

NATIONAL TRUST (VICTORIA)

CLASSIFICATION REPORT

1. NAME OF PLACE/ARTEFACT

House

2. LOCATION

2 Ash Grove, East Malvern, Victoria 3145
(Ash Grove was originally known as Pine Grove)

3. TYPE OF PLACE/ARTEFACT

House

4. LISTING STATUS

Classification Recommended

5. SUMMARY

5.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Erected for George Wood in 1890 to the designs of A.H. Fisher this house is one of the earliest examples in Australia of the half-timbered "Old English" style as found in the works of W Eden Nesfield and R Norman Shaw, in England in the 1860s and 1870s.

5.2 DESCRIPTION

The use of a half-timbered upper storey above a masonry base is characteristic of the "Old English" style, as is the use of red brickwork including tall strapped chimneys. Elements of particular interest include the use of cement in place of plaster, the hollow brick walls at ground floor level, and the elaborately decorated moulded panels in the gable ends. Significant front and side elevations have suffered only minor changes, but there have been more extensive alterations to the rear over many years.

5.3 HISTORY

Except for the years 1921-29 when it was The Grange School, run by Misses E. & M. Turner, the building has been used as a private residence throughout its life.

5.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The house at East Malvern can be seen as the first Australian, fully developed example of the Nesfield/Shaw "Old English" style, in Australia. Only three Australian nineteenth-century examples have been identified which are strictly comparable: West Maling, Penshurst, NSW (1888-9) which is thought to have been

designed in England; the house at East Malvern (Arthur Fisher, 1880); and High Peak at Neika, near Hobart, Tasmania (George Fagg, 1891-2). Even if one includes H.H. Kemp's design for Woodlands at Essendon (1888), in which only the gables are half-timbered, the East Malvern house is still one of only four known comparable extant examples, and one of only two in Victoria. It is clearly of state significance and is arguably of national significance.

6. DESCRIPTION

6.1 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The house was designed by Arthur Fisher and built by Messrs Williams and Wallace of Armadale at a cost of 2,500 pounds. The half-timbered upper storey of the house incorporates cement rather than plaster, while the ground floor has hollow walls of red brick. The distinctive tall strapped chimneys are also of red brick, and there are unusual decorative moulded panels in the gable ends. The roof is of green slate with a wide purple band and terracotta ridging. Slate roofed verandahs are supported by timber posts. Noteworthy is the use of cavity brick construction (described in 1890 as hollow walls).

6.2 CONTEXT (based on 1980's photos)

Apparently located in a suburban residential area, this free-standing house in an established garden, is set behind a high fence and gates which appear to date from the mid to late 20th century. The distinctive upper floor and roofscape are visible from the street.

6.3 PRESENT USE

The house is in use as a private residence.

6.4 PRESENT CONDITION (based on data form & 1980s photos)

A modification to the original design which probably occurred during construction was the substitution of straight for curved diagonal bracing in the half-timbering. The introduction of a large awning over the main upstairs window has not been dated, but may be relatively early. The back verandah (upstairs) was added in the 1920s when the building was a school. The balustrade on the front and side verandahs was added in the 1960s, and the roof form of the side verandah may have been simplified at this date as well. The laundry additions and renovations to the rear were undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s. An inspection as been made in 1990 and internal features surviving included at least 40 stained glass doors and windows with painted birds and fruit, mostly original, six original marble mantles, cornices, ceiling roses, and skirtings etc.

7. HISTORY

The house was erected in 1890 for George Wood, but it is not clear whether he ever lived there. The house was vacant in 1891. From 1892 to 1900 Alfred Wilton was the occupant. In 1900 Harrie Ford became tenant, he bought the house in 1905 and continued living there until 1912, when Thomas Rutledge leased the property. In 1914 Stanley Rodda bought the house and was owner/occupier until 1921. From 1921 to 1929 the Grange School operated on the premises, which were owned from 1922 to 1937 by The Grange Pty. Ltd. In 1929 upon closure of the school the house was lease by one Hawkins, who continued to live there until 1944, when Sam Grainger took on the lease ownership passed from The Grange Pty. Ltd. to Ouida Wilkinson in 1937. From 1952 until 1969 Harold Glowry was owner/occupier to be followed in that capacity by C Scalamera (1969-78) and R & D Foster (from 1978).

