

12 SELBOURNE ROAD, FORMERLY 'TARRING'

Original Use: Residence
Date of Construction: 1872¹
Architect: Unknown²

DESIGNATION A
CITATION NO.9



HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

This polychrome brick house was built for Henry Henty, nephew of Edward Henty, one of Victoria's foremost pioneers³. The 1903 MMBW plan showing the extensive grounds of 'Karring' (sic.) marks in various garden structures including a 'fernyery', an 'aviary', a 'bamboo house' and 'summer house'⁴. The house is a wide two storeyed mansion built of polychromatic brickwork, that is set in very vibrant patterning across the facade, between the floors, and to represent quoining. The use of such brickwork in the early 1870s was still innovative and is very similar of the work of Joseph Reed on houses such as 'Rippon Lea'. The box-like form of the house is broken by two polygonal bay window units and by a single storeyed verandah to two facades. The decoration to the verandah is no longer extant and the roof has been clad with terracotta tiles. The house was included in *Victoria's Representative Men at Home* in 1904, and in that article was well illustrated including views of the exterior, interior, garden and the wonderfully fanciful 'Burmese Temple' (presumably the 'Summer House' on the MMBW plan) bought by Henty at the 1880 Melbourne Exhibition⁵.

Henty remained the sole owner and occupier of the house until 1920, when the building was sold to the Ruyton Girls' School⁶, the current occupiers. During alterations and additions to the building in 1962, a large dormitory was added above the original ballroom⁷.

- 1 National Trust of Aust.(Vic), 'Nomination Form for the Australian Heritage Commission - 12 Selbourne Road', 24 January 1986
- 2 The sophisticated and relatively early use of polychromatic brickwork on this house would suggest that it is the work of Joseph Reed, however no substantiating evidence has been found.
- 3 *Victoria's Representative Men at Home*, pp.110-111
- 4 M.M.B.W., 'Plan of Kew - 1574', Scale: 40 feet to 1 inch, May 1903
- 5 *Victoria's Representative Men at Home*, p.110-111. Henty was presumably referring to the Melbourne Exhibition of that year.
- 6 National Trust of Aust.(Vic), 'Survey and Identification Committee Data Form - 12 Selbourne Road', 22 July 1972
- 7 *ibid.*

The consultant's citation states:

'Tarring' is of significance as an early and successful example of the use of polychromatic brickwork, for its associations with the Henty family, and as one of the key mansions to have been built in Kew during the Victorian period.

This is an appropriate assessment and it suggests that the building could well be considered suitable for registration with the Historic Buildings Council. It is possible, however, that under comparison with other polychromatic mansions, Rippon Lea, Elsternwick (ex1868) in particular, it might be found wanting in terms of significance through integrity, especially with regard to the grounds. This building would require further investigation, especially with regard to the surviving fabric of structures and gardens and the architect/s of the original building and grounds before a definitive classification could be accorded. However, the building is certainly of regional significance.

There is a solid case for this building's A grading in terms of its age, design and historical associations.