital accommodation and staff quarters to the north in 1934, began the extensive building program which followed, much of which is in marked contrast to the structures of the previous one hundred years<sup>7</sup>. The cellar rooms, once reputedly having housed Carter's Boroondara wines, were converted to a chapel.

**Description**

The MMBW *Detail Plan* of 1904, when compared with Carter's subdivision plans of 1883, show the original house to be the south end of the present structure, as defined by the colonnade mentioned in the 1876 advertisement. Wolf's 1889 additions extended towards Balwyn Road, matching in

1 The Canterbury Courier's *Early History of Canterbury*(1950); *Free Press*, 11.5.1977, p.10; *Free Press*, 21.2.1968, pp. 10-11; RB 1861-2, 199  
2 RB 1863-4, 227; RB 1868-9, 222  
3 RB 1971-2, 221  
4 RB 1881-2, 260  
5 RB 1874-5, 236; RB 1884-5, 505  
6 RB 1883-4, 339  
7 *ibid.*; RB 1885-6, 640

1 *The Argus*, 22.11.1876, p.2  
2 CLF 13, Vol.5  
3 RB 1888-9, 1476; RB 1890-1, 3454  
4 RB 1892-3, 903  
5 *Free Press*, 21.2.1968, pp. 10-11  
6 *ibid.*  
7 *ibid.*

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height and finish but without the "balcony". The design is two-storied, of stuccoed brick with a basalt stone basement, and is provided with a two-level verandah. The verandah is supported on superposed Ionic order cement colonnades.

The original house's conservative Renaissance revival design has been subtly repeated in Wolf's west wing of the 1880's by use of Ionic pilastrations across a facade which repeats, in bas-relief, the major decorative elements of the first building. A similarly subservient role has been adopted by the 1934 north addition, adopting the traditional form of a servants wing. A distinctive element of the east face, where the verandah terminates on a room bay, is the elegantly swept stair which ascends to the entrance from the carriage sweep. This is an important remnant of the long drive from Canterbury Road, along with mature exotic ornamentals (cedars, pines) which allude to the former house ground and beyond.

Internally, the wide entrance hall has Corinthian Order paired columns to the dividing arch whilst main rooms have white marble or slate mantels. The cellar is suitably medieval in character with stone and brick archways between footing walls.

Comparative examples, conservative in a renaissance revival style with superposed colonnades include: Fairholme, Prospect Hill Road (1874) 6-8 Burnett Street and 40 Alma Road, St. Kilda; 102 North Road, Brighton and the former Wren house at 15 Nolan Avenue, Kew.

#### **Comparative Examples**

The following Camberwell sites may be compared with this site.

- 2, BERWICK STREET, 1859
- 19, CANTERBURY ROAD, 1860
- 9, BARNSBURY ROAD, 1861
- 290, CAMBERWELL ROAD, 1868-
- 8, AIRD STREET, 1870
- 35, PROSPECT HILL ROAD, 1873-4

#### **Integrity**

There is a new entrance door and some other details have been altered but the exterior remains generally unchanged since the 1880s. Internally, mantels have been removed, rooms subdivided and sanitary services added.

#### **Streetscape**

The house is recognizable as a presubdivision property and prominent from distant view points to the south. However it is not related to the Balwyn Road streetscape.

#### **Significance**

Architecturally, an early semi-rural example of the conservatively treated Renaissance revival in Victoria and among a small group (6 known) of early Victorian houses, of this general style group, which possess two level cement colonnade verandahs of state importance.

Historically, owned by persons prominent in Camberwell affairs and illustrative of the area's early wine-growing role in Victoria, given its large near intact cellar. Few buildings survive from pre-suburban Camberwell and Shrublands is an uncommon reminder of the suburb's rural past, built in a more expansive rural style than later mansions and owned by Ernest Carter, dentist and vigneron. Carter was a crucial and representative figure in the history of Camberwell. His career combined an urban profession with management of a rural enterprise. He also fostered an infant municipality on the fringe of the metropolis. Shrublands reflects the lives of Carter and his peers, important to Camberwell and other municipalities. The building has significance for the region of Melbourne middle ring suburbs: of regional importance.