

20 FELLOWS STREET, FORMERLY 'FAIRHOLME'

Original Use: Residence
Date of Construction: 1889¹ and 1909²
Architect: 1889: Perhaps F.J.Smart, 1909: C. Gordon McCrae

DESIGNATION B
CITATION NO.45



HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

This substantial residence was built for Edward Andrew Smart, solicitor, and in 1890 it was a nine-roomed brick house with an N.A.V. of £165³. Edward Smart was a son of Archibald Smart, owner of 'Turinville' (q.v.), and the brother of architect F.J. Smart, who was a partner in the firm Reed, Henderson and Smart and later Reed, Smart and Tappin⁴.

The house was subsequently purchased by importer J.K. Merritt in 1898⁵. Merritt was referred to in 1910 as '... one of the most popular of Kew's recent mayors ...'⁶ and under his ownership, 'Fairholme' was substantially altered and added to by architect C. Gordon McCrae in about 1909, to become a fourteen-roomed house with an N.A.V. of £150⁷. The work undertaken appears to have effected the two main decorative facades, as a caption to an illustration of the house in 1914 describes the illustration as the building as remodelled by McCrae⁸.

While the overall form of the house is unadventurous, presumably because of the constraints of the late Victorian building within, the decoration is innovative. It draws on the Art Nouveau for its main stylistic source, and this is applied to the plaster panels of the window spandrels and the balcony above the entrance porch, and up the piers of the gabled entrance way. This is set in contrast to the tuckpointed red brickwork of the walls and the turned timber decoration across both levels of the verandah.

SIGNIFICANCE

'Fairholme' is of significance for the unusually comprehensive application of the Art Nouveau to the decoration of its facade and the intact nature of that decoration, the leadlight windows and the timber verandah. Its significance is enhanced by the Edwardian remodelling having been undertaken for J.K. Merritt.

HERITAGE LISTINGS

HBR: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

GBR: N/A

RNE: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

National Trust: File No.4917

¹ National Trust of Aust.(Vic), 'Research into 'Halle'...', 21 June 1982

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ F.Barnard, *The Jubilee History of Kew*, p.48

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *Building* 12 Nov. 1914

The grading of this building is somewhat problematic. It is of undoubted regional significance but has undergone extensive additions. It is recommended that it be downgraded to a B classification.