(This is based on D Foster's research on the data form. It has been assumed that Directory information usually related to the year prior to publication).

8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The "Old English" Style

While it can be argued that there was a continuous English tradition of building half-timbered houses, in the nineteenth century there were two main outbreaks of the fashion. The first was an off-shoot of Romanticism and the Picturesque, and appeared in the first half of the century, being actively promoted by pattern book authors such as P.F. Robinson and T.F. Hunt. It could well be argued that the work of George Devey in England in the 1850s provided the link between this earlier phase and its later manifestation in the work of W Eden Nesfield and R Norman Shaw, (who were in partnership from 1862-68), which began in the mid 1860s and was widely publicised in the architecture journals from the 1870s (Devey's work was not published). The style of these buildings, which had half-timbered upper floors above a masonry base, with very tall articulated red-brick chimneys, was most commonly described as "Old English".

Half Timbered Houses In Australia

Surviving examples of the earlier phase in Australia include Wattle House, St Kilda (S Jackson from 1847) and Whitby House, West Brunswick (J Gill c1850) which was only partially half-timbered. It is hard to know where to place the half-timbered additions to Springfield House, Mitcham, South Australia, as the only available date, 1870, is highly improbable and comes from an unreliable source. A house at 350 Davey Street, Hobart (J Mault c1885) is half-timbered on both

levels but may have been inspired by Nesfield/ Shaw prototypes. Two Victorian examples by H.H.Kemp who had recently arrive from England are of interest, a design for an unidentified (unbuilt ?) house in East St Kilda described as being in the "Old English" style (1887) and Woodlands at Essendon (1888). Both of these limited their half-timbering to gable infills. The earliest identified example in Australia of a full-blown Nesfield/Shaw "Old English" design is West Maling, King George's Road and Penshurst Avenue, Penshurst, NSW. This was built in 1888-9 under the supervision of Charles H. Halstead but its design is so English and so unlike anything Halstead did subsequently, that it is thought he may have been supervising a design by an English architect. The house at Ash Grove East Malvern, designed by Arthur Fisher and built in 1890, which is quite comparable stylistically, follows hot on the heels of the NSW example.

Comparative Analysis

The house at East Malvern can thus be seen as the first indisputably Australian fully developed example of the Nesfield Shaw "Old English" style in Australia. Somewhat surprisingly, when the house at Ash Grove was illustrated in the Building and Engineering Journal in June 1890, no comment was made upon the style in the brief accompanying description. That the style was then extremely rare in Australia however, is indicated by an article published in the same journal three years later, in which the style was described as somewhat new to the Colony, though very largely adopted of recent years in England as a revival of the old domestic architecture (BEJ 21 10 93). This accompanied an illustration of Highpeak at Neika, near Hobart (George Fagg, 1891-2), which is the next comparable example. Government Cottage, Mount Macedon (G. M. Watson, 1891 destr.) would have been comparable if built as intended, but the original scheme for half-timbering above brick had to be abandoned due to transport difficulties, and the house was built of timber throughout. The only other identified half-timbered house from the 1890s, Tay Creggan at Hawthorn (R.G.W. Purchas, 1897) reverts to the more conservative picturesque type, using moulded Tudoresque chimneys and highly decorated bargeboards, as well as having half timbering at both levels.

The house at East Malvern is therefore one of only three Australian nineteenth century examples identified which are strictly comparable, and even if one includes Kemp's design for Woodlands at Essendon, the East Malvern house is still one of only four known extant examples of the "Old English" style (as espoused by Nesfield and Shaw) in Australia and one of only two in Victoria. It is clearly of state significance and arguably of national significance.

(an illustration of this building is appended)

9. REFERENCES

Building Engineering & Mining Journal 28.6.1890, p224
(perspective and brief description).

The Grange School, Ash Grove . 1921-29. No. 767, list
of closed schools, Education Department Archives.

Titles and street directories research by D Foster,
1988 (on earlier data form).

Photographs on Trust file:rear view 1982, front and
side views 1980s.

Photographs of Grange School, 1920s, held by Mrs D
Foster.

10. APPENDICES

Perspective rendering(1890), three photographs (1980s).
Illustrations of other houses for comparative purposes
